

A visible continuity, therefore, but one that did not prevent a major transformation: from that time on, the technology of sex was ordered in relation to the medical institution, the exigency of normality, and—instead of the question of death and everlasting punishment—the problem of life and illness. The flesh was brought down to the level of the organism.

This mutation took place at the turn of the nineteenth century: it opened the way for many other transformations that derived from it. The first of these set apart the medicine of sex from the medicine of the body; it isolated a sexual "instinct" capable of presenting constitutive anomalies, acquired derivations, infirmities, or pathological processes. Heinrich Kaan's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1846, can be used as an indicator: these were the years that saw the correlative appearance of a medicine, an "orthopedics," specific to sex: in a word, the opening up of the great medico-psychological domain of the "perversions," which was destined to take over from the old moral categories of debauchery and excess. In the same period, the analysis of heredity was placing sex (sexual relations, venereal diseases, matrimonial alliances, perversions) in a position of "biological responsibility" with regard to the species: not only could sex be affected by its own diseases, it could also, if it was not controlled, transmit diseases or create others that would afflict future generations. Thus it appeared to be the source of an entire capital for the species to draw from. Whence the medical—but also political—project for organizing a state management of marriages, births, and life expectancies; sex and its fertility had to be administered. The medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics were the two great innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century.

HISTORY

Innovations that merged together quite well, for the theory of "degenerescence" made it possible for them to perpetually refer back to one another; it explained how a heredity that was burdened with various maladies (it made little difference whether these were organic, functional, or psychical) ended by producing a sexual pervert (look into the genealogy of an exhibitionist or a homosexual: you will find a hemiplegic ancestor, a phthisic parent, or an uncle afflicted with senile dementia); but it went on to explain how a sexual perversion resulted in the depletion of one's line of descent—rickets in the children, the sterility of future generations. The series composed of perversion-heredity-degenerescence formed the solid nucleus of the new technologies of sex. And let it not be imagined that this was nothing more than a medical theory which was scientifically lacking and improperly moralistic. Its application was widespread and its implantation went deep. Psychiatry, to be sure, but also jurisprudence, legal medicine, agencies of social control, the surveillance of dangerous or endangered children, all functioned for a long time on the basis of "degenerescence" and the heredity-perversion system. An entire social practice, which took the exasperated but coherent form of a state-directed racism, furnished this technology of sex with a formidable power and far-reaching consequences.