

Incarnated historicity: an essay on Archeology and Imagination

Historicidade encarnada: um ensaio sobre Arqueologia e Imaginação

Fabricio Pontin^I, Tatiana Vargas Maia^{II}

Abstract: In this essay, we will first focus on how important the issue of the body and the embodiment is for Foucault's take on subjectivity and truth, pointing at the situatedness of knowledge as an argument about the alienating aspects of embodiment. Further, we will contrast Foucault's bodily intentionality, which shapes the possibilities of a narration of self, with Walter Benjamin's notion of "arcades" and the placement of subjectivity as a realm of a narration for the self, which, on its turn, frees subjectivity from the materiality of embodiment. Finally, we frame the issue of narration within an "aesthetics of embodiment", pointing the ways in which eroticism and sexuality may allow an overcoming of embodied alienation within an open interpretation of Foucault's archeological method.

Keywords: Embodiment; Alienation; Historicity; Knowledge

Resumo: Neste ensaio, vamos primeiro focar na importância da questão do corpo e da corporificação para a visão de Foucault sobre a subjetividade e a verdade, apontando para a localização do conhecimento como um argumento sobre os aspectos alienantes da incorporação. Além disso, vamos contrastar a intencionalidade corpórea de Foucault, que molda as possibilidades de uma narração do self, com a noção de "paisagens" em Walter Benjamin e a colocação da subjetividade como uma narrativa de um self que tenta liberar sua subjetividade de uma compreensão materialista do próprio corpo. Finalmente, enquadraremos a questão da narração dentro de uma "estética da corporificação", apontando as maneiras pelas quais o erotismo e a sexualidade podem permitir uma superação da alienação, seguindo uma interpretação aberta do método arqueológico de Foucault.

Palavras-Chave: Corporificação; Alienação; Historicidade; Conhecimento

Introduction

In this essay, we will first focus on how important the issue of the body and the embodiment is for Foucault's archeological take on subjectivity and truth, attempting to point at the situatedness of knowledge, as expressed by Foucault, as an argument about the alienating aspects of embodiment, that is, how the presence and feeling of a body in fact limits our practices of self and practices of knowledge in distinctive ways, placing Foucault's notion of intentionality firmly as a bodily intentionality which conditions every claim of knowledge. Our second part will contrast Foucault's bodily intentionality,

^I Professor do PPG em Educação da Universidade La Salle, Professor PPG dos Bacharelados em Direito e Relações Internacionais da mesma instituição. Doutor em Filosofia (SIUC), Mestre em Filosofia (PUCRS), Bacharel em Direito (PUCRS).

^{II} Professora do PPG em Memória Social e Bens Culturais da Universidade La Salle, Coordenadora e Professora do Bacharelado em Relações Internacionais e do Bacharelado e da Licenciatura em História da mesma instituição. Doutora em Ciência Política (SIUC), Mestre em Relações Internacionais (UFRGS), Bacharel em História (UFRGS), Bacharel em Ciências Sociais (PUCRS).

which shapes the possibilities of a narration of self, with Walter Benjamin's notion of "arcades" and the placement of subjectivity as a realm of a narration for the self, which, on its turn, frees subjectivity from the materiality of embodiment. In doing so, we seek to highlight the tension between Benjamin's attempt to use narration as a tool of emancipation from bodily and intellectual aspects of alienation, and Foucault's understanding of the situatedness of the body as a clear limit for our narrative practices. In our last section, we frame the issue of narration within an "aesthetics of embodiment", pointing at the ways in which eroticism and sexuality may allow an overcoming of embodied alienation within an admittedly open interpretation of Foucault's archeological method.

Embodied situatedness: Foucault's archeology of knowledge as a form of bodily alienation

If folly leads each man into a blindness where he is lost, the madman, on the contrary, reminds each man of his truth; in a comedy where each man deceives the other and dupes himself, the madman is comedy to the second degree: the deception of deception; he utters, in his simpleton's language which makes no show of reason, the words of reason that release, in the comic, the comedy: he speaks love to lovers, the truth of life to the young, the middling reality of things to the proud, to the insolent, and to liars.¹

During the archaeological period of his philosophy, Foucault tried to overcome the tensions of the structuralist and functionalist debate in France with the notion of an archeology of Knowledge. Part of this effort is an analysis of Hegelian historicism, specially where time and facts are concerned. Here, Foucault introduces the notion of an overcoming of the strict comprehension of History for a narrative undertaken of the historical processes. Such archeology of human sciences aims to analyze local discourses and to reach some conclusions on the relevance of these discourses and how they constitute regimes of discursive truth. This history of truth, a history of the possibility of truth, is casted upon an *epochè* of reference and signification that will allow us to overcome the imposition of regimes of truth as *the* singular possibility of truth.² Foucault seems to follow Heidegger's account of Kant³ to a certain extent, but he does not buy into the metaphysical project of Ontological Difference as he grounds his archeology.

In Foucault, any fundamental claim to knowledge or the possibility of knowledge would have to be historicized in the Archaeological method. But what is at stake in such a method? Foucault wanted to move away from the more idealistic and transcendental aspects of the phenomenological turn, which had swept over french though in the early 1960s. Instead of taking an ontological and structural point of view, Foucault chooses to suggest a duplicity in the pattern of regimes of truth and its relations to power, arguing that the discursive practices that suggest truth are just that: discursive practices suggesting truth; and that every truth claim holds only a linguistic pattern towards truth. In this sense, Foucault will claim that claims of objectivity (whether from empiricist or transcendental perspectives) miss the point on how knowledge is built.

The archeological method seeks to unveil different forms of discursive

¹ FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 14

² DREYFUS et RABINOW apud OLIVEIRA, *Tractatus ethico-politicus: genealogia do Ethos moderno*, p. 139.

³ HEIDEGGER, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*.

practices, which imply relations between forms of power and conceptions of truth. Such discursive practices in the archaeological moment in Foucault's effort just a way to uncover how contingent our conceptions of truth are, and how they are related to sovereign impositions of forms-of-life - these practices are, ultimately, seen in the body as the locus of practices of the self and of sovereign power.

In this sense, Foucault is closer to Walter Benjamin than to Heidegger, and his election of Baudelaire as the guide into the narration processes of modernity is a sign of how much Foucault relied on Benjamin's reflections of Modernity. But where the body in Benjamin, as we will see, is the body of an individual who wants to dislocate himself from alienation through his own authentic affirmation as a unique and creative being, in Foucault the body is the core of an erotic limitation - we, as individuals who seek to have knowledge of the world, are limited in this knowledge by the situation of our bodies, by the way in which our bodies are ordered towards the world. To an extent, this embodiment of the process of knowledge turns the body into a vehicle of alienation for Foucault - our bodies work against our attempt to have full understanding of the world.

In that sense, embodiment limits the narrative of the self in Foucault. Our ability to give an account of ourselves is shaped by the limits of our bodies, and by the ways in which we use our bodies. Foucault introduces the notion of the dispositive as a way to show the ambivalent relation of our bodies and the world, and the way that power acts throughout this relation. A relation that is bound to a weak notion of immanence.

To speak of a weak notion of immanence is to say that all forms of knowledge that are had as actual are actual insofar they arise from certain discursive practices. Had Foucault developed a strong notion of immanence, we would find a substantial form of knowledge that would pertain to all forms of regional knowledge. Such a condition of possibility is not had in the archaeological period of Foucault's philosophy. However, Foucault does develop a weak notion of immanence in the sense that forms of knowledge trust the relevance of discursive practices and the individuals that are performing these practices. Foucault will defend that certain aesthetic practices imply different regimes of desire and power that are more or less relevant to conceptions of truth.

Maybe it is still not clear why such implications are understood as a weak-immanence. The key here is Foucault's regional use of what we could label an "present positioning of history", or, "history as it appears to ourselves". Such positioning of history, in Foucault, is not had as a stable form that establishes a strong sense of Reality. It is rather had as an actual history of a form of knowledge, a determined conception of truth. Any attempt to super-impose these local practices and conceptions of truth is met with the accusation of sovereignty, of imposition of forms of knowledge against practices of the self. Sovereign power, in the form of scientific positivism or grammar, will try to "pacify" this multiplicity of claims into a standard form of truth.

In short, Foucault's epistemological perspectivism is overall incompatible with a strong notion of immanence; it is also incompatible with a notion of transcendence. Honneth points this out very well when he writes that for Foucault, every type of knowledge "must be seen as being so closely bound up with a given relation of power that a transcendent perspective from which these processes could be defined as deviations from an ideal situation is no longer possible"⁴.

This discussion brings direct consequences for the understanding of embodiment in Foucault, because we are dealing with discursive practices and not with regular or static structures that hold this process of "constitution" of truth together, Foucault manages a way out of the riddle of control and desubjectification. This way out is

⁴ HONNETH, *Disrespect. The normative foundations of Critical Theory*. p. 40

characterized by an inversion of the mechanisms of domination – the dispositive. In our third section we will get back to this point, but for now it should suffice to say that Foucault operates outside the realms of a substantial notion of knowledge and a structural definition for the body which both limits the scope in which one can get free of power dynamics connected to the situatedness of the body, but also allows us to resignify our own situatedness without breaking up with our own current structural realities.

“Truth is the death of intention”: Walter Benjamin and the sketches of the passages

In this section we want to focus on a key passage in Benjamin’s late collection of aphorisms “*The Arcades Project*” where Benjamin seems to dispute, at the same time, materialistic views of time and truth, and what he claims to be an “essential” point of view within phenomenology.

What distinguishes images from the “essences” of phenomenology is their historical index. (Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through “historicity”). These images are to be thought of entirely apart from the categories of the “human sciences”, from the so-called habitus, from style and the like. For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. And, indeed, this acceding “to legibility” constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior. Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each “now” is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else, is the death of the *intentio*, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth). It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.⁵

This is a long and complex aphorism, but we want to break it down in parts in order to clarify the notion of truth, embodiment and authenticity in this passage. To a great extent, this aphorism summarizes Benjamin’s methodology and main arguments with Phenomenology. Also, it situates the difference between apparent (archaeological) and authentic (truthful) figures Benjamin starts by pointing out the essentialism that marks the Heideggerian reading of *aletheia*, or the appearance of things in veiling and unveiling. This essentialism would be marked by the factualization of forms of Being by an “abstractalization”, this is the very movement that we find in the paragraph nine of Being and Time⁶, as Dasein is predicated as a necessity-to-be, Being is posited as a first necessity of essential relevance – such is the methodological turn that Heidegger performs in order to transform the comprehension of the transcendental into a

⁵ BENJAMIN, *The Arcades project*, p. 462-463.

⁶ HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time: a Revised Edition of the Stambaugh Translation*.

comprehension of Being-Itself. This movement of abstractalization, for Benjamin, tries to rescue historicity from phenomenology, insofar it turns the question of Being as the very destiny of History. History hence becomes a tool through which one unveils Being, all the ontic features of appearance are uncovered through the *Daseinanalytiks*.

The reasons that led Benjamin to distance himself from phenomenology, however, are quite different of those that we identified in Foucault, but they are relevant in the sense that they allow us to break the issue of the relation of embodiment, narrativity and truth into two different perspectives. While Foucault relied on a weak notion of immanence without resort to a material feature of reality, Benjamin had both a strong notion of immanence and a very sharp notion of materialism.

Benjamin is very quick to point a sharp distinction between images and essences. Essences, he advances, are the appearances that the phenomenologist takes as the reduction of reality, the Being that gives the ground for comprehension. The historicist, nevertheless, knows that these essences are but an abstract illusion, they must be understood as a result of a historical attempt to reduce history to a tool, to a direct and acritical description of matters of fact, which are disembodied and dislocated from their material and political significances - this alienated notion of history is immediately contrasted with an “imagined” and narrative take on history.

Such narrative take is what we could describe as an “embodied historicity”, such narrative allow images of the past to be legible as it were (*es gibt*), there is a now-point (*jeztpunkt*) where the images reveal the possibility of a recognition of a point past. Truth is charged in the present, it is revealed in an immanation, in a recognition - in bodies that are immediately placed in relation and recognize their respective historical placement.

There is no intentionality in this explosion, present and past become authentic in the moment of this recognition, as an immediate appearance of the Real - as a breakdown of an order of alienated beings. This is what is meant by the relation of what-has-been to the *now-point*. It is important to stress here the dual-notion of time that is at play for Benjamin. On one hand, we have the chronological time - the time of physics, that is given as a succession of now-points, the “train” of history. On the other hand, we have authentic time, this authentic time is given in the form of a revelation, of a pure-appearance of something as a standstill reality that has-come-to-pass. There is, however, a dialectical relation here, insofar we are situated in chronological time but we are hit by authentic reality in a different level. This dialectical relation of the now-point as both chronological (material) and real (truthful) is made possible by a dialectical movement of historicity. Without this movement, we are either left with a purely immanent understanding of history that tries to uncover an abstract reality out of essences, or with a brute archaism that suggests the possibility of narrating the past as it really were, instead as how it has-come-to-pass. It is important to note that embodiment plays a central role in this plays of immanence in Benjamin: intentionality keeps the immanence at play at the same time it blocks the emergence of truth.

If this seems quite exoteric, it is because it is meant to be. For Benjamin, it is at this point that we reach the critical moment, or, in his own words, the perilous critical moment. But why is it perilous? It is perilous insofar we risk throwing ourselves into objectivism and the attempt of reproduction of the material reality of history in the present. Benjamin is quick to point that these pictorial forms of authentic forms are not in themselves material, they are instead narrated figuratively in the now-point, as we transform archaic images into historical images through dialectical relation. The critical moment, then, is this transformation, where imagination, rather than intuition, is the tool used to make it possible for authentic historical narration to be-come.

But then, isn't Benjamin suggesting that history is a figment of imagination? Very much like a work of fiction? It seems to us that the answer to this question must be negative. History is not a work of fiction, it is not just our perception of the past as it seems to be. Rather, what Benjamin calls authentic history is a revelation of the placement of the body in relation to time, which is narrated by an individual who dislocates herself, through a narrative of herself. Once again, it is necessary to stress that time is given immanently at the same time that is lived materially, and in the synchrony of these forms of givenness of time we have the *jeztpunkt* where archaic forms and narrative images are coincidental, and thus authentic. Hence the remark that truth is the death of intention, it is the death of intention because the way we proxy truth is not given in an intentional relationship between subject and object, but by the removal of subjectivity from a mere relation to objects. Communicative forms that express something about the past and claim the reality of the past, must then express this constellation, in the form of a memory that reconciles the past with the present.

In the *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin writes:

The object of knowledge, determined as it is by the intention inherent in the concept, is not truth. Truth is an intentionless state of being, made up of ideas. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it. Truth is the death of intention.⁷

Again, this seems to suggest the ontological (hence, not imaginary) relevance of Truth as “an intentionless state of being”, even though this same Truth is narrative, it is “made up of ideas”. Benjamin seems to be suggesting that one should take an aesthetic perspective towards truth and knowledge, but unlike Foucault, he is not suggesting that these practices posit games-of-knowledge that create and invent Truth. Rather, by seeking the aesthetic practice of oneself as a Flaneur, as one who wanders around the city watching the passages and discovering history one is rather engaging in a immersion in the Reality of experience (and the images presented to us in-experience) and that which is revealed by experience in the world.

Imagination and the construction of Reason: Foucault's dialectical deficit

In 1968, Foucault was being questioned on his works on Archeology by the Epistemological Circle, specially on the grounds of obscurantism and relativism. Such criticism was met with a direct response from Foucault in *On the Archeology of Sciences*, where he looked back on the project of The Archeology of Knowledge and its discursive practices of truth. It seems that a particular passage in that article summarizes what is at stake both in *The Order of Things* and in *Madness and Civilization*:

These discursive sets should not be seen as a rhapsody of false knowledges, archaic themes and irrational figures which the sciences, in their sovereignty, definitively thrust aside into the night of a prehistory. Nor should they be imagined as the outline of future sciences that are still confusedly wrapped around their futures, vegetating for a time in the half sleep of silent germination. Finally, they should not be conceived as the only epistemological system to which those supposedly false, quasi- or pseudo-science, the human sciences, are susceptible. To analyze discursive formations, positivities and the knowledge which corresponds to them is not to assign forms of scientifically but, rather,

⁷ BENJAMIN, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. p. 36.

to run through a field of historical determination which must account for the appearance, retention, transformation, and, in the last analysis, the erasure of discourses, some of which are still recognized today as scientific, some of which have lost that status, some have never pretended to acquire it, and finally, others have never attempted to acquire it. In a word, knowledge is not science in the successive displacement of its internal structures; it is the field of its actual history.⁸

This is one of the few places in Foucault's works that we are able to find a direct definition of what knowledge is and how it is posited as a available form. The first thing we know about knowledge in the Archaeological method, then, is that it is discursive. The author is concerned with the discursive practices that seek to establish a certain knowledge as truth. However, it is important to stay attentive to the multiplicity of knowledge in Foucault. Foucault quickly informs us that sciences have a claim of sovereignty on what is knowledge. Those who are familiar with Foucault will clearly identify an imposition in this claim, since the act of sovereignty is an imposition of knowledge from the outside – as the form of rationality that imposes the discourse on madness, or the Order of Resemblances that imposes relation of things and ideas-of-things as necessary. Narration is not such practice, and it is also not some future or teleological destiny that we are currently seeking to unveil. The narration of discursive practices, for Foucault, takes on hold of the discursive practices themselves, and it speaks truth to the field of the actual history of this practices, as opposed to the relation of this practices to some kind of strong reference-point. The condition of possibility of knowledge is not some transcendental Being, or a dialectical relation of past and present points given in revelation. It is rather knowledge itself, “the field of its actual history”. Knowledge is then singular in its relation to itself, but it is multiple in its narrative relevances. It is also invented as a narrative practice, it is a field of illimitable possibilities of truth and knowledge that are subsequently posited from different conception of truth and narration.

When we speak of a weak notion of immanence in Foucault, we are speaking of the main point at view: The forms of knowledge that are had as actual, are actual insofar they arise from certain discursive practices. Had Foucault developed a strong notion of immanence we would find a substantial form of knowledge that would pertain all forms of regional knowledge. Such condition of possibility is not had in the archaeological period of Foucault's philosophy. However, Foucault does develop a weak notion of immanence in the sense that forms of knowledge trust the relevance of discursive practices and individuals that are performing these practices. If Deleuze linked the reality of desire as relevant in all acts of knowledge, Foucault will see how certain aesthetics imply different regimes of desire and power that are more or less relevant to conceptions of truth.

Maybe it is still not clear why such implications are understood as a weak immanence. The key here is Foucault regional use of actual positing of history. History, in Foucault, is not had as a stable form that establishes a strong sense of Reality. It is rather had as a actual history of one form of knowledge, one determined conception of truth, which appears in relation to a situated body.

Foucault follows Benjamin in the imagined practices that posit ourselves in the world as a knowing-subject. The point of departure is the identification of stable forms that necessitate a narration to bare witness to facts as they have come to pass. Archeology, in Foucault, only bares witness to itself, to a knowing-subject that is able

⁸ FOUCAULT, *Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 2, Aesthetics*, p.326.

to posit only his own history and narrations, without being able to increase the scope of his claims outside his own discourse or reality. Better yet, any attempt to superimpose these local practices and conceptions of truth is met with the accusation of sovereignty, of imposition of forms of knowledge against practices of the self.

In short, Foucault's epistemological perspectivism is overall incompatible with a strong notion of immanence, it is also incompatible with a notion of transcendence. Honneth points it very well:

[a]ccording to Foucault every type of knowledge must be seen as being so closely bound up with a given relation of power that a transcendent perspective from which these processes could be defined as deviations from an ideal situation is no longer possible.⁹

The lack of both a transcendental and immanent notion of ground in this moment of Foucault's work suggests that the movement towards genealogy is not only a consequence of a change of concern, but a recognition that Archeology was not able to deal with relevant aspects of knowledge that would be expressed non-discursively or to describe aesthetics of the self that we would be able to identify as unacceptable without resorting to imposition from the outside.

Language/Power/Self

I would wonder if the act hadn't been purely personal, aimed against Minette Swift as an individual, and not "racist". Yet how swiftly and crudely the personal becomes the racial! As if, beneath ordinary hatred, there is a deeper, more virulent and deadly racial hatred to be tapped. As the nineteenth-century British looked upon the "Hottentot Venus" (a naively trusting young South African woman who had cooperated with her exploiters, I'd discovered) as a crude sexual spectacle, a brute and not human being to be ogled, displayed in a carnival, eventually dissected for "scientific" purposes. It was sickening, such cruelty. Yet exhilarating to know for always there is power in knowledge.¹⁰

As I explored her body, feeling my way among the braces and straps of her underwear, the unfamiliar planes of her hips and legs steered me into unique culs-de-sac, strange declensions of skin and musculature. Each of her deformities became a potent metaphor for the excitements of a new violence. Her body, with its angular contours, its unexpected junctions of mucous membrane and hairline, detrusor muscle and erectile tissue, was a ripening anthology of perverse possibilities. As I sat with her by the airport fence in her darkened car, her white breast in my hand lit by the ascending airlines, the shape and tenderness of her nipple seemed to rape my fingers. Our sexual acts were exploratory ordeals.¹¹

Our take on Foucault's archeology in this article has been critical and skeptical, and our contentions might not have done justice to the repercussion of Foucault's work in the philosophical and cultural scenario post-1967. It is a rather an easy task to point at Foucault's epic attempt to reconstruct imagination as a groundless practice of selfhood as a failure, specially after authors like Habermas and Honneth¹² were able to take on some of the insights of the Foucaultian analysis and re-integrate them in the tradition of transcendental philosophy.

⁹ HONNETH, Disrespect. *The normative foundations of Critical Theory*, p. 40

¹⁰ OATES, *Black Girl/White Girl: A Novel*, p. 128.

¹¹ BALLARD, *Crash: A novel*, p. 175-176.

¹² KELLY, *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. MIT Press, 1994.

However, the relation between power and language and its implications for the construction of the self as developed in the Archaeological movement in Foucault cannot be underestimated. Perhaps the most important contribution of this period of Foucault's archeology is not the text of the *Order of Things* or the insights of *Madness and Civilization*, but the commanding nature that those works acquired to a generation of philosophers and writers who on their turn were able to transform and ironically historicize Archeology as a part of a project of knowledge, as part of that constellation that Benjamin was drawing on his way from Berlin to Port-Bou.

Genealogy appears in this context, as modernity is recast in Foucault as not a question of sovereignty but of emancipation, of the liberation of the forms of life from their mimetic necessities, the liberation of bodies and sexuality of its biological boundaries and finally the emergence of an ethical expression of oneself that is had both aesthetically and politically.

In the project of the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault points at a rejoinder of the politics and the aesthetics of the body:

That *bios*, that life – by which I mean the way in which the world immediately appears to us in the course of our existence – is a test should be understood in two senses. Test in the sense of experience, that is to say the world is recognized as being that through which we experience ourselves, through which we know ourselves, discover ourselves and reveal ourselves to ourselves. And then, test in the sense that this world, this *bios*, is also an exercise, that is to way that on the basis of which, through which, in spite of or thanks to which we form ourselves, advance towards an aim or salvation, or head towards our own perfection. (...). The challenge is this: How can what is give as the object of knowledge (*savoir*) connected to the mastery of *tekhné*, at the same time be the site where the truth of the subject we are appears, or is experience and fulfilled with difficulty? How can the world which is given as the object of (*connaissance*) and at the same time the place of the subject's "self" as the ethical subject of truth appears and is experienced? If this really is the problem of Western philosophy – how can the world be the object of knowledge (*connaissance*) and at the same time the place of the subject's test; how can there by a subject of knowledge (*connaissance*) which takes the world as object through a *tekhné*, and a subject of self-experience which takes this same world, but in the radically different form of the place of its test? – if this really is the challenge of Western philosophy, you will see why *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is the summit of this philosophy.¹³

At this stage of his work, Foucault understands "biopower" as a way by which capitalist society *invests* in this form of power as something that constitutes the social body. At first, Foucault tries to show how the history of biopolitics is tied with the history of capitalism; with the emergence of cities, the emergence of health *policies*. The leading clue here is the emergence of these policies within the German state, better yet, as a unifying force for the German state. Foucault tries to point out that the development of capitalism in Germany happens because the German state lacks the tools that England and France had at hand to develop a state. Where England and France could count on strong armies and strong economies, Germany had to count on a different aspect: the medical.

But why is this noteworthy? It is noteworthy in the sense that it creates a different form of expression for sovereign power. The focus, for Foucault, is not in the change of mode of production – though this is important – but in the change of *strategy* in order to

¹³FOUCAULT, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France. 1981-1982*, p. 486-487.

enable governance. This strategy of power is identified in Foucault as a first “phase” of biopolitics, that is, medicine of state. This is peculiar to the development of capitalism as it relates to the modern, Westphalian, State and the Westphalian mode of sovereignty. For Foucault, this mode of governance is the most important historical feature for our understanding of the period, as the *Staatswissenschaft* are perfected in the Prussian state as a meticulous control of the general health of the population.

Wherein previous models of sovereignty were concerned with individual bodies – domesticated by the army, controlled by the police, and punished in the prison – now we have the emergence of the sovereignty as the manager of a population, a group of individuals under a same rubric. In Germany, the first individual to be “normalized” is the doctor – the State establishes general norms, criteria, to allow the construction of medical schools, and the State issues the final stamp that permits one to practice medicine legally. It is also the State that will verify the means and conditions that qualify an epidemic and how to deal with one – but in order to identify the “sick”, first the State will need a model for the normal. This model was the physician, so now we had a concept of sick and a concept of health, both under control of a sovereign structure. Surely, Foucault is aware of the *necessity* of such a move in a Europe that still suffered the consequences of the plague; but we also need to be aware that this move also plays a part in the transformation of the government.

How exactly does it change the role of the government? The movement into biopolitics will dislocate the “place” of the sovereign in the sense that the power over the subject is no longer located in establishing a “docile” body by external force, but by domesticating life by defining the stances in which life is worthy of protection and how it is worthy of protection. There is a sovereign imposition of modes of living and normative differences for different “profiles”. Please note that Biopolitics is not only negative, it grants an important set of rights, such as social security, public healthcare, and public hospitals, but Foucault is quick to point out that the right to social security, public healthcare, and public hospitals (just to give some examples) is dependent on whether or not one is contemplated as having rights. Racial and social identity are not a matter of an individual making sense of his own history, but a matter of external imposition of a profile that will grant you more or less protection – or, in some cases, no protection whatsoever.

This strategic imposition of a *mode of living* was thought so that individuals would pursue occupations that do not serve their own interests, but the interest of society. The dislocation of the population from farms and into industrial areas, in the first moments of Capitalism, denotes this biopolitic. The State first develops the science that will allow for the identification of a profile, and later it uses this profile in order to create a workforce. And note that Foucault doesn’t express any moral judgment about this movement – at this moment, biopolitics is neither negative nor positive. Rather, he seems to want to point out how this creation of a workforce, and the consequential urbanization of the modern space, are dependent on the birth of social medicine. Or, if you prefer, on the birth of biopolitics.

Because we are dealing with discursive practices and not with regular or static structures that hold this process of “constitution” of truth together, Foucault finally manages a way out of the riddle of control and desubjectification that does not require, as it did in Benjamin’s substantive and immanent reading, a replacement of the body outside of the capitalist and liberal order. Foucault sees a potential way out in an inversion of the mechanisms of domination – the dispositive.

But how is that possible? This is possible because bodies that are explored by sovereign power in order to constitute a repressive regime of truth can be turned upside down as mechanisms of resistance. In this sense, Foucault does not accept the idea of a static structure for emotions – or for knowledge in general, for that matter – turning the project of enlightenment into a project of resignification of practices.

In the last volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault spends a long time describing the practices of domination and submission in sadomasochism. Regardless of what one might think of Foucault's choice of example and lifestyle, he is trying to point out the redefinition of dispositifs of punishment into dispositifs of pleasure. The care of the self appears as an antidote to the technologies of power. The shame of being "subjected" or "reduced" is now reconstituted as a form of re-approaching the limits of one's own body as something to be celebrated. This is the emergence of the technologies of the self as a "positive" side of biopolitics, the care for one's own body, one's own identity and the exploration of one's relationship with others as something that does not need to be mediated by the pre-defined conceptions established – grammatically and constitutionally – by a sovereign power. Freedom, in Foucault, will be embracing the limits of one's own self while at the same time emancipating the construction of one's own identity and expression from the restraints of an external power.

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