

## The Dawn of Idiocy: Nineteenth Century Tropes and Topologies of Intelligence.

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How might *our* intelligence *itself*, --be understood? In order for intelligence to *be* known, must it not maintain the grasp of a *knowledge* that can exist *within* the interior *of* thought and on the exterior of consciousness? As an identifiable or quantifiable human attribute, must it not continually escape thought to recapture *knowledge*, --a knowledge that can only recognize *itself* in proximity to thought, with a conception that could only be preconceived, and a meaning that must serve the purpose of meaning? A *knowledge* that can only (yet can never) inscribe its own meaning or have given birth to *itself*.

The contemporary scientific discourse *of* intelligence depicts a *self*-acknowledgement or recognition of *itself* (discovery), continually speaking --*of*-itself, --*about*-itself, --in the language of association, metonymy, interpretation, and description (mimesis). It is a discourse that wanders to-and-fro between the individual and the universal, the temporal and the corporeal, --between domains of experience and those of a *presupposed logoi*. It must wander in this manner to avoid silence, and must continually recognize its own speech to avoid death. For, in the discourse of the human sciences, intelligence transcends its speaking subject to stand as proxy of its linguistic-structure (both origin and *telos*; regardless of a language-of-thought or thought-expressed-in-language); so that its articulation discloses *itself*, marks-out its domain, establishes its boundaries, and *signifies* its 'presence' beyond *its* subject. In this manner, the human sciences (at least attempt to) contain intelligence within its own 'metalogue'. Is it not, *seemingly* ironic, yet necessary for science to ask: where did intelligence come from. It is *seemingly* ironic, for the 'essence' of the question, "...is assimilated by analogy to those areas of experience felt to be *already* understood as to *their* essential natures."<sup>1</sup> Yet, the question is necessary for assimilation, or a "right of closure...used to link up the conclusion of the discourse with its inaugurating gestures."<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, a 'familiarity' with intelligence (at least historically) did not occur as a revelation or as an epiphenomenon (if it occurred at all). Rather, the making of a science of intelligence (or *the* nature of its development), occurred over the course of the nineteenth century. The human sciences did not locate intelligence in the metaphysical potential of the mind, but rather partitioned-it-out, located its diversions, deviations, and afflictions. It was in the symptoms-*of*, or pathologies

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<sup>1</sup> Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse : Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). p 5. It should be noted, that Hayden White, and his work on tropics, and discourse in the human sciences have shaped much of the introduction, --my thought here. White also uses and further develops the terms 'metalogue' and 'familiarity'. I should also mention Michel Foucault's analysis of discourse, and the work of Jacques Derrida, specifically: Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> White. p. 5.

of the mind, --those that arrest thought, and betray the stubborn evasive seclusion of intellectual disorder. The rhetorical dimensions of intellectual abnormality<sup>3</sup> reveal *the* 'idiot' as an initial archetype for the discourse of intelligence formed over the nineteenth century. Tracing the significance and etymology of the word intelligence as it transcended from a philosophic or epistemological-orientation, to form its contemporary position in the realm of the biological and human sciences, leads to the 'dawn of idiocy'. The examination of these tropes, or figurative modes of discourse employed by the human sciences, reveal the modalities by which intelligence was constituted as opposed to signified or discovered.<sup>4</sup> These pieces language and their linguistic connections and interactions formed the move from *one* meaning, toward a meaning felt to be proper, [true], or 'real'. Idiocy would provide the human sciences' an antithesis between intellectual abnormality and intelligence *par excellence*. A relation of binary opposition, --a linking and separation of the two in circular logic, where idiocy explains intelligence and intelligence explains idiocy.

With rhetoric of humanistic concern, positivist inquiry, and historically developed notions of 'discovery' or scientific advancement the interplay, or perhaps interdependence of [intellectual-abnormality] and intelligence thrived and re/produced conceptions into vastly increasing realms of inquiry and social/political arrangement. In spatialization of mentalities, the rhetoric, myth, and discourse of 'intellectual-abnormality', inscribed the contextual shift of intelligence from epistemological-axiom to scientifico-political schema.

At this point *we* might [move aside], intelligence for a moment and consider dimensions it occupied, or those to which it was extended. First, to characterize it in another way, we might considered it as a schemata, or use the term intelligence-schemata<sup>5</sup>. The term 'intelligence-schemata' is useful, because the modes and technologies it produced did not remain autonomous and unique unto themselves, --nor was it a conception derived from a cohesive 'structure'. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, it enveloped systems of classification, measurement, and distribution of bodies (individual, social, or otherwise) in relation/nonrelation. To form a 'body of knowledge'<sup>6</sup> intelligence

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term "intellectual abnormality" in general sense to incorporate the terminology (the many terms) of the human sciences' characterization of dysfunctional, deficient, & abnormal intellect; "idiocy", for example, had up-to 12 subsets of classification depending on the scientist, and was eventually divided into several categories including feeble-minded, moron/moronic, imbecile & moral imbecile, and many others, --used in various areas, --by various psychiatrists.

<sup>4</sup> Again, I am drawing from Hayden White's description of tropics in the human sciences as, "...the process by which all discourse *constitutes* the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyze objectively." From: White. p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> The term '*intelligence schemata*' attempts to convey a consideration of intelligence as a network of many schemas; the structures, frames, units, or scripts into which all knowledge is packed and organized. *Intelligence schemata*, have been used through the course of the nineteenth century and twentieth century.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault uses the term 'body of knowledge' and explored the interplay of knowledge, power, and the 'body' in several of his works. For more on a "political investment of the body"

was not simply a corpus of information or understanding; but rather, a ‘body’ through which knowledge functions, --a ‘body’ in which knowledge is invested, and in turn re/produces knowledge.

While *the* dimensions of intelligence are far too expansive to cover in this paper it is important to consider (however briefly) the social impact. It is worth noting, because the science of intelligence, in narration (diegesis) or discourse, conceals its association to these ‘events’, ‘errors’, and manifestations. Additionally, it is important to avoid the risk of reducing the examination scientific intelligence to a series of social processes and conditions.

If earlier epochs had seen departures from social-norms and the bases of social-privilege imbued with a semi-religious significance, the period of industrialization would see the establishment of a social body distributed along a continuum of scientific norms. The ‘intelligence schemata’ as *normalizing technology*<sup>7</sup>, infused the struggles of class and race throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. By the early twentieth century the intelligence-schemata, and its discourse permeated public schools, immigration policy, scientific racism, and eugenics. It would function in the fertile discourse of racist scientists and biologist throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and would span from colonial domination to the Nuremberg Laws. While its function in re/structuring of the social fabric is difficult to assess, we might consider that its social and political influence is comparable to changes that in earlier epochs were brought about only through deployment of overt violence.

Yet the tropes *of* intelligence (idiocy, imbecility, feeble-mindedness) enjoyed categorical privilege reproducing the antithesis, or self-referential relation, as the scientific fixation upon intellect and the ‘possibilities’ of mental measurement re/produced a menagerie of discursive arrangement, which gave intelligence a positivist orientation, and notions of a linear style progression, ---a progression of discovery where the methods, apparatuses, and technology of science would continually reveal (or uncover) its [true] nature or essence, --only to the betterment of humankind.

The aim of this paper is not to rediscover, or produce a discourse of intelligence, but rather to expose the re/production of intelligence. While an exploration of

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see the first chapter “The Body of the Condemned” in: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). p. 3-30

<sup>7</sup> For more on Foucault and “normalizing technologies” see: Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Examples of “normalizing technologies” in Foucault’s work include the Panopticon and confessional. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow explain normalizing technologies this way, “a major difference between the operation of normal science and that of normalizing technologies; whereas normal science aims in principle at the final assimilation of all anomalies, disciplinary technology works to set up and preserve an increasingly differentiated set of anomalies, which is the very way it extends its knowledge and power into wider and wider domains.”<sup>20</sup>

intelligence-schemata, in its various forms and operations, is far beyond the confines of this paper, there is a consideration of the discursive formation and the social/spatial organization that underlay the development and deployment of intelligence as an apparatus used in the objectification of thought and the subjectification<sup>8</sup> of human beings. Attempting to ‘expose’ intelligence in this capacity incorporates a focus, which is twofold, and interrelated. First, is to consider the initial tropes of the intelligence as they involve a relation to the formation of intelligence-schemata. This requires a consideration of intelligence as a system of thought contingent upon various unrelated causes, as opposed to any universal or teleological paradigm, and in addition, to explore intelligence as something other than a scientific advancement or discovery illuminating the nature of mind. Second, is a consideration of spatialization, or topologies of intelligence, as a mapping of the social/spatial domains through which the theoretical components of intellectual abnormality were manifested and structured. Again, the transition in conceptual and spatial relations of intelligence is complex, cannot be described as fluid and linear, and is beyond what can be accomplished here. However, this paper will attempt to sketch-out topologies of intelligence, or attempt to follow the threads of discourse as they permeated the public sphere and were employed in the development of a ‘body of knowledge’ used to divide, classify, and arrange socially and spatially individuals in realms of perceived intellectual function.

### **Genesis & Aporia**

“From this perfect primitive man all of us were supposed to be descended. We were in fact faithful copies of him; only we had to cast off some few things in order to recognize ourselves once more as this primitive man, on the strength of a voluntary reunification of superfluous learnedness, of superabundant culture.” –Friedrich Nietzsche (*The Birth of Tragedy*)<sup>9</sup>

Idiocy became a form of scientific classification around the mid-nineteenth century. However, the birth of scientific idiocy is conceptually marked, or might be located in myths made famous in the history of psychiatry. These myths are used to convey a scientific enlightenment. Yet they occur at a time when psychiatry and psychology were vying for legitimacy and scientific status. While

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Rabinow draws the characterization of ‘subjectification’ analyzing Foucault’s work, specifically the modes by which human beings are turned into objectified subjects. Rabinow interprets ‘subjectification’ as more of a ‘self-formation’ (as opposed to identity formation, or a false consciousness) in which the individual is active. According to Foucault it consists of a long intricate series of, “operations on [people’s] own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct.” According to Rabinow, there is always a component of external authority involved in this process of self-understanding and self-formation. For more information see: Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

it's hard to say, exactly what the relationship of these events are, to the development of either 'idiocy' or intelligence, the 'events' are used to mark a shift in social organization, and a shift in the formalized conception of *the* 'social-body' itself.

The first event has been celebrated as "the great liberation", a monumental moment in the history of the human sciences. Psychiatric history refers to this as the moment when Philippe Pinel, Physician in Chief to the Insane at Bicetre, walked in to the Houses of Confinement to liberate the insane. Michel Foucault, however, has referred to this event as 'the great division'.<sup>10</sup> Foucault notes in *'Madness and Civilization'* the reforms in the treatment of the insane at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Prior to this time criminals, the poor, and the insane were treated the same way; they were handled as animals, exhibited for profit and amusement, and physically confined. Foucault notes, during the time of Pinel's reform those confined in the 'hospitals', the insane, criminals, and the poor were differentiated. Foucault, however, suggests this change had little to do with any theoretical advancement about the 'true' nature of mental illness. Rather the changes corresponded to industrialization and the need for an expanded labor force. For the poor, liberation was marked by a move from the houses of confinement to the oppressive "discipline" of the factories and laws of supply and demand labor. The differentiation of the insane and criminals related to a primarily political rather than scientific consideration. The distinction and category of 'criminal' corresponded to bourgeoisie fear of the "revolutionary" subversive element of society.<sup>12</sup> This event is note worthy because it relates to the division made between idiots and the insane at the end of the eighteenth century. Prior to this time, idiocy had maintained by a loosely framed connection to folly.

The second 'event', which might be the conceptual marker for the dawn of idiocy, or the beginning of a 'scientific treatment' of idiocy is reported by Edward Séguin and most historical accounts of psychology, is the work of Itard and the case of *'Sauvage de l'Aveyron'* (translated as *'The Wild Boy of Aveyron'*). Itard regarded him as a child who had been raised in the wild, completely out of contact with 'civilization'. He was reported to have been captured by a group of hunters, and to have escaped. Eventually he was recaptured, and briefly put on display. For a short time he drew large crowd and public fascination in France. Itard and other scholars were eager to bring *'Sauvage de l'Aveyron'* to Paris.

Itard noted eleven recorded cases of "savages" or individuals believed raised in the wild by animals. If "savages" or those whom they believed had faculties lain

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<sup>10</sup> 'The New Division' appears as a chapter in: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization; a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965). p. 221-240.

<sup>11</sup> For more information see: Paul Rabinow. *The Foucault Reader*. (New York: Pantheon Books. 1984), 141-166; and/or Michel Foucault. *Madness and Civilization: A history of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. R. Howard. (New York: 1965) the chapter titled "The Birth of the Asylum."

<sup>12</sup> This summary is very similar to the one provided in 'Tropics of Discourse', in the section titled: Foucault Decoded. For more information see: White. p. 247-248.

dormant under the cover of animal instinct and habit could be educated this phenomenon would furnish new notions on the nature of the human mind and the development of ‘primitive faculties’. To solve this ‘metaphysical problem’ Itard undertook the project of educating the “Savage of Aveyron.” Education of the ‘savage’ it was believed, “would evidence the natural springs of the human mind.”

For this education, Itard attempted to utilize Condillac and Locke’s empirically based notion of the human mind as *tabula rasa* (blank slate), or the *idea* that individuals accumulate knowledge through experience, and the idea that human beings accumulate knowledge to makes sense of an external world. This view presents intellect in a structured process-oriented paradigm where data from the world is collected and localized. Edward Séguin would write, “The celebrated Itard undertook to teach him, and it was expected that he would prove that all our ideas are derived from the senses and that our mental faculties are only sensations transformed.”<sup>13</sup>

Scientific *idiocy* was brought to the US from France, promoted most notably by Edward Séguin, who immigrated to the US in 1848. Séguin had spent several years in France working with Itard and Esquirol. It was during this time that he would form the ideas he would bring and spread throughout the US.<sup>14</sup> While Séguin and most contemporary recollections connect the work of Itard and the case of *Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’ as the first scientific treatment of idiocy it was only through an aporia, or Itard’s feigned expression of doubt as to the ‘origin’ of ‘*Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’, or the maladies afflicting his ‘education’. It was through an aporetic description or expression of his distance from ‘civilization’, --a point at which Itard could not capture in language the [true] nature of ‘*Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’. Itard would state, “Here is a subnormal boy who has lacked civilizing experience. If I give him this experience he will become normal.”<sup>15</sup> When Itard was less than successful in normalizing ‘*Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’ he was declared idiotic. For Séguin and those who would follow in this path, the scientific treatment of idiocy and the capture of ‘*Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’ were of the same event.

The move to associate the transformation and development of idiocy, with its conceptual relation to intelligence, from the tropes ‘sauvage’ or ‘wildness’ presents a significant consideration. These tropes had been utilized since biblical times, and retained unique character through various epochs. Until the end of the eighteenth century, ‘wildness’ had endured a significant history and conceptual position. To quote Hayden White,

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<sup>13</sup> M F D, "Idiocy in Massachusetts," *The Southern Literary Messenger; Devoted to Every Department of Literature, and the Fine Arts (1848-1864)* 15, no. 6. p. 367.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Séguin, *Idiocy: And Its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1971). p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Marc-Gaspard, Itard. *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*. Trans. George & Muriel Humphrey, with an introduction by George Humphrey. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962. p. viii. of the introduction.

The notion of 'Wildness' (or in its Latinate form, "savagery") belongs to a set of culturally self-authenticating devices which includes, among many others, the ideas of "madness" and "heresy" as well. These terms are used not merely to designate a specific condition or state of being but also to confirm the value of their dialectical antitheses "civilization", "sanity", and "orthodoxy", respectively. Thus, they do not so much refer to a specific thing, place, or condition as dictate a particular attitude governing a relationship between a lived reality and some area of problematical existence that cannot be accommodated easily to conventional conceptions of the normal or familiar."<sup>16</sup>

Idiocy's development, with an *a priori* stipulation, or claim to civilization, was framed as a consciousness, a mental space to which science would lay claim, and establish the boundaries of thought. Idiocy would come to function in the re/structuring of the social sphere through the formation of mental space. Scientific classification and 'treatment' of idiocy, not only drew from, but re/produced prevailing ideological conceptions of the nature of humankind. Again, Hayden White points to the interplay of language, experience, and normality,

"...societies feel the need to fill areas of consciousness not yet colonized by scientific knowledge with conceptual designators affirmative of their own existentially contrived values and norms. No cultural endowment is totally adequate to the solution of all the problems with which it might be faced; yet the vitality of any culture hinges upon its power to convince the majority of its devotees that it is the sole possible way to satisfy their needs and to realize their aspirations. A given culture is only as strong as its power to convince its least dedicated member that its fictions are truths."<sup>17</sup>

The notions of 'wildness' would no longer function the way they did in the eighteenth century. When terms like idiocy and the tropes of intelligence and reason replaced 'wildness', it would transcend from a *state of being* to a potentiality "lurking in the heart of every individual, whether primitive or civilized, as his possible incapacity to come to terms with his socially provided world."<sup>18</sup> For Itard, and his predecessors education would take on the

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<sup>16</sup> Hayden White. (1985) p. 151. According to Hayden White the concept of Wildness appears in Hebrew, Greek, and Christen thought, and in *premodern* and myths.

<sup>17</sup> Hayden White. (1985) p. 153

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p. 179.

responsibility for this domestication, or the inversion of animal instinct to the sensibilities of the ‘civilized’. Reflecting on the institutional development of idiocy, Edward Séguin in 1866 stated, “I ventured, therefore, to declare with an emphasis embraced somewhat, perhaps, by a lurking distrust of the prediction that the time would come when access would be found to the idiotic brain; the light of intelligence admitted into its dark chambers, and the whole race be benefited by some new discovery on the nature of mind.”<sup>19</sup>

Yet, beyond the ‘promise’ of science, humankind would fluctuate in relation to a ‘natural state’, as science would not simply distance the ‘animal world’ but identify a need for reconfiguration of *the* natural. Hayden White notes that, “The unmasking of such myths as the Wild Man has not always been followed by the banishment of their component concepts, but rather by their interiorization.”<sup>20</sup> It would be a little more than fifty years between when Itard attempted to reunite a *Wild Man (homo ferus)* as a distinct human species with ‘civilization’, until a ‘natural selection’ would redistribute him. Perhaps, Itard did not lead ‘*Sauvage de l’Aveyron*’ from wild, but rather redirected a ‘species’ to a non-teleological mental status. As Nietzsche would write, “We wished to awaken the feeling of man’s sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance.”<sup>21</sup>

## Geographies of Thought

**Idiocy** It incapacitates mostly the functions which give rise to the reflex, instinctive, and conscious phenomena of life; consequently, the idiot moves, feels, understands, wills, but *imperfectly*.... (Edward Séguin 1866)<sup>22</sup>

Idiocy was (at least) presented as an *a priori* mode of epistemic justification for which contemporary institutional notions of ‘intellect’ and the more formalized science of intelligence were based. A verifiable continuum of intellectual function was not established in the metaphysical potential of the mind, but rather built upon a foundation of a science rooted in the abnormal. It took the nineteenth century to complete this transformation, and required the deployment and continual reinforcement of abnormality discourse to permeate the public sphere.

Again, what can be regarded as a conceptual marker for the ‘dawn of idiocy’, occurred within the domain of the ‘new division’, but has its own unique character. Itard and other scientists of the era were looking for an opportunity

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<sup>19</sup> Séguin, 18-23.

<sup>20</sup> Hayden White. p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> A Quote taken from ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ located in: Foucault and Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*. p. 79. This quote is originally found in: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* ([n. p.]: 1903).

<sup>22</sup> Edward Séguin. *Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method*, Reprint: (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971) p. 32.

that would draw public fascination and allow them to develop new conceptions of the mind. While the dominant philosophical ideas had allowed science to gain prominence through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there remained a significant obstacle for the biological and human sciences focused on mental processes and the basis of thought. Psychiatry and psychology has a history of varying epistemological orientation. Psychology developed as a rationalist based branch of metaphysics in the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. A distinction developed between empirical and rational psychology in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The primary analysis of thought during this time was philosophical or epistemological in nature. Yet epistemology, with either an empirical or rationalist orientation, could not close in upon and move 'thought' from a branch epistemology to a general biology.

Take for example, the obstacle of Cartesian rationality, or that a duality exists between the cerebral and material. Accordingly, minds are unextended substances, and thus are distinct from any physical substance. The essence of mental substance is to think. The notion of Cartesian dualism, which holds that minds are unextended substances, and thus are distinct from any physical substance. The human sciences would need to bridge Cartesian dualism, to make the brain the organ (origin) of the mind, creating measurable, explanatory model(s) for thought. Yet a metaphysical mind could not capture, cybernetically and etiologically, a measurable structure of intellect. It is only within the paradigms of 'idiocy' (and the variants of abnormality) that scientists sought to make the notion of a biologically based *intelligence* function.

Francis Galton's work *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* is a highly regarded work in the history of psychology; and used as a basis (theory) for mental testing.<sup>23</sup> It places imagery and 'psychological phenomena' into the realm of scientific inquiry. In his book *Natural Inheritance*, he takes collected data and uses statistical techniques in an attempt quantify human characteristics.<sup>24</sup> He is studying the "natural inheritance" of talent and character. Yet it is in one of his earliest works, '*Hereditary Genius*' where he suggests a non-telic distribution of intelligence. In this book Galton states,

"Hence we arrive at the undeniable, but unexpected conclusion, that eminently gifted men are raised as much above mediocrity as idiots are depressed below it; a fact that is calculated to considerably enlarge our ideas of the enormous differences of intellectual gifts between man and man."<sup>25</sup>

Working from a foundation formed in idiocy the human scientists sought to establish the binaries of normality and abnormality in an objective system of

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Sir Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (New York: AMS Press, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> Francis Sir Galton, *Natural Inheritance* (London: Macmillan, 1889).

<sup>25</sup> Francis Sir Galton, *Hereditary Genius; an Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences*, Meridian Books; M134; (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962). p. 31.

measurement. The term ‘mental test’ appeared in the 1890s. Eventually ‘mental test’ culminated in the intelligence quotient, which is used to express a numerical relationship of an individual’s ‘mental age’ in relation to ‘chronological age’. From here, apparatuses of mental measurement would continually find and validate forms of intellectual-abnormality in relation/non-relation to an intelligence located in an *idiocy* that was found a century earlier. In outlining the development of an IQ test for children, (the Binet-Simon Scale) the authors would state that they held, “...firmly in mind the idea that the physical disorders of idiocy have no value except as signs which reveal the intelligence.”<sup>26</sup>

The idea of ‘mental processes’ would replace the significance of a thought as the primary emphasis concerning the act of thinking. Additionally, both thought and perception would no longer be relative or judged on an individual basis. The human sciences would put forth a universalized and empirically based version of the world, which could be measured. Once these technologies of normalization were established, and accepted in public opinion, thought and perception would no longer be relative and judged on an individual basis. There would become a standard universal version of the world, mirrored from a system of measurement. Once psychiatry and psychology established this apparatuses as a functional social utility, the version of intellect distinguishing the binaries of normality and abnormality permeated the *body*.

During the nineteenth century the topic of idiocy appeared in academic journals, and newspapers. The sentiment expressed in the newspapers, promoted the need for state custodianship of those deemed mentally inferior. Citizens were only expected to express care for individuals through their support of the state and institutional apparatus. If the notion of ‘*loco parentis*’<sup>27</sup> pervaded the growth of common schools, this concept was preceded by the conception of custodial care promoted through the asylum. The notion of custodial care formed in the asylum had a legal and judicial power connected to the socialization and treatment of individuals. This formation inherently connected the ‘family’ or private sphere to the values and norms of the public/political sphere.

Newspapers printed articles detailing the architecture, arrangement, and nuances of daily life in the asylum. These articles, written in the nineteenth century, maintain a cohesive projection of intellectual abnormality in social/spatial formation. They evoked the notion of a ‘civilized’ and ‘benevolent’ state apparatus caring for ‘unfortunate creatures’. However, the journals and newspapers of the nineteenth century presented contrasting views regarding the ‘status’ of idiocy. The human sciences printed journals that suggested the advances in science and the growing potential and development of ‘treatment’ for idiocy. Yet at the same time the journals and newspapers stated a growing crisis

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred Binet, Th. Simon, and Elizabeth S. Kite, *The Development of Intelligence in Children (the Binet-Simon Scale)* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins company, 1916). p. 23

<sup>27</sup> *loco parentis* (*def.*) From Latin meaning ‘in place of the parents’, --to assume the duties and responsibilities of the parent.

of mental and intellectual degeneracy. As early as 1850 the US census began collecting statistics on Idiocy, Insanity, and Pauperism. This data was collected and articulated in newspapers and journals. According to the 10<sup>th</sup> census in July of 1880 the number of “idiots” in the US was reported to be 76,895, --up from 24,527 in 1870, ---and from 18,930 in 1860.<sup>28</sup> Henry Goddard, who is considered the father of IQ testing in the US, presented data from intelligence tests stating that 83% of all Jews tested were feeble-minded, as were 80% of the Hungarians, 79% of the Italians, and 87% of the Russians.<sup>29</sup>

With interplay in notions of ‘cure’ and ‘crisis’, the human sciences expanded the search for intellectual abnormality into realms that had previously been unrecognizable. As they established legitimacy and justification, the forms of classification were divided and subdivided and expanded into wider and wider realms. Idiocy was divided into several categories including feeble-minded, moron/moronic, imbecile, moral-imbecile, and many others were used in various areas and by various psychiatrists. As the scientific gaze was expanded into wider and wider realms of social/spatial organization, the intelligence-schemata would extend to scientific racism, racialized mythologies, and eugenics. In 1866, John Langdon Down (associated eponym: Down’s Syndrome) wrote an essay that used ethnic phenotypes to describe forms of idiocy. He used the terms *mongoloid* and *mongolism* as classification for what he called a congenital form of idiocy.<sup>30</sup> Both Galton and Goddard were explicitly racist, and promoted white supremacy in scientific discourse. The connection of intelligence to racism seemingly worked in a self-referential or interactive manner. Scientists utilized preexisting notions of racial inferiority (then imbued with a semi-religious/political association) as a means to validate their ‘scientific ideas’. Galton, for example, devotes one of the last chapters of *Hereditary Genius*, called ‘*The Comparative Worth of Different Races*’<sup>31</sup> to illustrate how his scale of inheritable traits corresponded to other races. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century scientists would embrace the idea that intelligence varied according to race.

The set of relations or conceptualizations, utilized by the human sciences and nineteenth century institutions re/produced formations of a social body. Mediated through concepts of disorder and deviance, individuals would be placed in a new relation with themselves and others. Foucault would note this transition by suggesting that,

“Henceforth, more generally confined than he could have been in a dungeon and chains, a prisoner of nothing but himself, the suffer

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<sup>28</sup> For more information see: "Facts from the Census.," *New York Times* (1857-Current file), Feb 8, 1883., or the US Department of the Interior, 1895, *Report on the Insane, Feeble-minded, Deaf and Dumb, and Blind* (Eleventh Census: 1890), Washington, US Government Printing Office.

<sup>29</sup> John David Smith, *Minds Made Feeble: The Myth and Legacy of the Kallikaks* (Rockville, Md.: Aspen Systems Corp., 1985). p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> For more information see: Langdon H. J Down. “Observations on an ethnic classification of idiots”, *Journal of Mental Science*, 13, (1867): 121-123.

<sup>31</sup> Galton, *Hereditary Genius; an Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences*.

was caught in a relation to himself that was on the order of transgression, and in non-relation to others that was on the order of shame.”<sup>32</sup>

The establishment of idiocy would allow the human sciences to draw intelligence away from a spectrum of philosophic inquiry, with its fluctuations in the realms of epistemology, to function as a ‘political technology of the body’<sup>33</sup>, utilized in the social/spatial formations of the nineteenth century. The asylum, therefore, needs to be conceived beyond that of ‘negative and repressive’ to acknowledge the ‘positive and creative’<sup>34</sup> formations upon which the institution was based and thrived.

### **Cultivating A Village of the Simple**

“Let the whole colony become a ‘village of the simple’, its inhabitants an industrious, celibate, community... if this plan should be found successful as applied to the feeble-minded, why should it not, with modifications, apply to other classes of degenerates?” ---Alexander Johnson (1896)

Idiocy and its variants would come to function in a re/structuring of social space. Yet, for the social scientists of the nineteenth century, ‘the asylum’ presented a semantic and conceptual obstacle, in that it portrayed notions of that which is incurable, terminal, and custodial. Psychiatrists and psychologists acknowledged from early on the desire to transcend the conceptual limitations imposed by the asylum. One doctor noted, “The movement for revision of names is a healthy one and indicates a better understanding of the newer and better purposes of the institutions.”<sup>35</sup> The common schools, ungraded classes, hospitals, and reformatories were to become the necessary spaces, --the symbolic and metaphorical space to convey notions of treatment and progress. The transition in the houses of confinement had opened this possibility, but it would take a *body of knowledge* to move beyond the walls of the asylum, for the scientific gaze to permeate the public sphere.

By the mid-nineteenth century several asylums/school were predicated on their association to idiocy. In 1851 New York developed an experimental school for idiots that would become a state institution. In 1852 a school was founded that

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<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault. (1965). p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> Again, --‘political technology of the body’ is a phrase drawn from the work of Foucault. For more information see: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*.

<sup>34</sup> I am using the tern ‘Positive’ to mean: measured or proceeding in a direction *assumed* as beneficial, progressive, or auspicious and constructive and sure, rather than skeptical.

<sup>35</sup> “Journal of Psycho-Asthenics” Vol. 1 No. 2, December 1896. p. 65. The author stated that, “The original idea of concerning all these institutions was that of an asylum----‘without exposure to violation,’ a refuge.”

later became known as the *Pennsylvania Training School for Idiots*. By 1865 similar institutions had opened in Connecticut, Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the institutions were started privately, as ‘experiments’, but were later adopted and received funding from the states. By 1891 there were roughly seventy-two asylums in the US. The asylums and training schools were built with day rooms, chapels, recreation rooms, dormitory space, dining rooms, workrooms, and classrooms. By 1891 the asylums and training schools established separate wards, for example, the acute ward, the epileptic ward. At least one-fourth the inhabitants were to have their own room, simulating the domains of social life, ---a microcosm of society.<sup>37</sup> Generally, the administration block formed the center of the building. The “more excitable cases” and those deemed least likely to be reformed were situated farthest from the center. Corridors and hallways were purposely designed to section-off various locations, disrupting the flow of bodies, and designating various spaces with significance and purpose. If the asylums or schools housed both men and women, they were separated with one side for men, and the other for women.<sup>38</sup>

The asylums, training schools, farm colonies, and hospitals manifested in their spatial arrangement in the idea that *treatment* involved the ordering and structuring of daily life. The prevention of further social degeneracy would be based on the successful structuring of life. In 1848 Samuel Howe opened an experimental school that was to serve as a model for the instruction of those designated *idiots*. In this school the young were trained for ‘industry, order, and self-respect’. Howe’s school and the ones modeled after it promoted the idea that schools, pedagogy, and training would relieve families and communities from the burden of idiocy.<sup>39</sup>

The various tropes of intelligence are generally associated within the development and function of institutions, yet the conceptions of mentality and intellect also preceded the formation of the common school movement.<sup>40</sup> As early as 1855 architecture manuals used in the construction of the common school houses stated the need to build separate rooms and buildings, or ‘ungraded classes’ for

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<sup>36</sup> Séguin. p. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Charles Burdett, *Hospitals and Asylums of the World: Their Origin, History, Construction, Administration, Management, and Legislation* (London, J. & A. Churchill, 1891).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> S. G. Howe, *On the Causes of Idiocy*, Medicine & Society in America (New York, Arno Press, 1972).

<sup>40</sup> For more information see: John G. Richardson and Parker, Tara L. “The Institutional Genesis of Special Education: The American Case.” *American Journal of Education*. Vol. 101, No. 4 (August 1993), 359-392.

“All states but two established the asylum before the reformatory, and all but four states established the state hospital for the deaf before the reformatory. And, finally, all but 11 states, nine of which were in the far western territories, established the state reformatory before enacting compulsory attendance.” P. 362.

backward and dull students.<sup>41</sup> The primary method of education or instruction in these classes was manual training. The ‘special classes’ of New York City had their beginning with Public School-1, in Manhattan in 1899, and exist at present.<sup>42</sup> The development of the ‘common schools’ coinciding with ungraded-classrooms was a national phenomenon. To quote Séguin,

“...for fear that constant familiarity with the sight of idiots, in all their modalities, or modes of being, would blunt the senses of the standard man in the mind of the observer, we consider it paramount that any investigation made on idiocy upon idiots be conducted *pari passu* upon normal subjects with the strictest similarity; at play, at school, on the sick list, or on the cold slab, when possible; everywhere, near the abnormal, the normal; next to the shadow, the light.”<sup>43</sup>

The schools were regarded methodologically to extend the scope of a state apparatus into areas of the social body previously inaccessible. The basis for compulsory education was mediated through a notion of social crisis, a degeneration of the social body through the lack of proper habit, and mental development. The schools, and more directly the ungraded classroom, whose spatial manifestation was rooted in classification, labeling, and arrangement of individuals was employed as a solution to this crisis. A manual for school architecture, stating the need for the public education and the upgraded classes suggests, “...it may be well to inquire whether an imperfect system of ungraded Common Schools may not have been the parent, to some extent, of those un-republican classes and distinctions, which are becoming more strongly and obviously developed with every year of our progress as a nation, and which must be restrained.”<sup>44</sup>

The deployment of the *asylum* in the social/spatial arrangement of schools, and the ordering of the social body was not independent and random. Rather, as Foucault notes, “These relations are established between institutions, economic, and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques of classification, modes of classification.”<sup>45</sup> Horace Mann and George Sumner, as early as 1842-3, wrote in favor of the work at Bicetre. And, in the preface to ‘*Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method*’, Séguin states that his

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<sup>41</sup> Pennsylvania. Dept. of public instruction. [from old catalog] and Thomas Henry Burrowes, *Pennsylvania School Architecture. Manual of Directions and Plans for Grading, Locating, Constructing, Heating, Ventilating and Furnishing Common School Houses* (Harrisburg,: Printed by A.B. Hamilton, 1855). p.12.

<sup>42</sup> "Journal of Psycho-Asthenics. Corp Author (S): Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons. ; American Association for the Study of the Feeble-Minded," (Faribault, Minn.: Association of American Institutions for Feeble-Minded).

<sup>43</sup> Edward Séguin, *Report on Education 1875: A Facsimile Reproduction*, History of Psychology Series; (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1976). p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Pennsylvania. Dept. of public instruction. [from old catalog] and Burrowes.

<sup>45</sup> Michel Foucault (1972). P.45

book embodies, “an outline of the direction to be given to the scientific efforts of the friends of idiocy and the apostles of universal education.”<sup>46</sup>

The *intelligence schemata* re/produces a separation-between or concealment of actual lived space and social practices and the discursive and coded practices of the science.<sup>47</sup> External authority and disciplinary power mediate the function and understanding of the social body. The *intelligence schemata* situate the ‘body’ (social or otherwise) in relation to a perceived natural arrangement. However, this arrangement is not inherent in-itself, but rather, is an experience built around power, hierarchy, custom, and social order. The *intelligence schemata* are re/produced by an ability to repeat its own signification in the space of the body and the ordering of a body in space. A school architecture manual from 1855 suggests an outline for classroom arrangement; “The desks and chairs are arranged diagonally on the floor so that no one Scholar can see the face of another without being at the right or left half face.”<sup>48</sup> A quote from the New York Times in 1899 states,

“To provide a course of training for the child of school age who is incapable, by reason of mental infirmity, of profiting by the ordinary course—this is the function of the special class. It is class designed to teach the defective child to labor and to be happy in labor... In short, the special class is one which at a most critical period seeks to help over that child who is on the line of mental insufficiency [sic], thus making a good citizen of him who without such aid would be quite certain to prove a useless or bad one.”<sup>49</sup>

Incorporated in the landscape of the asylum and classroom, is the architecture and arrangement of power, hierarchy, and authority. A space enveloped with ritual, privilege, and custom centered on the reinforcement of hierarchy and authority. The topologies of intelligence are not simply a mapping or a metaphor for social order through spatial arrangement, but of the ritualized re/production and process of self-understanding and self-formation.

### **Reflections: A look in the mirror.**

“The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent:

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<sup>46</sup> Sequin. p. 1-36

<sup>47</sup> For more information on the connection between space and discourse see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Pennsylvania. Dept. of public instruction. [from old catalog] and Burrowes. p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> Quote by Dr. James P. Hanley in: The New York Times "Education of Dull Children.," *New York Times (1857-Current file)*, Mar 3, 1899. p. 12.

such is the utopia of the mirror.” --Michel Foucault (Of Other Spaces)

Individuals, as institutional beings, have been continually situated socially and spatially through the function of discourse that positions the ‘self’ not simply in relation to others, but in both in relation-to and distance from an *other*. According to the science of intelligence, each person embodies an identifiable intellectual potential and social valuation as a distinct and inherent feature. Human beings thus become inherently connected and yet completely disconnected. The intelligence-schemata must maintain this notion in standards of chronology, normality, and development. For example, intelligence testing is used to identify a potential, yet it must reinforce and maintain abnormality to sustain the continuum of ‘intellectual ability’. The test seeks to uncover or confirm a continuum between abnormality and ability, that its’ basis or rational presupposes. Yet the search for an etiology of intellectual-abnormality has occurred throughout the twentieth century, as well as the utilization of intelligence to influence social policy.

Contemporary notions of intelligence, -that of a static mental teleology, were formed in the discursive formations that operated in the scientific establishment and political/social deployment of intellectual abnormality. The ‘body of knowledge’ that would allow intelligence to function, did not simply emerges as a unified body of knowledge, but was it put together in piecemeal fashion from a variety of discursive and spatial organizations. As the basis of thought became the object of scientific discourse the disciplines like psychiatry and psychology, called on individuals to view various behaviors through paradigms of intelligence (in referential relation to abnormality) internal and inherent to their ‘self’. Foucault suggests, “Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge.”<sup>50</sup> The conditions that allowed the theoretical formulation of intellectual abnormality to transcend from theory to scientific [truth] were predicated in the tropes of intelligence and spatial organizations. The human sciences gaze has since remained fixated in the body, and within the realms of mental space. This space, where language and the body intersect is not neutral or uncontested. The approach to deconstructing these formations is difficult because the science does not remain fixed or static, and does not function solely in the ‘objects’ it constructs. Foucault suggests, “...the problem arises of knowledge whether the unity of a discourse is based not so much on the permanence and uniqueness of an object as on the space in which various objects emerge and are continually transformed.”<sup>51</sup> The new tropes of intelligence exist by signifying norms, --refining and reproducing those norms; extending beyond those deemed abnormal, recreating the binary opposition, they re/produce a

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Rabinow. The Foucault Reader. (New York: Pantheon Books. 1984), p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Michel Foucault. “The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language.” Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1972). P. 32.

continuum of social intellect and an evaluation of mental process to which we are all subject.

From the 'dawn of idiocy', we might consider that intelligence-schemata developed, not in relation to a scientific or technological breakthrough, but rather slowly evolved out of political/social concerns and 'theories' for grouping and classifying individuals. In other words, intelligence serves a primarily political, as opposed to humanistic function. The *intelligence schemata* continue to work in a self-referential fashion with the rhetoric of intellectual abnormality. In other words, *intelligence schemata* lay in a potential to capture in measurement a deviation, and a deviation is the measure by which 'scientific intelligence' is signified. This aspect of intelligence has remained fairly consistent, although there have been reactions and shifts to its underlying rational. Although there have been considerable challenges to the *uses* of intelligence throughout the twentieth century, it continually resurfaces.

Although much of the nineteenth century discourse *of* intellectual abnormality, or the tropes of intelligence have been reconstituted, many of the social/spatial formations have remained intact. In addition, the new tropes of intelligence, exist by signifying norms, --refining and reproducing those norms, and their antithesis; --by extending beyond those deemed 'abnormal' recreating binary opposition, it forms a continuum of static social intellect and evaluation of mental process to which we are all *subject*.

“So what escape can there be from a space thus shattered into images, into signs, into connected-yet-disconnected data directed at a 'subject' itself doomed to abstraction? For space offers itself like a mirror to the thinking 'subject', but, after the manner of Lewis Carroll, the 'subject' passes through the looking-glass and becomes a lived abstraction.” ---Henri Lefebvre<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lefebvre.

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