

19. Grégoire de Tours, *Historia Francorum* (575-592) (Paris, 1692).
20. Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (Paris, 1695).
21. The reference is to *Etat de la France dans lequel on voit tout ce que regarde le gouvernement ecclésiastique, le militaire, la justice, les finances, le commerce, les manufactures, le nombre des habitants, et en général tout ce qui peut faire comprendre à fond cette monarchie; extrait des mémoires dressés par les intendants du royaume, par ordre du roy Louis XIV à la sollicitation de Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne, père de Louis XV à présent regnant. Avec des Mémoires historiques sur l'ancien gouvernement de cette monarchie jusqu'à Hugues Capet, par M. le comte de Boulainvilliers*, 2 vols. in folio (London, 1727). In 1728, a third volume appeared under the title *Etat de la France, contenant XIV lettres sur les anciens Parlemens de France, avec l'histoire de ce royaume depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à Charles VIII. On y a joint des Mémoires présentés à M. le duc d'Orléans* (London, 1728).
22. Foucault is alluding to those of Boulainvilliers's historical works that deal with French political institutions. The most important are: *Mémoire sur la noblesse du royaume de France fait par le comte de Boulainvilliers* (1719; extracts are published in A. Devyver, *Le Sang épuré. Les préjugés de race chez les gentilhommes français de l'Ancien Régime* [Brussels: Editions de l'Université, 1973], pp. 500-48); *Mémoire pour la noblesse de France contre les Ducs et Pairs*, s. 1. (1717); *Mémoires présentés à Mgr. le duc d'Orléans, Régent de France* (The Hague/Amsterdam, 1727); *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France avec quatorze lettres historiques sur les Parlemens ou Etats Généraux*, 3 vols. (The Hague/Amsterdam, 1727) (this is an abridged and revised edition of the *Mémoires*); *Traité sur l'origine et les droits de la noblesse* (1700), in *Continuation des mémoires de littérature et d'histoire* (Paris, 1730), vol. 9, pp. 3-106 (re-published, with numerous modifications, as *Essais sur la noblesse contenant une dissertation sur son origine et abaissement, par le feu M. le Comte de Boulainvilliers, avec des notes historiques, critiques et politiques* [Amsterdam, 1732]); *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1733); *Histoire des anciens parlemens de France ou Etats Généraux du royaume* (London, 1737).
23. The historical writings of L. G. comte de Buat-Nançay include *Les Origines ou l'Ancien Gouvernement de la France, de l'Italie, de l'Allemagne* (Paris, 1757); *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Europe*, 12 vols. (Paris, 1772); *Eléments de la politique, ou Recherche sur les vrais principes de l'économie sociale* (London, 1773); *Les Maximes du gouvernement monarchique pour servir de suite aux éléments de la politique* (London, 1778).
24. Of the many works by F. de Reynaud, comte de Montlosier, only those that relate to the problems raised by Foucault in his lecture will be mentioned here: *De la monarchie française depuis son établissement jusqu'à nos jours*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1814); *Mémoires sur la Révolution française, le Consulat l'Empire, la Restauration et les principaux événements qui l'ont suivie* (Paris, 1830). On Montlosier, see the lecture of 10 March below.
25. See L. G. comte de Buat-Nançay, *Remarques d'un Français, ou Examen impartial du livre de M. Necker sur les finances* (Geneva, 1785).
26. L. G. comte de Buat-Nançay, *Les Maximes du gouvernement monarchique*, pp. 286-87.
27. On this question, see J. N. Moreau, *Plan des travaux littéraires ordonnés par Sa Majesté pour la recherche, la collection et l'emploi des monuments d'histoire et du droit public de la monarchie française* (Paris, 1782).
28. Cf. J. N. Moreau, *Principes de morale, de politique et de droit public puisés dans l'histoire de notre monarchie, ou discours sur l'histoire de France*, 21 vols. (Paris, 1777-1789).

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*Nation and nations. - The Roman conquest. - Grandeur and decadence of the Romans. - Boulainvilliers on the freedom of the Germans. - The Soissons vase. - Origins of feudalism. - Church, right, and the language of State. - Boulainvilliers: three generalizations about war: law of history and law of nature, the institutions of war, the calculation of forces. - Remarks on war.*

LAST TIME, I TRIED to show you how the nobiliary reaction was bound up with, not exactly the invention of historical discourse, but rather the shattering of a preexisting historical discourse whose function had until then been to sing the praises of Rome, as Petrarch puts it.<sup>1</sup> Until then, historical discourse had been inferior to the State's discourse about itself; its function was to demonstrate the State's right, to establish its sovereignty, to recount its uninterrupted genealogy, and to use heroes, exploits, and dynasties to illustrate the legitimacy of public right. The disruption of the praise of Rome in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries came about in two ways. On the one hand, we have the recollection, the reactivation, of the fact of the invasion, which, as you will remember, Protestant historiography had already used as an argument against royal absolutism. The evocation of the invasion introduced a major break in time: the Germanic invasion of the fourth to fifth centuries negates right. This is the moment when public right is destroyed, the moment when the hordes flooding out of Germany put an end to Roman

absolutism. The other break, the other disruptive principle—which is, I think, more important—is the introduction of a new subject of history, both in the sense that the historical narrative acquires a new domain of objects, and in the sense that a new subject begins to speak in history. History is no longer the State talking about itself; it is something else talking about itself, and the something else that speaks in history and takes itself as the object of its own historical narrative is a sort of new entity known as the nation. "Nation" is, of course, to be understood in the broad sense of the term. I will try to come back to this point, as it is this notion of a nation that generates or gives rise to notions like nationality, race, and class. In the eighteenth century, this notion still has to be understood in a very broad sense.

It is true that you can find in the *Encyclopédie* what I would call a Statist definition of the nation because the encyclopedists give four criteria for the existence of the nation.<sup>2</sup> First, it must be a great multitude of men; second, it must be a great multitude of men inhabiting a defined country; third, this defined country must be circumscribed by frontiers; fourth, the multitude of men who have settled inside those frontiers must obey the same laws and the same government. So we have here a definition of the nation which, so to speak, settles the nation within the frontiers of the State on the one hand, and within the very form of the State on the other. This is, I think, a polemical definition which was intended, if not to refute, at least to rule out the broad definition that prevailed at this time, and which we can find both in texts produced by the nobility and in texts produced by the bourgeoisie. According to this definition, the nobility was a nation, and the bourgeoisie was also a nation. All this will be of vital importance during the Revolution, and especially in Sieyès's text about the Third Estate, which I will try to discuss.<sup>3</sup> But this vague, fluid, shifting notion of the nation, this idea of a nation that does not stop at the frontiers but which, on the contrary, is a sort of mass of individuals who move from one frontier to another, through States, beneath States, and at an infra-State level, persists long into the nineteenth century—in, for instance, the work of Augustin Thierry,<sup>4</sup> Guizot,<sup>5</sup> and others.

We have, then, a new subject of history, and I will try to show you how and why it was the nobility that introduced into the great Statist organization of historical discourse this disruptive principle: the nation as subject-object of the new history. But what was this new history, what did it consist of, and how did it become established in the early eighteenth century? I think that the reasons why this new type of history is deployed in the discourse of the French nobility become clear if we compare it with the nature of the English problem in the seventeenth century, or about one hundred years earlier.

In the England of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both the parliamentary opposition and the popular opposition had, basically, to solve a relatively simple problem. They had to demonstrate that there were both two conflicting systems of right and two nations in the English monarchy. On the one hand, there was a system of right corresponding to the Norman nation: the aristocracy and the monarchy were, so to speak, lumped together. This nation brought with it an absolutist system of right, and it imposed it through the violence of the invasion. So: monarchy and aristocracy (absolutist-type right and invasion). That system had to be challenged by asserting the system of Saxon right: the right to basic freedoms, which just happened to be the right of the earliest inhabitants and, at the same time, the right that was being demanded by the poorest, or at least by those who did not belong to either the royal family or aristocratic families. So, two great systems. And the older and more liberal system had to prevail over the new system that had—thanks to the invasion—introduced absolutism. A simple problem.

A century later, or at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, the French nobility was obviously faced with a much more complex problem because it had to fight on two fronts. On the one hand, against the monarchy and its usurpations of power; on the other, against the Third Estate, which was taking advantage of the absolute monarchy so as to trample on the rights of the nobility and to use them to its own advantage. So, a struggle on two fronts, but it cannot be waged in the same way on both fronts. In its struggle against the absolutism of the monarchy, the nobility

asserts its right to the basic freedoms which were supposedly enjoyed by the Germanic or Frankish people who invaded France at some point. So, in its struggle against the monarchy, the nobility claims freedoms. But in the struggle against the Third Estate, the nobility lays claim to the unrestricted rights granted to it by the invasion. On the one hand, or in the struggle against the Third Estate, it must, in other words, be an absolute victor with unrestricted rights; on the other hand, or in the struggle against the monarchy, it has to lay claim to an almost constitutional right to basic freedoms. Hence the complexity of the problem and hence, I think, the infinitely more sophisticated nature of the analysis that we find in Boulainvilliers, compared to the analysis we find a few decades earlier.

But I want to take Boulainvilliers simply as an example, because there was in fact a whole nucleus, a whole nebula of noble historians who began to formulate their theories in the second half of the seventeenth century (the comte d'Estaing between about 1660 and 1670),<sup>6</sup> and they went on doing so until the comte de Buat-Nançay<sup>7</sup> and possibly the comte de Montlosier<sup>8</sup> (who was writing at the time of the Revolution), the Empire, and the Restoration. Boulainvilliers plays an important role because it was Boulainvilliers who tried to retranscribe the reports produced by the intendants for the duc de Bourgogne, and we can therefore take him as a point of reference and as a representative figure who can, provisionally, stand for all the others.<sup>9</sup> How does Boulainvilliers make his analysis? First question: What did the Franks find when they entered Gaul? They obviously did not find the lost homeland to which they wanted to return because of its wealth and civilization (as the old historico-legendary story of the twelfth century would have it when it described the Franks as Gauls who had left their homeland and then decided to go back to it at some point). The Gaul described by Boulainvilliers is by no means a happy, almost Arcadian Gaul which had forgotten Caesar's violence and had happily merged into a newly constituted unity. When they entered Gaul, the Franks found a land that had been conquered. And the fact that it had been conquered meant that Roman absolutism, or the kingly or imperial right that had been

established by the Romans, was not a right that had been acclimatized to Gaul; it was not accepted, and did not fit in with either the land or the people. This right was the result of the conquest; Gaul had been subjugated. The right that prevailed there was in no sense a consensual sovereignty; it was the result of domination. And it is the very mechanism of that domination, which lasted throughout the Roman occupation, that Boulainvilliers is trying to isolate by identifying a number of phases.

When the Romans first entered Gaul, their immediate priority was obviously to disarm the warrior aristocracy, which had been the only military force to put up any real opposition; they disarmed the aristocracy and humiliated it in both political and economic terms by (or at least at the same time as) artificially raising up the common people and, according to Boulainvilliers, using the idea of equality to seduce them. In other words, a device typical of all despotisms (and which had, as it happens, been developed in the Roman Republic from Marius to Caesar) was used to convince inferiors that a little more equality for them would do them more good than much greater freedom for all. And the result of this "equalitarization" was a despotic government. In the same way, the Romans made Gaulish society more egalitarian by humbling the nobility, raising up the common people, and establishing their own Caesarism. This was the first phase, and it ended with Caligula's systematic massacre of the former Gaulish nobles who had resisted both the Romans and their characteristic policy of humiliation. We then see the Romans creating the nobility they needed. This was not a military nobility—which might have opposed them—but an administrative nobility that was designed to help them organize a Roman Gaul and, above all, to assist them with all the dishonest tricks they would use to plunder the wealth of Gaul and to ensure that the tax system worked in their favor. So a new nobility was created, and it was a civilian, juridical, and administrative nobility characterized, first, by its acute, sophisticated, and masterly understanding of Roman right, and second, by its knowledge of the Roman language. It was its knowledge of the language and its understanding of right that allowed a new nobility to emerge.

This description makes it possible to dispel the old seventeenth-century myth of a happy and Arcadian Roman Gaul. The refutation of that myth was obviously a way of telling the king of France: If you claim the rights of Roman absolutism, you are not laying claim to basic and essential right over the land of Gaul, but to a specific and particular history whose tricks are not especially honorable. You are at least inscribing yourself within a mechanism of subjugation. What is more, this Roman absolutism, which was established thanks to a certain number of mechanisms of domination, was finally overthrown, swept away and defeated by the Germans—and that had less to do with the contingencies of a military defeat than with an inevitable internal decay. This is the starting point for the second section of Boulainvilliers's analysis—the moment when he analyzes the real effects of Rome's dominion over Gaul. When they entered Gaul, the Germans (or Franks) found a conquered land that was the military armature of Gaul.\* The Romans now had no one to defend them from invasions from across the Rhine. Given that they no longer had a nobility, they had to turn to mercenaries in order to defend the Gaulish land they were occupying. These mercenaries were not fighting their own cause, or to defend their own land, but for money. The existence of a mercenary army, of a paid army, obviously implies a very high level of taxation. Gaul therefore had to supply not only mercenaries but also the means to pay them. This had two effects. First, a considerable increase in taxes paid in cash. Second, an increase in the amount of money in circulation or, as we would say today, devaluation. This leads to two things: Money loses its value because it has been devalued and, curiously enough, because it becomes increasingly scarce. The lack of money then leads to a downturn in business and to general impoverishment. It is this state of general desolation that provides the context for the Frankish conquest or which, rather, makes it possible. Gaul's vulnerability to a Frankish

\*"that was the military armature of Gaul" does not figure in the manuscript, which reads, "a country ruined by absolutism."

invasion is bound up with the fact that the country was in ruins, and the explanation for that is the existence of mercenary armies.

I will come back later to this type of analysis. But the interesting thing about it—and this should be pointed out straightaway—is that Boulainvilliers's analysis is already very different from the analyses we find only a few decades earlier, when the question that was being raised was essentially that of public right, or in other words: Did Roman absolutism, and its system of right, survive the Frankish invasion? Did the Franks abolish, legitimately or otherwise, a sovereignty of the Roman type? That, broadly speaking, was the historical problem that was being raised in the seventeenth century. For Boulainvilliers, the problem is no longer whether Roman right did or did not still exist, or whether one right had the right to replace another. Those problems are no longer being posed. The problem is understanding the internal reasons for the defeat, or in other words, understanding in what sense the Roman government (legitimate or otherwise; that is not the problem) was logically absurd or politically contradictory. The famous problem of the grandeur and decadence of the Romans, which will become one of the great clichés of the historical or political literature of the eighteenth century,<sup>10</sup> and to which Montesquieu<sup>11</sup> will return long after Boulainvilliers, has a very precise meaning. What is, for the first time, taking shape here is an analysis of the economico-political type. A new model is taking shape, and the problem is no longer simply the problem of the negation of right, of the change of right, or of the transformation of an absolutist right into a Germanic-type right. That is the first set of analyses that can be found in Boulainvilliers. I am systematizing it all a bit, but I'm just trying to save time.

To move on from the problem of Gaul and the Romans, the second problem, or the second set of problems, which I will take as an example of Boulainvilliers's analyses, is the problem he raises with regard to the Franks: Who are these Franks who came to Gaul? This is the other side of the problem I was just talking about: Whence the strength of these people who, although they were uncouth, barbarous,

and relatively few in number, could actually invade Gaul and destroy the most powerful empire that history had known until then? It is the strength of the Franks and the weakness of the Romans that have to be explained. To begin with the strength of the Franks: They enjoyed something the Romans believed they had to do without: the existence of a warrior aristocracy. The whole of Frankish society was organized around its warriors, who, although they were backed up by a whole series of people who were serfs (or at least servants dependent on clients), were basically the Frankish people itself, as the German people consists essentially of *Leute* or *leudes*, or people who are all men-at-arms, or the very opposite of mercenaries. What is more, these men-at-arms or aristocratic warriors elect their king, but his only function is to settle disputes and juridical problems in peacetime. Its kings are civil magistrates, and nothing more than that. What is more, these kings are chosen by the general consent of groups of *leudes*, or groups of men-at-arms. It is only in times of war—when a strong organization and one power are needed—that they elect a leader, and his leadership obeys very different principles and is absolute. The leader is a warlord who is not necessarily the king of civil society but who may, in certain circumstances, become its king. Someone such as Clovis—of [...] historical importance was both civil judge, the civilian magistrate who had been chosen to resolve disputes, and warlord. At all events, what we have here is a society in which power is minimal, at least in peacetime; it follows that freedom is maximal.

Now, what is this freedom that is enjoyed by the members of this warrior aristocracy? It is certainly not freedom in the sense of independence, nor is it the freedom that, basically, allows one to respect others. The freedom enjoyed by these Germanic warriors was essentially the freedom of egoism, of greed—a taste for battle, conquest, and plunder. The freedom of these warriors is not the freedom of tolerance and equality for all; it is a freedom that can be exercised only through domination. Far from being a freedom based upon respect, it is, in other words, a freedom based upon ferocity. And when he traces the etymology of the word *Franc*, Boulainvilliers's follower

Freret says that it certainly does not mean "free" in the sense in which we now understand the word; essentially, it means "ferocious," *ferox*. The word *franc* has exactly the same connotations as the Latin word *ferox*; according to Freret, it has all its favorable and unfavorable meanings. It means "proud, intrepid, haughty, cruel."<sup>12</sup> Here we have the beginnings of the famous great portrait of the "barbarian" which we will go on finding until the late nineteenth century and, of course, in Nietzsche, [for whom] freedom will be equivalent to a ferocity defined as a taste for power and determined greed, an inability to serve others, and constant desire to subjugate others; "unpolished and rough manners, a hatred of Roman names, the Roman language and Roman customs. Brave lovers of freedom, bold, fickle, faithless, eager for gain, impatient, restless,"<sup>\*13</sup> et cetera. These are the epithets Boulainvilliers and his successors use to describe this new great blond barbarian who, thanks to their texts, makes his solemn entry into European history—I mean into European historiography.

This portrait of the great blond ferocity of the Germans makes it possible to explain, first of all, how, when these Frankish warriors came to Gaul, they simply could not and would not be assimilated into the Gallo-Romans and, more specifically, why they completely refused to submit to this imperial right. They were much too free, by which I mean too proud, too arrogant, and so on, not to prevent their warlord from becoming a sovereign in the Roman sense of the word. Their freedom made them far too intent on conquest and domination not to seize the land of Gaul for themselves on an individual basis. The Frankish victory therefore did not make their warlord the owner of the land of Gaul, but each of his warriors benefited, directly and in his own right, from the victory and conquest. Each warrior claimed for himself a piece of the land of Gaul. These are the distant beginnings of feudalism; I will omit the details of Boulainvilliers's analysis, as they are so complicated. Each warrior actually seized a piece of land; the king owned only his own land, and therefore had no Roman-style right of sovereignty over the whole of the land of Gaul. Because

\*Quotation marks in the manuscript.

they had become independent and individual landowners, there was no reason for them to accept a king who ruled over them and who was, in some sense, the heir to the Roman emperors.

This is the beginning of the story of the vase of Soissons—again, I should say the historiography of the vase of Soissons. What is the story? You probably read it in your school textbooks. It was made up by Boulainvilliers, his predecessors, and his successors. They all borrowed the story from Gregory of Tours, and it became one of the clichés of their interminable historical discussions. When, after some battle or other—I can't remember which<sup>14</sup>—Clovis was sharing out the booty, or rather presiding as a civilian magistrate over the sharing out of the booty, you know, when he saw a certain vase, he said, "I want that," but a warrior got up and said: "You don't have any right to that vase. You might well be king, but you will share the booty with the rest of us. You have no preemptive rights, you have no prior or absolute right over the spoils of war. All the victors have an absolute right to the spoils of war: they have to be shared out, and the king has no preeminent right." This is the first phase of the story of the vase of Soissons. We will look later at the second.

Boulainvilliers's description of a Germanic community therefore allows him to explain why Germans completely rejected the Roman organization of power. But it also allows him to explain how and why a small number of poor people were able to conquer and hold the rich and populous land of Gaul. Once again, the comparison to England is interesting. You will recall that the English were faced with exactly the same problem: How was it that sixty thousand Norman warriors succeeded in settling in and holding England? Boulainvilliers has the same problem. And this is how he resolves it. He says this: The reason why the Franks were able to survive in the land they had conquered is that the first precaution they took was not only not to give the Gauls arms, but to confiscate their weapons. Which left a military caste that was both clearly differentiated from other castes and quite isolated from the rest of the country. It was a military caste, and it was purely Germanic. The Gauls no longer had any weapons, but on the other hand, they were left in actual possession of their

lands, precisely because warfare was the only occupation of the Germans or Franks. The Franks fought, and the Gauls remained on their land and farmed it. They were merely required to pay certain taxes to allow the Germans to carry out their military functions. The taxes were certainly not light, but they were much less onerous than the taxes the Romans had tried to levy. They were much less onerous because they were, in quantitative terms, lower, but above all because, when the Romans demanded monetary taxes to pay their mercenaries, the peasants could not pay them. They were now being asked only for taxes that were paid in kind, and they could always pay them. To that extent, there was no longer any hostility between the peasant Gauls, who were merely being asked to pay taxes in kind, and the warrior caste. We therefore have a happy and stable Frankish Gaul which is much less impoverished than Roman Gaul was at the end of the Roman occupation. According to Boulainvilliers, the Franks and the Gauls lived happily side by side. Both were free to enjoy what they had in peace: the Franks were happy because the industrious Gauls provided for their needs, and the Gauls were happy because the Franks gave them security. We have here the sort of nucleus of what Boulainvilliers dreamed up: feudalism as the historico-juridical system characteristic of society, of European societies from the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries down to almost the fifteenth. Until Boulainvilliers analyzed it, this system of feudalism had been identified by neither historians nor jurists. Such was the climate of the juridico-political unity of feudalism: a contented military caste supported and fed by a peasant population that paid it taxes in kind. That, so to speak, was the climate of the juridico-political unity of feudalism.

I would also like to isolate the third set of facts that Boulainvilliers analyzes, because they are important. I refer to the sequence of events whereby the nobility, or rather the warrior aristocracy, that had settled in France gradually lost most of its wealth and power and, ultimately, found itself being held in check by monarchical power. Boulainvilliers's analysis is roughly as follows: The king of the Franks was originally a temporary king in two senses. On the one hand, he

was appointed warlord only for the duration of the war. The absolute character of his power lasted, therefore, only so long as the war itself. On the other hand, and to the extent that he was a civil magistrate, he did not necessarily have to belong to one particular dynasty. There was no right of succession, and he had to be elected. Now this sovereign, who was a temporary king in two senses, gradually became the permanent, hereditary, and absolute monarch with whom most European monarchies—and especially the French monarchy—were familiar. How did this transformation come about? First, because of the conquest itself, because of its military success. Because a small army had settled in an immense country which could be assumed, at least at first, to be hostile to it. It was therefore natural that the Frankish army should remain on a war footing in the Gaul it had just occupied. As a result, the man who had been warlord only for the duration of the war became both warlord and civilian leader. The very fact of the occupation kept the military organization intact. It was kept intact, but not without problems, not without difficulties, and not without rebellions on the part of the Franks themselves—on the part of Frankish warriors who did not agree that a military dictatorship should be maintained in peacetime. In order to retain his power, the king was therefore obliged to turn to mercenaries, and he found them either among the very Gaulish people who should have been left disarmed, or among foreigners. For all these reasons, the warrior aristocracy began to find itself being squeezed between a monarchic power that was trying to preserve its absolute character, and the Gaulish people, who were gradually being asked by the monarch himself to support his absolute power.

Which brings us to the second episode in the story of the Soissons vase. This is the moment when Clovis, who could not stomach being told not to touch the vase, was reviewing a military parade and noticed the warrior who had told him not to touch the said vase. Taking his great ax, the good Clovis smashed the warrior's skull in, telling him: "Remember the Soissons vase." Here we have the precise moment at which the man who should have been nothing more than a civilian magistrate—Clovis—holds on to the military form of his

power, but uses it to settle a civil dispute. The absolute monarch is born at the moment when the military form of power and discipline begins to organize civilian right.

The second and more significant operation that allows civil power to take an absolutist form is as follows: On the one hand, then, the civil power appeals to the people of Gaul to recruit a band of mercenaries. But another alliance is also formed, and this time it is an alliance between royal power and the old Gaulish aristocracy. This is how Boulainvilliers analyzes it. He says: When the Franks came, which strata of the population of Gaul were worst affected? It was not so much the peasants (whose monetary taxes were transformed into taxes in kind), as the Gaulish aristocracy, whose lands were, of course, confiscated by the German and Frankish warriors. It was this aristocracy that was effectively dispossessed. It suffered as a result, so what did it do? Given that it no longer had its lands and that the Roman State no longer existed, there was only one refuge left; its only remaining shelter was the church. The Gaulish aristocracy therefore took refuge in the church. It not only developed the apparatus of the church; it also used the church to increase and expand its influence over the people by putting a whole system of beliefs into circulation. It was also the church that allowed it to improve its knowledge of Latin, and third, it was in the church that it studied Roman law, and that was an absolutist form of law. When the Frankish sovereigns had to rely on the support of the people in their struggle against the Germanic aristocracy and at the same time to found a State (or at least a monarchy) of the Roman type, what better allies could they hope to find than these men who had such influence over the people on the one hand, and who, because they spoke Latin, were so familiar with Roman law, on the other? The Gaulish aristocrats, the Gaulish nobility who had taken refuge in the church, quite naturally became the natural allies of the new monarchs once they began to establish their absolutism. And so the State, with its Latin, its Roman law, and its legal knowledge, became the great ally of the absolute monarchy.

So you see, Boulainvilliers ascribes great importance to what might be termed the language of knowledges, or the language-knowledge

system. He shows how the warrior aristocracy was completely bypassed by the alliance between the monarchy and the people, and that alliance was based on the State, Latin, and a knowledge of the law. Latin became the language of the State, the language of knowledge, and the language of the law. The nobility lost its power to the extent that it belonged to a different linguistic system. The nobility spoke Germanic languages and did not understand Latin. Which meant that when the new system of right was being established by ordinances in Latin, it did not even understand what was happening to it. And it understood so little—and it was so important that it did not understand—that the church on the one hand, and the king on the other, did all they could to ensure that the nobility remained in the dark. Boulainvilliers traces the whole history of how the nobility was educated by showing that the reason the church placed such emphasis on the afterlife, which it described as the sole reason for being in this world, was basically that it wanted to convince the well-educated that nothing that happened in this world was of any importance, and that their true destiny lay in the next world. And so it was that the Germans, who had been so eager to possess and to dominate, the great blond warriors who had been so attached to the present, were gradually transformed into archetypal knights and archetypal crusaders who took no interest in what was going on on their own lands and in their own country, and who found themselves dispossessed of their fortune and their power. The Crusades—those great pilgrimages into the beyond—were, in Boulainvilliers's view, an expression or manifestation of what happened when this nobility's attention was fully concentrated on the next world. What was happening in this world, or in other words, on their lands, while they were in Jerusalem? The king, the church, and the old Gaulish aristocracy were manipulating the Latin laws that would dispossess them of their lands and their rights.

Hence Boulainvilliers's call—for what? Essentially—and this runs throughout the whole of his work—he does not, like the *parlementaire* historiographers (and popular historiographers) of seventeenth-century England, call for a rebellion on the part of nobles who have

been dispossessed of their rights. What the nobility is being invited to do is, essentially, to open up its knowledge, to reopen its own memory, to become aware and to recuperate both expertise and knowledge. This is what Boulainvilliers is inviting the nobility to do in the first instance: "You will not regain power if you do not regain the status of the knowledges of which you have been dispossessed—or which, rather, you have never tried to possess. The fact is that you have always fought without realizing that there comes a point when the real battle, or at least the battle within society, is no longer fought with weapons, but with knowledge." Our ancestors, says Boulainvilliers, took a perverse pride in not knowing who they were. Their constant ability to forget who they were seems to have bordered on imbecility or bewitchment. Gaining a new self-awareness and tracing the sources of knowledge and memory means denouncing all the mystifications of history. If it reinserts itself into the web of knowledge, the nobility can become a force once more, and can establish itself as the subject of history. So if it wishes to become a historical force, that implies that it must, in the first instance, acquire a new self-awareness and reinsert itself into the order of knowledge.

Those are some of the themes I have identified in the voluminous works of Boulainvilliers, and they appear to me to introduce a type of analysis that will be of fundamental importance for all historico-political analyses from the seventeenth century until the present day. Why are these analyses important? First, because of the general primacy they accord to war. But I think that the really important thing about them, given that the primacy accorded to war by these analyses takes the form of the relationship of war, is the role Boulainvilliers gives to that relationship of war. Now I think that in order to use war as a general social analyzer in the way that he does, Boulainvilliers has to generalize war in three successive or superimposed ways. First, he generalizes it with respect to the foundations of right; second, he generalizes it with respect to the battle form; and third, he generalizes it with respect to the fact of the invasion and a second phenomenon that is the invasion's corollary: rebellion. I would like to look a little at these three generalizations.

First, generalization of war with respect to right and the foundations of right. In the earlier analyses of the French *parlementaires* of the seventeenth century and the English parliamentarians of the same period, war is a sort of disruptive episode that suspends and overturns right. War is the ferryman who makes it possible to move from one system of right to another. In Boulainvilliers, war does not play that role; war does not disrupt right. War in fact completely conceals right, and even natural right, to such an extent that right becomes unreal, abstract, and, in a sense, fictive. Boulainvilliers advances three arguments to prove that war has completely concealed right, to such an extent that right becomes no more than a useless abstraction. He argues this in three ways. He first speaks in the historical mode and says that you can study history as long as you like, and in any way that you like, but you will never discover any natural rights. Natural rights do not exist in any society, no matter what it may be. When historians think they find in Saxon or Celtic society a sort of little outcrop, a little island of natural right, they are completely mistaken. No matter where we look, we find only either war itself (beneath the French, we find the Frankish invasion; beneath the Gallo-Romans, we find the Roman invasion) or the inequalities that result from wars and violence. The Gauls, for example, were divided into aristocrats and nonaristocrats. We also find an aristocracy and a people among the Medes and the Persians. Which obviously goes to prove that behind that division there were struggles, violence, and wars. And whenever we see the differences between the aristocracy and the people diminishing, we can be sure that the State is about to sink into decadence. Once their aristocracies became decadent, Greece and Rome lost their status and even ceased to exist as States. Inequality is everywhere, violence creates inequalities everywhere, and wars are everywhere. No society can last without this sort of warlike tension between an aristocracy and the popular masses.

This same idea is now applied at the theoretical level. Boulainvilliers says: It is of course conceivable that a sort of primitive freedom did exist before there was any domination, any power, any war, or any servitude, but such freedom is conceivable only if there is no

relationship of domination between any of the individuals concerned. A freedom in which everyone, in which every individual is the equal of every other individual, this freedom-equality combination can, in reality, only be something that has no force and no content. Because . . . what is freedom? Freedom obviously does not consist in being prevented from trampling on someone else's freedom, because at that point it ceases to be freedom. The first criterion that defines freedom is the ability to deprive others of their freedom. What would be the point of being free and what, in concrete terms, would it mean, if one could not trample on the freedom of others? That is the primary expression of freedom. According to Boulainvilliers, freedom is the direct opposite of equality. It is something that is enjoyed thanks to difference, domination, and war, thanks to a whole system of relations of force. A freedom that cannot be translated into a nonegalitarian relationship of force can only be a freedom that it is weak, impotent, and abstract.

This idea is now applied in both historical and theoretical terms. Boulainvilliers says (and once again, I am being very schematic): Let us accept the fact that natural right did actually exist at some point, that at the founding moment of history there did exist a right that made people both free and equal. The weakness of this freedom is such that, precisely because it is an abstract, fictive freedom with no real content, it will inevitably be defeated by the historical force of a freedom that functions as nonequality. And while it is true that something resembling this natural freedom, this egalitarian freedom or this natural right, did exist somewhere or at some point, it was powerless to resist the law of history, which states that freedom is strong, vigorous, and meaningful only when it is the freedom of the few and when it exists at the expense of others, only when a society can guarantee an essential nonequality.

The egalitarian law of nature is weaker than the nonegalitarian law of history. It is therefore natural that the egalitarian law of nature should have given way—on a permanent basis—to the nonegalitarian law of history. It was because it was primal that natural right was not, as the jurists claim, foundational; it was foreclosed by the greater

vigor of history. The law of history is always stronger than the law of nature. This is what Boulainvilliers is arguing when he says that history finally created a natural law that made freedom and equality antithetical, and that this natural law is stronger than the law inscribed in what is known as natural right. The fact that history is stronger than nature explains, ultimately, why history has completely concealed nature. When history begins, nature can no longer speak, because in the war between history and nature, history always has the upper hand. There is a relationship of force between nature and history, and it is definitely in history's favor. So natural right does not exist, or exists only insofar as it has been defeated: it is always history's great loser, it is "the other" (like the Gauls who lost to the Romans, like the Gallo-Romans who lost to the Germans). History is, if you like, Germanity, as opposed to nature. So, a first generalization: Rather than disturbing or interrupting it, war conceals history completely.

Second generalization of war with respect to the battle form: According to Boulainvilliers, it is true that conquests, invasions, and the battles that are lost and won do establish a relationship of force; but the relationship of force that finds its expression in the battle was, basically, already established, and it was established by something other than earlier battles. So what is it that establishes the relationship of force and ensures that one nation will win the battle and that the other will lose it? Well, it is the nature and organization of military institutions; it is the army; it is military institutions. These are important because, on the one hand, they obviously make it possible to win victories, but also because, on the other hand, they also make it possible to articulate society as a whole. According to Boulainvilliers, the important thing, the thing that makes war both the starting point for an analysis of society and the deciding factor in social organization, is the problem of military organization or, quite simply, this: Who has the weapons? The organization of the Germans was essentially based upon the fact that some—the *leudes*—had weapons and that others did not. The characteristic feature of the regime of Frankish Gaul was that it took the precaution of taking the Gauls'

weapons from them and reserving them for the Germans (who, because they were men-at-arms, had to be supported by the Gauls). Things began to change for the worse when the laws governing the social distribution of weapons become confused, when the Romans began to employ mercenaries, when the Frankish kings organized militias, and when Philip Augustus began to use foreign knights, and so on. From this point onward, the simple organization that allowed the Germans, and only the Germans, or the warrior aristocracy to own weapons, collapsed in confusion.

The problem of who has the weapons is of course bound up with certain technical problems, and it is in that sense that it can provide the starting point for a general analysis of society. Knights, for example, are synonymous with lances and heavy armor but also with a numerically small army of rich men. "Archer," in contrast, is synonymous with light armor and a large army. As we can see, this points to a whole series of economic and institutional problems. If there is an army of knights, a heavy and numerically small army of knights, the powers of the king are obviously limited, as a king cannot afford such an expensive army of knights. The knights themselves will be obliged to pay for their own upkeep. An army of foot soldiers, in contrast, is a numerically large army, and a king can afford such an army. Hence the growth of royal power, but hence too the increase in taxation. So you see, this time it is not because it takes the form of an invasion that war leaves its mark on the social body; it is because, through the intermediary of military institutions, it has general effects on the civil order as a whole. It is therefore no longer the simple duality between invaders and invaded or victors and vanquished, the memory of the Battle of Hastings or of the Frankish invasion, that serves as social analyzer. It is no longer the simple binary mechanism that puts the seal of war on the entire social body; it is a war that begins before the battle and continues after it is over. It is war insofar as it is a way of waging war, a way of preparing for and organizing war. War in the sense of the distribution of weapons, the nature of the weapons, fighting techniques, the recruitment and payment of soldiers, the taxes earmarked for the army; war as an

internal institution, and not the raw event of a battle. This is the operator in Boulainvilliers's analyses. He succeeds in writing the history of France because he constantly traces the connecting thread that, behind the battle and behind the invasion, brings into being the military institution and, going beyond the military institution, all the country's institutions and its whole economy. War is a general economy of weapons, an economy of armed people and disarmed people within a given State, and with all the institutional and economic series that derive from that. It is this formidable generalization of war, as opposed to what it still meant for the historians of the seventeenth century, that gives Boulainvilliers the important dimension I am trying to show you.

The third and final generalization of war that we find in Boulainvilliers's analysis is made not with respect to the fact of the battle but with respect to the invasion-rebellion system. Invasion and rebellion were the two main elements that were introduced to rediscover the war that goes on within societies (in, for example, the English historiography of the seventeenth century). Boulainvilliers's problem is not then simply to discover when the invasion took place, or what the effects of the invasion were; nor does it simply consist in showing whether there was or was not a rebellion. What he wants to show is how a certain relationship of force, which had been revealed by the battle and the invasion, was gradually, and for obscure reasons, inverted. The problem of the English historiographers was that they had to look everywhere, at all institutions, so as to find out where the strong (the Normans) were, and where the weak (the Saxons) were. Boulainvilliers's problem is to discover how the strong became weak, and how the weak became strong. The greater part of his analysis is devoted to the problem of the transition from strength to weakness, and from weakness to strength.

Boulainvilliers begins to analyze and describe this change by looking at what might be called the determination of the internal mechanisms of the inversion, and examples are easily found. What was it that actually made the Frankish aristocracy so strong at the beginning of what was soon to become known as the Middle Ages? It was the

fact that, having invaded and occupied Gaul, the Franks themselves directly appropriated the land. They were therefore landowners in their own right, and they were therefore in receipt of taxes in kind that ensured both that the peasant population remained quiet and that the knights remained strong. And it was precisely this, or in other words, the source of their strength, that gradually became the principle of their weakness. Because the nobles lived on their separate estates, and because the tax system financed their ability to make war, they became separated from the king they had created, and were preoccupied only with war and with fighting among themselves. As a result, they neglected everything that had to do with education, instruction, learning Latin, and acquiring expertise. All these things would lead to their loss of power.

If, conversely, you take the example of the Gaulish aristocracy, it could not have been weaker than it was at the beginning of the Frankish invasion: every Gaulish landowner had been dispossessed of everything. And, in historical terms, their very weakness became the source of their strength, thanks to an inevitable development. The fact that they had been driven off their land and into the arms of the church gave them influence over the people, but also an understanding of right. And that gradually put them in a position to grow closer to the king, to become advisers to the king, and therefore to get their hands on a political power and an economic wealth that had previously eluded them. The form and the elements that constituted the weakness of the Gaulish aristocracy were also, from a certain point onward, the very things that allowed it to reverse the situation.

The problem Boulainvilliers is analyzing is therefore not who won and who lost, but who became strong and who became weak. Why did the strong become weak, and why did the weak become strong? History, in other words, now looks essentially like a calculation of forces. Insofar as a description of the mechanisms of relations of force is required, what will be the inevitable outcome of this analysis? The conclusion that the simple dichotomy between victors and vanquished is no longer strictly pertinent to the description of this whole process. Once the strong become weak and the weak become strong, there will

be new oppositions, new divisions, and a new distribution of forces: the weak will form alliances among themselves, and the strong will try to form alliances with some and against others. What was still, at the time of the invasion, a sort of pitched battle in which armies fought armies—Franks against Gauls, and Normans against Saxons—these great national masses will be divided and transformed by multiple channels. And we will see the emergence of a diversity of struggles, shifting front lines, conjunctural alliances, and more or less permanent groupings: monarchical power will form an alliance with the old Gaulish nobility, and they will have the support of the people; the tacit understanding that existed between the Frankish warriors and the peasants will break down when the impoverished Frankish warriors increase their demands and demand higher taxes; and so on. Until the seventeenth century, historians had basically taken the great confrontation of the invasion as their model; this little system of support networks, alliances, and internal conflicts will now, so to speak, develop into a form of generalized warfare.

Until the seventeenth century, a war was essentially a war between one mass and another mass. For his part, Boulainvilliers makes the relationship of war part of every social relationship, subdivides it into thousands of different channels, and reveals war to be a sort of permanent state that exists between groups, fronts, and tactical units as they in some sense civilize one another, come into conflict with one another, or on the contrary, form alliances. There are no more multiple and stable great masses, but there is a multiple war. In one sense, it is a war of every man against every man, but it is obviously not a war of every man against every man in the abstract and—I think—unreal sense in which Hobbes spoke of the war of every man against every man when he tried to demonstrate that it is not the war of every man against every man that is at work in the social body. With Boulainvilliers, in contrast, we have a generalized war that permeates the entire social body and the entire history of the social body; it is obviously not the sort of war in which individuals fight individuals, but one in which groups fight groups. And it is, I

think, this generalization of war that is characteristic of Boulainvilliers's thought.

I would like to end by saying this. What does this threefold generalization of war lead to? It leads to this. It is thanks to this that Boulainvilliers reaches a point that the historians of right [ . . . ]\* For those historians who identified history with public right, with the State, war was therefore essentially a disruption of right, an enigma, a sort of dark mass or raw event that had to be accepted as such, and not, certainly not, a principle of intelligibility. There was no question of that; on the contrary, it was a disruptive principle. Here, in contrast, war turns the very disruption of right into a grid of intelligibility, and makes it possible to determine the force relationship that always underpins a certain relationship of right. Boulainvilliers can thus integrate events such as wars, invasions, and change—which were once seen simply as naked acts of violence—into a whole layer of contents and prophecies that covered society in its entirety (because, as we have seen, they affect right, the economy, taxation, religion, beliefs, education, the study of languages, and juridical institutions). A history that takes as its starting point the fact of war itself and makes its analysis in terms of war can relate all these things—war, religion, politics, manners, and characters—and can therefore act as a principle that allows us to understand history. According to Boulainvilliers, it is war that makes society intelligible, and I think that the same can be said of all historical discourse. When I speak of a grid of intelligibility, I am obviously not saying that what Boulainvilliers said is true. One could probably even demonstrate that everything he said was false. I am simply saying that it could be demonstrated. What was said in the seventeenth century about the Trojan origins of the

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\*The recording breaks down at this point. The manuscript explicitly states: "In one sense, it is analogous to the juridical problem: How does sovereignty come into being? But this time, the historical narrative is not being used to illustrate the continuity of a sovereignty that is legitimate because it remains within the element of right from beginning to end. It is being used to explain how the specific institution, or the modern historical figure, of the absolute state was born of intersecting relations of force that became a sort of generalized war among nations."

Franks, or about how they emigrated and left France under the leadership of a certain Sigovève at some point and then returned, cannot be said to have anything to do with our regime of truth and error. In our terms, it is neither true nor false. The grid of intelligibility established by Boulainvilliers, in contrast, does, I think, establish a certain regime, a certain division between truth and error, that can be applied to Boulainvilliers's own discourse and that can say that his discourse is wrong—wrong as a whole and wrong about the details. Even that it is all wrong, if you like. The fact remains that it is this grid of intelligibility that has been established for our historical discourse.

The other thing I would like to stress is that by making the force relationship intervene as a sort of war that is constantly going on within society, Boulainvilliers was able to recuperate—this time in historical terms—the whole kind of analysis that we find in Machiavelli. But for Machiavelli, the relationship of force was essentially described as a political technique that had to be put in the hands of the sovereign. The relationship of force now becomes a historical object that someone other than the sovereign—something like a nation (like the aristocracy or, at a later stage, the bourgeoisie)—can locate and determine within its own history. The relationship of force, which was once an essentially political object, becomes a historical object, or rather a historico-political object, because it is by analyzing this relationship of force that the nobility, for example, can acquire a new self-awareness, recover its knowledge, and once more become a political force within the field of political forces. When, in a discourse such as Boulainvilliers's, this relationship of force (which was in a sense the exclusive object of the Prince's preoccupations) became an object of knowledge for a group, a nation, a minority, or a class, it became possible to constitute a historico-political field, and to make history function within the political struggle. This is how the organization of a historico-political field begins. At this point, it all comes together: History functions within politics, and politics is used to calculate historical relations of force.

One further remark. As you can see, this is the origin of the idea

that war is basically historical discourse's truth-matrix. "Historical discourse's truth-matrix" means this: What philosophy or right would have us believe notwithstanding, truth does not begin, or truth and the Logos do not begin, when violence ceases. On the contrary, it began when the nobility started to wage its political war against both the Third Estate and the monarchy, and it was in this war and by thinking of history in terms of war that something resembling what we now know as historical discourse could establish itself.

Penultimate remark: You are familiar with the cliché that says that classes in the ascendancy are the bearers of universal values and the power of rationality. An awful lot of effort has gone into trying to demonstrate that it was the bourgeoisie that invented history, because history is—as everyone knows—rational and because the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, being a rising class, brought with it both universality and rationality. Well, I think that if we look at things a little more closely, we have an example of a class that, precisely because it was decadent and had been dispossessed of its political and economic power, was able to establish a certain historical rationality that was then taken up by the bourgeoisie and then the proletariat. But I would not say that it was because it was decadent that the French aristocracy invented history. It was precisely because it was waging a war that it was able to take war as an object, war being at once the starting point for the discourse, the condition of possibility for the emergence of a historical discourse, a frame of reference, and the object of that discourse. War was both this discourse's starting point and what it was talking about.

One last remark, finally. The reason Clausewitz could say one day, a hundred years after Boulainvilliers and, therefore, two hundred years after the English historians, that war was the continuation of politics by other means is that, in the seventeenth century, or at the beginning of the eighteenth, someone was able to analyze politics, talk about politics, and demonstrate that politics is the continuation of war by other means.

1. See the lectures of 28 January and 11 February above.
2. "Collective word used to designate a considerable quantity of people inhabiting a certain expanse of territory, contained within certain limits, and obedient to the same government." "Nation" in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Lucques, 1758), vol. 11, pp. 29-30.
3. E.-J. Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?* On Sieyès, see the lecture of 10 March below.
4. On Augustin Thierry, see the lecture of 10 March below.
5. On François Guizot, see the lecture of 10 March below.
6. Joachim, comte d'Estaing, *Dissertation sur la noblesse d'extraction*.
7. On Buat-Nançay, see the lecture of 10 March below.
8. On Montlosier, see the lecture of 10 March below.
9. The analysis of Boulainvilliers's historical work undertaken by Foucault in this lecture (and the next) is based upon the texts already mentioned in notes 21-22 to the lecture of 11 February and, more specifically, on *Mémoires de l'histoire du gouvernement de la France*, in *Etat de la France . . . ; Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France . . . ; Dissertation sur la noblesse française servant de Préface aux Mémoires de la maison de Croi et de Boulainvilliers*, in A. Devyer, *Le Sang épuré . . . ; Mémoires présentés à Mgr le duc d'Orléans . . .*
10. This literature begins with Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, written 1513-1517 (Florence, 1531); continues with Bossuet, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (Paris, 1681), E. W. Montagu, *Reflections on the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republics* (London, 1759), and A. Ferguson, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (London, 1783); and ends with Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (London, 1776-1778).
11. Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (Amsterdam, 1734).
12. N. Freret, *De l'origine des Français et de leur établissement dans la Gaule*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1796-1799), vol. 5, an VII, p. 202.
13. Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: eine Streitschrift* (Leipzig, 1887), Erste Abhandlung: "Gut und Böse," "Gut und Schlecht," 11; Zweite Abhandlung: "Schuld," "Schlechtes Gewissen und Verwandtes," 16, 17, 18. See also *Morgenröte: Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile* (Chemnitz, 1881), Zweite Buch 112. (French translations: *Genealogie de la morale. Un écrit polémique* [Paris: Gallimard, 1971] and *Aurore. Pensées sur les préjugés moraux* [Paris: Gallimard, 1970]; English translations by Francis Golffing, *The Genealogy of Morals*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals* [New York: Doubleday, 1956], and by R. J. Hollingdale, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982]). Cf. the quotation from Boulainvilliers in Devyer, *Le Sang épuré . . .*, p. 508: "they were great lovers of freedom, bold, fickle, unfaithful, avid for gain, restless and impatient: this is how the ancient authors describe them."
14. The reference is to the defeat of the Roman Sygarius and the capture of Soissons in 486.

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25 FEBRUARY 1976

*Boulainvilliers and the constitution of a historico-political continuum. - Historicism. - Tragedy and public right. - The central administration of history. - The problematic of the Enlightenment and the genealogy of knowledges. - The four operations of disciplinary knowledge and their effects. - Philosophy and science. - Disciplining knowledges.*

WHEN I TALKED TO you about Boulainvilliers, I was certainly not trying to prove to you that something resembling history began with him, because, after all, there is no reason to say that history began with Boulainvilliers rather than with, for example, the sixteenth-century jurists who collated the monuments of public right, with the *parlementaires* who, throughout the seventeenth century, searched the archives and jurisprudence of the State to discover what the basic laws of the kingdom might be, or with the Benedictines, who had been great collectors of charters even since the late sixteenth century. What was in fact established by Boulainvilliers in the early eighteenth century was—I think—a historico-political field. In what sense? First, in this sense: By taking the nation, or rather nations, as his object, Boulainvilliers was able to dig beneath institutions, events, kings and their power, and to analyze something else, namely those societies, as they were called at the time, that were bound together by interests, customs, and laws. By taking them as his object, he changed two things. On the one hand, he began to write (and I think it was the