

1968 and the Cahiers pour l'analyse. Internal Debates in the Philosophy of Concept: Epistemology, Formalization and Anti-psychologism

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Abstract: I examine in this paper the tradition of the philosophy of concept in the 60's of the XXth century in France, insofar as it is characterized by heterogeneous views about science, truth, formalization, epistemological break, discourse, subjectivity.

I consider for that scope the 9th issue of *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, the review published by the "Cercle d'épistémologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure", mostly composed by young followers of Althusser and of Lacan. This issue published in summer 1968 is entitled "*Généalogie des sciences*" ("*Genealogy of sciences*") and deals with formalization and the different models of history of science. It is the occasion of a sharp debate concerning in particular the notion of epistemological break, between the redactors of the review on the one hand and Michel Foucault on the other hand, whose "Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie" will constitute the matrix of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* published one year later (1969).

Starting from this debate of 1968, I try to interrogate Foucault's archaeological program in so far as it implies a particular use of the "epistemological rupture", the kind of antipsychologism involved in his critique of formalism and rationalism, and also the specificity of his analysis of discourse insofar as it breaks up with a psychoanalytic font.

So that finally, it appears that 1968 was also the occasion of strong debates between the protagonists of the philosophy of concept following Bachelard's and Canguilhem's claims.

Keywords: Archaeology, Epistemological break, Formalization, Antipsychologism, Subject, Knowledge, Analysis of discourse.

It may seem at first sight that the tradition of the philosophy of concept, as it was developed in the 60's of 20th century in France, is characterized by some sort of theoretical homogeneity: namely a particular interest for epistemology, formalization, structural analysis and its correlate, anti-psychologism. Such an agreement on these topics would be a consequence of the collective mistrust towards the tradition of the philosophy of consciousness. Probably one of the most striking expressions of this general trend in "French Thought" could be found in the *Cahiers pour l'analyse*¹, the review published by the "Cercle d'épistémologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure", mostly composed by young followers of Althusser and of Lacan, during the fertile period of 1966-1969.

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1 f of the episteme, is asked a tw a, Agon Hamza The Cercle d'épistémologie held this publication, The *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, Travaux du Cercle d'épistémologie de l'Ecole normale supérieure publiés par la société du Graphe, éditions du Seuil, between 1966 and 1969 ; it involved 10 issues. Henceforth quoted CPA.

Yet the widespread notion of a homogeneous view that would have been shared by all the protagonists of the philosophy of concept in the continuity of Bachelard's and Canguilhem's claims, might be contested, if one considers for example the debates at work in the 9th issue of the *CPA*, entitled “*Généalogie des sciences*” (“*Genealogy of sciences*”), which deals with formalization and the different models of history of science. The disagreement, in this issue of the *CPA* published in the summer of 1968, takes place between the redactors of the review (Alain Badiou, Alain Grosrichard, Jacques-Alain Miller, Jean-Claude Milner, François Regnault) on the one hand and Michel Foucault on the other hand.

Quite remarkably, the author of *The Order of Things*, the theoretician of the episteme, is asked a series of – sharp – questions about the way he used the notion of epistemological rupture (or epistemological break) in the framework of the archaeological program he developed in these years. Foucault's answer is exemplary of such a division inside the field of Canguilhem's followers. Very different conceptions about history of science, theory of truth, analysis of discourse, functions and limits of formalization, and even theory of subject, appear to be here at stake, at the heart of the year 1968, two months after may 1968. Foucault's particular view on these topics, which is characteristic of his archaeological method, is then transcribed in his book of 1969, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: a book which is substantially inspired by this confrontation with the members of the Cercle d'épistémologie in 1968, and by his *Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie*.

As regards epistemology and history of science, Foucault departs from Althusser and his followers, through his critique of rationalism and formalism. As regards the analysis of discourse, he departs from Lacan and his followers.

In both case, the notion of *discursive formation* is at stake: it is central, for the subversion of the “epistemological rupture”, from a horizontal to a vertical position, as well as for the emancipation of the theory of discourse from a psychoanalytical frame. This central notion, in its turn, involves in Foucault's perspective a strategic, original distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance*, and the focus is put upon the discontinuity and anonymity of *savoir*, a central claim of his *Archéologie du savoir* that he tries to define systematically in 1968. Such are the features of Foucault's singular and radical anti-subjectivism, which appears to be quite distant from the Fregean, rationalist anti-psychologism that was widely dominant in the editorial board of the *CPA* at that time.

I will organize my paper in three parts, each of them being related to a topic involved in Foucault's text published in the *CPA* in 1968:

I will first examine Foucault's archaeological program in so far as it implies a particular use of the “epistemological rupture”, then I will deal with the topic of Foucault's original antipsychologism involved in

his critique of formalism and rationalism, and eventually I will focus the attention on the analysis of discourse of which prodromes are set up in Foucault's *Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie*.

I The archaeological program: Foucault's particular use of the “epistemological rupture”.

The importance of the topic of the “epistemological rupture” in French philosophy in the second half of the 20th century is well known. But it plays an original and quite disconcerting role in Foucault's *archeological* programme developed in the sixties: that is, the archeological sequence that goes from *Madness and Civilization (Histoire de la folie, 1961)*, to *The Archaeology of Knowledge (L'Archéologie du savoir, 1969)*, passing through *The Order of Things (Les mots et les choses, 1966)*.

In 1968 indeed, on the occasion of his exchange with the redactors of the *CPA*, Foucault makes a clarification about his own theoretical line, from a methodological point of view one may say: such a clarification will constitute the general pattern of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in 1969, from the introduction up to the last section.

The “epistemological rupture”, a concept elaborated by Gaston Bachelard under the name of “rupture épistémologique”², is central in the tradition of French epistemology. It is for instance particularly strategic in the philosophy of Louis Althusser – one of the inspirators of the young members of the Cercle d'épistémologie, together with Lacan and Canguilhem. Althusser reactivated Bachelard's concept under the name of “coupure épistémologique” (*epistemological cut*), in order to give an account of the radical difference between science and ideology, and, also, in order to underline the “theoretical revolution” in Marx, that is historical materialism, the opening of the continent “History”³.

Foucault himself was deeply influenced by this tradition of French epistemology of which main protagonists were Cavailles, Bachelard, Canguilhem. For such a tradition represented, according to his own explicit claim, the field of the *philosophy of concept*, as opposed to the field of the *philosophy of consciousness*, the philosophical adversary. One must say that Foucault was also very close to Althusser, who had been his professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and whose struggle against theoretical humanism, subjectivism, psychologism, was shared by Foucault, as well as the critical reflexion upon the problematic “scientificity” of human sciences. But at the same time, there were strong disagreements between the two of them, concerning the philosophical use of such a concept, “the epistemological rupture”.

One is then led to interrogate the ambivalent, complex relationship

2 Bachelard, 1949 ch. 6, “Connaissance commune et connaissance scientifique”, pp. 102-118.

3 L. Althusser, “Marx's immense theoretical revolution”, in Althusser and Balibar 1970, part II, pp. 182-192.

which linked Foucault with this famous concept of epistemological rupture in its Bachelardian, then Althusserian acceptations. For the general claim I intend to defend is that the very field of the philosophy of concept, even through its constant, apparently unified battle against subjectivism and psychologism, was very far from being a homogeneous, harmonious field; there were effective dividing lines even within the area constituted by the “philosophy of concept, knowledge, rationality”.

In the first place, the specific *problem* that I will try to examine is the following.

On the one hand, Foucault, throughout his archaeological moment, accorded a huge importance to “*the question of discontinuities, systems and transformations, series, thresholds*”. Foucault was interested in such notions, which are variations on the theme represented by the Bachelardian-Althusserian concept of epistemological rupture. For example, his anti-subjectivist, discontinuist conception of history was in perfect harmony – or it could seem so at least – with Althusser's program during the same years: anti-humanism, anti-historicism, anti-psychologism, the definition of history as “a process without subject”. Foucault made recourse to these concepts, because they served his purpose to develop a discontinuist conception of history - especially in the field of the “history of ideas”.

But on the other hand, the use of the notion in Foucault's work is *very different* from Bachelard's and from Althusser's. The difference between these philosophical perspectives might be related to the question of truth, and to the type of cut, or rupture that should – or should not – be established between truth and error, between true and false, between the scientific and the no-scientific, or between science and ideology. This could put a new light on the complex configuration of anti-psychologism, in French philosophy at that time, that is during the glorious sequence of the sixties-seventies of the XXth century.

Generally speaking, Foucault, all along his theoretical percouse, inscribed himself within a constellation that one could name as the philosophy of concept (represented by Cavailles, Canguilhem, Althusser, Foucault himself). We may refer here, of course, to the Foreword by Michel Foucault to the English edition of the book by Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*. In this Foreword, Foucault seems to follow an insight by Cavailles, when he asserts the famous 'dividing line' between 'a philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject, and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of concept'⁴.

This revendication of a philosophy of concept is already quite

4 See Foucault's 'Foreword' to the English edition of the book by Georges Canguilhem, in Canguilhem 1978, p. I.

clear in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). In the first pages of the Introduction, Foucault makes an explicit act of allegiance, let us say, to the his famous predecessors in epistemology, Bachelard and Canguilhem.

« [...] 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 from the work and methods of the historian, attention has been turned [...] 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. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably. There are the *epistemological acts and thresholds*, described by Bachelard : they suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it off from its empirical origin and its original motivations, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities ; they direct historical analysis away from the search for silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing-back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects. There are the *displacements and transformations* of concepts : the analyses of G. Canguilhem may serve as models [...]”⁵

Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, focused his analysis on what he calls “*the question of discontinuities, systems and transformations, series, thresholds*”⁶. He did so because to these concepts helped him to disqualify a theory of history characterized by continuism, teleology, and – a crucial point - subjectivism. For the criticism towards teleological continuism, against the “*twin figures of anthropology and humanism*”, was of course, in Foucault's view, closely related – this point is crucial - to the rejection of a *philosophy grounded upon the concept of consciousness*⁷. As though anthropological thought had found its ultimate shelter in a continuist conception of history, i. e. in the representation of a form of

5 M. Foucault, 1972, Introduction (p. 4).

6 M. Foucault, 1972, Part II (“The Discursive Regularities”), Chapter I, (“The Unities of Discourse”) p. 21.

7 Foucault writes, in Foucault, 1972, Introduction, p. 12 : “Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought. In this system, time is conceived in terms of totalization and revolutions are never more than moments of consciousness”.

history referred to the “synthetic activity of the subject”.

Such a theoretical line was in perfect harmony – or it could seem so at least – with Althusser's program during the same years. Althusser in his field had already promoted, since 1965 at the time of *For Marx*, and *Reading Capital*, the categories of anti-humanism, anti-historicism, anti-psychologism, through his definition of history as “a process without subject” : a process with no subject, no origin and no end.

Foucault's proximity to Althusser can also be seen in the questioning about human sciences, about their – very uncertain - “scientificity”⁸.

There is, then, this shared struggle against anthropologism, at stake in the common critique directed against the idea of a teleological historical process, and the common refusal of any form of subjectivism – even dissimulated through the figure of historicism, the last “asylum”, the “*privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness*”, in Foucault's words⁹. It seems rather uncontested that, as far as an antisubjectivist conception of history is concerned, Foucault was deeply influenced by Althusser. But the game of the reciprocal influences is rather intertwined, complicated. Who influenced who ? It is also probable that Foucault himself had an important role in Althusser's discovery “structural analysis”¹⁰.

Be that as it may, when Foucault, in the Introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* which was re-written from his debate of 1968 with the Cercle d'épistémologie, looks back to his own archeological percouse, since 1961, he insists upon the fact that the (implicit) method he had used was above all distinct from any “*anthropologism*”. On this ground, the importance of the encounter with Althusser's philosophy cannot be denied.

II Antipsychologism and the question of truth and knowledge. Foucault's critique of formalism

One could believe, then, that Foucault's central methodological use of the category *episteme*, in his archeological history - in so far as it implies this *discontinuity* previously evoked - is a mere product of an original matrix, the Bachelardian, and then Althusserian, concept of epistemological rupture. One thinks, of course, of the caesuras between the great epistemes in *The Order of Things* : the Renaissance (governed

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8 see the end of *The Order of Things* ; this view is already at stake in the last chapter of *Madness and Civilization*, dedicated to the “Anthropological Circle”.

9 Again, Foucault, 1972, Introduction, p. 12

10 This is striking when one reads for example the Letters to Franca Madonia in the years 1961-1962. In a letter addressed to Franca (5 October 1962, Althusser 1998, p. 228), Althusser mentions the project he had in mind of a seminary dedicated to the “origins of structuralism”, and that he presents as a direct consequence of his very enthusiastic reading of Foucault's book, *Madness and Civilization*.

by the category of resemblance), the Classical Age (commended by the category of representation), and Modern times (commended by the figure of history). These discontinuities, these ruptures between the different epistemes would be understandable as the manifestation of a rather obvious, transparent recourse to the bachelardian concept of “rupture épistémologique”. Yet the situation is not so simple, it is even extremely disconcerting.

Let us recall that this concept, the epistemological rupture, was introduced by Bachelard, in the framework of his anti-empiricist conception of science and its elaboration. We find a first occurrence of the term, “rupture épistémologique”, in *Le rationalisme appliqué*, by G. Bachelard, published in 1949¹¹. In Bachelard's original view (opposed to the positivist tradition in the philosophy of science), the concept of epistemological rupture is required by a certain conception, a discontinuity conception, of the scientific work. It is inscribed, thus, within a certain conception of *science*, of scientific procedures, and not at all within a conception of “history” in general, nor of the “history of thought”. Bachelard's claim is that there exists a “*deep epistemological discontinuity*” between science, “*scientific knowledge*” on the one hand, and “*common knowledge*” on the other hand. Moreover, Bachelard specifies that this epistemological discontinuity is only effective, really operating, in the “fourth period” of history, the contemporary period. Of course, Bachelard's view is directed against the teleological representation of an history of science conceived (like it is in Brunschwig) as the continuous and necessary development of Reason. In that respect, it could seem rather close to Foucault's later discontinuism.

But at the same time, Foucault's later view is very far from a mere, faithful actualization of Bachelard's claim. On the contrary.

Indeed, Foucault's notion of episteme, as we know, is not reducible to the field of science, as opposed to the field of its “pre-history”, error, or ideology. Rather, Foucault's concept designates the systematic, ‘structural’ intertwining of, not only sciences (biology, linguistics...) but also “knowledges”, ideological representations, power dispositives : an intertwining that Foucault, later on in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, relates to the general category of ‘discursive practice’ (*pratique discursive*). It is particularly remarkable, then, that when taking over the discontinuity schema, Foucault does not in fact reactivate the Bachelardian-Althusserian cutting between science and ideology. Not only does the concept of episteme largely exceed the field of science, but the discontinuity, the cutting works in an original way : it functions vertically, between “periods” of history, and no more horizontally as in Bachelard's epistemology, when it was used to mark the specificity of a

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11 Bachelard 1949, ch. 6.

science within a particular period of history.

One could speak, then, of some *vertical rupture*, in contradistinction with what would be an *horizontal rupture* which would define Bachelard's *applied rationalism*, and even, later on, Althusser's distinction between science and ideology. And we would be then confronted to what might be seen as the Foucauldian subversion of Bachelard's concept of epistemological rupture.

Such a subversion was perfectly identified, in 1968, by the members of the "Cercle d'épistémologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure". In fact, this distinction just mentioned between a vertical and an horizontal rupture was produced by the members of the Cercle d'épistémologie (Circle of epistemology) themselves, and it can be found in the ninth issue of the *Cahiers pour l'analyse* of which title is "*Généalogie des sciences*".¹²

The ninth issue of the *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, published in 1968, is constituted by a series of questions addressed to Michel Foucault, concerning mostly his archaeological theory. It also includes the answer by Foucault himself to the members of the Cercle d'épistémologie. Among the questions addressed to Foucault, there is this sharp criticism, almost some sort of accusation of having transformed Bachelard's concept of epistemological rupture.

Indeed, this is the issue at stake in the first question asked "A Michel Foucault" by the Cercle d'épistémologie, under the title "*De l'épistémè et de la rupture épistémologique*" ("*On episteme and on epistemological rupture*").

The redactors of the *CPA* are eager to hear Foucault explain himself about his conception of science, and more precisely about the postulates that govern his Archaeology and "the implications of his method" employed from *Madness and Civilization* to *The Order of Things*. Starting from the constatation that, since Bachelard, the notion of epistemological rupture had served to define the discontinuity between "the birth of every science" and the ideological context (the "tissue of tenacious, interrelated, positive errors") from which it separates itself, and recalling that "the author of *The Order of Things*, by contrast, identifies a vertical discontinuity between the epistemic configuration of one epoch and the next", they ask Foucault what kind of relations he thinks are obtained "between this horizontality and this verticality". Thus, at that point, comes out some sort of attack against Foucault's "archaeological periodization", insofar as it "breaks up the [historical] continuous into synchronic sets, grouping together *knowledges (savoirs)* in the shape of unitary systems".

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12 *CPA*, 9. See the section "*Sur l'archéologie des sciences*", which includes the questions to Foucault ("A Michel Foucault") and Foucault's long answer ("Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie"), in *CPA*, 9, original edition pp. 6-40.

This archeological periodization, indeed, would efface "the difference that, in Bachelard's view, separates scientific discourses from other kinds of discourses, and, by assigning each a specific temporality, makes of their simultaneity and solidarity a surface effect"¹³.

Foucault's answer to the Cercle d'Epistémologie (*Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie*) was also published in the 9th issue of the *CPA*¹⁴. It is particularly interesting and illuminating, in this respect, for its main insights are taken over and developed in *L'archéologie du savoir* of 1969 (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*). This answer to the Cercle d'épistémologie can be read as Foucault's retrospective effort to systematize his own archeological method, the one he "used" since 1961, at the time of *Madness and Civilization*. Foucault's reflection upon his own theoretical insight as regards the archaeological program such as it is proposed in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, is therefore the direct consequence of his debate with the members of the Cercle d'épistémologie, whose proceedings can be read in the 9th issue of the *CPA*.

Foucault's heretic claim (as regards the rationalist trend in the *CPA*) is particularly remarkable when he asserts the inadequacy of the distinction between scientific and non-scientific, or between the rational and its contrary, as regards the specificity of the discursive formations he studied in *The Order of Things*, concerning language, analysis of wealth, life. In these cases, the scope was not to establish the "cut" between pure science and impure ideology: "the issue at stake was not to know with what cuts or what repressions a science, or at least a science-orientated discipline was finally about to constitute itself from such an impure soil". Rather, the notion of discursive formation is explicitly constructed upon the dissolution of these classical distinctions: hence the striking assertion according to which discursive formations are "epistemologically neutral"¹⁵.

The gap is then acknowledged by Foucault himself between the archaeological program on the one hand, and the epistemology of Bachelard and Canguilhem on the other hand. In other words, to the initial question addressed to Foucault by the Cercle d'épistémologie, about the possible obliteration in his work of the difference established by Bachelard between scientific discourses and other kinds of discourses, Foucault's answer could be understood as a positive one.

This is the reason why, in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault's more explicit defence consists essentially in a critique addressed to the

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13 *CPA*, 9, pp. 5-6. English translation: Cahiers Kingston (Translation slightly modified).

14 *CPA*, 9, pp. 9-40.

15 *CPA*, 9, p. 31-32. I translate from the French (as well as all the ulterior quotations from the « Réponse de Michel Foucault au Cercle d'épistémologie »).

formalism and to the rationalism that would still be at work in French epistemology. In this answer can be found a distancing from an “epistemological history of the sciences” whose models would have been provided by “G. Bachelard and G. Canguilhem”. Indeed, according to Foucault, the epistemological history of the sciences “is necessarily concerned with the opposition of truth and error, the rational and the irrational, the obstacle and fecundity, purity and impurity, the scientific and the non-scientific”: a series of opposition which obviously contrasted with Foucault's own program, that is, precisely, the “Archaeology of knowledge”, *l'archéologie du savoir* ¹⁶.

The situation is quite paradoxical of course, as Foucault, all along his own philosophical percourse, constantly recognized his debt to Canguilhem's philosophy. But at the same time, his mistrust in Bachelard's conceptualization of a strict dividing line between the scientific and the non-scientific (ideology), a dividing line that, as we have just seen, cannot be taken into account in the very elaboration of the concept of *savoir* and *discursive formation*, leads Foucault to some kind of heterodoxy ; namely, to the denunciation of a “formalism” that could haunt this tradition of French epistemology, in so far as it is deeply marked by the strict distinction between truth and error which is characteristic of rationalism. Thus, when Foucault points out the trap represented by what he calls the “formalist illusion” (*illusion formalistice*), when he asserts that “it is illusory to imagine that science would constitute itself through the gesture of a cut and of a decision, that it would emancipate itself, all of a sudden, from the qualitative field and from all the murmurs of the imaginary, by the violence (serene or polemical) of a reason that would institute itself in its own assertions : therefore, that the scientific object would begin to exist by itself in its own identity”¹⁷, he refuses *de facto* Bachelard's legacy (even though he does not mention his name) in the field of the history of science.

Similarly, one may say, Foucault can not inscribe his own work in the trend of a Fregean tradition at the core of analytic philosophy, a tradition deeply marked by an anti-psychologist rationalism, and a general claim about the epistemic vertue of *formalization*, which represent on the contrary the object of a particular interest among the members of the Cercle d'épistémologie¹⁸.

Such are the many faces of anti-subjectivism and of anti-psychologism, in the last 60's in French philosophy : the archaeology of *knowledge (savoir, not connaissance)*, in that respect, is irreducible to the

16 Foucault, 1972, chapter 6 (“Science and Knowledge”), (e) “The different types of the history of sciences”, pp. 189-190.

17 CPA, 9, pp. 37-38.

18 See for instance the 10th (and last) issue of the CPA (winter 1969), entitled « La formalisation ».

rationalist philosophy of science and to the formalization program.

We could go back, at this stage, to the analysis of the divergence between Foucault and Althusser, around the use of the epistemological rupture, which implies, in each of them, a very different treatment of the question of truth.

What is the use – so important – made by Althusser of the Bachelardian concept of epistemological rupture ?

One may isolate a persisting claim in Althusser's work, throughout the inflexions of his own philosophical percourse, his “formalism”, then the criticism against theoreticism, etc. : this claim consists in the position of *the rupture between true and false* ¹⁹.

Althusser acknowledged his debt to Bachelard, and more precisely to the concept of rupture epistemological rupture²⁰. Althusser adopted this concept, and radicalized it, from the “rupture” to the “cut” (*coupure*), through an outlook that remained for the most part epistemological. This notion was necessary in order to give an account for the radical, irreversible discontinuity between science and non-science, between truth and error, between a science and its “pre-history”, that is ideology. The specific context of Althusser's work in the sixties of the 20th century, was to establish, against all forms of humanist and historicist interpretations of Marxism, the *revolutionary discovery* of Marx, in the field of science, his establishing a new science, the science of the continent History, totally *cut* from its pre-history (that is : Feuerbach's humanism, Classical political economy, Hegel's idealist philosophy).

So that ultimately, Althusser's perspective remains within the field of rationalism. Of course, after the “auto-critique” and the “anti-theoreticist” turn, Althusser will write that his previous conception (in the sixties, during the “theoreticist” period) of the rupture was unsatisfying, because it remained formalist, theoretical : as he puts it, his explanation of the rupture was a rationalist explanation, “contrasting *truth* and *error* in the form of the speculative distinction between *science* and *ideology*...”²¹. But it is remarkable that *even after the autocritique*, Althusser will not abandon the category of true, as distinct from the category of false. He remains, in a way, a rationalist, as shows his constant reference to Spinoza, all along his philosophical percourse.

But this implies a particular use of rationalism. Althusser revendicates, a non orthodox – non Cartesian – rationalism, liberated

19 Even if a continued - never ending - rupture is at stake, according to some spinozistic rationalism, a spinozistic rationalism which would not be exclusive of a nominalist position refuting the “Truth” as some transcendent category. Cf. The reading by Etienne Balibar on the topic of *la coupure continuée*, in Balibar 1991, “Le concept de coupure épistémologique de Gaston Bachelard à Louis Althusser”.

20 Cf. Althusser, 1976, Part 2, pp. 112-114.

21 Althusser, 1976, Part 2, NLB, pp. 105-106.

from the representation of a subject of knowledge²². His constant reference is Spinoza's rationalism, combined with "nominalism", that is to a conception of "what is true", and not a conception of Truth defined as a metaphysical category. Yet in Althusser, the divide (the rupture, or "the cut", between true and false, science and non-science) remains fundamental, irreducible - although the epistemological cut, "*la coupure*", should be understood, in *Essays in Self criticism*, as an "ongoing" rupture, ("*coupure continuée*").

As regards Foucault on the contrary, rationalism, even in its heterodox, spinozistic form, is radically rejected. His refusal of humanism and anthropologism, which is so insistent in his whole philosophical percouse, his anti-psychologism then, no less important than Lacan's or Althusser's, is connected with a radical subversion of the divide between true and false, and with a contestation of the rationalist claim according to which science could be neatly isolated from non-science.

In Foucault's archeological perspective articulated to the categoris of *episteme*, *savoir* and *discursive practice*, as we have shown, the rupture is horizontal, rather than vertical as it was still in Bachelard, Canguilhem and also Althusser, that is operating in an epistemological framework.

III Analysis of discourse : a discourse without subject?

We may say that in Foucault, the general "cut" between true and false is no more relevant. This is what appears from his very concept of *savoir*, involved in the theory of the *episteme*, by contrast with the concept of *connaissance*. One must insist upon the importance of this differentiation, of this antagonism, between *savoir* on the one hand, which is the very object of archaeology, and the concept of *connaissance* which is implied by an "idealist" theory of knowledge, and a teleological conception of history, these twin figures of anthropologism rejected by

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22 For Althusser, the Cartesian subject, identified with the 'Subject of truth and objectivity', that is the subject of knowledge, remains a fallacious concept, in so far as it is taken within a contestable comprehension of what the 'cut' between truth and error is - a crucial misunderstanding of the epistemological rupture. Descartes, according to Althusser, simply opposes error to truth, as though the former were the mere negation of the latter and remained 'outside' of truth, he does not thematize then the relation of error to this "outside". The effective *cut* between truth and error is not adequately comprehended, it is reduced to an exclusion, a partition (*'partage'*), and this partition is then seen as the 'result of a judgement', the judgement operated by a Subject, a thinking Ego, the Subject of Truth (See Althusser 1996, 2nd conference).

According to this genealogy, the Subject of knowledge, the subject of science, should not be reduced to the psychological ego, that is to the 'subject of error'; yet its very transparency to its own epistemic procedures and operations is a mistaken claim, inherent to this philosophy of consciousness founded upon a misconception of what the knowledge process is. To the Cartesian *Cogito* then, Althusser opposes the Spinozistic model of thinking and knowledge as *production*, that is, according to the famous formula of the '*veritas norma sui, et falsi*' (Spinoza, *Ethica*, Part II, Propositio 43, Scholium), as a process in which the 'subject of objectivity', the subject of knowledge, is suppressed : a process which will become, in Althusser's terminology, the well-known process without subject.

Foucault ²³.

Savoir is fundamentally anonymous, whereas *connaissance* always supposes some subject of knowledge. In that respect, Foucault's notion of *discursive practice*, developed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in relation to the analysis of discourse involves this operation that consists in substituting the concept of *savoir* to the still formalist-rationalist concept of *connaissance*. At the end of the operation of substitution, the cut between true and false is not central any more : the reason is that Foucault's conception of *savoir* is not commended by the "metaphysical" category of Truth, nor by the very concept of true.

Such a move, from *connaissance* to *savoir*, appears to be strategic in Foucault's elaboration of his archaeological method, which entails a mistrust in the hypostasis of the notion of science, a diffidence against the "formalist illusion". What is at stake in this move is also, in a correlative way, his particular conception of the analysis of discourse, together with the systematic refutation of a "subject of knowledge" that accompanies the dissolution of a classical subject of discourse.

He draws this explicit opposition between *savoir* and *connaissance* at the end of his *Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie*, and proposes the total evacuation of the notion of *connaissance* from the field of archaeology:

"What archaeology cuts out, is not the possibility of the various descriptions that could be developed about scientific discourse ; it is, rather, the general topic of "*connaissance*". [...]"

Now, to this major topic, others are related : the topic of a conscious activity that would guarantee, through a series of fundamental operations preceding every explicit gesture, every concrete manipulation, every given content, the unity between science defined by a system of formal conditions and world defined as the horizon of all possible experiences. The topic of a subject that guarantees, through its reflexive unity, the synthesis between the successive diversity of the given, and the ideality which is sketched out, in its identity, through time. Then and above all, the great historico-transcendental topic, that has gone through the whole 19th century, and which is scarcely exhausted today [...]"

Now, by opposition with all these topics, one may say that *savoir*,

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23 One must here underline the misleading dimension of the first english traduction of the *Archéologie du savoir*, under the title *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1972), as regards this crucial distinction in the original French text between *savoir* and *connaissance*. Indeed, the english word *knowledge* is used indifferently to translate the two concepts (except when the opposition in the original version is so obvious that the translation leaves these original terms in French, *savoir* and *connaissance*), which conducts to obliterate Foucault's strategic differentiation between a philosophy of discontinuity, anonymity, discursive practices (*savoir*), and a transcendental philosophy of subject (*connaissance*) which represents the main adversary of his archaeology (the archaeology of "knowledge", l'archéologie du *savoir*).

conceived as the field of historicity where sciences appear, is free from any constituent activity, emancipated from any reference to an origin or to an historico-transcendental teleology, separated from any link with a founding subjectivity (*subjectivité fondatrice*). [...]

History needed to be continuous so that the sovereignty of the subject could be maintained ; but reciprocally history could not be conceived in its unity unless a constituent subjectivity and a transcendental teleology would go through it. Thus the anonymous discontinuity of *savoir* was excluded from discourse and set aside into the unthoughtable".²⁴

Generally speaking then, the substitution of *savoir* to *connaissance* is the correlate of the disqualification of rationalist epistemology which separates Foucault from Althusser's followers. But it may also be understood as the mark of some radical anti-subjectivism, correlative of a non-psychoanalytical theory of discourse, which leads to the hypothesis of an anonymous discourse, a discourse without subject - should the subject be the subject of the unconscious. This original approach to discourse and enunciation seems to separate Foucault from Lacan's followers in the *CPA*, like Jean-Claude Milner and Jacques-Alain Miller.

We encounter here Foucault's singular distinction between theory of discourse, based upon the concepts of discursive practice, discursive formation, on the one hand, and theory of the unconscious on the other hand. The contestation of the psychoanalytical conception of a discourse beneath the discourse, a subterranean, silent discourse, that would be the discourse of the unconscious, haunts the pages of Foucault's methodological text in the *CPA*, as it will haunt the *Archaeology of Knowledge*. It entails the distancing from Lacan and from a Freudian framework that postulates some sort of dissimulated discourse underneath the "obvious" discourse, as reveals Foucault's mistrust in any kind of hermeneutics, even a Freudian one, such as it was theorized in *The Interpretation of Dreams*²⁵. For, in Foucault's view, psychoanalysis would in some way reproduce, even paradoxically, a philosophy of the subject, although the representation of a sovereign consciousness has disappeared since the elaboration of Freud's first topic at the time of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Moreover, Foucault's analysis of discourse, through the notion

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²⁴ *CPA*, 9, pp. 39-40. The same view, of a systematic, then methodological opposition between *savoir* and *connaissance* which announces the opposition between philosophy of concept and philosophy of consciousness, is summarized this way in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* : « Instead of exploring the consciousness/knowledge (*connaissance*)/science axis (which cannot escape subjectivity), archaeology explores the discursive practice/knowledge (*savoir*) science axis ». (Foucault 1972, ch. 6, p. 141). "What archaeology tries to describe is not the specific structure of science, but the very different domain of knowledge (*savoir*)". (*Ibid.*, p. 151).

²⁵ Freud, 2010, ch. 6 and 7.

of discursive formation which is the object of a description, even an empirical one, also departs from Althusser's conception of the *symptomatic reading (lecture symptomale)* which is used in *Reading Capital* in order to investigate Marx's theoretical revolution in *Capital*²⁶. Not only does the philosophical reading proposed by Althusser and his followers in 1965 aim at revealing through the blanks and the lapses of *Capital* Marx's latent philosophy, but it follows for that scope what would constitute according to Althusser Marx's own method, Marx's own symptomatic reading of Smith's Political Economy :

“ a reading which might well be called “symptomatic” (*lecture symptomale*) insofar as it divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a *different text*, present as a necessary absence in the first”²⁷.

Foucault's refusal of any symptomatic reading could be the lesson of his diffidence in the categories used by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in particular the distinction between “latent” and “manifest” at the core of the definition of the dreamwork : a distinction which is on the contrary quite central in Althusser's elaboration of the *symptomatic reading* dispositive. This latter dispositive is explicitly indebted towards Freud, Lacan and Lacan's return to Freud, and consists in interrogating the “silences” and the “blanks” in Marx's discourse, that would be symptomatic of a secret, dissimulated discourse, conceived through the category of the *discourse of the unconscious*.

At the beginning of *Reading Capital*, Althusser insists on the importance of the reference to Freud, and to Freud read by Lacan, in his general project to reveal the epistemological mutation at work in Marx's theory, historical materialism, since *The German Ideology* : a project which involves both a philosophical and a symptomatic reading whose premises are explicitly psychoanalytical :

“Only since Freud have we begun to suspect what listening, and hence what speaking (and keeping silent) *means (veut dire)* ; that this “*meaning*” (*vouloir dire*) of speaking and listening reveals beneath the innocence of speech and hearing the culpable depth of a second, *quite different* discourse, the discourse of the unconscious”.²⁸

And he adds, in an important note :

“We owe this result, which has revolutionized our *reading of*

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²⁶ L. Althusser, « From *Capital* to Marx's philosophy », in Althusser and Balibar 1970, Part I, pp. 11-34.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 16.

Freud, to Jacques Lacan's intransigent and lucid – for many years isolated – theoretical effort. [...] I feel bound to acknowledge [this debt] publicly [...]. Just as I feel bound to acknowledge the obvious and concealed debts which bind us to our masters in reading learned works, once Gaston Bachelard and Jean Cavailles and now Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault”.²⁹

In that respect, by contrast to Althusser's perspective, Foucault's reluctance to adopt any psychoanalytical category, such as the discourse of the unconscious, marks his anomalous position, one may say, within the galaxy of the “philosophers of concept” at the end of the 60's in France., as well as his singular indifference to Lacan's work.

Particularly significant of Foucault's heterodox position at that time, regarding psychoanalysis, is a question formulated by the Cercle d'épistémologie. This question takes place within the second series of remarks and demands that can be found after Foucault's answer, and it is called “De l'impensé”, “*On the unthought*”. The Cercle d'épistémologie finally asks where Foucault might stand in relation to Freud, since, according to its members, one could wonder whether Foucault's use of discontinuity would

“henceforth exclude the possibility that a statement might be produced *in order* to take the place of another ? That is to say : in order to prevent it from appearing, in order to *repress* it ?”³⁰

The reader understands then quite clearly that Foucault's possible rejection of the concept of repression (*refoulement*) would set him aside from psychoanalysis which represents on the contrary a crucial theoretical background for the Cercle d'épistémologie. This theoretical frame is indeed revindicated as such by the members of the Cercle, when they claim, at the end of their question to Foucault :

“recognition that a discourse can come to the surface in order to repress another one beneath it strikes us as the definitive achievement of psychoanalysis”.³¹

Far from such a recognition of what would be the definitive results of psychoanalytical theory, Foucault's singular view on discourse analysis presents itself as an *empirical* description of the statement as a singular

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²⁹ *Ibid.* Part I, p. 16, note 1. Of course, it has to be noticed that this homage from Althusser to Foucault himself is formulated in 1965, one year before the publication of *The Order of Things (Les mots et les choses)*, whose sharp critique against what would be the vestiges of anthropologism in Marx's theory of history could not be understood and accepted as such by Althusser.

³⁰ CPA, 9, p. 44. English translation : Cahiers Kingston.

³¹ *Ibid.*

event, incompatible with any kind of hermeneutic outlook. One could isolate then in Foucault's method a gesture of sticking to the surface of to the enunciated in its singularity, which signs the explicit refusal of any kind of “depth” beneath the positive statements.

This point is quite clear when Foucault, following an insight developed in the CPA, explains in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that discursive analysis is quite different from thought analysis, for it does not obey to an allegorical perspective, for it refuses the very conceptual differentiation surface / depth.

“Once these immediate forms of continuity are suspended, an entire field is set free. A vast field, but one that can be defined nonetheless : this field is made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them. Before approaching, with any degree of certainty, a science, or novels, or political speeches, or the *oeuvre* of an author, or even a single book, the material with which one is dealing is, in its raw, neutral state, a population of events in the space of general discourse in general. One is led therefore to the project of a *pure description of discursive events* as the horizon for the search for the unities that form within it. [...]”

It is also clear that this description of discourses is in opposition to the history of thought. There too a system of thought can be reconstituted only on the basis of a definite discursive totality. But this totality is treated in such a way that one tries to rediscover beyond the statements themselves the intention of the speaking subject, his conscious activity, what he meant, or, again, the unconscious activity that took place, despite himself, in what he said or in the almost imperceptible fracture of his actual words ; in any case, we must reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them. The analysis of thought is always *allegorical* in relation to the discourse that it employs. Its question is unfailingly : what was being said in what was said ? The analysis of the discursive field is orientated in a quite different way : we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence ; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes. We do not seek below what is manifest the half silent murmur of another discourse [...]”.³²

Now, it is interesting to notice that already in the text of the CPA, discourse analysis, through the asserted disjunction between analysis of discourse and analysis of thought, was explicitly defined as a *description*,

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³² Foucault, 1972, Part II, Ch. 1, pp. 26-28.

indifferent therefore to the hermeneutic paradigm and to the conceptual configuration surface / depth.

Since the scope of *l'analyse du discours*, the analysis of discourse, is to grasp the statement as an event, considered in its "narrowness" and its "singularity", and also to examine the specific interrelations between this statement and other statements, what gets excluded in this investigation is the search of "beneath what is manifest, the half silent chattering (*bavardage*) of another discourse"³³. This revindicated indifference towards "some kind of secret discourse, which would animate from the inside manifest discourses"³⁴, is strategic. It situates Foucault's analysis of discourse within "the general element of *archive*", and distinguishes it from other types of discourse analysis that would be more closely linked to psychoanalysis : for example, as we have just seen, Althusser's *lecture symptomale*, developed in 1965 in *For Marx* and in *Reading Capital*.

Foucault's tone is thus quite polemical, against the followers of Lacan and Althusser, with this assimilation of the supposed silent discourse to some "chattering" (*bavardage*).

Indeed, the disjunction established in the *CPA* between the analysis of discourse and the analysis of thought, the recourse to the vocabulary of the "*archive*" and of the "*monument*", used to describe the status of discourse, involve a powerful and constant disqualification of categories such as a "silent discourse", a "discourse beneath the discourse", or even a "discourse of the unconscious" : all categories that pertain to a tradition of the conception of discourse currently inspired by psychoanalysis. For such dominant categories seem to require the place of a supposed subject, the subject of discourse, the subject of the unconscious, which cannot be admitted by Foucault. As though there were remainders of anthropologism and subjectivism within psychoanalysis itself. When, for example, Foucault links his concept of *discursive formation* to the concept of "positivity", he insists on the fact that, although this concept of discursive formation "puts into the light, among the phenomenons of enunciation, relations that had previously remained in the shadow, and were not immediately transcribed at the surface of discourses", he underlines that what discursive formation enlightens is not "the unity of a secret meaning, nor a general and unique forme"³⁵. The target of Foucault's attack here might be the unique form, the "secret meaning" carried on, in his own outlook, by the system of the unconscious in its Freudian acception.

We know that this starting diffidence as regards psychoanalytical theory

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³³ *CPA*, 9, p. 17.

³⁴ *CPA*, 9, p. 19.

³⁵ *CPA*, 9, p. 29.

will be accentuated later on, in the 70's, when Foucault will not hesitate to situate psychoanalysis within the general dispositive of "psychiatric power", and disciplinary power in general³⁶. In that respect, the text of 1968, on the topic of discourse analysis, represents a key moment in the inversion of Foucault's view on psychoanalysis, whereas it was still positively considered in 1966, at the time of *The Order of Things* : psychoanalysis was then identified, together with linguistics and structural anthropology, to one of these "counter-sciences" that could be opposed to the anthropologism characteristic of traditional human sciences.

In other words, it could seem on a first reading that Foucault's radical anti-subjectivism would lead him to a general and univoque contestation of psychoanalytical theory, together with what would be his "eliminativist" claim regarding the very notion of subject.

Yet the situation at the time of the *CPA* is not so simple, it is indeed far more complex than this eliminativist reading. For there exists, even for the first Foucault, during the archaeological sequence, a *fundamental ambivalence* as regards the question of the *subject*. On the one hand, there is indeed a temptation to erase the subject, as being the other name of consciousness, psychological or transcendental subjectivity, as shows the very definition of *savoir* through the categories of discontinuity and *anonymity*. But on the other hand, Foucault's archaeological inquiry is really punctuated by the attempt to reformulate in a radical way the question of the subject, that is to disconnect the subject from the figure of sovereignty, and to conceive it on the contrary as being subjected and constituted in the discursive formations, therefore assigned to a pre-determined empty place. For *savoir*, in Foucault's words, is not the realm where the subject vanishes ; it is rather

"a domain in which the subject is necessarily situated and dependent, and can never figure as titular (either as a transcendental activity, or as empirical consciousness)"³⁷.

Thus Foucault would draw the paradoxical portrait of an anonymous, decentred and multiple subject, conceived through the paradigm of discontinuity and dispersion.

The constatation of such an ambivalence, at work in the archaeological texts themselves, would lead us then to contest a common reading according to which the "first Foucault", in the 60's of the 20th century, would have refuted the conceptualization of the subject, or even attempted to efface such a question, whereas the "second Foucault", at

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³⁶ Foucault, 2006.

³⁷ Foucault, 1972, ch. 6, p. 141.

the turn of the 70's - 80's, would have rediscovered the question of the subject.

As a matter of fact, and the text of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is very clear on this point, the problem of the "status of the subject" is central in Foucault's archaeological analysis ; and it is particularly central in his *analysis of discourse*. We may therefore suppose that his approach to psychoanalysis is governed by the same kind of ambiguity. The conclusion of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is under that respect particularly interesting, when Foucault sustains that, in so far as archaeology seeks "to define, out-side all reference to a psychological or constituent subjectivity, the different positions of the subject that may be involved in statements", then it "touches on a question that is being posed today by psychoanalysis"³⁸. And it has to be recognized, Foucault explains in the introduction of the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, that psychoanalysis, together with linguistics and ethnology, has contributed to the decentering of the subject, that is to the contestation of the sovereign subjectivity.

In a way then, analysis of discourse, despite its rejection of the category of "silent discourse", would take the place of transcendental philosophy to reconsider the general question of the subject : the subject henceforth considered, not as a principium, but as an *effect of discourse*, as suggests Foucault's striking formula about "the different positions of the subject that may be involved in statements".

It finally has to be noted that this view concerning a subject that would be constituted inside the sphere of discourse, at the opposite of the notion of a "constituent subject", happens to intersect remarkably with the program followed by Michel Pêcheux in his own *analysis of discourse*, a few years later. The scope of Pêcheux, at the intersection of linguistics, philosophy and psychoanalysis, will be to study the "subject-effect" within the discourse, according to a general "non-subjectivist theory of subjectivity" inspired at the same time by Althusser (the theory of ideology) and Lacan, and developed in his major book first published in 1975, *Language, Semantics and Ideology. Stating the Obvious (Les Vérités de La Palice)*³⁹.

Quite significantly, the young Michel Pêcheux, seven years before the publication of his book, also published under the pseudonym of Thomas Herbert, in this 9th issue of the *CPA*, an article entitled "Remarques pour une théorie générale des idéologies"⁴⁰.

.....
38 Foucault, 1972, conclusion, p. 160.

39 Pêcheux, 1982.

40 *CPA*, 9, pp. 74-92. In particular, p. 90.

To conclude, one can only be struck by the multiple, sometimes contradictory figures of antipsychologism in French Philosophy, that is within the very field of the philosophy of concept. First, the two-fold figure of anti-psychologism, in Foucault and in Althusser, supposes a very different treatment of the notion of truth, which situates the archaeology of knowledge, and its denunciation of formalism, quite apart from the French tradition of history and philosophy of science, conceived through its rationalist matrix.

Second, Foucault's radical anti-subjectivism seems to lead him to disqualify even the psychoanalytical (Lacanian) conceptualization of the subject of the unconscious, as what would be the symptom of a persisting, subterranean philosophy of the subject, at least the paradoxical vestige of idealist subjectivism.

Yet, Foucault's relation to psychoanalysis is quite ambivalent, as we have noticed. Indeed, it is as ambivalent as his treatment of the question of the subject. On the one hand, he seems to have revindicated the suspension of any psychoanalytical reference ; and this distancing is correlated to his eliminativist temptation about the notion of subject. Nevertheless, Foucault's archeological sequence remains haunted by this question of the subject, up to the point that it leads to a renewal in the conceptualization of the subject, as an anonymous, diffracted, constituted subject : the subject henceforth defined, we may say, using a vocabulary borrowed from Pêcheux, as a *discourse effect*. In this latter respect, psychoanalysis remains a useful theoretical tool, although totally reconsidered, from a singular outlook.

As a matter of fact, a remarkable example of such an heterodoxical reappropriation of psychoanalysis may be seen at work in the passage of Foucault's answer to the Cercle d'épistémologie, in which he assigns his analysis of discourse to the order of description, rather than to the order of interpretation. His simultaneous rejection of the representation of a "silent discourse" stands at the core of the construction of his original notion of *discursive event (événement discursif)*. In order to qualify more precisely such a notion, Foucault does not eliminate the category of the *unconscious*, but suggests its singular and rather astonishing re-definition in the terms of "the unconscious of the thing said" - in strong resonance with the figure of an anonymous, non constituent subject – substituted to the traditional notion of "the unconscious of the speaking subject".

"These relations [between formulated statements, intertwined into discursive sets], would never have been formulated for themselves in these statements [...]. But these invisible relations would not in any way constitute some kind of secret discourse, which would animate from the inside manifest discourses ; therefore it is not an interpretation that could bring them to the light, but rather the analysis of their coexistence,

of their succession, of their mutual functioning, of their reciprocal determination, of their independent or correlative transformation. Taken together (although they could never be analyzed in an exhaustive way), they form what may be called, by some play upon words, the unconscious, not of the speaking subject, but of the thing said” 41.

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41 CPA, 9, p. 19.