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“Surpassing the 'Panopticum': the ‘rebirth’ of the subject in the social thought of Anthony Giddens, Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault”
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Abstract

Post-modern literature is often interpreted as being foundationalist regarding the question of the ‘death of the subject’. My paper contests the thesis that states the impossibility of, through post-modern politics, to construct viable theories based on the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘resistance’. I argue that such thesis is unwarranted, for it rests upon a disregard to the point that the ‘death of the subject’ argument can be understood as a refusal of the rational self metanarrative, rather than a refusal of the possibility that, through human volition, resistance to power and untemporal social structure reification can be envisaged.

Such resistance to power in post-modern thought is presently theorised by two strands of post-structuralism.

The first is associated with the notion of alterity and the ‘being for’ condition, articulated in theories like the ‘subject in community’.

The second focuses on the ‘self’ rather than on the ‘other’, reconstructing the empowerment of men out of the ‘freedom of subjectivity’ bias. Such strand can be found in Giddens’s ‘theory of agency’, Rorty’s ‘strong poet ideal’ and in the later Foucault’s ‘aesthetics of existence’.

My purpose is to analyse the conceptions of what I have designated as the second strand, indicating its potentialities regarding the question of resistance to power in radical politics. I will mainly concentrate on Giddens and Foucault. Rorty will appear as a voice in the comparative dialogue among the three authors.

Paper

Post-modern literature is often interpreted as being foundationalist regarding the question of the ‘death of the subject’. I contest the thesis that states the impossibility of, through post-modern politics, to construct viable theories based on the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘resistance’. I argue that such thesis is unwarranted, for it rests upon a disregard to the point that the ‘death of the subject’ argument can be understood as a refusal of the rational self metanarrative, rather than a refusal of the possibility that, through human volition, resistance to power and untemporal social structure reification can be envisaged.

I will characterise two approaches that focusing on the ‘self’, reconstruct the empowerment of men out of the ‘freedom of subjectivity’ bias, although in very different terms. Such approaches are Giddens’s ‘theory of agency’ and the later Foucault’s ‘aesthetics of existence’. Richard Rorty’s recuperation of the ‘strong poet ideal’ will be briefly focused and only in the way it may help to clarify both Giddens’ and Foucault idiosyncrasies.

My purpose is to analyse those conceptions, indicating its potentialities regarding the question of resistance to power in radical politics. I will mainly concentrate on Giddens and Foucault. Rorty will appear as a voice in the comparative dialogue among the three authors.

1. Anthony Giddens: the ‘trusted’ self

Anthony Giddens articulates the concept of 'risk' with the concept of 'trust' to construct its personal appraisal of late modernity. Therefore, the author establishes a link between risk perception, mainly the reflexivity of those perceptions, with the development of what I call a 'trusted' self, meaning a subject that is at the same time exposed to the contingencies of our *Runaway World* and dependent upon mechanisms of trust that, in late modernity assume the form of scientific expertise. In fact, what is at stake, in Giddens' writings, is a particular reading of the self, positioned somewhere along a via-media between Cartesian subjectivity bias and structuralist and post-structuralist subject's decentring perspectives. Therefore we shall start by depicting his sociological views, followed by his theorisation on risk.

Giddens' structuration theory is meant to set a balance between structure and agency as ontological analytical priorities. It is rather interesting to discuss how this equilibrium is put in motion in Giddens' work. Regarding structure, his main objective is to distance his work from functionalism, structural-functionalism and structuralism. In this regard, Giddens points to the similarity between Parsons' and Althusser's thought concerning normative social internalization (Giddens, 2000: 9). Concerning agency, Giddens' perspective on a self-reflexive agent is essentially designed to explain his standpoint on historically located individual *praxis* and on the potentialities open to human action in the 'lifeworld', thereby denying all reductionist approaches (Giddens, 2000: 15). Giddens' opposition to both Popper's and Sartre's different forms of ontological individualism is particularly significant. Facing Popper's refusal of collective entities as basis for social explanations and Sartre's defence of individual freedom against structure, Giddens sets forward a kind of a 'strong', but contextualised, agent model. Individual agency is empowered as a vehicle that guarantees the recursive character of societies, which gives considerable value to social norms, rules as well as to socialization mechanisms. Individuals are 'strong' in the sense that: 1) they are able to articulate between their practical and/or discursive conscience when they have, socially, to account for their actions and beliefs; 2) they keep society from becoming static, intervening in the 'world' understood as the object and as somehow 'plastic'. This dual belief in human empowerment and on the plasticity of the world upon which individual agency is focused, leads us to the importance that the temporal dimension of human *praxis* assumes in 'structuration theory'. Drawing from phenomenological resources, mainly from Heidegger's work, Giddens places the 'self' on 'time'. He thereby aligns his thought with critics of Kantian's transcendentalism, stating that time and space are much more than receptacles of experience, for "everything which exists is a temporal 'being' ['be-ing'] ((Giddens, 2000: 13)¹.

Concomitantly with the importance of structure for time-space relations, Giddens also stresses that the reflexive monitoring of the self, is achieved in a structured environment where reason and intentionality are intermeshed with doubt. It is at this point that agency meets its structural limits and that the equilibrium, in Giddens' social thought, between subject and object starts to favour society over individuals. Such distortion of the balance is visible in Giddens' constant reference to the theme of ontological security in contemporary societies. The significance, in his work, of such theme reveals his not desired but almost natural filiations with parsonian structural-functionalism. Although, it is worth mentioning that Giddens' concern with order, led him to reformulate the problem in different terms from those suggested by the hobbesian-parsonian framework He achieves

that by stressing the importance of disembedding mechanisms throughout modernity. Disembedding in Giddens' thought refers to the lifting out of social relations from their traditional locals and their subsequent time and space restructuring (Giddens, 1995). He depicts two disembedding mechanisms, namely symbolic tokens and experts systems, which by intermeshing risk and trust reveal the contradictory nature of modernity. By interpreting such mechanisms as empowering increased time and space differentiation, although in a significant heterogeneous form, Giddens is able to sustain the argument that modernity's values should be reconfigured in order to embrace the all world. In systemic thinking, such absorption of the environment by the system is cause for anguish. In Giddens, and consistently with its particular view on globalization (Giddens, 2006; for a critical perspective see Rosenberg, 2000), the reconfiguration of time and space is enshrined in a sort of contemporary imaginary where the beneficial effects of freedom are perceived and extended world wide through linkage mechanismsⁱⁱ. Compressed and differentiated, time and mainly space, contribute to the diversity of social relations and expose individuals to ideas and experiences detached from their immediate territorial context (Domingues, 2006: 34). The totality of the system, for Giddens, entails risks, but it signifies, above all, the enlargement of the individual's set of resources and fields of experiences. Giddens' account of disembedded mechanisms is meant to explain how abstract relations between the 'self' and the 'world' become common in quotidian contemporary experiences (Marden, 2005: 55). Those relations are also intervening fundamental variables in the formation of new social ties of indistinct space-time spans, which articulate between the global and the local, evidencing the increased virtual nature of the latter (Giddens, 1995). It is in this context that detraditionalization gains significance, social roles become evolving and kinship ties become fragile. Self-identity becomes a 'reflexive project' (Giddens, 1997: 29), intertwined between personal and social change. The modern world is depicted as increasingly ungrounded in terms of normative systems which unfolds a new social significance for trust, risk and identity.

It is in his major work "The Consequences of Modernity" that Giddens addresses risk more thoroughly, directly articulating it with the concept of trust. Giddens draws such articulation from Niklas Luhman, accepting the latter differentiation between risk and danger, as well as his link between trust and rational choice, but refusing Luhmann's assertion that the only way to minimize risk is through inaction. It is through Luhmann that Giddens reaches at a definition of acceptable risk as "weak inductive knowledge" (Giddens, 1995a: 28). However, the tentative to draw his own definition from Luhmann's one is not at all clear and so we need to proceed into Giddens' construction of the risk profile in modernity in order to deepen his thought. Giddens traces a risk profile in late modernity, highlighting four specific features of the objective character of risk, namely intensity, global reach, the socialization of nature and the development of institutionalised risk environments (Giddens, 1995: 103) and three other features concerned with the public perception of risk. The first feature is concerned with a temporal dimension, for the growing intensity of risks has a double meaning: on one hand the threat potential for human survival is increased and on the other, the effects of eventual disasters are prolonged in time and so the conscience of risk eminency tends to be pervasive throughout the human 'life-world'. He draws from Beck both the belief that modern risks are above economic and social differences and that the side-effects of risks are interdependent, deepening the 'apocalyptic' configuration of late modernity. The second feature is related with a spatial

dimension. Once more, a double consideration is given. There is an increase of the events that may constitute a risk, for their contingent nature, coupled with the increase of people eventually affected by them. Regarding risk diversity, Giddens differentiates between external and caused risks. External risks derive from natural hazards or imposed traditions. Caused risks are man made and develop from our technological intervention on the environment. Such kind of risks present a high degree of danger (Giddens, 2006:37) than the former, namely because they do not have any historical memory associated (Giddens, 2006:35). The worldwide extension of risks is related with the global reach of disembedding mechanisms, which impinge on traditional subsidiarity, preventing the local management of contingencies. The third feature refers to 'socialised nature', meaning the articulation between humans and their physical environment (Giddens, 1995a:105). Giddens states: "Our society is living beyond the end of nature" (Giddens, 2006:), to signal the decrease of natural environmental aspects still untouched. Finally, the fourth feature concerns the institutionalisation of closed risk environments. As it happens with disembedding mechanisms, Giddens seems to depict some economic and political systems as autopoietic, being their own inner workings (as it is case of historical international systems) and regulations (the best example being the market) the responsible for the production of objective risks. The 'cold war' bipolarity example is clear: a closed and delimited arena of action, contextually bound by an explicit pattern of strategic behaviour and whose structural traits unleashed specific types of risk, like arms race. The next three features of the risk profile relate to lay perception not only of risks but of all significant characteristics of reflexive modernity. The fifth trait demonstrates this quite well. It concerns the conscience of risk as risk. Risk perception can no longer be mediated through non scientific systems of knowledge, which downplays religious cosmologies and tradition as trust building mechanisms. It adds that risk conscience is very well diffused in lay population. Finally, experts systems, meaning scientific systems of knowledge, cannot also account for all risks dimensions. The knowledge of expertise is limited for specialists are unaware of a particular set of dangers and their associated risks. Giddens is not always clear as to the source of such 'unawareness', relating it to the overall reflexive and contingent character of modern forms of knowledge production, but he details that when entering into risk discourses experts can camouflage (Giddens, 1995: 108) real risks, not exposing the lay public to the 'truth'. However, he declares that it is experts' ignorance on the reality of certain risks, and not exactly the manipulation of scientific knowledge, the most troublesome event for reflexive societies (Giddens, 1995: 108), for undermining experts systems equals to undermine trust in modern societies and trust is one of two elements that keep reflexivity from disturbing social stability. It is interesting to confront such centrality of trust over truth with Giddens' conceptualization of power. In "Nation, State and Violence", he denounces the intensity and dangerousness of forms of political power that run invisibly through reified social practices (Giddens, 1987). Latter, in "Politics, Sociology and Social Theory", when referring to the concept of power in Talcott Parsons, he explicitly states the difficulty in achieving a balance between the need of building rationally defensible forms of domination and assuring freedom from specific historical systems of power (Giddens, 1995b: 215). Although, he also declares that power and freedom are not inimical, that truth and power can be reconciled and that it is useless to engage in Foucauldian and Nietzschean radical and reductionist views of power (Giddens, 1995b: 268). It is here that we clearly see the importance of the above mentioned alignment between Giddens and Parsons in what concerns social order. It should also be stressed that

what distances Giddens from post-structuralism is, in fact, a different concept of the 'subject'. The second element that keeps reflexivity from disturbing social stability is related to the way populations, exposed to the constant knowledge about risk, manages to cast away such burden, recurring to a mix of contrafactual thought and pre-modern trust in fate. The latter demands on individuals the self repression of anxiety, through a life span balance of fear with faith. The former witnesses a kind of "narcotising" effects in societies where risk is central, whereby high consequence / low probability risks are dismissed as unreal (Giddens, 1995a: 111). This popular ability to cope with a continuous sense of imminent catastrophe leads Giddens into asserting four individual adaptive reactions to the risk profile of modernity, namely pragmatic acceptance, sustained optimism, cynical pessimism and radical engagement. Significantly, only the last reaction entails an active engagement from the individuals towards their social system where, as Giddens puts it "the sources of identifiable dangers" are located. Social movements are the driving examples of such type of reaction.

Giddens addresses the issue of reflexivity having in mind the need to tackle insecurity in the contemporary world. That explains the attention the authors concedes to risk perception and to the politicization of trust in reflexive societies. We will address the articulation between risk and trust in reflexive modernization approaches.

Giddens associates risk perception and the politicisation of trust arguing for the empowerment of different types of individual agency within reflexive societies. In Giddens' understanding, reflexive agency is a path towards not the reduction of ecological risks, but of ontological insecurity. The concept of 'ontological security' was introduced by Ronald Laing in the early '1960 and it deals with psychological and social risks and with the preservation of order and stability. Giddens frames the question of how 'ontological security' should be achieved throughout society arguing that experts and technicians, empowered by a double hermeneutics, have the role of introducing some degree of certainty in social and political relationsⁱⁱⁱ. Responsibility is assured through 'active trust', which means a kind of accountability procedure exercised by lay people towards experts systems. Giddens assumes that common people have resources to critically control and contest the opinion of experts, which gives the former an active role towards the latter. That explains the centrality that experts assume in the context of Giddens' thinking. The notion of 'experts systems' can be associated with Habermasian notions of technical cosmopolitanism. Since both Habermas and Giddens disagree with the Frankfurt school's belief on the incompatibility between democracy and technology, the comparability between their two notions becomes stronger^{iv}. Although, Giddens takes up an utilitarian perspective on such systems, not sharing the same reservations Habermas does in face of the eventual colonization of the 'lifeworld' by instrumental systems.

Giddens analysis of questions like risk, 'experts system' and ontological security, is conditional upon a cognitive dimension through which he frames his work on reflexivity. His stress on individualization and his need to endow his theories with a generous empirical dimension turns his conceptual approach on risk central in his work (Giddens, 2006). He speaks of risk as central to agency. He depicts individuals as living their lives making options that entail risk calculus. Options based on probabilities became the fundamental *raison d'être* for both lay people and experts. Giddens shares such cognitive approach with Ulrich Beck. It is worth quoting Lash: "(...) risk society has less to do with the distribution of evils and risks than with a pattern of behaviour centred on risk. (...) This gets

exemplified in the self construction of life stories described by Beck and Giddens on which a mode of regulating the probabilistic calculus gives narrative content to the road of life” (Lash, 2002: 137). In this sense, the definite constraints that Beck associates with ‘risk society’ or the articulation between trust and ‘experts systems’ argued by Giddens work, as theoretical blinders regarding the constructed nature of risks and regarding the aesthetic value of contingency. Therefore, both reify the illuminist tradition adopted, among others, by Kant, Durkheim or Habermas, and that “(...) presumes the critical as originated in the universal (knowing agency) towards the particular (existing social conditions)” (Lash, 2002: 106). Such cognitive reflexivity adopts two of the most important rationalist metanarratives, namely the stress on the subject (as opposed to the object) and the belief on societies’ continuous progress toward positive change. Regarding the first metanarrative, and connecting modernization with increased individualization, Beck and Giddens underline how reflexive modernization empowers individuals on the subject of traditional forms of domination like social classes, the family, the state or tradition itself. In what concerns the second metanarrative, the thesis on reflexive modernization is understood, by the above mentioned authors, as a stage of an historical process where each phase unfolds the next one. In this sense, to pre-modernity succeeded simple modernity, whose developments conducted to its reflexive stage (Lash, 2002: 109). In the first metanarrative, which is specially developed in Giddens’ *Consequences of Modernity* and Beck’s *Risk Society*, reflexivity is understood as a structural process. Structural reflexivity is due to the empowerment of agency *vis-à-vis* its structure. Individuals reflect about the structural forms of domination entailed by ‘simple modernity’. In the second metanarrative, reflexivity is perceived as self reflexivity in the sense that modernity monitorizes itself, which differentiates it from its prior phases. In this sense, contingency and thus resistance become increasingly framed by structural reflexivity, which, at the same time, seems to empower the self through the institutionalization of double hermeneutics, but also to tame him because all the subject’s actions toward resistance are entrusted to society. It is Giddens way to escape Nietzsche ‘aesthetic nihilism’. But it is also exactly the opposite kind of solution espoused by Foucault in order to answer to the same dilemma.

2. Foucault : *L’Âme, prison du corps* ?

On a brief passage placed in *Les Techniques de soi*, Foucault characterizes his perspectives on the self, through the depiction of governmentality: “J’appelle «gouvernementalité» la rencontre entre les techniques de domination exercées sur les autres et les techniques de soi” (Foucault, 2001: 1604). It becomes then clear that, in order to understand Foucault, we need to analyse both the techniques of domination and the technologies of the self, which means confronting his earlier with his later writings.

In the initial pages of *Surveiller et Punir*, Foucault states:

“The men of whom we are told and that they invite us to liberate is already in itself the effect of a subjection way deeper than him. A ‘soul’ inhabits him taking him to an existence which is a piece of the domain exercised by power over the body. *The soul, effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul, prison of the body.* (Foucault, 1975: 34, author’s translation).

In such passage, Foucault comprises the crux of his work on a genealogy of the judicial systems, thought to chastise crime, delinquency and abnormality. His goal is to

study the metamorphosis of the punitive methods from individual torture through public prolonged and cruel executions to a modern political technology of the body. In such technology, it is inscribed a common history of both power and object / subject relations (Foucault, 2007: 24). In his thought, the 'soul', and its domination over the body, is the mechanism that, from modernity onwards, translates the workings of the penal system and the transformation of the 'tamed' men, as an object of knowledge within the economy of a political discourse covered with scientific status.

Surveiller et Punir bears witness to Foucault's structuralist perspective on the subject's domination by disciplinary power. Thus, we think that we should start by in a few briefly depict structuralism, clarifying its main argument.

In reaction to Foucault's lecture *Qu'est qu'un auteur*, where he criticizes the individualism inherent in authors' claims, proposing a return to the text himself through an inquest on discursivity practices (Foucault, 2006b:), Lacan defines structuralism in the following way:

“(…) je voudrais faire remarquer que, structuralisme ou pas, il me semble qu'il n'est nulle part question ... de la négation du sujet. Il s'agit de la dépendance du sujet ce qui est extrêmement différent; et tout particulièrement, au niveau du retour à Freud, de la dépendance du sujet par rapport à quelque chose de vraiment élémentaire, et que nous avons tenté d'isoler sous le terme de 'signifiant’” (Lacan, 1994: 820, quoted in Sato, 2007, p. 10).

Consequently, structuralism does not deny the existence of a subject, but it sustains that such subject is dependant on exogenous elements. The subject is, at the same time, deconstructed as *archè* (Sato, 2007:10) and reconstructed as, in Foucault's words, “ (...) effect and instrument of a political anatomy” (Foucault, 1975: 34). Thus, the 'signifiant' pointed by Lacan is internalised by the subject, remaining out of his control. Therefore, the subject occupies an exogenous position regarding the 'signifiant'. Nevertheless, the subject identifies himself with the 'signifiant', as Freud depicts in his psychoanalytic theory of power and mass psychology. Now we can understand why Foucault places a significant importance on disciplinary technologies through which power is projected into the subject, although remaining distinct from him. Foucault combines such structuralist theory of power with a re-interpretation of the Kantian subject through Nietzsche's perspectives. Foucault deconstructs Kant's transcendental subject, defending its replacement by Nietzsche's 'pensée du dehors'. Foucault argues that such move enables philosophy to focus on external power relations predominant in the empirical realm (Foucault, 2001: 540), as well as to consider knowledge as a product of political struggles that are manifest throughout the social field.

Concomitantly, Foucault puts forward the belief that power holds a multi-dimensional nature and operates through an increased variety of domination techniques. In *Les Mailles du Pouvoir*, Foucault is clear on the rejection of the term *pouvoir*, preferring its plural form: *pouvoirs* or *power relations*. He declares:

“Pouvoirs, cela veut dire des formes de domination, des formes de sujétion, qui fonctionnent localement, par exemple dans l'atelier, dans l'armée, dans une propriété de type esclavagiste ou dans une propriété où il y a des relations serviles. Tout cela, ce sont des formes locales, régionales de pouvoir, qui ont leur propre mode de fonctionnement, leur procédure et leur technique. Tout ces formes de pouvoir sont hétérogènes. Nous ne pouvons pas, alors parler du pouvoir si nous voulons faire une analyse du pouvoir, mais

nous devons parler de pouvoirs et essayer de les localiser dans leur spécificité historique et géographique” (Foucault, 2001: 1006).

Throughout his work, Foucault tries to deconstruct what he calls a juridical framework which regards power through the contract / oppression scheme, in favour of a return to Nietzsche, for whom at the centre of power relations lays a bellicose conflict which comprises the binomials repression / struggle and domination / resistance (Foucault, 2006a: 31). From such Nietzschean lineage, derives Foucault’s further developments on power, namely his considerations on power as a perfect *dispositif* for human body and soul domination and on power as a contingent and dynamic relation, always susceptible to inversions and transformations. Both developments are intertwined and are resumed by Foucault in different ways throughout his writings. Although intertwined, these two considerations are not always coherent articulated, revealing what some authors consider an *aporia* in Foucault’s work (Sato, 2007: 36). Thus, we shall try to characterize them, having especially in consideration the evolution of Foucault’s thought.

As we have already pointed, in *Surveiller et Punir*, Foucault traces a genealogy of the judicial system, clarifying how the penal structure increasingly became more sophisticated, concentrating its disciplinary efforts on achieving docile bodies through the manipulation of the individual soul (Foucault, 2007: 119). He characterizes disciplinary power as a perfect technology, abstractly functioning, freed from constraints with the purpose of watching and punishing in such an ideal way that it is not possible for the individual to escape from it. There is no space for resistance. To sustain this argument, Foucault resources to the analysis of Bentham’s ‘panopticum’, described as the architectural figure that best puts in motion the analytic distribution of power. The ‘panopticum’ has a double role in *Surveiller et Punir*. It first functions as an image of an ordered society, whereby individuals are catalogued within the normal / abnormal, not dangerous / dangerous continuum and treated accordingly. Those considered as disruptive regarding social, psychiatric and clinical patterns are excluded and confined to the ‘panopticum’, now portrayed as the ideal model of a detention complex, where prisoners are constantly watched (Foucault, 2007: 166). The system works through a combination between the total visibility of the prisoners and the invisibility of the coercive agents and *in fine* of all the disciplinary mechanism. The most important effects of the ‘panopticum’ are:

“(…) to induce in the detained a conscientious and permanent state of visibility, which guarantees the automatic functioning of power. To make such vigilance permanent, even if not continuous in its action; that the perfection of power turns useless the actuality of its exercise. That such architectural device transforms itself into a machine able to create and uphold a power relation independent of the one which exercises it; at last, that the detained find themselves locked in a situation of power that they themselves are the bearers” (Foucault, 2007:166).

From the above passage we can understand how the perfection and totalising nature of the disciplinary technologies derive from subject’s internalisation. Subjects internalise the workings of power. The higher level of efficacy attained by the watchful state happens when exogenous surveillance is replaced by self-surveillance, through the inducement of what Foucault calls *le regard* : “Un regard qui surveille et que chacun, en le sentant peser sur lui, finira par intérioriser au point de s’observer lui-même; chacun ainsi exercera cette surveillance sur et contre lui-même” (Foucault, 2001: 198). Hence, the expression “political anatomy” reveals its significance. The body is imprisoned by the mind, for the mind

internalises power. Two considerations follow. First, the body assumes a contingent and dependant role vis-à-vis the mind, since it is the soul who materialises the body giving it a social configuration (Sato, 2007: 75). The body becomes an axis of power, insofar as it is useful for its workings (Deveaux, 1996: 213). This perspective of the body as a political field assumes a fundamental role in Foucault's theorisation. He clearly states: "Ce que je cherche, c'est à essayer de montrer comment les rapports de pouvoir peuvent passer matériellement dans l'épaisseur même des corps *sans avoir à être relayés par la représentation des sujets*" (Foucault, 2001: 231). Second, Foucault's *l'âme, prison du corps*, that corresponds to Bentham's "power of mind over mind" explicitly means that the subject is divided on two levels: the transcendental level of the soul, the disciplinary agent, who internalises power, and the empirical level of the body, literally penetrated by external power relations. This division of the self in two levels bears an importance that should be stressed. Sato states:

"Foucault reprend ici la même structure que le doublet empirico-transcendental kantien. Mais il disqualifie dans le même temps la limite kantienne: parce que le doublet empirico-transcendental est construit, pour Foucault, par les rapports de pouvoir dans le champ social. Autrement dit, ce sont des forces extérieures qui permettent d'opérer cette structure reflexive" (Sato, 2007: 39).

Until now, we have seen how power works as a perfect disciplinary system with no possible escape route, that invests its technology over the body through the mind. The second development of Foucault's conceptualization that we would like to debate is his characterization of power as a contingent and dynamic relation, always susceptible to inversions. *Powers* are multi-dimensional and work through *politics* whose function is to inscribe power relations in several ideational (in institutions or in economic asymmetries) and material fields (the body). Consequently, politics can be understood as the continuation of war ("silent war") through other means (Foucault, 2006a: 31). Like in a war, politics entails inversions and power relations become relative and changeable. Foucault upholds that power cannot be considered as a homogenous process of domination. Power is something that circulates and that only functions in chain. Power works. Power is a resource in transit, that moves between individuals, and so it cannot be held indefinitely by them (Foucault, 2006a: 43). And so resistance becomes a possibility in Foucault's writings, which entails derogation concerning the formalist frame where, through the image of the 'panopticum', Foucault had locked power relations.

From *La Volonté du Savoir* onwards, both resistance and domination, and not only domination as it was implicit in *Surveiller et Punir*, became inscribed in power relations. It is from here we can trace Foucault's *kehre*, an important shift in his thought.

In Foucault's writings, resistance is associated with what the author calls "the aesthetic of existence", defined as "intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values" (Foucault, : 408, 409). The capacity for self-transformation is framed through *Le Souci de Soi*, whose philosophical meaning Foucault traces since the ancient Greeks. It is in the classic texts that a set of practices and modes of reasoning are found and then linked to the care of the self and consequently to the detachment of the individual regarding the exogenous and imposing characters of power relations. Such kind of an account on subjectivity bears an explicitly political dimension, coupled with a particular

perspective on self-knowledge (Foucault, 2001: 1175). We will depict the care of the self, through for particular dimensions: 1) the differentiation between the care of the self and self-knowledge; 2) the Foucauldian perspective on ethics and freedom; 3) the articulation between the care of the self and the political care for others; 4) and finally, the specific development regarding subjectivity behind Foucault's *kehre* towards the care of the self.

When characterising the origins of the hermeneutics of the subject, Foucault calls our attention to the fact that we can find two different understandings regarding the care of the self. The original account is originated in Greek philosophy, mainly from Plato's *Alcibiade* onwards, where self caring is understood as a major principle of the art of living. Based on early Christian doctrine, a second understanding regarding the care of the self became predominant: self-knowledge. Progressively, self caring was co-opted by self knowledge, being obfuscated by it. Such obfuscation is present in the interpretation of classic thought. On this subject Foucault declares: "Lorsqu' on demande : «Quel est le principe moral qui domine toute la philosophie de l'Antiquité?», la réponse immédiate n'est pas «prendre soin de toi même», mais le principe delphique, *gnôthi seauton*, «connais toi toi-même» » (Foucault, 2001 : 1605). The obfuscation of the care of the self by self-knowledge is fundamental for the understanding of the subject crafted by modernity. There are two reasons behind such inversion. Firstly, Christian morality transformed self caring into a sin, redeemed by self-knowledge, which, in this sense, appears as a way of self surrender and thus salvation (Foucault, 2003: 32). Secondly, modern philosophy from rationalism to phenomenology proclaimed self-knowledge, either in the *cogito* or the *sum* versions, as the main philosophical principle. This two reasons combined led self-knowledge into the status of modernity's major pillar (Foucault, 2001: 1607, 1608).

Besides distinguishing between the two principles of the 'care of the self' and self-knowledge, Foucault deepens his genealogy of the former by stressing the gap between the pedagogical and the critical / therapeutical functions connected with it. It is through pedagogy that the practices and the techniques that materialize the care of the self reveal the articulation between social relations, power relations and truth regimes. Foucault stresses the multiplicity of locations where pedagogy for the care of the self holds techniques and mechanisms for the establishment of a link between truth and the self:

"On a donc là tout un ensemble de techniques qui ont pour but de lier la vérité et le sujet. (...) Nous sommes encore très loin de ce serait une herméneutique du sujet. Il s'agit tout au contraire d'armer le sujet d'une vérité qu'il ne connaissait pas et qui ne résidait pas en lui ; il s'agit de faire de ce vérité apprise, mémorisée, progressivement mise en application, un quasi sujet qui règne souverainement en nous" (Foucault, 2001 : 1181).

Such link has implicit that the classic imperative "Take care of yourself" bears a need not only for truth assimilation, but also for the reification of rules of conduct and prescriptions. It is at this moment that the care of the self becomes associated with truth games as well with ethics, understood as the conscious practice of freedom (Foucault, 2003: 28, 29) and that the meaning of Foucault's *kehre* becomes clearer. In an interview conceded in 1984 he stated that his lectures at the Collège de France constituted a shift in his treatment of the articulation between subjectivity and truth. Until then he had framed such articulation from the point of view of coercivity. From his lectures at the Collège de France onwards he tries to understand truth and subjectivity through the practices of the self-formation of the subject (Foucault, 2003: 25, 26; Foucault, 2001: 1604). He locates his

thought against perspectives that, based on Freud, postulate liberation as the sole solution to subject's freedom. It is, rather, through ethics that individual freedom can be accomplished. From this follows that freedom is conditional upon self-reflexion. Thus, the imperative "Take care of yourself" assumes an ethical dimension, although not being confined to it. As we shall develop further ahead, Foucault's characterisation of the care of the self is intended to resolve the Nietzschean's dilemma regarding individual interior struggle between self-containment and resistance. Like Plato and Nietzsche, and against stoicism and Hegelianism, Foucault places the 'work' needed to accomplish the care of the self predominantly on the individual and not on exterior entities to him performing several kinds of pedagogical functions. He also rejects the idea of an outside *logos*, speaking as a master to the subject's mind. On the contrary, individuals should attain autonomy in reflexivity, which, in fact, prevents their ethics, understood here as patterns of behaviour, from becoming moralized. The individual should be able, in Foucault's words, to "(...) turn the gaze upon itself, to recognize itself in what it is and, recognizing itself in what it is, to recall the truths that issue from it and that it has been able to contemplate..." (Foucault, 2003: 29).

This articulation between truth, freedom and subjectivity also brings to the fore Foucault's perspectives on power and specifically the frame through which he establishes a connection between the care of the self, the care for others and the possibility for power conversions. The art of governing oneself makes no distinctions between the public and the private realm. An individual able to care for himself is aware of his political role and his exercise of freedom through ethics includes the care for others. Although the care of the self is ontologically prior *vis-à-vis* the care for others, the complexity of social relations makes them concomitant. In this sense, power relations are present within the care of the self and because the latter is endowed with ethics it can perform a function of power control inside social relations. From here we can conclude that in Foucault, the care of the self is one of the keys to democratic systems. When questioned if the care of the self when separated from care of others run the risk of becoming absolute, Foucault answers negatively, saying that the care of the self gives the individual the sense of its limits and of its possibilities, allowing him to become a good citizen. That is what he states in the following passage:

"(...) the risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one's desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city, to be the master of a household in an *oikos*, if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death – if you know all this, you cannot abuse your powers over others. Thus there is no danger" (Foucault, 2003: 31).

This passage is also relevant for the last dimension that we would like to dwell upon: the perspective regarding subjectivity derived from Foucault's *kehre* towards the 'care of the self'. Like it is stated in the passage above, the care of the self is important for the formation of the good citizen, understood as the individual who knows its limits and mirrors such knowledge in its private and public conduct. From here, we can argue on the possibility of understanding Foucault as putting forward a close but not at all identical understanding regarding Nietzschean conceptions of the self.

The starting point of Nietzsche's thought is the famous thesis on universal self estrangement. In *The Genealogy of Moral*, Nietzsche states: "We are all fatally strangers to ourselves; we do not understand ourselves..." (Nietzsche, 2007: X). From this assertion, Nietzsche derives the main dilemma regarding the formation of the subject. In a Nietzschean perspective, the modern subject is the product of a struggle between ontology of domination and ontology of resistance. Only through the affirmation of contingency, a possibility that Nietzsche concedes only to few, it is possible to internalize conventional styles of self-regulation without falling into resentment and revenge, as well as to combine selfhood with the acknowledgement of artificiality enshrined in subjectivity (Connolly, 1988: 159). In Foucaudian terms, the logic of domination and the logic of resistance correspond to *techniques de domination* and *techniques de soi*, which combined result in governmentality (Foucault, 2001: 1604). Consequently, Foucault is an heir to Nietzsche's analysis of the tensions enshrined in the formation of the self. That leads him into denying Cartesian or existentialists conceptions of the subject, for they endow the self with a substance. Such essentialist view works as a theoretical blinder regarding the historical variation of the articulation between the subject and the truth games where he is immersed (Foucault, 2003: 33). This proximity with Nietzsche also inspires Foucault in conducting a genealogy of power relations, for instance through governmentality. That is why Foucault frequently stresses how resistance is dependant upon the aesthetics of existence. He supports such reasoning by declaring:

"(...) si on prend la question du pouvoir, du pouvoir politique, en la remplaçant dans la question plus générale de la gouvernementalité – gouvernementalité entendue comme un champ stratégique de relations de pouvoir, au sens plus large du terme et pas simplement politique - , donc si on entend par gouvernementalité un champ stratégique de relations de pouvoir dans ce qu'elles ont de mobile, de transformable, de réversible, je crois que la réflexion sur cette notion de gouvernementalité ne peut pas ne pas passer, théoriquement et pratiquement, par l'élément d'un sujet qui serait défini par le rapport de soi à soi. ... Ce qui veut dire tout simplement que, dans le type d'analyse que je essaie de vous proposer depuis un certain temps, vous voyez que : relations de pouvoir – gouvernementalité ceci constitue une chaîne, une trame, et que c'est là, autour de ces notions, que l'on doit, je pense articuler la question de la politique et la question de l'éthique" (Foucault, 2001: 241, 242)

It is interesting to note that in *Surveiller et Punir*, self-reflexion was a mechanism from domination. Now it becomes a mechanism for resistance (Sato, 2007: 95).

However, Foucault does not espouse Nietzsche's aristocratic solutions. In fact, he surpasses Nietzsche in two ways. Firstly, the care of the self, as depicted in Foucault's writings is not meant to be restricted in its application and it is not congruent with Nietzsche's 'aesthetic nihilism' (see Domingues, 2006:6). Secondly, although rejecting both a theory of the subject (Foucault, 2003: 33) and 'humanism' (Foucault, 2001: 1601), either for philosophical, strategic or normative reasons (Fraser, 1996: 15-36) Foucault emphasises how self-knowledge *through endogenous means* is important for the formation of the citizen. Still, Foucault resumes Nietzsche's perspectives on the value of contingency, when he articulates between the care of the self (and consequently on the formation of the citizen) and the conscience of human finitude, exalted in classic thought but obfuscated in Christianity (Foucault, 2003: 32). As so, Foucault would probably agree with Connolly's assertion that "(...) democratic politics provides the best way to incorporate the experience of contingency into public life" (Connolly, 1988: 159). Contingency is inherent in power

relations in what they present of reversible, mobile and transformative. Power relations only exist in the presence of freedom (Foucault, 2003: 34). On one hand, the contingency of power relations empowers individuals in their exercise of, in Deleuze's term, "self-affectation" (Deleuze, 2005:136), understood as subjectification. On the other, contingency allows the affirmation of the historical character of the self. Like Sato puts it: " Si la subjectivation désigne la formation de la singularité du sujet pour résister au pouvoir, elle est aussi une tentative de désassujettissement" (Sato, 2007: 90). Contingency is also present as an element of historical critic. As a result, stressing resistance techniques leads Foucault into an unexpected return into Enlightenment (Foucault, 2001: 1390), praising not its doctrine but its permanent critique of our historical time.

3. Richard Rorty: the 'strong poet ideal'

Giddens' view of the 'strong agent' is very different from Rorty's recuperation of the 'strong poet ideal'. With it, Rorty wants to espouse Nietzschean's conceptualization on the contingency of individuality. Putting forward the view that modern philosophy brought with it the aspiration of framing subjectivity through the erosion of idiosyncrasy, Rorty upholds a Bloomian understanding regarding the need to identify the "blind impress" unique to each individual (Rorty, 1992: 47). Identifying such "blind impress" that materializes subjectivity is typical of poetry, but not of modern philosophy who, following Plato, idealistically tries to transcend contingency in order to attain universality.

From here we can establish a fundamental differentiation between Rorty and Giddens. Giddens' conceptualization of the subject, due to the weight it confers to trust, absorbs contingency into structural reflexivity. Giddens' filiation with classic sociological thought is, in this sense, counterproductive in Rorty's view. As a sociologist, which is interpreted as advocating a not always coherent balance between modern and post-modern thought, Giddens would easily slide into what Rorty calls a 'discoverer' of humanity's immutable laws of behaviour and as such opposed to post-Nietzschean thinking, where truth is reduced to language games.

Rorty's proximity with Nietzsche undoubtedly generates complicity between his perspectives on the self and Foucault's conceptualization. However, Rorty's defence of private irony combined with public complacency towards liberalism definitely sets him apart from Foucault's views. In the text *What is Enlightenment*, Foucault denounces Kant's tentative to uphold a differentiation between private and public uses of reason. Such critic can easily be produced against Rorty, whose particular idiosyncrasies of thought not always leave a coherent impress.

ⁱ Anthony Giddens' sociological thinking is framed by a critical positioning towards ontological structuralism and ontological individualism. Giddens' thought can and, in this sense, be interpreted as a *via-media* between agency based theories and Foucauldian approaches which stress the role of political structures in curtailing individual autonomy. The former perceive structures as inimical to human freedom, claiming therefore a return to the individual as a source of agency. The latter, personifying Nietzschean resurgence, denounce the domination of the individual by a "disciplinary matrix" (Wight, p. 265) that constitute the focal point of origin of calculated technologies of subjugation. Regarding methodology, his perspective is essentially syncretic,

since he admits the validity of both macro institutional analysis and the study of micro strategic conduct. Such methodological syncretism is empirically useful given Giddens' distinction between social face to face integration and systemic wider integration. It can also be understood as a consequence of Giddens' proximity to scientific realism. However, Giddens also points to the need of introducing a paradigmatic axis in time-space relations, meaning that only the combination of structure *with* temporal and spatial dimensions gives content to the syntagmatic axis. Time, space and 'virtual time-space' (or structure), the 'triple intersection of difference', are necessary elements for reality construction. Regarding the stratification of action, Giddens declares that the intentional character of the reflexive monitorisation of human action does not disavow the existence of unacknowledged conditions as well as unintended consequences of action that impinge on the flow of individual conduct.

ii Linkage processes between the domestic and the global settings, as theorised play an important role in Giddens' thought for disembedding processes are first developed in internal contexts and latter spread onto the global realm, although retaining domestic influences.

iii Double hermeneutics is the mechanism that translates reflexivity into empirical reality. It refers to the existence of two sources of interpretation in the social realm, specifically individual agents and 'experts systems'. Ideas and concepts circulate between the two sources, but 'experts systems' keep a mediating role regarding knowledge which means that they are the group more accountable for keeping the stability through trust inside reflexive societies.

iv It should be stressed that the importance of communication between 'experts systems' and lay people and of their critical exchange of arguments reveals Giddens' acknowledgement of Habermas' theory of communicative action. Also, in his notion of 'active trust', Giddens imports from Habermas, the articulation between public spheres, democratic accountability and rationalization processes (Lash, 2000: 188). This bridge with Habermasian thinking is not possible with other strands of post-positivist theories, namely with Foucauldian approaches, since 'experts systems' can clearly be subsumed into governmentality forms.

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