

THE EVOLUTION OF FOUCAULT'S REASONING ON PATHOLOGY

Normunds Kozlovs

Riga Stradins University, Latvia

Ilva Skulte

Riga Stradins University, Latvia

***Abstract.** This paper is an attempt to theoretically describe the development and transformation of the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault whose work on body, disease and mental illness provide a basis for an advanced approach in the philosophy of medicine. The aim of the research is to understand on the basis of the theoretical review of Foucault's works and secondary literature the evolution of the reasoning on pathology in different works by the French author. In the first part of the paper we describe how Foucault came to the idea that psychiatric and organic must be treated as completely different. In the second part, we add more sociocultural context and discuss Foucault's ideas in the perspective of developing modernity.*

***Keywords:** body, disease, gaze, ideology, medicine*

Introduction

In the late 1940ies and early 1950ies, during his studies and early lecturing at the *École Normale Supérieure* the famous French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault was deeply interested in history of psychology, but also the clinical psychology and psychiatry of his time. It was the time before he started his structural analysis of society and before his different "archaeologies", when he (shortly a member of the Communist party) developed his view on mental illness in the work that was first entitled "Mental Illness and Personality" that included also a part on Pavlov's reflex theory. Back then Foucault's theoretical approach was based on phenomenology and was inspired by his professor Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger. He believed in unity and experience of personality. But until next edition and success of this work, Foucault's ideas changed. He developed a renewed version of the book with a new title "Mental Illness and Psychology" and with another view with no integrity of personality.

The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the evolution of the reasoning on pathology in different works by Michel Foucault. We used as a method the

hermeneutic interpretation of the Foucault's texts and secondary literature in connection to wider cultural, social and historical context.

Literature review

Foucault's analysis of mental disorders shows that the historical evolution of the medical discourse as a whole (and psychiatric knowledge particularly) is rooted in "mythology" of organic pathology: psychiatric knowledge and organic hypothesis both do the distribution of symptoms by pathological groups and try to isolate large pathological units by using the same methods. And behind this unified methodology there are two postulates about the nature of the disease:

1. Initially it is postulated that the disease is essence, specific unity and all the symptoms are presenting it.
2. At the same time disease is dependent on them and to some extent independent from them. In psychiatry it describes the schizophrenic basis lurking behind obsessive symptoms and talks about masked delirium and the presence of manic-depressive psychosis in manic crises or depression episodes. In his most early work Foucault claims that concept "mental illness" is simply the wrong use of metaphor borrowed from organic pathology domain. He writes: "My aim is to show that mental pathology requires methods of analysis different from those of organic pathology and that it is only by an artifice of language that the same meaning can be attributed to "illnesses of the body" and "illnesses of the mind"" (Foucault, 1987, 10).

Foucault does not deal with the problems of the origin of medical discourse, just as he is not interested in the history of the concept of disease. This is unfortunate, since the most ancient nosological (nowadays: the branch of medical science dealing with the classification of diseases) treatises (Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna) could not be treatises on medicine in our understanding, and even could not be tractates on diseases in general. They could only be descriptions of certain pathologies within the existence of the human organism.

Medicine in general like those early nosological tractates' claims to gain knowledge about human. And the most ancient object of consideration of medicine is the human body.

The body is given to medicine only as a sick body i.e. body with pathology, since medicine has nothing to say about a healthy body, and only a disease allows medicine to exist. That is, it turns out that a living and healthy body for medicine does not exist at all, because medicine cannot say anything about it while remaining medicine.

It can be assumed that the body appears to be the surest way to localize pain, that is, the body appears in discourse only as a place to designate and describe

pain (the question “Where does it hurt?” replaced the question “What's wrong with you?” that could be the main question of psychiatric knowledge), that is understood by the term "localization".

Along with this biased view about the presence of the specific nature of the disease, and as if in order to compensate for such super-abstraction- another notion is introduced – one of naturalistic postulate; which describes a disease as a natural specie behind the polymorphic volumes of each taxonomic group as the unity of the species: so, early dementia appears as a species characterized by a return to earlier forms of natural evolution and having hebephrenic, catatonic or paranoid invariants.

Thus, if parallelism existed between the psychic and organic branches of psychopathology, then this occurred not only by the reasoning on the presence of a certain idea of human integrity and psycho-physiological parallelism, but also due to recognition of both of these two postulates concerning nature of the disease.

If mental illness appears in the medical discourse by using the same conceptual methods as in the description of organic life and psychological symptoms' analysis tend to share common ground and connect in the same manner as organic then it is because there is tendency to treat the disease (mental or organic) as natural entity that manifests itself through the specific symptoms. Those two forms of pathology, therefore, have no real unity. This pseudo-unity arises only via the help of these two postulates and abstract parallelism. Therefore there is conceptual problem of human psycho- somatic integrity that persists.

This problem directed the study of pathologies to new methods and new concepts. The concept of organic and psychological unity leads to the rejection of those postulates that turn the disease into a specific essence. The disease ceases to be independent reality and refuses to play the role of the natural species or foreign body behind symptoms or organism itself. On the contrary, respect is given to the general reactions of the individual that are located between the sickness processes and general functioning of the body. Disease no longer fit between them like an autonomous reality. It is impossible to continue think about illness as an abstract gap or residue in individual becoming sick.

In the second edition of the Foucault's book "Maladie mentale et personnalite" (The Mental Illness and Personality) the title appears slightly changed to "The Mental Illness and psychology". In this newest version concept "natural species" is substituted with “botanical species” This “botanical view” is the echo of Foucault's stay in Uppsala, where he was writing "The History of Madness"- book that made him famous, and in free time used to walk near the house of Karl Linnaeus, located near Uppsala.

The treatment of madness as a botanic gaze appears in "The History of Madness", where it indicates that in the 18th century, approach "described by botanists order becomes an organizing principle for the world of pathology as a

whole; diseases are no longer distributed in the space of the mind itself and in accordance with its order. The idea of this “botanic garden”, where to accommodate along with various kinds of plants also various types of pathologies, belonged to the wise and divine providence" (Foucault, 2006, 188). He does not leave this topic and in later lectures on "Psychiatric Power," where he recalls the psychiatric hospital of the 19th century “The place of diagnosis and classification, botanical greenhouse in which the types of diseases are distributed as if in a large vegetable-ground ...” (Foucault, 2007, 402).

Most medical scientists are concerned with the fact that in psychiatry - the main diagnostic method is the clinical method and not the laboratory method. That implies the subjectivity of observation that is incompatible with positive science and opens a vast space for fantasy and commerce (which, in particular, brings it closer to psychology).

For Foucault in his work "The Birth of Clinic" (Foucault, 1976) where he examines the origins of medical discourse and the historical construction of clinical method- "body" and "disease" are two concepts that complement each other. That is, if we define a disease as a certain pathology of the body, then we will not be able to identify the body, but the most interesting thing is different: if we define the body as the location of the disease, then the disease will be indefinable for us. Some discourses, in particular those that Foucault implies, have as their goal the attainment of some positive knowledge. Therefore, Foucault believes that a positive discourse about the body is intended to simply objectify pain.

Research results and discussion

Michel Foucault is, of course, one of the most careful observers - a serious investigator of rationality, forms of consciousness, mind and its inversion - madness. Distinguished Russian philosopher Vladimir Bibihin in his work "The new renaissance" writes about Foucault who warned, that it is so hard to restore some of the renaissance world feelings. It needs to break, as a plaster mask on ones' own face, the usual mechanisms of manipulative thinking (the concept introduced for this phenomena by Foucault based on his mentor Jean Hyppolite's Hegelian interpretation of “objective” is "apparatuses") through which the outer world feels like an object collector. No research, no restoration of historical accuracy, no science progressed Foucault more than anything, neither rehabilitation of insanity and sex, nor criticism and reform of the medical and prison system itself, but a very personal thing: “First of all, but afterwards - inviting others, experience in going through certain historical content, in our present existence... it is to test our modernity to such an extent that it comes out of this experience transformed” (Trombadori, 1981, 21; Quoted as in Бибихин,

1998, 152). Not to philosophize, but to "experience a direct, personal experience of being" by studying logically-rational constructs only to "divide them" and through them, behind the frames, to mute in the alarming expansion of pre-categorical life. Such a frontier experience should also "distinguish" the subject, "take it out of yourself" (Bartolommei, 1983, 48; Quoted as in Бибихин, 1998, 153). Foucault analysed the discourse-personal ideological mechanisms - to better understand the primacy of the unique, unprotected, direct feeling. Human is surviving animal, *animal experiens*. Far from experience, resilient here and now, everything is abstract and deafening. It is criminal to suppress the life of the vulnerable by the plans of trust or even the hope of saving the soul in the future. What the minute of existence will bring is also valuable; for the purpose is gathered in that which is unexpectedly revealed to mind and heart. "Each experience is the decisive experience in which we, as we say, are lost in salvation or salvation; the third is not given" (Бибихин, 1998, 153). It is, in this case, that it is about to make it visible and pronounced. It is possible that this is what he has in mind when he warns us: "We must place ourselves, and remain once and for all, at the level of the fundamental spatialisation and verbalization of the pathological, where the loquacious gaze with which the doctor observes the poisonous heart of things is born and communes with itself" (Foucault, 1976, XII).

Foucault begins his hermeneutical analysis of the subject in the work "The Hermeneutics of the Subject" (Фуко, 1991) with a glimpse into the history of philosophy: Plato's "Alkibiados" dialogue focuses on caring for himself (*epimeleia*) - an element characteristic of Greek and Roman philosophical thought. This principle involves three aspects - the view of the world, the view of yourself, and the activity (most often - transformative) that the subject carries out with himself. In a platonic sense, the *epimeleia* is, first and foremost, the concern for its divine and immortal soul, where ascetic corporeal self-discipline is important.

Corporeality is what gives the opportunity to start talking about the body, that is, to introduce the body into one or another discourse. Or otherwise, corporeality is a place for the body in discourse, that is, corporeality determines when it is appropriate to talk about the body.

In his "The Hermeneutics of the Subject", Michel Foucault indicates that the paradigm shift that characterizes modernity is one in which thinking becomes separated from the transformation technologies of self, or where mastery of the world no longer directs self-evolving changes in the cognitive subject. Postmodernism, according to the vast majority of cultural and identity studies, proves to be rationally rigid prescriptions in a system built for modernity in opposition frameworks, thus describing self as flexible, open, socially constructed and constantly changing entity, often freely interacting with the external physical

and social environment, including the requirement to return to "roots" and traditions.

In describing the subject's hermeneutics, Michel Foucault specifically releases a Cartesian paradigm shift that introduces new times, or modernity, when the cognition is separated from the technology of self-transformation, or when the path of truth cognition no longer leads to self-transformation. In modernity, as the era of the new subject and the relationship of truth, knowledge accumulates in an objectivized social process, where the subject acts in one direction, because the truth no longer interacts with the change of the subject's existence.

In the description of the ascetic practice of self-creation within modernity in Foucault's question, "What is Enlightenment?" refers to the Baudlaire postulates the difference between a psycho-geographically floating *flâneur* and a dandy: "Being modern does not mean accepting itself as a stream of abandoned outgoing moments; it means to perceive yourself as a complex and difficult-to-develop object: it is called bodybuilding "dandysme" in that time". (Fuko, 1996, 169) Dandy in a solipsistic manner forms his own individual subjectivity in mass society (modernism), while *flâneur* is already part of a liquid modernity of flows where subjectivity dissolves on the trajectory of motion.

In turn, Foucault claims that in postmodern existence the standard of living is what used to be the object of criticism for stoic philosophers: Seneca's *stultitia* is 1) openness to external influences, non-critical perception, confusion of objective notions with experiences and other subjective elements; 2) Rods are the one who is scattered over time and allows himself to be seduced, captivated, he has left his life in the air and does not move his will to any purpose. Such a life flows in a selfless and unconscious way - that is, without will, constantly changing its direction. The will is not absolute, but is dependent on changes in perceptions, occasional events and tendencies. In turn, absolute and free will is a desire without inertia and laziness. Relative, limited and fragmented variable will is separated from self as it is ideal: it is *stultitia*.

From the Hegelian idea of the philosophy of conscientious "time spirit" (*Zeitgeist*) and the philosophy of the whole mental paradigm, the concept of "total conception of ideology" of Karl Manheim (Mannheim, 2013) grows out of importance in the "false consciousness" problem. Speaking of total ideology (as opposed to partial), it comes when an epistemological approach is analysed, its objective structure forming its internal structure, in the expression of Manheim - when the "morphological" or structural-analytical "relationship of social existence and cognition forms" is revealed. In contrast, the study of partial ideology is "functionalization at a psychological level". The latter deals with psychology of interest and social psychology because the subject's (both collective and individual) ideas are viewed as functions of his social existence. The study of total ideology does not take place on a psychological but epistemic level, i.e.

encompassing the specifics of the existing level of society development. The total ideology of this research is essential as the cultural landscape of successive phases of capitalist development, or Max Weber's "ethos", which is different, for example, in a consumer society or an information economy. Foucault like Karl Manheim speaks of "total conception of ideology" in the structuralist terms as specific forms of rationality or historically changing episthemes. According to Foucault, who introduced the "historical a-priori" construct in the changing systems of reasoning, that forms various discourses differently in each epoch linking "Words and Things" ("Les Mots et les choses" (1966) - the title of the one of his most popular books translated into English as "The Order Of Things. An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences" (Foucault, 1970)) the relation between the visible and invisible— which is necessary to all concrete knowledge— changed its structure, revealing through gaze and language what had previously been below and beyond their domain. A new alliance was forged between words and things, enabling one to see and to say (Foucault, 1976).

The turning point of the epistemic shift (for Manheim: "total conception of ideology") is the Great French revolution, which results in the normalization of change, innovation, transformation and even revolution in the modern political arena. Political ideologies are just one of the ways in which this socio-psychological normalization - the emergence of human sciences itself - following the "archaeology of human sciences" initiated by Michel Foucault illustrates the change of these episthemes.

Since most of Foucault's legacy is devoted to the thematisation of the mentioned "to see and to say" problem, medicine is a fairly convenient example of the localization of this problem. Medicine is a kind of field where the gaze is identical with the act of appointing meaning, the body is the place where the image is identical with the word, where you can talk about the visible, the body is only a tool for speaking, something that gives rise to conversation, making conversation possible in general. This does not mean that one can speak only with the help of the body in the vocal-phonetic aspect, but the body itself provides a certain alphabet, something to which signs can be attributed: "The gaze is no longer reductive, it is, rather, that which establishes the individual in his irreducible quality. And thus it becomes possible to organize a rational language around it" (Foucault, 1976, XIV).

In the analysis of medical gaze that forms the clinical method Foucault involves the semiotic attributes of signified/signifier as well as dramatization theory: "Eighteenth century transcribed the double reality, natural and dramatic, of disease, establishing the truth of a corpus of knowledge and the possibility of its application. A happy, calm structure, in which a balance was struck between the Nature-Death system, with visible forms taking root in the invisible, and the Time-Outcome system, which anticipated the invisible by means of a visible

mapping out (*repérage*). Both these systems existed for themselves; their difference is a fact of nature to which medical perception adapted itself, but which it did not constitute. The formation of the clinical method was bound up with the emergence of the doctor's gaze into the field of signs and symptoms. The recognition of its constituent rights involved the effacement of their absolute distinction and the postulate that henceforth the signifier (sign and symptom) would be entirely transparent for the signified, which would appear, without concealment or residue, in its most pristine reality, and that the essence of the signified - the heart of the disease - would be entirely exhausted in the intelligible syntax of the signifier" (Foucault, 1976, 92).

Conclusions

Before his fame that came with the book "The Birth of Clinic" first book by Foucault "The Mental Illness and Personality" illustrates the transition of the author from phenomenological approach to the structuralism in the analysis of pathology. From the first edition he takes on the very idea that the pathology can not be conceptually used in description of mental phenomena. But later the view of the person is changed to the more socially and relationally based concept – an outcome of his structuralist and, later, poststructuralist analysis.

In his later philosophical works throughout his life, Foucault is trying to understand and interpret the subject in the world - in the direct experience and social and cultural context - and place it in the vocabulary of philosophical writings. From the direct experience to the thinking that involves rigid opposition between subject and object and visible and invisible, and no longer directs self-evolving changes in the cognitive subject in the modern era, and further to the postmodern conceptualizations of the self as flexible, open, socially constructed and constantly changing entity, interacting with the external physical and social environment – the writings by Michel Foucault follow the path of the evolution in thinking on pathology.

References

- Bartolommei, S. (1983). Michel Foucault: Il libro come esperienza. In: *Il ponte*, XXXIX, Firenze, I, p. 38–55.
- Foucault, M. (1970). *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1976). *Birth of the Clinic*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1987). *Mental Illness and Psychology*. Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Berkley.
- Foucault, M. (2006). *History of Madness in the Classical Era*. London: Routledge.

- Foucault, M. (2008). *Psychiatric power: Lectures at the college de France, 1973—1974* (Vol. 1). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fuko, M. (1996). Kas ir arpaismība? In: Kūle, M. (red.) *Tagadnes izaicinājums*. Rīga: Intelektis.
- Mannheim, K. (2013). *Ideology and Utopia*. London: Routledge.
- Trombadori, D. (1981). *Colloqui con Foucault*. Salerno: 10/17 Cooperative editrice.
- Бибихин, В.В. (1998). *Новый ренессанс*. Москва: Наука, Прогресс-Традиция.
- Фуко, М. (1991). Герменевтика субъекта. Курс лекций в Коллеж де Франс, 1982. In: Винокуров, В., Филиппов, А.Ф. (Ред.) *Социо-логос* (284-314). Москва: Прогресс.