

The Composition of History: a Critical Point of View of Michel Foucault's Archaeology

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**"The Composition of History: a Critical Point of View of Michel Foucault's Archaeology"**

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**Abstract:** In "The Composition of History: a Critical Point of View of Michel Foucault's Archaeology" Javier Gálvez discusses a very specific aspect within the work of Foucault: the role of the philosophies of history in the composition of historical discourse. The philosophies of history of pre-revolutionary Europe were able to show a discursive continuity that does not tally with the discontinuities that are sought in Foucault's archaeological and genealogical project. The question that is asked following the analyses of these discourses does not fully escape from the analyses of the knowledge-power apparatuses: how is it possible that the practical-political nature of the philosophy of history discourses has remained effectively silenced in political practice? After elucidating a barely bounded concept of "history" in Foucault from the discontinuities of the epistemological fields of "Order" and "History," the indecision of this rupture in philosophical-historical discourse will be shown, taking Turgot and Vico as examples.

**Javier Gálvez AGUIRRE**

### **The Composition of History: a Critical Point of View of Michel Foucault's Archaeology**

If one must speak of History with a capital "H," this should be the History of Humanity, the History of events, the narration of singularities that enable the making of a certain story. And insofar as History can be studied, it also requires certain standards, a method, the suspicion that History and its singularities can also indicate regularities. Since *The Order of Things*, Foucault has expressed the interests and problems typical of undertaking any type of research concerning history. And the problem is exacerbated when imposing the obligation of examining it by means of an archaeological method: history is no longer only a temporal flow; this flow is always accompanied by a certain tinge of knowledge, a certain conception about this very history that prevents it from being thought as if there were once a pure object. Nevertheless, history, as temporality, continues to indicate, from its paradoxical position, the impulse to escape from the order of a certain knowledge. Precisely when we try to understand history from within a particular epochal frame, specifically that which emerges out of an interest in the very historicity of mankind, that is when the distinction between History and the human sciences is made more obvious. Hence it should be stated: History, in *The Order of Things*, cannot be included just like that as one of the human sciences. Foucault examines the question in relation to modern discourse, a discourse that aims to be dissolved in objectivity, and one to which we are still partly captive: due to the fact of having made history of the world (natural history, economic history, history of language), mankind himself becomes dehistoricized. But in this process, on setting out to find the time of things, man realizes that History concerns man exclusively, the man that designates, classifies and understands the history of things:

At a very deep level, there exists a historicity of man which is itself its own history but also the radical dispersion that provides a foundation for all other histories. It was just this primary erosion that the nineteenth century sought in its concern to historicize everything, to write a general history of everything, to go back ceaselessly through time, and to place the most stable of things in the liberating stream of time. Here again, we should no doubt revise the way in which we traditionally write the history of History. (Foucault, *The Order* 403)

From the nineteenth century onwards, interest in the human being and his history has been objectified from a paradoxical position: the particularity and relativity of actions are understood in a temporal frame, but at the same time this relativity is gradually eroded for the sake of explanatory regularity. This is a question of a feedback process: the regularities typical of a historical a priori from the classical period have lost their own specific field of enunciation. And what was typical of the classical period in terms of History? The study of regularities that are present in the objects that are analyzed. History, in the framework of the classical episteme, is Order. And it would have appeared to be that simple, if Foucault himself had not given the 1975-1976 Collège de France lectures. In these lectures, published under the title *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault proposes analyzing the genealogy of the discourses on racism. This text, which does not tend to be highly cited by the specialist literature (when compared to others such as *Birth of Biopolitics* or *Security, Territory, Population*), provides the keys, as I understand it, to making another reading of Foucault possible, in which the dialogue with the tradition of the history of thought is more open. It is a text, ultimately, where the topic under discussion could also be the direct object of the history of ideas (in the sense meant by Foucault). The purpose of these lectures is to undertake an archaeological analysis of the narratives, of the (hi)stories on History up until the end of the eighteenth century. The culmination is the reabsorption of these narratives within the philosophy of bourgeois history, of that bourgeoisie that boasts about the vocabulary of Progress. It is not, therefore, a question of the praise of such absorption but the confirmation of a process of crystallization of certain discourses.

Despite this assessment, the typical assertions of the philosophy of history are not the central points of the text. The critiques of a certain disciplinary notion of History are the constant background noise against which the author operates. From the methodological delimitations that are proposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (to demarcate the elements of construction of knowledge) to the contrasting of the histories that he presents in *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault delineates a conception of the least grandiloquent history, the least prone to closed systemizations and to all those characteristic products of an onto-theology (also in this case, teleological) that disregard the material practices of knowledge within which they operate. The objective is the positive establishment of (a) a series of lines of investigation for our present self-understanding, (b) alternative routes in the political construction of

ourselves. Insofar as he sets out an alternative model of interpretation of History in toto, Foucault barely provides any indications about the future. This is not, otherwise, surprising: distancing oneself from all traditional metaphysical construction of History becomes synonymous with getting rid of the whole historical-philosophical lexicon. And this implies undermining History as such (that History with a capital "H," lineal, with inexorable tendencies toward the western civilizing model), not offering prophetic glimmers of future hope, distrusting any anthropological projection based on technique and its (allegedly) finalistic advance. The propaedeutics of Foucault in this regard, it is worth highlighting, consist of the exposition of proto-knowledge that does not reach the disciplinary level of the most well-known. Or, in the best of cases, a proto-knowledge that was reabsorbed into a disciplinary logic that radically modulated it. In short, it is a question of burnishing certain other discourses that have been silenced. However, this does not give them a kind of superior "moral ranking" to the predominant discourses because they are not necessarily a type of voice of the oppressed (Foucault, *Society* 76). It is only of use to us as an indication for undertaking a more complex critical ontology, more befitting the realities that are presented to us, albeit in a latent way, in the discourses that have remained partially crystallized down to the current day.

With this condensed explanation, I have shown a possible exegetic path of the relation between the Foucauldian task and the critique of the philosophies of history, particularly those that emerged between the end of the eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century. In the degree to which the archaeological reading of historical knowledge (Natural History, Economics, Anthropology) opens up a breach at the heart of modern History, the philosophical constructions on History enter a critical situation: there is no question of speaking of teleology, or of truth in History, or of unidirectional lineality, or of laws in its movement, or of Progress. All construction on History of a philosophical nature has been gigantomachy, a meta-story that should be called into question due to its tendency to establish a dialectic between History and Knowledge that ideologically distorts all bourgeois action, all modern sovereign power, in a desire for universality. Thus, critiquing the modern construction of history does not imply eradicating the possibility of establishing a rational and critical investigation of its very history, of its very construction (Paponi 26).

Insofar as narrative constructions of events aim to have a status of "knowing," of "conceptual seriousness," the focus of the question will be politicized. The narrative will go from being "literature of leisure" or "indicator of moral behavior" to being the source of legitimization of certain political demands. It is these narratives that trace the history of races in *Society Must Be Defended*. What is peculiar about these lectures is that they were able to trace the particular outline of the gap that Foucault knowingly left without mention in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: the relation between the forms of narrative discourse and the forms of social and cultural production. Due to the fact that it traced a narrative in opposition to the official history of the statesmen of the State, it opened the path toward investigating the relations between theory and practice in a space that was close to the question of ideology. Although one must bear in mind that it makes no sense to assume two completely separated blocks, one "real" and the other "social" in the construction of discourses (Chartier 176). The space of these narratives takes place alongside the appearance of the philosophies of history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What is curious is that these philosophies of history, which played such a central role in their time, lose their focus here: the interest in other, lesser knowledge thus functions as a kind of silent critique. What is missing, therefore, is the explicit counterpoint of both types of discourse. No discourse whatsoever states the explicit truth for us. Its relevance resides in two other aspects: (1) its legitimizing aspect of certain social strata, of certain modes of life; (2) its function as "attractor" and social mobilizer. The two aspects diverge if the receivers of the message do not hold the position "narrated" in its status quo. The discourse can go from being revolutionary to conservative depending on the social actors that verbalize it. It thus surreptitiously enters into the tricky terrain of the ideological function of the discourse. But has the ideology really been satisfactorily delineated through these types of discourse? How do we understand, first of all, the relation between text and action through the archaeological analyses of politics and history?

The particular line of research of this paper points to a comparative study that has not been overtly confronted by Foucault: the place of "History's" composition in the narratives of the history of races (as its subsequent reabsorption into a "statized" historiography) and in the philosophies of the history of the period. A more orthodox line of research would require having, as its touchstone, the development of the question of governmentality always present, outlined particularly in *Birth of Biopolitics*. If this governmentality does not have an ahistorical tenor, then it must be in line with the liberal conception that appears in the eighteenth century. This is, in other words, the "result" of Foucault's archaeological research that remains after breaking with any historical continuity idealized in Modernity. Because of this he moves on to the question of conduct (Lorenzini 9) and turns to the care of self, studied in the

lectures he gave in his later years. This is how Foucault chose to account for the relation between text and action. But in this work the analysis pauses at an earlier point to make it possible to examine another possible way, another possible reading of the relation between politics and discourse. For Foucault himself had realized that his project of the destruction of the subject, typical of the 1960s, was going to be impossible. What remained was for him to mine it via a genealogical work from various angles and without a solution of continuity (Potte-Bonneville 165). The reading concerning the concepts obtained through genealogical analysis in the Collège de France lectures can be interpreted as yet another discourse (and which has not always succeeded in expounding the totalities desired). Posing this question does not compel reabsorbing the Foucauldian project into the universalizing tendency of the history of (political) ideas. Rather, it is a question of introducing the elements of the history of ideas into the heterogeneity of the histories narrated (Revel, "Foucault" 24), of obliging the hegemonic elements to be one more part of the dialogue, although by doing so certain aspects of "otherness" are blurred, which today run the risk of being equally distorted. It is therefore a question of widening the problem of "History" from the inclusion of strictly philosophical discourses: must all the "triumphal" discourses remain irremissibly outside of archaeological analysis? If the answer is no, the question of the relation between the discursive construction of History and the danger of the text's idealization would remain open.

In order to tackle the proposed task, the relation between history (as official discourse) and the composition of the philosophies of history from the end of the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries needs to be understood with greater clarity, and certain essential aspects of *Society Must Be Defended* need to be scrutinized. In these lectures, Foucault focuses on the genealogy of the history of races. This is characterized by countering the official State discourse, and thus in turn it also counters the very discourses of political philosophy. The central slogan of all counter-history (Foucault focuses on the cases of England and France) is an inversion of Clausewitz's famous phrase: war is not the continuation of politics, but politics is the continuation of war. Through the narrative of certain historical myths, counter-history aims to show the unjust impositions of the State against barbarian origins. The barbarian is thus vindicated compared to the administrative political model and imperialist tendencies (Foucault, *Society* 103, 112). Nonetheless, it should be stated that there are two discontinuous levels in this counter-history (Gros 83):

- 1) the English narrative, focused on the reinstatement of primitive law;
- 2) the French narrative, which aims to legitimize the right of force of the nobles, who were losing their privileges with the politics of the centralization of power typical of absolute monarchy.

The context that I am interested in analyzing is the latter: following the course of French counter-history, it culminates in the very legitimization of the philosophies of the history of the nineteenth century. What is characteristic of this counter-history is that, in contrast to pacifying discourses, it observes the survival of the conflict in the heart of political coexistence. All peace is nothing but an illusion that aims to keep the State and its defenders alive. But if politics is the continuation of war, the structure of the social body loses the rigidity it yearns for. The opening and survival of the conflict are due to two issues: "One was the problem of whether or not the war between hostile groups really does constitute the substructure of the State; the other was the problem of whether political power can be regarded both as a product of that war and, up to a point, its referee, or whether it is usually a tool, the beneficiary of, and the destabilizing, partisan element in that war" (Foucault, *Society* 127). If the conflict exists and there is insistence on its being a part of the discourses of counter-history, this is due to the nobility's interest in thinking of their rights outside of the law, in the interstices of the law. It is no longer the State speaking, nor its scholars who aim to legitimize it – and who, moreover, had been losing their credibility throughout the eighteenth century (Grell 26-27). What begins to speak now is society or, rather, the nation. With the object "nation" a discursive rift will be opened. On the one hand, nation is not comprehended within a territory defined by the reach of the legal power of the State. All legal-political ritualism (ritual of legitimization that is covered between the political-theological apparatuses of Roman Law and the monarchic vicariate of mediaeval Christianity) will be confronted, and reviled, by a history of humiliation and the desire for restitution, both legal and moral. Counter-history thus rises up as a revolutionary and critical element of the status quo:

This is also a knowledge whose methodology is not the ritual reactivation of the acts that founded power, but the systematic interpretation of its evil intentions and the recollection of everything that it has systematically forgotten. Its method is the perpetual denunciation of the evil that has been done in history. This is no longer the glorious history of power; it is the history of its lower depths, its wickedness, and its betrayals. (Foucault, *Society* 135)



Thus counter-history will take an eminently critical tone, and with it, will make it possible to lay down the bases of all revolutionary political discourse. What happens over the eighteenth century, however, is that the bourgeois discourse, by appropriating the critique and the moral tone in its philosophical-historical reflections, it will displace the issue of the conflict to a margin that will end up pacifying this counter-knowledge. It is the very embourgeoisement that causes this self-dialecticalization, and not a kind of reflection from the history of ideas (Foucault, *Society* 216). Counter-history opposes the State with the nation, and now, little by little, the State will absorb the concept of nation and smooth over the internal conflicts. The history that countered the State opposed political theory and any philosophical aim to explain and pacify the conflict. But from the mid-eighteenth century, when the bourgeoisie also appropriated the discourse of history, this discourse would diminish the conflictive aspect in their narrative picture: just like in the political philosophy of Hobbes or Puffendorf, war would be an aside in the flow of History, just one point more, with barely a role when the desired political objectives are achieved.

The conceptual displacement of the conflict in the discourses on history can be appreciated with clarity in the discontinuity that is drawn from the writings of Boulainvilliers to those of Sieyès. It is a displacement that operates by bourgeois self-understanding itself, which looks at History seeking to make itself nation. The difference with the discourse of the nobility stems from the fact that while the latter formulated itself as a group hostile to the monarch, the bourgeois nation, the Third State, saw itself as a nation insofar as it aspired to legitimately represent the conjunction of State and Nation: "What characterizes "the" nation is not a horizontal relationship with other groups (such as other nations, hostile or enemy nations, or the nations with which it is juxtaposed). What does characterize the nation is, in contrast, a vertical relationship between a body of individuals who are capable of constituting a State, and the actual existence of the State itself" (Foucault, *Society* 223). A nation that aspires to be State is compelled to rewrite all conflict as one more element in the historical discourse. Conflict must not be always present, it must be resolved in some way when it finally reaches a legitimate State model (that which had "always" held a true nation). The specific mode of the bourgeoisie of registering that conflict in the historical discourse is through reconciliation. The conflict has certainly existed, and it has made the shifting of governmental models possible. But that conflict must disappear in society, and it does so by generating, before its last moment of splendor, the legal and cultural models of co-existence. As the conflict becomes displaced, what is relevant in these discourses is not centered on their legacy. The focus of attention is, from now on, the discourse of State control. And to that must be added another differentiating element: the historical discourse of the bourgeoisie will not demand their rights from their origin but from the legitimization of their present, from the possibility of making real the virtuality of the nation: "Once history is polarized around the nation/State, virtuality / actuality, functional totality of the nation/real universality of the State, you can see clearly that the present becomes the fullest moment, the moment of the greatest intensity, the solemn moment when the universal makes its entry into the real" (Foucault, *Society* 227). This genealogical delineation finally makes visible the relation between counter-history, history as disciplinary knowledge (monarchic state and, later and with other characters, bourgeois state) and philosophical-historical discourse. Bearing in mind that the relation between these different types of discourse must assume the discontinuities and disparities of every order of the discourse, at least three questions arise:

(1) Would Foucault perhaps adopt a Marxist notion of functionally operative ideology in his analyses? The relation between the discursive conditions and the material conditions, clear in the genealogical analysis of history, goes one step beyond the archaeological project: it supposes a level of connection between both conditions that Foucault himself had deliberately set aside in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

(2) Is the conflictive and violent outline of the discourse of the counter-history of origins lost completely? We will need to examine what the construct of society is that is made possible with the concept of nation, especially if the question is contemplated based on the subsequent lectures (*Security, Territory, Population and Birth of Biopolitics*).

(3) What happens with the pre-revolutionary philosophical-historical discourses? These have remained partially obliterated when characterizing the dialectic drift of the philosophy of bourgeois history.

These three questions will be answered in different ways in the remainder of this study. I will try to answer the first over the rest of the discussion, although I fear that I will not be able to offer a fully satisfactory answer. The second cannot be reliably answered in this article due to issues of space and succinctness of argument. The third I will answer forthwith.

We have seen that the genealogical discourse on history passes exactly through counter-history and through its susceptibility to being politically appropriated. What has been left aside in this counter-history is the appearance of the philosophies of history from the mid-eighteenth century (Vico,

Montesquieu, Turgot, Voltaire). Are they not susceptible to an analysis of the formations of the discourse? Why is Turgot, both philosopher and economist and minister, barely mentioned in this genealogy of power? Why is Vico reduced to a cyclical explanation of history that has little to do with his historical project through the fantastic universals? The question that is raised is not to refute the significance of Foucault's analyses, but to broaden the spectrum and thus in turn demythologize the position of the history of ideas. Nonetheless, to the extent that Foucault disregards these authors, a gap appears in his own discourse about History: when History is analyzed through the discourses of philosophers, it is not limited to offering the conditions of understanding of the historicism of the nineteenth century. This History as episteme was only half-finished in the mid-eighteenth century, as the philosophical-historical discourses of that time were not limited to the explicit specification of the conditions of the episteme "Order." Examining the philosophical-historical discourses, what we find, therefore, is that the great break has, unfortunately, a middle ground: the attempt at reconciliation between Order and History. I call into doubt the discontinuity between these two episteme models using two brief references to relevant authors within the European context of that time: Anne Robert Jacques Turgot and Giambattista Vico.

"History gives place to analogical organic structures, just as Order opened the way to successive identities and differences" (Foucault, *The order* 237). According to this quotation, the possibility of uniting elements of analogy and succession lacks sense, as we find ourselves with two divergent epistemic frameworks, without a solution of continuity in the production conditions of its enunciations. This discontinuity is demonstrated by the radical difference of focus between the political discourses of the seventeenth-century philosophers, the history of the nobility in the style of Boulainvilliers and Sieyès's characterization of the Third Estate. But between Boulainvilliers and Sieyès lies Turgot, a clear example of philosophical-historical practice. I move on with a quotation from one of his texts about Universal History "Le genre humain toujours le même dans ses bouleversements, comme l'eau de la mer dans les tempêtes, et marchant toujours à sa perfection" ("The human race always remaining the same during these upheavals, like the water of the sea during storms, and always proceeding toward its perfection") (276-77). Is this merely a question of successions? Perhaps the role of the analogy is completely out of place. It could be argued, with some legitimacy, that here the role of the analogical barely has any relevance, that the characterization of History and its succession in Turgot, through a rationalist explanation of Providence, essentially refers to the evidence of successions, to the configuration of events through a cyclical pattern. It could be said, also, that here there is no theoretical framework at all that gives evidence of the historicity of events. It could be conceded with relative ease. Nevertheless, insofar as Turgot looks to the moral perfecting of nations (the notion of "Progress" had not yet acquired the semantic field of temporal historical vector), the reference to the singularities of History (despite all its regularities) ends up having a place in his discourse, however minimal: "Une combinaison continuelle de ses progrès avec les passions et avec les événements qu'elles ont produits, forme l'Histoire du genre humain, où chaque homme n'est plus qu'une partie d'un tout immense qui a, comme lui, son enfance et ses progrès" ("A continual combination of this progress with the passions, and with the events they have caused, constitutes the history of the human race, in which each man is no more than one part of an immense whole which has, like him, its infancy and its advancement") (Turgot 276). Inasmuch as natural history affects the history of man, the discontinuities between Order and History cease to be so clear.

If the case of Turgot obliges us to rethink the abyss between modes of enunciation of knowledge, Vico's *New Science* goes further. He begins from a familiar human finitude that at the same time aims to attain the universality typical of all metaphysics. The field to which he applies it is the course of nations and their political, religious and cultural development. It is not necessarily about seeing Vico as the father of historicism, although the specialist literature pictures him thus (Cacciatore 26-34). But what is evident in his texts is the indecision between the imposition of a legal order that guarantees stability and the perseverance/consistency of the singularity of each period. In this regard, he shifts precisely between the two spheres. I quote one of the final texts of his major work, where this tension can be discerned: "Oggi una compiuta umanità sembra essere sparsa per tutte le nazioni, poiché pochi grandi monarchi reggono questo mondo di popoli; e, se ve n'hanno ancor barbari, egli n'è cagione perché le loro monarchie hanno durato sopra la sapienza volgare di religioni fantastiche e fiere" ("Today a complete humanity seems to be spread abroad through all nations, for a few great monarchs rule over this world of peoples. If there are still some barbarous peoples surviving, it is because their monarchies have persisted in the vulgar wisdom of imaginative and cruel religion") (Vico 954). The elements that come into play are more than varied: circumscription of the regularity of socio-political practices depending on the metaphysical models of religion; regularity of the course of nations that pays no attention to an outline extrinsic to the very future of peoples (the coexistence of different models of

nations collides head-on with a kind of historical regularity superior to each particular development); configuration of humanity based on their own historical and cultural legacy; moral and legal progress dependent on suitable monarchic models. All these elements, joined together, are too diverse to be able to bind them into a classic Foucauldian episteme or other modern episteme. What this text shows is exactly the sphere of continuity between both models – although this continuity should not allow any totalization, but rather points to a blind spot that is characteristic of Modernity: indecision regarding the role of authority in carrying out social justice. This is otherwise a typical subject of the revolutionary bourgeois philosophies of history.

More characteristic of the philosophies of history (particularly after the French Revolution) is the construction of narratives about freedom, which is the way in which the tension is resolved between authority and the implementation of certain historically won rights. And just here, where Foucault criticizes this conception, he moves closer precisely to the very indecision of the first theorists on the philosophy of history:

We should not think of freedom as a universal which is gradually realized over time, or which undergoes quantitative variations, greater or lesser drastic reductions, or more or less important periods of eclipse. It is not a universal which is particularized in time and geography. Freedom is not a white surface with more or less numerous black spaces here and there and from time to time. Freedom is never anything other –but this is already a great deal– than an actual relation between governors and governed, a relation in which the measure of the “too little” existing freedom is given by the “even more” freedom demanded. (Foucault, *Birth* 63)

It is not possible to speak of an exterior freedom as such. Neither does it make sense to conceive this freedom as intrinsic, essential, as an anthropological constant. Wherever there is freedom, it is freedom in a context. And from the eighteenth century, they begin to consider how, through based on the apparatuses of the conduct typical of governmentality (Gros et al. 18). Contextualizing this topic of individual freedom and political freedom: progress and globalization are spoken of as more or less explicit processes that operate from the eighteenth century onwards, which entail a breaking of the politics of the balance of power of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This freedom that is demanded, furthermore, is made difficult to conceive in strong teleological terms: it does not pre-exist its relations of force of the political (that this exists in authors such as Vico through the concept of “providence” is subject to debate, in which I lean towards the negative). However, the concept of freedom, which together with being a crystallization of different discourses and enunciations, together with being an effect, is set forth in the first philosophical-historical discourses (Vico, Montesquieu) as a kind of ideological signifier that articulates and legitimizes the demands themselves of the political in the (desired) stability of the present and its future ramifications. It is thus articulated as a vector and promotor of the action at the heart of society. And this form of articulation refers to the ratification of the political correction of its present. Deep down, but also in the superficial effects that can be seen in Vico and Turgot, all explanation of history is a narrative that justifies the particularities of the present, although their legitimation is raised to the universal plane. Every enunciation that is made of freedom has to pass through a discourse that cannot completely escape from its ideological tenor – a discourse that, in order to be effective, must obliterate the conditions of its construction in the enunciation of its narrative.

By way of conclusion, I will set down some of the key points dealt with in this article. Perhaps one of the fundamental problems that underlies *Society Must Be Defended* is the question of up to what point the praise for the discourses of counter-history is the praise for the possibility of opening a path from narrative to political mobilization. The order of discourse, in the Foucauldian political project, requires three pillars: an archaeology that shows the relations among the knowledge of a period, a genealogy that refers the interrelation of such knowledge to our present interests, and an attitude that succeeds in doing politics (Revel, *Foucault avec Merleau-Ponty* 38). But, with all that, it is difficult for these three elements to remain confined to the differential thresholds of hegemonic knowledge. The appearance of Boulainvilliers's narratives about the origins shows a counter-knowledge that, to his regret, would suffer the fate of having his grievances being reabsorbed into the heart of the discursive structure of the State. Suffice it to think, on the plane of cultural representations, about the change in ideological meaning that was made of the paintings by Jean-Louis David in revolutionary France: divergent uses are given to the same object through a process of reappropriation that are not at all ingenuous. It is a question of demanding the right of interpretation. It is about introducing, in the circuit of ideology, the legal assumption of the truth. Stated another way: the truth, true historical interpretation, has a legitimate owner. And when legitimacy triumphs, legality and asymmetry of power returns. Tragically, all crystallized discourse on history will be a discourse that has swallowed up the counter-knowledge that



forged its practical, revolutionary nature. An unattainable History comes into play here, an awareness of temporality and of its critical, political aspect, which has no wish to be reduced to episteme but which cannot yet find an exit in the form of knowledge either. The characterization of the episteme "History" assumed in the modern era cannot therefore be of value: Foucault, conscious of its possible (and unwanted) translation to *Weltanschauung*, gradually redirects this episteme to the field of enunciations (Van de Wiele 606). The main focus is choosing the narratives that will attempt to produce a History from the stories. But, insofar as it is proposed to create a genealogy of the conflict based on the narratives about history, the archaeological project requires certain revision – to be specific, a revision of the role of the pre-revolutionary philosophies of history.

All narrative about History, outlined and contemplated out of finite and specific knowledge, will obsessively seek identification between the particular and the universal in cultural productions. The philosophy of history attempted it, generally in vain when it became very technical, through concepts such as "freedom" or "nation." But its range of action was minimal in practice, at least in comparison with the apparatuses of the knowledge inherent to the peak of liberalism. We must not forget that we find ourselves at the heart of the discourse, of a discourse that had not yet experienced, in the mid-eighteenth century, the nature of proclamation, of *pronunciamento* or of manifesto. Therefore, the task remaining is its examination as ideology. In other words, as critical practice in the heart of the discourses that does not end up annulling those other discourses over which it operates. And, speaking of annulment, it is not enough to refer only to censure, to the deletion of the record. Along with the discourse, there is the extralinguistic element that is violence. What needs to be done is to stop observing it as what is radically different from language, knowledge, reason. The non-opposition between reason and violence is patent in the domain of Foucault's discourse (Gros 75-76), but the question points to another aspect: whether it is at all possible to understand the imbalances between the theoretical and the practical in the knowledge-power apparatuses. The question that arises, if explaining it as a kind of dilemma has any usefulness, is whether that discourse can be understood by reference to something not textual and practical or if it is merely a space of justification of some already determined expository conditions. If it can, or can't, produce event, and other event – an "experience" in the sense of the make-up of subjectivities that resist (Morey 174-75) by means of the text. Raising this question does not necessitate the reabsorption of the Foucauldian project in the universalizing tendency of the history of (political) ideas.

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