

Chapter Five

MICHEL FOUCAULT AS A HETEROTOPIA¹

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Not all weighty humanistic thoughts are worth locating them in the biographical subsoil, on which they grew; and in the case of others, the weave of their intertwinement with the author's life (and the resulting consequences) seems in turn so clear and significant at the same time, that it does not leave anyone indifferent, provoking to deeper reflection upon it. This latter category undoubtedly includes the achievements of one of the most intriguing (due to many co-occurring circumstances) 20th century thinkers—Michel Foucault. He himself, referring to his own work, confesses, "Whenever I tried to do some theoretical work, it was born of the elements of my existence, it always referred to the processes I've seen in my environment. Because it seemed to me that in the things that I see, in the institutions I am dealing with, in my relations to others I notice deep crevices, disruptions and dysfunctions—that's why I decided to take up such work, a kind of autobiographical fragment" (Foucault, 1981, as cited in Eribon, 2005, pp. 50-51). The fact that what the author of *Madness and Civilization* modestly refers to as the autobiographical fragment underwent multiplication over time, absorbing more and more areas of the unusual life, is also confirmed by Didier Eribon skillfully moving around the

¹ This title, together with the idea it represents of looking at Michel Foucault from the heterotopic perspective was taken from the paper presented by Andrzej Paweł Wejland, whom I would like to thank for sharing the paper and our inspiring conversations about heterotopicity in Foucault's works. The above-mentioned lecture (titled *Michel Foucault: Utopia and Heterotopia*), was given at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Łódź in November 2004.

intricacies of Foucault's biography. Commenting *inter alia* on the sources of research on madness presented in *Histoire de la folie*, he says that "everyone, regardless of whether they knew the deeper causes of his disorders or not, remembered [Foucault] as a man who balanced on a rope with a sense of precarious balance that at any moment could slip towards madness. Also, in that fact, everyone sought the explanation of his obsession with psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry. 'He wanted to understand everything that was associated with privacy and exclusion,' says one of his colleagues. 'His very keen interest in psychology undoubtedly stemmed from his biography,' says another. We could also hear the confession: 'When *Histoire de la folie* was published, everyone who knew him clearly understood that this book is most closely connected with his personal story.' One of his then close friends said: 'I have always believed that one day he will write about sexuality. He had to give it the central place in his work, because it held the central place in his life,' and he continues: 'His most recent books present a sort of his personal ethics that he had fought for himself. Sartre never wrote ethics, Foucault did it,' or: 'Drawing on Ancient Greece, Foucault found in the *Histoire de la sexualité* archaeological uncovering of his own foundation...' In short, everyone agrees that the work of Foucault, and even his method, are rooted in a situation which he so dramatically experienced as a *normalien*. Of course, it's not mean that the whole work of Foucault should be interpreted from the perspective of his homosexuality [...]. Obviously, with extreme simplification, one can observe how an intellectual project grew out of personal experience, which ought to be regarded as original, how a thinker prone to intellectual adventures 'invented' his idea throughout the confrontations of the personal and social life and did not stop at it, but began to think about it, to cross it, in order to—in the form of ironic rejection—ask it as a question to those who asked him before: 'Do you actually know who you are? Are you convinced about your common sense? Your scientific concepts? Your categories of perception?' (Eribon, 2005, pp. 49-50; italics in the original).

Since Foucault practiced—to follow his nomenclature—the endless *sobąpisanie* (*self-writing*),² it seems appropriate to suppose that at his level of self-awareness (namely the methodological one), he did not do this blindfolded. Where, then, is the key to understanding the phenomenon

² The phrase 'sobąpisanie' which is best reflected by the English 'self-writing,' I repeat after Michał Paweł Markowski, who translated in such a way the French phrase 'l'écriture de soi.' Markowski, aware of the importance of language nuances, in turn reveals that he followed this path, unable to find a more appropriate formulation for Foucauldian intuitions than the one based on the analogy of 'życiopisanie' ('life-writing') by a Polish poet Edward Stachura (cf. footnote 1 in Foucault, 1999, p. 304).

known as 'Michel Foucault'? What makes it? This matter, in accordance with the principle of narrative retardation, I will elucidate step-by-step, trusting in the Reader's patience. Let me start by giving the floor once again to Didier Eribon: "In connection with Foucault, there appeared—says his biographer—specific difficulties. Foucault was a complex and colorful personality. 'He wore masks and constantly changed them,' said Dumézil and he knew him better than anyone else. I did not try to uncover 'the truth' about Foucault: behind each mask another mask appeared, and I do not believe in the possibility of extracting the truth about the personality emerging from one shell after another. Could there be a number of Foucaults? Thousands of Foucaults, as Dumézil stated? Undoubtedly" (*ibid.*, p. 10). It seems that despite the pessimism, which is concealed in these words, at least at the first glance, the author, following Georges Dumézil, reveals a 'truth,' and indeed an important truth nailing, in my opinion, the personality-identity complexities of Foucault and multiple effects resulting from them. Who was Foucault? Did anyone, including himself, know the answer to it? Finally, to what extent, and for who, did it matter? Quite meaningful—perhaps not only in a symbolic sense—are in this regard the trials and tribulations of naming the newborn boy: "[...] the family gave the son the name of his grandfather and his father; Paul—grandfather Paul Foucault, Paul—father Paul Foucault, Paul—the son of Paul Foucault... But Mrs. Foucault did not want quite to conform to the tradition of her husband's family. Yes, her son was to be named 'Paul.' So be it. But she added the middle name, 'Michel,' and joined both of them with a hyphen. The official documents and school reports contained the name 'Paul.' End of story. However, the family soon started using the other name: just 'Michel.' For Mrs. Foucault he would forever remain Paul-Michael, she remembered him with both these names just before her death. The whole family to this day speaks of 'Paul-Michel.' Why did Foucault change his name? 'Because his initials—P.-M.F.,' said Mrs. Foucault, 'were the same as Pierre Mendes France's initials.' This explanation was provided to her by her son. However, he presented the matter quite differently to his friends: he did not want to have the name of his father, whom he hated in his youth" (*ibid.*, p. 19).

Stubborn adherence to tradition, fighting an uneven battle with the juggling of appearances, skillful dodging, instead of facing the name-related norm imposing lasting social obligations—that is Foucault's fate, which, it is necessary to add, was taken by him with a slightly ironic smile, though not free of resignation, blooming on the face of the genius alienated from the world. "This is the city where I was born; decapitated saints with books in their hands ensure that justice is infallible, the castles are

armed... this is the hereditary gift of my wisdom" (ibid., p. 18), Foucault says about Poitiers, a city where he spent his childhood and early adolescence; does he say it as 'Paul,' 'Michel,' or 'Paul-Michel'? Or maybe a little bit as each of them? An intellectual floating on high seas; a provincial returning after many years to his homeland; a sensitive man maintaining strong ties with the mother till the end of his days; a rebel bearing a deep grudge against the father... Undoubtedly, no matter what perspective it is set into, the (self-)portrait of Foucault is painted in different colors, none of which is strong enough to pierce through the rest of them...

This multicolored nature, deliberately, I suppose, reinforced by Paul-Michel himself, manifested outside in a wide repertoire of bizarre behaviors that, sooner or later, made Foucault, almost everywhere where he appeared, an unwanted person. "He was an incorrigible individualist, and his relationships with others were complicated, and sometimes swollen with conflicts. He did not feel good in the new skin—there was something morbid about it. [...] Foucault hid in his own solitude, he abandoned it only when he could mock others. He ridiculed his colleagues with such coldness that soon he became known for it. Mocking and jibing, he gave them blunt nicknames and used them in public [...]. He argued with everybody, he made enemies everywhere, showing the signs of odd aggressiveness, sometimes going hand in hand with truly outstanding megalomania. [...] As a result, he soon became universally hated" (ibid., pp. 46-47)—such were the words used by Eribon to describe the situation in which the future philosopher found himself right after being admitted to the elite of *École Normale Supérieure* in 1946. Over the time, the atmosphere around Foucault thickened until the moment when, for the sake of the good name of the noble institution and the mental health of the eccentric young man, it was decided to take radical steps towards him: "One day, a teacher found him lying on the floor in the classroom—he saw that the boy cut his skin on his chest with a razor; another time he was seen chasing a student with a dagger in his hand. And when in 1948 he attempted to commit suicide, most colleagues saw in this a confirmation of what had long been assumed: Michel Foucault's mental balance was in a condition worse than deplorable. [...] Two years after Foucault had been admitted to *École* he found himself in St Ann's Hospital—where he was entrusted to the care of Professor Delay, one of the leading French psychiatrists. [...] This was the first encounter of Paul-Michel with psychiatry as an institution. It was also the first close-up to that uncharted border which—perhaps not as dramatically as it is taken—separates a 'madman' from a 'sane man.' In any case, this painful episode gave Foucault a privilege, which was widely envied: he got a single room nearby the school clinic. In this way, he could isolate

himself and gain peace of mind that he needed to work. He lived there again when in the years 1950-1951 he was preparing for the second time for aggregation; and he appeared there one more time when he was giving lectures—but this time because of mere the convenience. Meanwhile, he yet again attempted to commit suicide, or in any event he staged such trials. ‘Foucault was quite obsessed with this idea,’ says one of his friends. One day, when someone asked, ‘Where are you going?’ Foucault replied, ‘To BHV, I want to buy rope, with which I will hang myself.’ The school doctor, obliged with medical confidentiality, merely stated, ‘These disorders resulted from the improper attitude toward his own homosexuality.’ Indeed, whenever Foucault returned from his frequent nocturnal visits to gay bars and pickets, he was depressed for hours, sick, and sullen with shame [...]” (ibid., pp. 47-48).³

‘Incompatibility’ of Michel Foucault resulted in his falling into deep loneliness that could be relieved, at least in part, by the act of writing—as believed the author of *La Volonté de savoir*: “Do you know why a man writes?” he once asked his assistant, Francine Pariente, and he answered this question himself, “To feel loved” ...

Paul-Michel desired dialogical engagement with the audience coming in great numbers to his lectures given at the Collège de France, almost as much as he desired genuine love (the taste of which he apparently experienced a number of times not only in the text dimension of life). Unfortunately, each time, instead of questions stimulating the discussion, there came big disappointment: “What I said here, needs to be discussed,” he explained, adding, “Sometimes, when a lecture is not going so well, one question is enough to put it on the right track. But the question is never asked. In France, the group effect prevents any real discussion. And since the lecturer does not receive any feedback, the lecture becomes more and

³ More than once his homosexuality brought Foucault to fight for a place (social one), just as he fought in the late 40s and early 50s, after he had been awarded a scholarship of the Thiers Foundation. Eribon says, “Foucault took benefit from the scholarship only for a year, instead of—as provided in the statute—for three years. He found life in the community difficult to endure [...]. Each scholarship holder had his own room, and therefore he could enjoy relative freedom, but in spite of it all, the scholarship holders lived in the guest house where they had to cope with life in a group of about twenty people, because—apart from the holders of 1951—there lived scholarship holders from the previous years. All meals were consumed in the same company. Foucault once again managed to alienate himself from everyone. He made attacks on each of them, pulling faces and inciting fights. His relations with his colleagues were marked by constant conflicts—the situation ended with a drama, because Foucault established an affair with one of his colleagues and the whole story ended grimly, because he was suspected of taking over letters... He did not want to go on with it all any longer, and his colleagues did not keep him either” (Eribon, 2005, p. 65).

more theatrical. Towards the people sitting in the audience I behave like an actor, or an acrobat. And when I come to the end of the lecture, I am struck by the feeling of complete loneliness" (ibid., p. 273)...



Famous exegetes of Foucault's works, Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan, prompt—but they do it for the sake of other needs, relatively different from mine—that to understand Michel Foucault's thought it is useful to apply "his own terms" (Lemert & Gillan, 1982, p. XV). This unusual procedure, that is supposed to protect us from falling into the trap of misinterpretation of the complex work of the author of *Les mots et les choses*, seems to work out also in the area of exploring mutual interactions between the texts and life, *the* texts and *the* life. I have come to the similar conclusion dealing with the wealth of Foucault's metaphors, which include the one that strongly merges the 'professional' and 'non-professional' dimensions of philosopher's actions. I mean here the concept of **heteroclicity**, first used in the Preface to *The Order of Things*. From there, we learn that the book, which once became so stunningly popular "arouse out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.' In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (Foucault, 1994, p. XV; italics in the original). Foucault explains then, reaching for suitable analogies and comparisons clarifying his reasoning, what is included in that *impossibility of thinking* as he puts it. Its meaning exceeds the plain and simple existence of the fabulous animals and the animals belonging to the remaining 'sophisticated' categories; it's not about the astounding combination, either, but about **the place** bringing them to **joined existence**, about *tópos koinós*—*common place*, whose peculiarity is compared

to the autopsy table, on which there suddenly land the sewing-machine together with the umbrella; about the place creating an opportunity for a localization, though an extremely unlikely one, of a sudden gathering of all “worms and snakes” in the mouth of Pantagruel’s companion, Eusthenes. Only there, paradoxically (!)—exclusively there in “that welcoming and voracious mouth” they are provided “with a feasible lodging, a roof under which to coexist” (*ibid.*, p. XVI).

Obviously, the example of the alleged Chinese encyclopedia should be perceived just as an excuse to discuss much more serious issues relating to the basics of certain cultural processes. Without going into too much detail of Foucault’s arguments, it is worth mentioning that they deal with the contact point of spaces, words and things. Culturally situated things and the corresponding words are in advance assigned to certain spaces, operating according to the principle of the “mute ground” where “it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed” (*ibid.*, p. XVII) (the original context locations of the umbrella and the sewing-machine are maintained, based on the universally adopted classification canon, in the extreme distance from each other; thus it is usually much easier for us to think of them as objects of ‘practical’ use than, for instance, objects stimulating imagination). In Foucauldian logic, the subject under discursive pressures, constantly revises its classification actions as for the—largely unrealized—“fundamental codes” imposing the “empirical orders” onto the world (*ibid.*, p. XX). Yet, what the interpreter is guided at by the specifically understood Borges’ list, is the fact that there are situations where the empirical orders are sometimes questioned, their rules are doubted, and the one who, zounds (!), enters the orbit of the impact of this ‘aberration’ will feel deep anxiety and will become at the same time exposed to the “disintegration of language”—and will be threatened by the “loss of what is ‘common’ to place and name” (*ibid.*, p. XIX). “It appears that certain aphasiacs, when shown various differently coloured skeins of wool on a table top, are consistently unable to arrange them into any coherent pattern; as though that simple rectangle were unable to serve in their case as a homogeneous and neutral space in which things could be placed so as to display at the same time the continuous order of their identities or differences as well as the semantic field of their denomination. Within this simple space in which things are normally arranged and given names, the aphasiac will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; in one corner, they will place the lightest-coloured skeins, in another the red ones, somewhere else those that are softest in texture, in yet another place the longest, or those that have a tinge of purple or those that have been wound up into a ball. But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve

again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety" (ibid., p. XVIII).

Foucault strongly stresses the importance of these, let's call them—'altered states,' seeing in them a thoroughly ambivalent force, that with the same easiness can *destroy* the original order and *initiate* the creative cultural movement; this force sprouts in the '**dimension of heteroclicity,**' where "a large number of possible orders" constantly flash and transform into two opposing forms: **utopias** and **heterotopias**. "*Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together.' This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences" (ibid., p. XVIII; italics in the original).

Heteroclicity is revealed through language (to that extent it is recognized in *The Order of Things*), but it also goes—as shown by the considerations contained in *Des espaces autres*⁴—far beyond it; utopias and heterotopias represent a kind of a reservoir of *spatial possibilities* gaining universal resonance, since they can be found in each type of culture. They make an integral part of social activities stretched between the desire to idealize the world (utopia), and doubting in its legitimacy (heterotopia). While heterotopias remain peculiar spaces, they also have the value of a kind of

⁴ This is the original title of the lecture given by Michel Foucault, March 14, 1967. The opportunity to present the concept of heterotopia was provided by a conference of Cercle d'Etudes Architecturales. The text of the speech was published in 1984 in the French journal *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*.

“counter-sites,” that is places where “**all the other real sites** that can be found within the culture, **are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted**” (Foucault, 1984a; bold added by M.K.).



What I have said so far is enough to return to the problem of Foucauldian ‘I’, this time merging it directly with the idea of heteroclicity. Michel Foucault, *as a person* and *as a thinker*, is in my opinion ‘another space’; remaining someone extremely **heteroclitic**,⁵ he is at the same time a **heterotopia** and a **heterotopologist**⁶—someone who has, to use a metaphor again, the attributes of Eusthenes and simultaneously is aware of his own internal contradiction, which he ultimately transforms into the intellectual and cognitive advantage.

After these explanations it is easy to see that the ‘taxonomic’ trouble so meticulously enumerated by Eribon and Dumézil (“He wore masks and constantly changed them,” “I did not try to uncover ‘the truth’ about Foucault: behind each mask another mask appeared,” “Could there be a number of Foucaults? Thousands of Foucaults?”) is immediately solved by its location in the common place, at *this spot*, remaining beyond all *other real places*. Significantly, the tone of the voices cited above is repetitive and resonant; the same Dumézil states, for example, “Foucault’s intelligence was literally boundless, it was even *sophisticated*. He extended the field of his observations to embrace all areas of the revived being, where the traditional divisions into body and spirit, drive and ideas seem absurd: madness, sexuality, crime. Hence, his eyes like a spotlight swept the past and the present, ready to make even the most disturbing discoveries, and ready to accept anything, except for the requirement of keeping orthodoxy. It was the intelligence of many focal lengths, using

⁵ *Webster’s Dictionary* has two alternative terms corresponding to the Polish adjective ‘heterokliczny.’ The first includes ‘heteroclitic’ or ‘heteroclitical,’ while the second is ‘heteroclite.’ These words (appearing in the literature already in the first half of the eighteenth century) reflect well the specific personality of Foucault, meaning as much as “deviating from ordinary forms or rules; irregular; anomalous; abnormal.” The noun ‘heteroclite’ can also be used to describe a person who has an eccentric and unconventional way of behavior (*Webster’s...*, entries: heteroclitic; heteroclite).

⁶ Talking about a ‘heterotopologist’ I follow the suggestion of Foucault, who, wondering how to describe heterotopias, proposes to elaborate “a sort of systematic description [...] that would, in a given society, take as its object the study, analysis, description, and ‘reading’ [...] of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called **heterotopology**” (Foucault, 1984a; bold added by M.K.).

moving mirrors,⁷ replicating the formed judgments to turn them at once into their opposites, without leading to self-destruction, and not giving up" (Eribon, 2005, p. 412; italics in the original). Clifford Geertz, on the other hand, while preparing in 1978 a review for the English edition of *Discipline and Punish*, already at the very beginning attempted to equal Foucault-the-thinker with the non-places by Maurits Cornelis Escher. Since *Folie et déraison* was printed, its author, as declared by the eminent anthropologist, "has become [...] a kind of impossible object: a non-historical historian, an anti-humanistic human scientist, and a counter-structuralist structuralist. If we add to this his tense, impacted prose style, which manages to seem imperious and doubt-ridden at the same time, and a method which supports sweeping summary with eccentric detail, the resemblance of his work to an Escher drawing—stairs rising to platforms lower than themselves, doors leading outside that bring you back inside—is complete" (Geertz, 1978). Stephen J. Ball (1990, p. 1) notes that "Michel Foucault is an enigma, a massively influential intellectual who steadfastly refused to align himself with any of the major traditions of western social thought. His primary concern with the history of scientific thought, the development of technologies of power and domination, and the arbitrariness of modern social institutions speak to but stand outside the main currents of Weberian and Marxist scholarship. In an interview in 1982, in response to a question about his intellectual identity, Foucault characteristically replied: 'I don't feel it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began

⁷ The 'moving mirrors' metaphor should arouse double curiosity, since a mirror, as such, places itself exactly at the intersection of utopia and heterotopia. Foucault (1984a) writes, "I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there."

a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?"⁸ Interestingly, the similarly self-reflective conclusions are, as it turns out, just a repetition of those from the early 1960s, when Foucault (1972, p. 12) began to see, paraphrasing his own words, *otherness* within his *own* thoughts. This takes place in the work deeply questioning the methods, borders and guiding clues relevant to the history of ideas. At the end of the chapter introducing us into the subject of archeology of knowledge, we find an intriguing internal-external dialogue, which is marked in the climax with a metaphor of a (text) maze, where the author—as we are convinced by the rhetoric used there—carefully hid his face. While making a momentary “autobiographical pact”⁹ with himself, Michel-trickster poses a question, this time acting from the position of his *alter ego*: “Aren’t you sure of what you’re saying? Are you going to change yet again, shift your position according to the questions that are put to you, and say that the objections are not really directed at the place from which you are speaking? Are you going to declare yet again that you have never been what you have been reproached with being?” and then states in a fickle way: “Are you already preparing the way out that will enable you in your next book to spring up somewhere else and declare as you’re now doing: no, no, I’m not where you are lying in wait for me, but over here, laughing at you?”

‘What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing—with a rather shaky hand—a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. **Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same:** leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their mortality when we write” (ibid., p. 17; bold added by M.K.).

This passage is clearly separated in the original (with double spacing) from the rest of the argument; and thus the *content* is symbolically

⁸ The phrase cited by Ball is taken from an interview conducted by Rux Martin during a seminar at the University of Vermont visited by Foucault in 1982; see Martin (1988).

⁹ The term ‘autobiographical pact’ is used by me according to the intentions assigned to it by Philippe Lejeune, assuming that we can talk about an autobiography from the moment the condition is fulfilled concerning the coexistence of a trivalent person in the text: the author, who is also the main character in the story and an actually existing person (cf. Lejeune, 1989).

replaced with a sign of *broken continuity*, and it is an attempt—when we again adopt the Foucault’s perspective—to designate “**this blank space** from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and so unsure” (ibid.; bold added by M.K.).

The examples of *personality* and *mental ‘flashes’* of Foucault’s heterotopias could be multiplied within the area of their multi-layer and multi-aspect character, nevertheless, a matter equally important to looking for the evidence of the **heteroclicity principle** is a reflection on the effects that it produces; and these are quite significant.

We already know that heterotopias raise concern, putting some of us on the edge of fear, but is it so that the only persons that are saturated with this primal fear are ‘aphasiacs’ embraced by the all-powerful impotence of speech, sensation, movement or memory? Indeed, they are bothered by the lack of the right word or sound, but also—which is equally important—due to the stigmatizing special kind of ‘loss,’ they often become a big trouble for the ‘non-aphasiacs,’ because they are not sufficiently ‘translatable.’ Michel Foucault reaches the limits of ‘translatability’ from the other side, he is, so to speak, ‘**hyper-expressive**’—he gives at the same time the impression of being ‘nowhere’ (in the blank space) and ‘everywhere’ (in all spaces at once); “None the less, his work has been taken up or has impacted upon a wide range of disciplines—sociology, psychology, philosophy, politics, linguistics, cultural studies, literary theory,” says Stephen J. Ball (1990, p. 1), eagerly supported by Leszek Koczanowicz (1999, p. 7), emphasizing that considering the “whole multiplicity of reception and interpretation of the thoughts coined by the author of *History of Sexuality*, there is a consensus about the fact that his work has revolutionized philosophy and social sciences. Even a cursory review of the bibliography published in 1983 that enumerated Foucault’s works and papers dedicated to him shows the scale of the impact.¹⁰ It reports 2,570 works in different languages and on almost all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Since that time, the number of manuscripts devoted to Foucault’s views as well as knowledge of his work have grown quite rapidly.” These comments should be supplemented by the opinion, which to my mind is not an isolated one, expressed by Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan (1982, p. XIII), that Foucault “Not only [...] does write across disciplinary

¹⁰ There are many indications that Foucault was aware of the repercussions caused by his texts. To the criticism of *La Volonté de savoir*, presented by Jean Baudrillard, proclaiming that Foucauldian work is imminently bound to be forgotten, its author sarcastically retorted: “My problem would rather be to remember Baudrillard,” “It’s enough for any scribbler to add his name to mine and whoever he may be, he can be sure of commercial success” (Eribon, 2005, p. 340).

boundaries, he is also read in this way. In other words, Foucault's readers tend to be those who, to greater or lesser extents, acknowledge that no single intellectual specialization is sufficient to the task of explaining the social world. They are, it seems fair to assume, people who share Foucault's conviction that the disciplines are both insufficient and part of the problem of modern society."

Observations on the extraordinary popularity of Michel Foucault and the fact that his work appears in numerous theoretical, analytical and interpretation contexts, (including those that go beyond the purely academic area), are completed and also explained by the **dispersion** category proposed by Umberto Eco. Trying to figure out the causes of worship that selected works enjoy, the Italian researcher was tempted to hypothesize that at the root of this behavior—on the part of the recipients—there is the 'fragmented' nature of these works. The author of *Name of the Rose* is of the opinion that the model dispersion compositions include *Casablanca*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the Bible. Dispersibility assumes the opportunity of reversing something, giving it a new form, and finally—playing a perverse game of meanings consciously or unconsciously provoked by the author and undertaken by the recipient. "It is widely known—writes Eco (2007, pp. 157-158)—that *Casablanca* was filmed day after day without knowing the end of the film" ["If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?" wonders Foucault; note added by M.K.]. [...] Ingrid Bergman looks so charmingly mysterious in the movie, since playing her role she did not know which of the men she would ultimately choose, both received her tender and ambiguous smiles. We also know that in order to induce the dynamics of the plot, the script writers placed all the hackneyed tricks taken from the history of film and novel, turning the film into a museum [...] for moviegoers. Therefore, this movie can be seen as a set of archetypes. To some extent, the same can be said about *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which is a *par excellence* cult film, due to the fact that it lacks a form, so it can be continuously deformed and turned inside-out. [...]

The Bible owes a lot of its huge and centuries-lasting popularity to its dispersive structure, which comes from the fact that the Bible was written by a number of different authors. *Divine Comedy* does not have a disperse nature, but because of its complexity, because of the large number of characters and events appearing in it (everything to do with Heaven and Earth, said Dante), each of its verse can be distorted, exploited as a magic spell or as a memory exercise. Some fanatics have gone so far that they have used the poem in social games. The work by Dante, similarly to Virgil's *Aeneid*, functioned in the Middle Ages as a manual of fortune-telling, just like

the *Centuries* by Nostradamus (another example of the success achieved through radical, incurable dispersibility). But, although *Divine Comedy* can be turned inside-out, we cannot do this with *Decameron*, because every story should be treated as a whole. The extent to which a specific work of literature can be subjected to turning inside-out does not depend on its esthetic values. *Hamlet* is still a fascinating drama (and Eliot himself cannot convince us to like it any less), I do not believe, however, that even the greatest fans of *The Rocky Horror* would attribute to it Shakespearean greatness. On the other hand, both *Hamlet* and *The Rocky Horror* make an object of worship, because their form is 'susceptible to dispersion,' and the latter is so dispersive that it allows us a variety of interactive games. To become a holy Forest, the forest must be convoluted and complex as the forests of druids and not structured like French-style gardens."

The dispersibility of Foucault's texts somewhat overlays their heterotopicity. This can be observed in the scope of the undertaken topics,¹¹ and the way they are presented; the subtlety, or even the vertiginous refinement of the paths of thought followed by the author of *Madness and Civilization*, allowed him to see the passages (sometimes relatively safe, but more often breakneck and by all means treacherous), where others faced a solid wall or, even worse, a bottomless abyss. His innate curiosity and exploration courage, both supported by a large dose of creative trouble-making, constantly pushed him into areas where he could ruthlessly expose ideological and ethical weaknesses underlying certain *discursive systems*. Foucault undoubtedly developed *blank spaces* (let's remember that he himself was a peculiar essence of the latter), but he always proceeded to them from *the middle of the developed spaces*; beginning with a critique of what was ambient (literally and figuratively), to determine then the indirect pathway, usually provided with a number of side routes. In this way, he prepared the ground for other alternative solutions, though immediately putting an emphasis on their temporality and the positively indexed (!) vulnerability to future change inscribed in it: "I wouldn't want what I may have said or written to be seen as laying any claims to totality. I don't try to universalize what I say; conversely, what I don't say isn't meant to be thereby disqualified as being of no importance. **My work takes place between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots. I like**

¹¹ Jerzy Szacki (2002, p. 902), admitting that Foucault "undoubtedly belonged to the original and influential thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century," notes as well that the author of *The History of Sexuality*, was "also one of the thinkers of his time, whose work led to a wide public resonance. It happened so that the works of Foucault [...] touched issues vital not only for professionals—such as hospital, mental illness, prison system, human sexuality or the ubiquity of power" (bold added by M.K.).

to open up a space of research, try it out, and then if it doesn't work, try again somewhere else. On many points—I am thinking especially of the relations between dialectics, genealogy and strategy—I am still working and don't yet know whether I am going to get anywhere. What I say ought to be taken as 'propositions', 'game openings' where those who may be interested are invited to join in; they are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc. My books aren't treatises in philosophy or studies of history: at most, they are philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems" (Foucault, 1987, p. 100; bold added by M.K.).



The example of Michel Foucault—this *another space, which is home to all the other spaces*, distinctly reminds us of the **complexity of the mechanisms that lead to the emergence of new ideas (in science)**. Here again the question returns, to which giving the answer was cleverly evaded by Ludwik Fleck, namely, what is the place of individuals in the thought innovation process? Are they just a background for the complex group activities, where the relationships occurring between knowledge and power minimize the efficiency of the work of a conscious human subject, or does the latter, as indicated by the theme of biographical epiphanies entwined with intimate experiences (see Chapter Two in this book), play a more serious role in the cited context? Should, in turn, we accept the thesis of at least relative symmetry that exists between what is individual and what is collective in the thought innovation process, what specific elements determine the latter? Dilemmas close to mine probably bothered also a Polish philosopher Jan Dembowski, who wrote many years ago: "Just as the thinking of an individual is not independent, but dependent on the collective, the given collectives cannot be understood as independent units. It is not difficult to quote many examples of how the social style of thinking affects the work of a biologist, and how natural theories depend on the religious views of their authors or their mathematical education. Collectives intermingle, and although a man belongs to many collectives at a time, he always remains the same person, he is a uniform man. His behavior is consistent with the molded nature and cannot be split. In all collectives, the way of thinking of an individual remains the same, and only the thinking material is different, which leads to different effect. **It is not clear [...]** what the origin is of new ideas in science. **Are we entitled to attributing the entire content of the human psyche to outside influences, completely excluding the endogenous factors?** It seems to me that we are not. It can be thought that there are 'mutations,' which in the mind

of an individual provide the background for completely new associations independent from the influence of the collective. In other words, in some cases, a thought collective can be replaced by an individual that becomes the source and center of the new collective. Therefore, in this case, individual creativity is possible in science” (Dembowski, 1939, p. 439; bold added by M.K.).

The case of Foucault, in my opinion, is one of those exceptional cases *through* which, and *thanks to* which, ideas gain great and unexpected momentum (becoming “transdiscursive” as Foucault (1984b) would say), the source, if not the essence of which is a particular individual (*persona*) thrown into the dramas of life, who is also someone constantly struggling with internal constraints, drawing from them the power to incessant *becoming oneself as The Other*.

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