

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

## Michel Foucaultの脱構築理論に関する一考察

メタデータ	言語: 出版者: 琉球大学教育学部 公開日: 2007-07-25 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Taira, Katsuaki, 平良, 勝明 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/1178">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/1178</a>

## Michel Foucault: A New Epistemological Dis-Order

Katsuaki TAIRA

Michel Foucault—what a magical name it has been, especially among the scholars who have been insatiably engaged in the space he opened up for those who tried to pinpoint the precise loci where nebulous and ever-receding networks of significations supposedly converged and yet the moment they converged they dispersed without a trace. As if the only real center of those elusive loci were merely the name that transmogrified the corpus, which after all repeats the randomized processes and seemingly circulates around the virtual and hypothesized center he adumbrates time and again in his recondite publications, of our author into almost tangentially meaningful by its being the fulcrum of our author's argument. (Or the centripetal authorial title merely a ploy for counterargument, as Foucault time and again refutes the idea of a univocal authorial positionality the authorial signifier is conventionally assumed to present to the average readers?) This paper is my quest—one of thousands of such ever attempted so far without producing anything that is audaciously termed less opaque than perspicuous—to at least grapple with his ever-evolving ideas and concepts and hopefully rise above the inchoate network of epistemological nebulae and retrospectively say, this is what he presumably meant and that is what he attempted to ideologically and conceptually construct and deconstruct. Some might say my attempt to pursue the path and deconstruct the edifice Foucault erected is quite untimely, arguing that the time the French theoretician reigned the literary and other realms passed decades ago and that merely suggesting the once-touted name evokes literary vulgarity impermissible in certain circles. However, such potential criticism just eggs me on to go back to the materials that have been consumed and reconsumed until quite recently among scholars, as I mentioned above, who tried to locate the very clues to expand the epistemological horizons they had been traditionally inured to. Who knows but revisiting Foucault might reveal something that is still new and pragmatically, a term that rings rather oxymoronic when you are dealing with Foucault (at least for the moment), applicable? Or, on the contrary, reassessment might reduce him to a position that generally coincides with the result of decades of lionizing of which he usually found himself the very object? We never know until we are fully engaged in his work and re-analyze it and truly understand the theoretical and epistemological horizons he

seems to have multiplied, if at all they are approachable. But we have nothing to lose because the act of tackling Foucault at this point is passé and thus in itself not to be regarded in a context that is generally described as conforming to the modes of the day. In other words, the attempt here envisioned is something that transcends time and not circumscribed within the framework of the fashionable or temporal. If Foucault has anything instructive and insightful to offer to the modern and contemporary students of ideas and knowledge, then now is the time to plunge into his, should I dare say, arcane and ever-expanding epistemological field. The reward is by no means guaranteed but if there is a modicum of a chance to retrieve a fraction of the tantalizingly inchoate, slippery episteme our author seems to inundate his precious and magical space with then we should brave all the hazards and frustrations any difficult attempt, such as this, is likely to entail. So without much delay, let us confront the unique epistemological order and disorder Michel Foucault develops.

What one notices as he goes over Foucault's work is the latter's concern with the established epistemological methodology and quest that tries to seek the indubitable foundation on which every human science is presumed to be based. In fact, whatever underlies human endeavor is immediately seized and foregrounded in his epoch-making title *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Let us extract the passage relevant to the current issue and analyze it to fathom the implied and denoted intentions of our author and attempt to come up with the clues as to how we should grasp Foucault's diffusive/expansive approach. The passage in question may be a bit lengthy but I hope the reader bears with me for the moment, or for that matter throughout this essay.

For many years now historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes, the constant readjustments, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events (p. 3).

The reader may be immediately struck by the repeated use of a number of key conceptual terms. One is a word that is related to stratification of epistemo-methodological scientific objects, a conceptual term which Foucault obviously posits in order to oppose the establishmentarian tendencies that prevail in humanistic and scientific human endeavors. Foucault views the traditional approach to finding such metaphysical certainties as the underlying invariables, which historians have been wont to indulge themselves in, as a recourse they have been resorting to for

centuries in order to find the rock-solid ground on which to absorb the superficial changes and processes and, in essence, continual becomings of all the worldly phenomena. The more ephemeral and changeable the human conditions and substrata that constitute them, the more inveterate the metaphysical seeking tendency has become, as Foucault seems to point out. Giving specifically the case of historians, the longness of historical periods, according to the view Foucault holds, is rendered not a liability but a ripe opportunity to locate the origin of each mutation of which the former is hypothesized as the inevitable necessity to engender all the ephemera. The other constant theme Foucault dangles before the reader throughout the passage is, not unexpectedly, a term that is conjoined to the other specifically striational term I just introduced above. It is a signifier which here Foucault allows to comprehend temporal duration and, by implication, its oppositional values that can be described as permanence and continuity and a concept that is pointedly linked to what Foucault refers to "motionless bases." The conceptual term Foucault introduces is indeed tied to the notion of ephemerality often represented as "shifts and changes" and "processes." Even simple notions such as "periods," "political events," and "movements of accumulation and slow saturation" once subjected to closer inspection comes to exude temporality and constant flux everything in this world is subjected to. They in their turn function as indices to point to the necessary as well as stable origin from which recursively they emanate. The idea underneath the checks and balances within which every periodic event teeters back and forth merely adumbrates the absolutist nature of the point from which every single epistemological manifestation hearkens.

This predictability that, in a way, derives from the linearity of the traditional construct of epistemological endeavors is indeed the underlying theme of Foucault's essay. No matter how expansive the manifestations of human scientific disciplines seem (which comprehends humanitarian and other fields as well), they somehow all redound to a prototypical methodological concept that is ultimately based on the metaphysical certainty of all human episteme. Before deliberating on the diffuse subject that seems to ceaselessly engender abstractions of abstractions, let us focus on another extract from our author's work with the hope that my argument be made more substantive through the exemplifications scattered throughout Foucault's writing. Here is the quote.

The tools that enable historians to carry out this work of analysis are partly inherited and partly of their own making: models of economic growth, quantitative analysis of market movements, accounts of demographic expansion and contraction, the study of climate and its long-term changes, the fixing of sociological constants, the description

of technological adjustments and of their spread and continuity. These tools have enabled workers in the historical field to distinguish various sedimentary strata; linear successions, which for so long had been the object of research, have given way to discoveries in depth. From the political mobility at the surface down to the slow movements of 'material civilization', ever more levels of analysis have been established; each has its own peculiar discontinuities and patterns; and as one descends to the deepest levels, the rhythms become broader. (p. 3)

The reader should immediately notice the recurrent conceptual props Foucault uses to describe the traditional epistemo-historical endeavor. Here Foucault depicts a vast epistemological scheme in which traditionalists are forced to deal with seemingly randomized ephemeral data in order to sort them out in a meaningful manner that is both inextricably premised upon the linear order of each phenomenon and at the same time upon an optimistic world view that each of the randomized ephemera nevertheless constitutes a comprehensible whole. (This ultimately optimistic predilection, however, does not necessarily exclude ingenuity on the part of the individuals who actually live the moment when life-impacting mundane contingencies arise. After all they are the ones who need to process and confront the issues as they pop up right before them, temporarily speaking.) The framework in which each individual is defined and embedded and where all the mutated manifestations of historical ingredients are interpreted and analyzed by them simultaneously develops and oscillates in accordance with the historical phase the individual happens to find himself in. (Paradoxically, all the ingredients that constitute the historical phase both get absorbed into a harmonious whole and rebuff an attempt to reduce them to a series of linear process that may be only convenient for epistemological comprehension.)<sup>1</sup> In other words, the process

---

<sup>1</sup> This process of compaction, as it were, that results in coexistence of seemingly contradictory elements in each other is also rife in Foucault's other works as well. In his *La Volente de Savoir* the silence, that repressed force that is kept hidden in discourse but nevertheless keeps cropping up in spite of itself, is granted a status that is indeed coextensive with the thing that tries to subdue it. Let me quote.

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers —is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say.... There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (*The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, p. 27)

That is merely one example of a relation that transcends what Foucault calls simple binarism. For lack of space I need to constrain myself to invoking only one more manifestation of such pseudo-contradictory relation. It directly pertains to sex as it is

foregrounded here is a cycle of entrenchment and modulation, less, in fact, on their own account than because of the way the target occurrences are treated by individuals. A relational structure that typifies the one established between the historical study and the analytical subject also emerges in such mundane interpretative and descriptive endeavors as “models of economic growth, quantitative analysis of market movements, accounts of demographic expansion and contraction” and others that try to comprehend human activities through dia- and synchronic valuational measures handed down and modified through time. Interestingly enough, this Foucault’s concern with temporality has almost Einsteinian aspect to it as well, as time and space, as it were, are confounded in our author’s argument to redefine the traditional quest for epistemological endeavors. It is as if the temporal axis must necessarily be accompanied by a spatio-striational one in order to describe a field filled with episteme. Succession of values and tools, which enable historians and economists to gauge various manifestations of reality are, according to this idea, interjected into the sedimentary strata that are located and must necessarily exist in a given spatiality and time. (Another way of simulating this schema is to give rise to “depth” in an apparently linear progression temporal development is ordinarily deemed to manifest without the striational conceptual injection into the epistemological framework.) Linearity, in other words, is invested with breadth or even a dimensional amplification, as one perspective is stratified and multitudinous undercurrents are admitted into the whole picture. In the process some sinister signs of disruption crop up, signified by Foucault as “peculiar discontinuities and patterns.” However, these are just minor and even constitutive potential disturbances that are destined to be engulfed by the linear progression of the traditional approach. They are merely on the par with “demographic expansion and contraction” and “long-term changes...technological adjustments...their spread and continuity” as they, rather expectedly in this context, buttress the idea of metaphysical solidness each humanistic and scientific endeavor is based on. After all, all the continuities and discontinues that seem to arise over a long historical span merely augment each other to generate the deepest rhythm, which is merely an indication of the solidness and invariance of the metaphysical foundation of the whole.

Indeed, Foucault’s attention is increasingly directed to the kind of hiatus

---

simultaneously involved in the realms of the discoursed and the not-to-be-mentioned.

We must not forget that by making sex into that which, above all else, had to be confessed, the Christian pastoral always presented it as the disquieting enigma: not a thing which stubbornly shows itself, but one which always hides, the insidious presence that speaks in a voice so muted and often disguised that one risks remaining deaf to it. (*The History of Sexuality*, Vlm. I, p. 35)

progression of history creates and leaves in its wake, no matter what history one is talking about. Let us look at the following excerpt that focuses exactly on the crevasses and discontinuities Foucault hinted and adumbrated in his previous argument in the same book. As with the other quotes this one could be rather lengthy.

At about the same time, in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature ..., in those disciplines which, despite their names, evade very largely the work and methods of the historian, attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity. Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogeneous manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 4)

Now what the reader needs to seize on, all the more because the concept is introduced in such a nonchalant manner as if to suggest that it has been dropped in mid-sentence to cover up the argumentative twists that are in fact used to foreground the very discontinuities recursively tied to that key concept, is the idea of evasion and slipperiness that is, according to Foucault, ineluctably involved in any comprehensive attempt "the historian" is engaged in. The disruptive tendency Foucault recognizes here is not limited to any specific disciplinary field. It rather exists in such a broad range of disciplines as what he obviously categorizes as epistemological, philosophical and literary. Once again the slipperiness, that ungraspable element I iterated above, in the aforementioned endeavors does not arise as an exterior, intrusive contingency but rather more like a concomitant part of historical research.<sup>2</sup> The splicing of the

---

<sup>2</sup> The very slipperiness that seems to be part of our author's argument may be something that persists as long as Foucault maintains the stance that is inherently opposed to the harmonized continuity and systemization of traditionalism. It may sound rather passé but if I quote once-famed critic Jonathan Culler, the "practitioner of deconstruction works within the terms of the system but in order to breach it" (*On Deconstruction*, p. 86). In other words, a critic like Foucault works hard to subvert the system that has been in dominance in the West for years but he can only work within that very system he is trying to get rid of. It is a very odd situation, to say the least. The position Foucault takes is at the same time parasitic and opportunistic. Culler, in fact, has more to say on the subject. It may be wise to let him expound on the stance those deconstructionists complacently assumed.

...to deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical

heterogeneous discontinuous quirks (obviously I am taking the historians point of view, who are desperate to integrate and organize the whole historical contents into some manageable entirety) forces our attention to the need (that of the historians, strictly speaking and following Foucault's argument) not only to tolerate the breaks that manifest themselves at various junctures of historical study but also to (this time on our part, who resides outside the jurisdiction of the former, as well as historians) reevaluate the conventional approach to systematize historical as well as epistemological disciplinary dimensions. As can be easily surmised, retrospectively speaking, opposing contrarian and disruptive energy to the unities represented by traditional approach is the outcome of this "revolutionary" discovery Foucault makes of the inherent cacophonies in the hopefully smooth progression of historical (obviously, chiming with the special connotations our author puts in the loaded word, that is) disciplines. Actually, that is rather an understatement. What Foucault envisions is to discover what is sequestered underneath the mainstream nomenclatures and subvert the disciplinary and epistemological system that is fulcrumed upon tradition and consequently upset the equilibrium generated by conventional values.<sup>3</sup> One manifestation we can glean from a rather diaphanous argument Foucault makes here is that he merges traditional disciplinary borders and tries to annul the subcategories that

---

operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise. (ibid.)

Could it be that the logical strategy deconstructionists employ are somehow based on topological legerdemain, as Nietzsche suggested, rather than on coherent, and thus continuous, logic traditional thinkers have purportedly have used? Considering Foucault's frequent references to the redoubtable philosopher, it is a disturbing possibility and at the same time a tantalizing one in that the philosopher's ideas could be transformed into any number of building blocks to develop a new epistemological approach.

<sup>3</sup> This may be quite by the by but Foucault's subversive attempt to drive a break into traditional epistemology, inclusive of methodology, contrasts neatly (I should say interestingly) with his contemporary compatriot, Jacques Lacan, who essentially maintained an optimistically systemic approach to explore the unconscious where he recognized a rationalistic structure rather than the obtrusive inchoate energy and bravely went about schematizing what was happening in the depths of human mind *à la* such great continental thinkers as Freud and Saussure. See *Ecrits: A Selection*, particularly Chapter Five, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud," pp. 146-178. (I am, however, aware that Foucault, especially in his earlier career, leaned toward the safe non-empirical and non-essentialist stance structural linguistics seemed to have offered, although the nominalism, upon which linguistic structuralism was systematized on a certain level, entailed, according to David Couzens Hoy, complications that were increasingly hard to unravel as Foucault underwent meandering intellectual transformations throughout his career. See *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, pp. 1-25.)

have been used as powerful means to justify the autonomous existence each one has enjoyed. Such concept as "periods," "centuries," "genres" and so on, our author loudly and yet very smoothly posits, are mere fiction built under the name of unifying authority, which again is produced to allocate certain autonomous territories to various "well-defined" disciplinary fields, ad infinitum. If such conceptual spheres are susceptible to finite interpretation and definable demarcation, then that is not supposed to be taking place in the target disciplines that are, as Foucault time again reiterates, linked, if at all in the most tenuous sense, to what is traditionally considered historical.<sup>4</sup> The double-entendre, one should note here, is that the evasion Foucault mentions is not only the kind that allows one to evade the centralizing authority that has been a powerful force to categorize the disciplinary and other epistemological fields in human sciences but also the kind that at the same time empowers one, at least historical and epistemological thinkers like Foucault, to go against the established citadel of such arbitrational forces as the disciplines listed in our author's work. In other words, while Foucault presumably posits the centrifugal slippage as the main source to confront the mainstream, traditional-bound historical/epistemological approach, he indeed cannot help bringing in the same baggage he is ostensibly trying to get rid of.<sup>5</sup>

In this cacophonous approach to define the theoretical foundation to which to somehow moor the jumble of various ramifications of knowledge, Foucault emerges as a bold architect to reconstitute an epistemologico-historical endeavor in a way that can

---

<sup>4</sup> The sense of indeterminacy Foucault's argument conveys seems to agree, in essence, with the interdictory stance he takes in the *Archaeology*, which translates to, in Richard Rorty's words:

do not look for progress or meaning in history; do not see the history of a given activity, of any segment of culture, as the development of rationality or of freedom; do not use any philosophical vocabulary to characterize the essence of such activity or the goal it serves; do not assume that the way this activity is presently conducted gives any clue to the goals it served in the past. ("Foucault and Epistemology," *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy, pp. 41-49.)

Rorty, by the way, concludes, "[s]uch purely negative maxims neither spring from a theory nor constitute a method."

<sup>5</sup> This teetering of his approach, or kind of methodological de-systemization, is indeed noted by other critics as well. One of them, James Miller, who wrote a biography of Foucault (although Miller calls his work, rather modestly, or more likely echoing Foucault's de-centering tendency, "not a biography, though in outline it follows the chorology of Michel Foucault's life; nor is it a comprehensive survey of his works, although it does offer an interpretation of a great many of his texts" but "a narrative account of one man's lifelong struggle to honor Nietzsche's gnomic injunction, 'to become what one is'") states that "Foucault left behind no synoptic critique of society, no system of ethics, no comprehensive theory of power, not even (current impressions to the contrary) a generally useful historical method." See *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, pp. 5-19.

reflect the important discoveries purportedly made in recent years. Without much delay let us excerpt a passage from the same book we have been following to see how our author pursues this gigantic enterprise.

And the great problem presented by such historical analyses is not how continuities are established, how a single pattern is formed and preserved...the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations. ...By what criteria is one to isolate the unities with which one is dealing; what is *a* science? What is an *oeuvre*? What is *a* theory? What is *a* concept? What is *a* text? How is one to diversify the levels at which one may place oneself, each of which possesses its own divisions and form of analysis? What is the legitimate level of formalization? What is that of interpretation? Of structural analysis? Of attributions of causality? (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 5-6)

Note how Foucault's argument is laced with ever-present ambiguity (or I should say ambivalence). The problem, as he sees it, in the present pursuit of knowledge (be it historical, or whatever) is not too much focus on connecting links to the past, or the study thereof, or apparent slant toward locating inherent continuities but under-emphasis on "division," which obviously echoes the concept he introduced before by the term ruptures, and the issue of limits.<sup>6</sup> Now what is the logical relation between the two juxtaposed terms Foucault affixes at the end of the sentence, as if there is no conflict and possible friction between them, or more accurately between the conceptual significance represented by the two terms here juxtaposed? Are we to take what is nonchalantly dropped, as if they were a mere addendum and *fait accompli*, without subjecting them to even a modicum of scrutiny? That would be too crude and irresponsible. So let us fathom what actually lies beneath the tip of those seemingly matter-of-fact but indeed extremely loaded words.<sup>7</sup> Well, I seem to have preambled

---

<sup>6</sup> The division, or discontinuity, that is foregrounded in the *Archaeology* is not the only story in Foucault's discursive formation. According to Paul Rabinow, "the longer-range continuities" that manifest in "cultural practices" more than compensate for the "sharp lines of discursive discontinuity in the human sciences." (By the way Rabinow equates the former with "non-discursive practices" as holding a position that is somehow opposite to the one held by discursive practices.) Rabinow may have a point in certain contexts but as far as Foucault's argument in the *Archaeology* is concerned the only feature that persists and continues ad infinitum seems to be diffusion, discursive breaks and logical decentralization. On Rabinow's view see *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 3-29.

<sup>7</sup> Loaded because, as I argue in the main essay, the terms here referred to in fact transmogrify and transform at various levels. What seems to determine the exact significance of each is the context in which it is placed. But even there each term

this argument rather too dramatically, but what Foucault crams into “division” qua rupture is exactly the element that tries to deter one from yielding the overweening authority over various categories that, on their own, seem to be bubbling with restive energies. Or, more succinctly put, the force that tries to repulse the borders scholars attempt to forge in their confident, and perhaps arrogant, move to subsume individual occurrences under arbitrary and, perhaps more likely, convenient pigeonholes. Indeed, the argument Foucault develops on this thesis is very consistent with the discontent he expresses with the current disciplinary pursuits that are prevalent at the time (contemporaneously with the author, that is). Thus, the irrelevance of finding the single pattern and continuities in the data obtained in historical research, etc. However, these multi-directional forces manifested by the elements that are wont to be introduced to various target disciplines are again in danger of being constrained and channeled into arbitrary nomenclatures by the concept Foucault, rather surprisingly I should say, concocts and terms as “limits.” Now what are the limits? A concept that obviously militates against that very centrifugal concept Foucault seems to have been gung-ho about adopting? Is it not something that demarcates the peripheries and eases the confusion that might arise from the bubbling energies that potentially annul the very borders the author, in a surprise flip-flop, now appears to be intent on preventing from happening?<sup>8</sup> Admittedly, the ploy here manifested, is subtle and nothing of the kind that explicitly declares the nullification of the deconstructive momentum our author seems to have been assiduously building from the onset of the current essay. But if the reader has been paying close attention, weighing out the pros and cons of the argument, well, the contradiction suggested by the juxtaposition of the two terms, or rather what that apparently entails, is so unsettling that one cannot help but being reminded of the difficulty Foucault faces as he attempts to develop an alternative disciplinary approach

---

spurns and eludes exact definition through a mechanism somehow reminiscent of the Foucaultian concept of slippage. Perhaps, the terms Foucault employs and the argument he makes indeed mirror each other. On that, see and follow the path of the main essay.

<sup>8</sup> My seemingly over-elaborate argument about Foucaultian limits arises from the evocation of innate demarcations and potential structures this line of epistemological rationale gives rise to—the kind Noam Chomsky in the old days was fond of deploying in such cogitation as, a “mass of schematisms, innate governing principles, which guide our social and intellectual and individual behavior...there is something biologically given, unchangeable, a foundation for whatever it is that we do with our mental capacities” (quoted from “Human Nature: Justice versus Power,” in *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind*, ed. Fons Elders (London, Souvenir Press, 1974), pp. 136-140). In other words, I fear Foucault may be running a risk of going a tad Cartesian.

that is devoid, or rather free from, all the trappings of metaphysical superstructure, origin, continuity, and borders.<sup>9</sup> The truth seems that as soon as Foucault thinks he is rid of all of these extraneous matters he is entrapped, recursively as if he is after all part of the system in order to argue against it, in them and finds himself weaving a network of conceptual wefts and warps to contain, or rather supersede, the traditional baggage. In other words, our author is involved in an extremely difficult race in which everyone has to abide by the same set of rules and yet has to win one way or another, most likely through an ingenuity that no one else has hopefully come up with and yet which everyone else actually shares. Thus, the dilemma, although Foucault ostensibly does not see it that way (who does? in an academic race to win the glory?), he falls into when he defines the big issue historians are facing, or should face, is very well delineated by the passage that "it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations."

The two contrarian views develop into an argument that is impacted upon the document and the lack of it. Without Foucault's sophisticated attempt to enforce the importance of documents of history, we tend to agree that written evidence, or simply evidentially facts are integral parts of historical endeavor. However, what our author particular stresses is the directionality and the clues they potentially provide in filling out the lacunae historians inevitably face in their effort to grasp the strands or a series of periods to trace a meaningful trajectory, which ultimately constitutes history. It is, according to our author, the reconstitute value those documents possess that becomes an integral part of historians' tools and without which no systematic overview of history is possible. What Foucault notes in the relevant passage in *The Archaeology of*

---

<sup>9</sup> Or could it be due to the inherent nihilism in the *Archaeology* that makes reading of Foucault such a challenging undertaking most of the time? Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow contends in their *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (p. 87) that the concomitant nihilism in the *Archaeology* reduces "all meaningful interpretation as an illusion fostered by the rule-governed rarity [sic] of statements," and quote the following passage:

To interpret is a way of reacting to enunciative poverty, and to compensate for it by a multiplication of meaning; a way of speaking on the basis of that poverty, and yet despite it. But to analyse a discursive formation is to seek the law of that poverty, it is to weight it up, and to determine its specific form. In one sense, therefore, it is to weigh the 'value' of statements. A value that is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of a secret content; but which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but, more generally, in the administration of scarce resources. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 120)

It is rather discouraging to find an author so acerbic and cynical. But that cannot be the whole story. If he were, he would have become obsolete long time ago. Or did he?

*Knowledge* is quite suggestive and at the same time apropos in this context that what is most useful about the documents is their recuperative power, or rather the way they allow historians to recover the traces of the past, "which they emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them" (p. 6). In other words, documents represent intangible vestiges that are physically untraceable and yet somehow coalesced into an object susceptible to historians' interpretations. Thus the inchoate historical lacunae are given, upon their discretion, certain directions and form which otherwise would be mere emptiness, indivisible and unknowable (granted that I am risking tautology). Now turning to the question of documents once again, they are also interpreted as a voice that is muted and silenced up to the moment when the interspersed documents give rise to audible sound which in turn, or rather consecutively, the historical subject deciphers based upon the documentary evidence compiled in a systematic/orderly manner. Needless to say, the messages the lacunae provide may not necessarily be digested as a given but rather they need to be processed from a fixed perspective which only a meta-subject can supply without failure and with absolute assurance. Assumption of this absolute position is a rather tall order and since logic tells us that no human being can indeed substitute God in this function the job historians fulfill in their limited capacity is at most arbitrary and biased. However, that may be caviling a bit as our author barges on in his schematic explication of how the order-giving subject takes an initiative and projects himself into the systematic overview in which the purportedly sole evidential documents are analyzed and made out into something they are supposed to represent and signify. It is curious how Foucault characterizes this process as a mutation (on the part of history) and seizes the positional shift between history and the document as something revolutionary that happened in the gradual evolution of how we look at history per se. It is not the truth-value that is to be made much of as the historians work on the documents. But rather the modus in which they could be utilized and organized as the historians try to get at the basis on which the evidential facts are supposed to be founded. In the process history, as it were, becomes the internalized force and engine to direct and group the relevant documentary bits with the ultimate goal of producing a meaningful whole that, in turn, can be called history. In Foucault's words, history "now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations" (*Archaeology*, pp. 6-7). On the surface, as the reader might have noticed, the work and function described here do not seem to be any different from those a traditional historian has been engaged in, as he delves into the materials and becomes

part of the flow of work meant to create a somewhat linear and unitary historical view. However, what is crucial here is the way history engages with the materials relevant to target organization. Note how it is turned into a subject and let in, or almost allowed to subcutaneously submerge into, the space where it is given free rein to shape and unify and, in a way, concatenate the materials in question. It is, strictly speaking, no more the conventional actant but the abstract concept represented by history that is given the main role to structure the raw materials in their proper relations and balances. It is an interesting process, something not to be just passed over by just a number of indirect references but expatiated upon in detail, as to how the subject transition is possible and, or how it did, or does if it has not happened yet—although that seems a bit contradictory in the context our author provides—take place and so on. Is it too much to ask? Perhaps not. Considering the implied momentous shift from the historian and history per se as the source of organizing force that is purportedly to underpin everything a historian does vis-à-vis the raw materials in question, an extensive and univocal explication seems due, or the least the reader could expect from such a profound author like Foucault. However, what our author delivers is not exactly the kind of in-depth analysis of how the positional shift takes place but rather blurring the lines that should, or logically should to be exact, demarcate the two entities defined here as history and historian. It may be time to quote the relevant passage to focus on what is at issue.

The document, then, is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unites, totalities, series, relations. History must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory; history is the work expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form. (p. 7)

Through repeated definition and redefinition of what history does on the documents, in other words through constant foregrounding of the relational signification that purportedly exists between history and documents, our author achieves something akin to transmogrification of history into historian and vice versa. History is, as has been shown, invested with causative power that impacts the foundation on which raw materials are based but as Foucault argues that it progressively attains a status that is

no different than one which is usually associated with a traditional subject position nomenclatured as historian. What does it mean? Well, in case I am falling into a limbo that renders every argument stripped of any concrete directionality, let me explain hopefully more in detail. History, Foucault seems to be implying, gives rise to shape and meaning where there used to be considered to exist only "an inert material" and applies (yes, the subject here omitted is obviously no other than the apparent subject represented by the subject in the main sentence) the outcome to what man has supposed to have "done or said." At this stage no one doubts that the concept history, or rather a simple grammatical history, is turned into, I should say anthropomorphized into, a very agent who usually conducts historical study. The suspicion is aroused even further when causation is concretized into a force that organizes and unifies documents and data into something definable, something that can be shared among those who share the same goal. However, anthropomorphizing tendency is not, even in this short passage, unidirectional. Foucault tends to blur the border between the object and subject positions and metaphorically allows one to jump to another's territory and vice versa, investing one, according to his own logic it seems, with the function and significance that are by definition exclusively other's. A case in point is a sentence, "History must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and through which it found its anthropological justification...." History here perhaps can be conceptualized as an abstract totalization. Its juxtaposition with its own image may or may not support that read. If we grant it a subject position that can wield causative power, that may seem a probable interpretation. However, once it is directly conjoined with *documents*, as indeed happens in the preceding sentence, interstitial space between the two, or rather the space that should separate the two, is filled with opacity that can transmogrify itself any way our author wants it. Look at the affixed incremental significative modulation, "that [the image] of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory." If history has been content with creating the image of a people that can be, as Foucault puts it, termed a memory of the past or collective consciousness of a people, which sounds a little dated now in retrospect, then it does not seem so far-fetched to invoke the actual and traditional agent who is implicitly referred to or linked to by the mere mention of the object of his search, which is rather bathetically perhaps ordinarily represented as history per se. This interpretation, indeed, becomes quite plausible despite the constant oscillation our author gets himself involved in when he explicitly states that "history is the work expended on material documentation...." That is, history is none other than the outcome, not a causative agent, that results in, or is equated with, such

particularized phenomena as “books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.” This causational oscillation, as it were, that arises from history is further made evident when Foucault continues the sentence, “that [material documentation] exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form.” It is tantamount to declaring the volitional nature of history or, conversely, non-volitional, objectified state of history that is completely deprived of a subject position. In other words, our author, in a manner rather strange, puts supposedly one and the same history under diametrically opposed categories in the same breath, leaving the reader rather puzzled, to say the least, and befuddled, which is most likely the case.

And then suddenly an idea surfaces that could bridge the apparent incongruities and indeterminacies Foucault's world seems to be inextricably embroiled in. What if the argument he is engaged in and developing is a way of framing a space in which metaphors and significative transformations are the norm rather than the exception? And occasional literal references are the ones that are to be pushed back and reinterpreted until they make a somehow homogeneous whole together with the ones that are on varying degrees of tropological levels?<sup>10</sup> That may sound a fanciful conjecture but since Foucault's argument becomes so diaphanous and tautologically challenging and syntactically tenuous—increasingly so, I should say—well, the proposal I am making may not be after all totally unreasonable. With that proviso let me quote the following excerpt and see if I can substantiate what I just hinted at and, if possible, make a synergistic sense of our author from a more broader perspective that, in a way, justifies the reputation Foucault has been enjoying—or perhaps, as some people claim, used to enjoy.

...let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those

---

<sup>10</sup> These seeming examples of smoothing-over the significatory discontinuities in the manner of structuralism (perhaps Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*, admittedly rather passé, may be particularly relevant in this context because of its encyclopedic summation of the structuralist ethos) tantalizingly keep the reader's expectations in the direction of totalization qua structuration. However, in the world of Foucault that is not meant to be. Such concepts as communication, signification and innate rules of structures that underlie any meaningful text simply do not materialize, or more strictly speaking, do not necessarily come into play even when any pseudo-system is even on the verge of congealment, which by the way invariably fails to transpire. One might wonder if any “discursive formation” is at all possible in this formidable author's unpredictable and almost fissile world. Bibliographical information about the book referred to above is as follows. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982).

traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 7)

What one notices at first sight here is the smooth and rather neat parallelism between the conceptualized *documents* and *monuments*. They not only sound similar but, as the reader pores over the current document generated by Foucault, their representational as well as significative entities seem to flow into each other and by the end of the sentence he is likely to have left with a sense that their interchangeability simply amorphized their gist into something completely malleable and almost unfixable. Granted that historical demarcation is embedded in his argument and that keeps the two from falling into total collapse, at least technically speaking, but no one can deny that the strength and the weakness of the argument here deployed derives from the neat parallelism and pseudo-interchangeability of the positions left to occupy by the *documents* and *monuments*. Interestingly enough, as if to echo the very transformative quality I pointed out, Foucault does note the transformation history works on the documents in order to come up with a unitary system that, rather reductively, is conducive to the very agent by which name the history is named here. Is it a mere coincidence? By no means. If you take a close look at the target sentence, you find the vestigial traces of history neatly turned into something legible. Indeed, it is the same argument Foucault used before when he focused on the transformation of modern history versus the past one. But, well, in retrospect that is also echoed in the present argument as Foucault links the transformation between the documents and monuments to the historical evolution of methodology that is purportedly something cataclysmic in the pertinent field. What is seeming a definitive difference between modern history and past history in the end congeals at a level where the distinctions made in the preceding argument collapses and the characteristics once attributed to the one are indeed turned around and linked to the other and vice versa. The argumentative hinges used here is archaeology, the very name Foucault applies to the entire book. Is it a coincidence? Perhaps not. As the reader may have guessed by now, the same pendular motion, polemically speaking that is, surfaces again and again. But I should not needlessly hurry, for my purpose as I engage with Foucaultian ratiocination is to analyze his work carefully and come up with the optimal interpretation as I possibly can arrive at.

The polemic pendular motion, as I mentioned above, manifests itself with a vengeance as Foucault takes the reader to the by now very well defined field of history (or at least supposedly more than well-demarcated, I should say). This time, as before, the argument is centered on serialization and de-serialization, or continuity and discontinuity, and totalization and fragmentation.<sup>11</sup> A tack he takes on this occasion, however, is that he resorts to a very nebulous, as it turns out later on, distinction between history proper and history of ideas, thought and sciences. To the former our author grants more stabilized longer concatenations of series of events that are based on causality, determinacy and other sequential relations that are, in fact, the foundations of conventional Western epistemology. The point Foucault makes here, I presume, is exactly the kind that is derived from the metaphysical anchor or lynchpin upon which traditional philosophers used to base their arguments to enlighten the befuddled audiences. Relational structures can be safely built because there is a safe stable foundation on which to compare and compile the two terms. The resultant linearity, once the raw materials are incorporated into history, gives rise to laws and consequently further serialization and strata, which in turn repeats the same process on an ever wider and grander scale. The potentially centrifugal move spawns unlimited types and number of history but because the dynamo is moored to the unmoving and solid metaphysical origin the resultant series is fundamentally linear and rationally explainable through such relational terms as causation etc. mentioned above. That is the general scheme Foucault describes pertaining to history proper. But, as I already preambled above, he posits a divergent branch, or subcategory of history, called history of ideas that leads to ever multiplying diversification and individuation. This category is exactly the kind he has been opposing the conventional epistemology with throughout his argument. In a way the space occupied by history of ideas is deductively arrived at when our author confronted and challenged the traditional approach to epistemology, which obviously includes those attempts to study everything man has produced and left behind him, even in vestigial forms. To be fair, however, Foucault characterizes the divergent transformation between the two as mutation, a mysterious quirk that intervened in the process between then when the two

---

<sup>11</sup> As the reader should be fully aware by now in Foucault same, or similar to be fair with our author, concepts recur and in transmogrified forms ad infinitum. I may not be totally trusted here but because of that tireless development on the same line Foucault seems to give rise to arguments that are quite diaphanous and slippery which are almost beyond unitary comprehension. They are indeed beyond traditional conceptual structuration. One perhaps has to transcend normal ratiocinative boundaries in order to fully synchronize one's mind with our author's.

were, as implied, identical or at least homogeneous, and now when they reveal unmistakable signs of individuated and discreet approaches. When the reader expects the emphasis to shift toward more of differentiation, or post-transmogrification of the two, the vestigial link between the two is furthermore foregrounded, perhaps inadvertently judging from the way Foucault attempts to elide from one argument to another. The counter-approach to traditionalism, Foucault intones, (which as I already mentioned was brought about by some sort of "mutation") produced "the opposite effect." One may be tempted to ask, opposite to what? But that question may be merely rhetorical in this context, as I have repeatedly pointed out that the need for the anti-approach to history proper was already adumbrated when our author (or even before he had) set out to work on the current essay.

The bifurcation into concentration and dissipation in what our author describes as a tendency in history that manifests in a transformative mutation, is further elaborated, or it may be more accurate to say reiterated, as Foucault renders the discontinuous as both the given and the unthinkable in historical endeavor. His explanation at this juncture is seemingly not that complicated. First, as Foucault has said it already a thousand times perhaps, the raw materials of history are essentially ridden with clefts, inconsistencies and non-linearity. As is with the real world, which consists of a myriad of discontinuous occurrences at any given moment, historical space is understandably crisscrossed with the lines that literally divide one spatio-temporal historical domain from another, at innumerable significative levels. However, history—actually Foucault here modifies the concept with a term rather conveniently thrown in here to hold anything that requires orderliness and proportion, classical—is prone to smoother joining surfaces as two occurrences, or two pieces of historical materials, are pulled together to form a consistent unitary historical horizon. Without that process, no history, according to the implied definition our author seems to have arrived at by now of history, or classical history to be exact, can maintain the impetus that purportedly allows it to move forward to complete the integrated edifice, which after all is the ineluctable goal, or at least one of the goals, historians should set before them. But what is at stake, vis-à-vis Foucault's argument is that the breaks and faults that crop up in historical lucubration are the concomitant part of history per se and not the kind that merely appear perchance and conveniently mutate into what they are originally not, allowing the historical consciousnesses to build the smooth links in what our author calls periodization and by extension stratification. In such a world it is therefore not at all surprising to find "the limits of a process, the point of inflexion of a curve, the inversion of a regulatory movement, the boundaries of an oscillation, the

threshold of a function, the instant at which a circular causality breaks down” (*Archaeology*, p. 9). Impasses of some sort, illogicalities in thought process, reversals in concatenated progression—these must necessarily arise as history come face to face with the real chaotic as well as inchoate bits of materials of which the edifice I referred to must be constructed. It is truly instructive to note that Foucault seizes these bits as something not only inescapable but indispensable, for after all a historian has to admit to their existence (the need for which would be the keener the more sincere and committed the historian was) and at the same time incorporate them as he somehow achieves a compromise in solving the knotty, as well as concomitant, issues of inconsistency and discontinuity.<sup>12</sup> In fact, our author does not have a choice as the elements he deals with constantly changes their overall significance and show shifting structural and conceptual features at each passing moments, as it were. Everything is relative and as the historian works through the raw materials the indeterminacy factor puts itself to the foreground at moment’s notice. That is why there are such cleavages that defy definition and specification. In our author’s words, “it [discontinuity, or its ilk in general] is the concept that the historian’s work never ceases to specify (instead of neglecting it as a uniform, indifferent blank between two positive figures)...” (*Archaeology*, p. 9). And such an element exhibits truly relativized values, making it, among other innumerable concepts, untreatable in any definite manner, thus allowing it further leeway for disruptive functions in ever complicating lucubration. Before I forget let me quote the line that almost echoes Einsteinian concept of relativity: “it [the same referent as above] assumes a specific form and function according to the field and the level to which it is assigned...” (ibid., p. 9). As one reads the way Foucault time and again tries to pinpoint the indefinable, one gets the sense that the concept is only circumscribed in a space where its significance is ever invested with its negative self. It is, in other words, never itself, with independent significance and values that persevere throughout time and space but it shifts and varies in episteme and nature depending on how one treats it and conceives it. That is why Foucault always leaves

---

<sup>12</sup> The exact lines that appear in Foucault’s essay read as follows: “Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian’s task to remove from history...it constitutes a deliberate operation on the part of the historian...he must, at least as a systematic hypothesis, distinguish the possible levels of analysis, the methods proper to each, and the periodization that best suits them...it is the result of his description (and not something that must be eliminated by means of his analysis)...for he is trying to discover the limits of a process...” From *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 8-9. Notice how delicate the status of discontinuity is in Foucault. It is one thing and yet not that thing. One might as well extrapolate it to mean that it poses one conceptual structure at one moment and quite another at other moments.

an escape route as he both tries to concretize the concept of continuity and dissipate it. This ambivalent attitude becomes painfully clear as one closely follows his argument. He says, "one does not speak of the same discontinuity when describing an epistemological threshold, the point of reflexion in a population curve, or the replacement of one technique by another." Perhaps he is irrefutable here but he is bringing in a mixture of instances in which the referred concept is in fact but necessarily manifest centrifugally. How can one expect under such circumstances the referred concept to preserve the self-same significative content and rebuff the deconstructive assault such divergent context seems to inevitably make? It is to a certain extent a bit comical when our author resorts to the paradoxical nature of discontinuity, pointing out its ever-shifting position in research, "it is both an instrument and an object," in his words. Is it not then uncategorizable, unframeable, and uncontainable? Foucault is hard put to somehow domesticate this very knotty concept as he follows with instantiations calculated to break this conceptual impasse he inadvertently faltered into, one through reversal of causality and the other through individuation and totalization: "it divides up the field of which it is the effect: ...it enables the historian to individualize different domains but can be established only by comparing those domains" (ibid. p. 9). The idea of being one thing and at the same time not that thing subsists throughout the current argument. Note how Foucault almost completely loses his readers when he remarks that discontinuity "is not simply a concept present in the discourse of the historian, but something that the historian secretly supposes to be present." In other words, the concept is simultaneously present and absent. If such dual state is possible in any argument, then its definability becomes infinitely uncertain and the most the reader can hope for is to attain the shadow of the argument and even the shadow of a shadow of the original and so on. It is not hard to imagine that Foucault has to come out of this debacle by reinventing the history he has half-heartedly been trying to conceptually contain up to the moment by forcing the reader to refocus on the semi-differentiated branch of history, which by the way he had in passing introduced in the previous-and-yet-related argument preliminary to the present one, and attributing to the new history the unique and creative power to transfer and displace discontinuities into and with something constructive and foundational, transform them from obstacle to work. Simply put, the new history incorporates discontinuities not as something that are unavoidable but essential and integral. Now we have a full circle. As our author puts it, the potentially disruptive tendency, or a feature thus tended to be considered traditionally, transforms itself into a "positive element that determines its object and validates its analysis." History, as it

were, here achieves a status where detotalizational ingredients, those tend to disrupt serialization and linearity, become the *sine qua non* of its existence.

The process of standardization of discontinuities in history—I need to be specific with due respect to Foucault, so be it new history—, however, indicates ironically the conservative tendency against which our author and others of his age obviously rebelled against when they proposed the non-totalizational history in the first place. The sooner Foucault finds himself in danger of successfully incorporating the discontinuous into an establishmentarian history the more keenly does he feel the need to escape from the doldrums such stability is deemed to induce. The case in point is the division between a total history and a general history, or rather, strictly speaking, redelineation and further deconstruction of history, an operation that generates the two. The move to escape from the stultifying constraints of the traditionalism is to negate those factors that are classified too unitary and centripetal. However, after all those arguments about discontinuities and totalization the paths our author can take seem a little limited. His tack now is to either repeat the previous line of development with an ever-subtle perspectival shift or cautiously tread between two equally unacceptable extremes from either of which he has to distance himself as soon as his argument begins to present itself dangerously careening toward too close to them. What does it amount to? At one moment, inevitably as anyone would agree, Foucault defines the general history as something that is not total history in terms that are just about the reversal of the latter, “These are the postulates that are challenged by the new history when it speaks of series, divisions, limits, differences of level, shifts, chronological specificities, particular forms of rehandling, possible types of relations” (*Archaeology*, p. 10). But the next moment he is compelled to backtrack from such obtuse opposition in favor of a history that is less absolutely discontinuous (a rather awkward expression but that should suffice for the moment) and more manageable and conceivable—the kind that is more amenable to more structured approach, no matter how contrarian that seems to the theory our author seems to be advancing. How does that delicate sentiment manifest in the essay? Let our author speak for himself.

This is not because it is trying to obtain a plurality of histories juxtaposed and independent of one another: that of the economy beside that of institutions, and beside these two those of science, religion, or literature; nor is it because it is merely trying to discover between these different histories coincidences of dates, or analogies of form and meaning. (*Archaeology*, p. 10)

At this stage the concepts, such as discontinuity and dispersion, that are linked to the new history are deprived of their puritanical vigor and rendered infinitely modifiable

contingent upon the circumstances in which they appear. The contingencies apparently include eccentricity that develops between ideas and historical phases, which the new history is supposed to tackle. What it is does not come out so univocally in our author's ever-expanding world. One thing that is, and often indefinably is not, is that it, the concept, is graspable in such a way that eludes normal traditional historical comprehension. Well, to be more succinctly put, it manifests in such relational terms as that which appears between two or more periodicities or two or more power entities that can only be defined, rather tautologically I should say, in terms of their positionalities such as those located, relatively speaking, vertically interrelated, and so on.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the attempt to seize the very concept discussed here meets a resistance of a kind that can be characterized as, if I borrow a much touted word and which turned out to be as self-reflexive as the one we are dealing with now, *aporistic*—a phenomenon that occurs when one feels tantalizingly ever so close to a goal and yet the goal recedes in accordance with the effort put into reaching the goal. One even gets a sense that the thing Foucault has been trying to pinpoint might perhaps be so eccentric and centrifugal that its reason for being could only be found where normal ratiocination ceased to exist. In other words, has the reader been chasing the mere willow-of-the-wisp all this time? That is too drastic and all too depressing. We still need to have confidence in our cicerone as we pursue our intellectual journey through the well-nigh unexplored territory our author has been leading us to. At least, we recognize, or at least we wishfully pray for such, a hope that our hero is, or just might be, taking us to a new level of epistemology we have not yet experienced. A new world, a new intellectual system (admittedly that seems to contradict what Foucault has been intoning, I admit), is unlocked and being founded right before our eyes—well, such are at least the rewards we rather self-consciously dangle before us as we proceed with our quest for the elusive grail.

The centripetal and centrifugal tendency, or pulling in and out of the bifurcational currents, also manifests on other planes as Foucault tries to define and

---

<sup>13</sup> To be fair to our author I quote him verbatim. His argument is ever so subtle but the recurrent conceptual delineations are incrementally consistent and the kind that tends to appeal to supra/subcutaneous intellection that paradoxically eludes full rational comprehension. Here is the quote:

...what vertical system they [serialized conceptual bits] are capable of forming; what interplay of correlation and dominance exists between them; what may be the effect of shifts, different temporalities, and various rehandlings; in what distinct totalities certain elements may figure simultaneously; in short, not only what series, but also what 'series of series'—or, in other words, what 'tables' it is possible to draw up. (*Archaeology*, p. 10)

develop new epistemological horizons. Methodology is another issue that is apparently riddled with contradictions and paradoxes. Despite his seemingly avowed desire to escape from the hidebound structures and strictures to keep history within the corals of traditionalism Foucault cannot help expressing his uncertainties about developing the kind of decentered system (granted that the term itself sounds oxymoronic in this context) without the time-honored epistemological and methodological foundations by means of which classical studies have long been cached since time immemorial. To be succinctly put, our author cannot get rid of the idea of "coherent and harmonious corpora of work" in dealing with history while he at the same time attempts to break away from such baggage and go beyond unitary and continuous conception of history; he is troubled with "the definition of levels of analysis" and its relevancy despite the fact that what he should be attempting would ultimately be leveling out such traditionalist inflexibilities and culling all those which are purportedly contradictorily featured; he is compelled to specify "a method of analysis," a process that is laced with such unexpected and bathetic terms as "breaking-down of the material," "a number of assignable features," "correlations," "interpretative decipherment," "analysis of frequency and distribution," etc.; he just has to invoke such anti-dispersionary (you must pardon my licentious use of Foucaultian concepts as I am, like our author, compelled to employ inchoate terms to pursue the as yet elusive ideas) methodological process as "delimitation of groups and sub-groups" despite our expectations to the contrary, albeit what the other alternative would be is quite undelineatable at this point; and he gives out a nuance that relational determinations are something that cannot be avoided. What is most salient at this juncture is not that Foucault is surreptitiously advocating this methodological recidivism, as it were, but that he recognizes the above iterated as a problem the new history faces. Without a doubt the epistemo-historical endeavor Foucault has been arguing for throughout the essay cannot exist without a solid methodological foundation. But what he concedes as a little problem the new history faces and the gargantuan conceptualization of the target work our author envisages seem to clash so hopelessly that the reader is possessed with a momentary despair that the only way out of this impasse would be jettison the discontinuous layers of structure that is simultaneously non-structure altogether and stand once again on the safe, traditional ground against which Foucault putatively started accumulating his deconstructive concepts in the first place.

Not coincidentally, the essay is followed with Foucault's re-musing on the metaphysical certainties the historical subject must necessarily have enjoyed since time immemorial. (Granted that that is rather oddly put, but Foucault's attitude to the

fixed and continuous subject is almost always problematic.) Rather repetitiously Foucault foregrounds the dovetailing of multi-faceted historical dimensions as he resignedly reintroduces the reader to the difficult issues history has been facing since it has been engaged in systematization of periodicity and often-contradictorily segmented historical phases. Initially Foucault tries to fall back on the human tendency to seize on the continuities and homogeneities as the historian faces an admixture of raw data and materials, both conceptual and physical. However, it turns out to be a ploy by our author to essentialize the subject, only through which after all the variegated periodicities and raw materials of history can be ascertained and at least to a modicum degree given any façade of directionality. It is, Foucault restates, a tendency of the subject to construct a framework or structure to contain all sorts of historical lucubration and conversely to resist anything that militate against such artificially smooth encapsulation of historical concepts. In other words, it is a natural reflex of the historical subject, which by the way Foucault substitutes with general *we*, or some might argue it is *I* who does that, to feel “a particular repugnance to conceiving of difference, to describing separations and dispersions, to dissociating the reassuring form of the identical” (*Archaeology*, p. 12). The argument here, by the way, is quite tautological and redundant, to some degree, for the self/subject naturally opposes to having heterogeneities within herself (that would entail schizoid instability) and for the very same reason desists “separations and dispersions” (that would alienate the self from herself) and avoids “dissociating the reassuring form of the identical” (that would result in self-destructive). On the contrary, the self needs and seeks the origin and the steady and reliable foundations on which it can always safely fall back on. By combing the two self-same arguments Foucault brings the reader to the same dilemma he has already introduced the reader to not many paragraphs before. The clash between the deconstructive, discontinuous tendency and structural, metaphysical tendency the subject faces anywhere she advances is something that is implicit as long as the originating and structuating consciousness is centered on the very traditional subject, from which Foucault despite his multi-layered subtle and rather decentered argument cannot escape after all. In this context our author’s comment and more less his admission to the inherent fear of harboring the *Other* within ourselves reiterates the difficulty of dealing with the double-edged issue Foucault has embarked on addressing in his work.

By now the reader must have guessed the gist of Foucaultian project in the essay we have been analyzing, but the more keenly our author feels the need to develop the eccentric, decentered historical view, the more strongly does he seem to have the

urge to fall back on the traditional function of the subject. It may sound ironic that Foucault time and again dithers between the two supposedly diametrical positions but as we delve more deeply into the layers that lie behind all his epistemological lucubration, the certainty of the continuous subject, as he puts it, and the solid and metaphysical origin that is equated with the base of consciousness loom ever larger. It may perhaps be that Foucault needs after all the "privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness" in order to venture into a territory that is seemingly murky and inchoate and beyond control of the invasive subject. In this light, even his observation that "[c]ontinuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject" sounds tinged with ambivalence. Does it mean that the founding function of the subject is a given and thus needs to be taken for granted or is it something that needs to be riven through and subverted one way or another before the new horizon Foucault seems to be hinting at throughout his essay can start to emerge in a tangible form? Of course it is not easy to divine the complex of intents that lie behind all his comments but after all the arguments regarding the possibilities and hindrances before the deconstructed historical processes can fully pan out any conceptual reminiscences and projections as to the position of the subject and its control become dashed with bi-directional, and even amorphous, suggestiveness. Perhaps, Foucault is encouraging an open-ended approach to develop a new phase of historical and epistemological study that is neither one nor the other and yet somehow comprehends all the features that are common to both, albeit they may be contradictory to each other? The idea of continuation, totalization and homogenization that tend to control each individuated occurrences and ideas in history are in fact laid out in a manner that is both resigned and antagonistic as our author narrates the sovereign power of the subject and simultaneously counterpoints it with a determined and yet surreptitious stratagem to overturn it. (Well, to be frank, there may be other views as to the true sentiment behind Foucault's seemingly dualistic approach to the totalistic and continuing processes that kick in and prevail in history and epistemology, but the teetering layout of the traditional and its alternative approaches throughout the *Archaeology* certainly induces one to take a shifting stance as to what is prevailing and what is receded.) Putting his argument in a historical perspective may perhaps be a way for our author to limelight the clash between the two and at the same time to integrate them into each other in order to arrive at a position that cannot establish merely based upon the traditionalist foundations or completely apart from them.

The relationship between the two attitudes that have been cropping up throughout this essay merely emphasizes the oscillating epistemological power struggle

taking place both in history, as our author is fond of reiterating, and in Foucault himself. The historical overview he presents in regards to Marxian political decentering and Nietchean genealogical disruption versus the rationalistic, metaphysical uber-position of traditionalism simply brings the reader's attention to the difficulty of surmounting the stabilizing subject and of coming up with the new methodology that both contains many features of "consciousness" and transcends them. Needless to say, Foucault's argument in this section runs on the same theme. The continuous and seemingly undislodgable sovereign subject that withstood the test of time and ideological jots. It is, however, rather interesting, although I should add that the strategy our author employs is not at all unexpected, that Foucault juxtaposes the safe, anchoring position of the subject with "the twin figures of anthropology and humanism." Could it be our author's implicit admission that a systematic and coherent framework is after all a *sine qua non* to establish an environment where the rationalistic endeavor can have any kind of universalistic appeal? That is, with any convincing foundations on which to develop the system that is in fact a non-system, the sort Foucault has been trying to weave upon his central conception but has not been able to so far in his argument with any modicum of success? Despite his reference to Marx, with the latter's powerful decentering move to break through and give rise to a new epistemological horizon, does Foucault in fact succeed in giving himself the needed impetus to break away from the traditionalist molds, with which he happens to identify anthropology and humanism of the nineteenth century, or at least does he manage to adumbrate the new epistemological horizons he has been itching to define but has been unable to? These pseudo-rhetorical questions are merely speculations. But one thing seems to be certain amid all the uncertainties that prevail in this deconstructed world of our author. That is, what I termed the teetering relations between the centering subject and its disjunctive counterpart are further juxtaposed with the historical purview in which the potentially disruptive Marxian historico-econo-ideological view and Nietchean genealogy<sup>14</sup> are given way to a humanistic totalistic traditionalism that has in fact been

---

<sup>14</sup> Genealogy used in this connection is a tricky term that begs for explication. According to Richard Rorty in his "Foucault and Epistemology," it signifies a "non-eschatological, non-edifying historiography" and...and he refers to an excerpt from Foucault's *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 139-140:

Genealogy must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to isolate the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles.

in the ascendancy for the past millennium. It is not then the stasis, in which one view and methodology prevails over the other, but rather the dynamism in which the two seemingly opposed views are constantly interleaved and let each other pull in the opposite direction that is foregrounded in the Foucault's argument. Other than that dynamism it is the ever-engulfing whirlpool that emanates from the metaphysical origin that plays out and always tries to absorb the counter-forces, which on the opposite side constantly manifest as an energy to scatter and disrupt the totalistic smoothing out of the consciousness. Is it not indeed the larger picture that arise from the historical canvass Foucault draws on in his effort to capture and focus on the turmoil that for all likelihood will continue as long as one side implicitly or explicitly forces the other to go on the defensive, which by the way is the pattern that is almost guaranteed to persists as long as the epistemological quest of the kind Foucault envisages continues. What is, however, striking is the tenacity with which our author maintains the guerrilla attitude toward the sacralized citadel of the humanized, centering and conservative subject with his sporadic and yet unrelenting sorties at the establishmentarian seamless histories and almost equal number of resultant resignations to attempt to overturn what he might be tempted to term the structuralist trend. But this same tenacity materializes in a not surprising admission that the provisos for the book titled *The Archaeology of Knowledge* are fulcrumed upon a number of conditions that are both defiance against and surrender to the sovereign power of the subject that has been and continues to be the origin and lynchpin of epistemology which at this point should impinge upon all the fields that pertain to human endeavors, including history. It may sound rather awkward at this final stage of my lucubration but I would like to let our author speak for himself as to how he thinks he is poised to delineate the tasks that lie ahead.

My aim is not to transfer to the field of history, and more particularly to the history of knowledge (*connaissances*), a structuralist method that has proved valuable in other fields of analysis. My aim is to uncover the principles and consequences of an autochthonous transformation that is taking place in the field of historical knowledge. It may well be that this transformation, the problems that it raises, the tools that it uses, the concepts that emerges from it, and the results that it obtains are not entirely foreign to what is called structural analysis. But...

In short, this book, like those that preceded it, does not belong...to the debate on structure (as opposed to genesis, history, development); it belongs to that field in

---

For Rorty's argument, see *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy, pp. 41-49.

which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off. But it would probably not be incorrect to say that the problem of structure arose there too. (pp. 15-16)

Is it only me who traces the ever narrowly circumscribed venture in seemingly ever widening epistemological horizons? I may be mistaken but perhaps....

#### Works Referenced

- Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- ..... *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Elders, Fons, ed. *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind*. London: Souvenir Press, 1974.
- Foucault, Michel. Donald F. Bouchard, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.
- ..... *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. I. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Hoy, David Couzens, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992.
- Lacan, Jacques. Alan Sheridan, tr. *Ecrits: A Selection*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.
- Miller, James. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. New York: Doubleday, 1993.
- Rabinow, Paul, ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

#### Michel Foucault の脱構築理論に関する一考察

Michel Foucault は *L'Archeologie du Savoir* において絶対的な origin や metaphysical な center というような概念で全体化される伝統的な epistemological な空間を脱却するような領域開拓のプロジェクトを提示、ないしは示唆する。しかしそのような伝統的概念領域を逸脱した理論の構築にも全体的な framework を掌握できるような system の必要性が常に

つきまとう。この論文では構造主義の恣意的な、連続性などの概念に代表されるような、totalitarianism に勇敢に立ち向かいつつ、なおかつその本質的な epistemological な核を形成する system から脱却できない Foucault の苦悩を分析してみた。