

THE TRACES OF THE CLASSICS¹

The complicit (contaminated and contaminating) gaze of the researcher

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Thought is a task of vagrants and villains. One must know how to get lost so as to draw a map: to wander about along margins and in the dessert, outside the fortresses where truth, the good and beauty are confined. Only nomads discover other worlds. One must know how to pervert the law (to play with it) and sometimes subvert it (to question it) in order to change/ get rid of it: to provoke ill thoughts in the do-gooders, to besiege the headquarters of truth, the good and beauty. Only the accursed ones improve this world. [Jesús Ibáñez. En: Román Reyes (ed), Michel Foucault, homenaje a un vago y maleante, Monográfico del periódico Liberación, Nº 6, Madrid, 30/12/1984]

Texts as apologies, pre-texts

The gaze (that of the researcher that looks), if it assumes its status as an agent that legitimizes itself in its profession, if it innovates, while being responsible for the will to progress that it makes explicit, involves: a) reaffirming the alleged historical and social determination of knowledge; b) admitting that *theoria* (*praxis*) is a *prosthesis*; and c) that it is possible to touch without con-tacting, that is, trans-forming³.

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³ In the original in Spanish, the three verbs are rooted one way or the other in the sense of touch (“tacto”), respectively: “tocar”, “contactar”, “trastocar”.

It is known what is incorporated into that complex entity that the body is. It is known, as a result, what is eaten and metabolized. The scraps of what has been gobbled up defines what one is not or cannot transform into.

Because the discourse on/about *the real* is not *local* anymore, the *gaze* (what the researcher looks at) involves at the same time: a) trans-nationalizing / globalizing thought; but b) keeping the reference of the thinker, strengthening like that the distinguishing marks of the origin.

Making theoretical proposals conditional to “(academically) conventional models” is a temerity. Or, in other words, an irresponsibility: if the real is not local any longer, it cannot be exclusively virtual either. And if reality is symbolic rather than crude, it is so as long as it can be manipulated. It is shadows that are manipulated, but never the objects that cast them. It is advisable, therefore, to learn to focus properly.

However, my stance on the matter is ambiguous: I call upon hands. Both upon their in-mediate use, their “will to contact” (trans-forming or re-creating), and their “will to projection beyond their in-mediate reach”. In that sense, I consider myself a treacherous *manipulator*. Manipulating is, in my case, humanizing. I *control what is* (by being nearby and having it at hand) so that it is “in a different way”.

But if one is responsible for the resistance of one's own hands, that responsibility is subsidiary if the resistance of the prostheses that one chooses (compass, chisel or brush, pen or pencil, rope ..., word, discourse, and so on) is (subjectively and objectively) weak or inefficient.

However, one ought to call upon the origin (again): *theoria* means “looking in depth”: the deep is not only the historical-discursive substratum (underpinning). Deep (lack of abyss or inverted *ab-Grund*) is only what gives priority to the (geographical and teleological) *sense* of what we are talking about. Locating its *position* on a plane, on a map (traced or to be defined). And it is because maps are geometric projections that one can *locate* (catch) the other, what transcends, anywhere or nowhere, even beyond any possible map.

One looks from (cultural/socially) “complicit” stances. My gaze is always a “*constructive gaze*”. Ingenuity (dispersion) was repressed in its origin. Will to system (surplus value) vs. will to fragment (fall in value). Power is always the one exercised by the powerful one “in his own or delegated right”. It is not emulable. If you want to be *like* god, they expel you from paradise. Because you did not dare to be competitive. Because you did not venture to become an alternative god.

“Construction” is the adaptation to a paradigm, a protocol, that guarantees the acknowledgment of the ascription group (generality) while questioning that of reference (singularity).

In order to discover “the traces of the Classics”, one has to accept previously closed sets, a reference canon. Some are included and others excluded. The “heaviest” ones (with institutional legitimacy) are included and the “light” ones (with poor or none institutional legitimacy) are excluded. The excluded are necessary, like margins, because they are guarantors, the basis of the “integration” or “membership” to the canon.

The “Classics” become timeless due to the “interest” of the moment. Recoverable only from the “interest” of the coming reader. At the same time, the fact that a “Classic” is timeless transforms it into a pre-text for, or into an academical and political “legitimation” of, any program or discourse. Thus the (multipurpose) paradox: the free recurrence and the punctual non-credibility of the “hagiographers” transform a text or its author into legitimizers of antagonistic stances.

But if traces are detected, it is advisable to unveil their *voice*, quiet through the ages, recovered in its *echo*. Undoubtedly, it would be advisable to listen first to the “echo of silence” that libraries keep in order to sell “solitudes”. That is, to legitimize the strength of the one that opts for criticism, for progress in the more literal sense of the word. The risk assumed by whom has opted for “thinking by himself”. For questioning the “evident”.

Pricking up our ears, we, “conveniently enlightened” and “legitimized” (documented citizens), have access to the “private club of noble thinking”. We are accredited. We are given a card that identifies us as a “member” to gain access to it. If we accept the “inclusion” rules. If we “lose the documents”⁴, we lose ourselves, we lose our way. We lose our reference point. We are expelled from the club. Those in charge of “shutting us away” in bags for better identification, for greater control, wait for us outside. But there is no confinement that is inviolable, since moles exist. Or the ones resisting. If not, how to interpret the revolt?

Is the era of the subject over? We are now “recognizable” thinkers by means of an ephemeral trace: the role that we have been assigned and behind which we recognize ourselves and make ourselves be recognized. But “secular legitimacy” is the inner enemy to be “displaced”. In order to fight against it, if eliminating it before turns to be impossible. Why do we insist on establishing “objectivities”? How can an “autonomous event”, a “solid proposition”, be understood, if those who grant autonomy or establish discourses are only the subjects “accredited” to “objectify the real”, those that, while doing it, “contaminate” their own products?

The fact that in a “literary product”, estimatively critical, an author does not notice that “footnotes” are missing (from the academically regulated perspective, which legitimizes status) is explained in the following way: the discourse of that non-contaminated author/thinker, young by nature (not very “enlightened”) or by vocation, cannot be possible if it has not been previously *contaminated* by Kantian, Hegelian, Marxist or Frankfurtian discourse, for example.

For the same reason, the corresponding Evaluation Commissions should reject any text (with pretensions of academic validity) if Aristotle is not quoted. The trans-versality of discourse (and its trans-ductivity) is only recognizable in our cultural circle if it is conceived on a dyadic logic that, paradoxically, is able to “incorporate” even the “qualitative variables”, which make “discursive and ontologically visible” facts originally considered as “solid”, which are defined by their nature and recurring acknowledgement. That is how we could understand

⁴ In Spanish the expression “perder los papeles” also means “to lose it”. This is lost in the translation.

Walter Kaufmann or Miguel de Unamuno when we speak of the “masks of the tragic”.

One was never and always at the same time in Hiroshima. The love/passion of the researcher (or is somebody able to define his job beyond his particular *pathos*?) and the traces of that love/passion that his research registers deny/question “the evident”. A *deus ex machina* is only in-vokable before the impotence or ignorance of the scientist. From his position, any word is a word too many, given that his discourse belongs to a different order. The discourse of the real-concrete is only recognizable in the discourse of the resistance. The discourse of submission never opens any perspective.

Resisting is living; as a result, we succeed in surviving beyond the pronounced, already uttered word. Only stories die. Subjects, however, remain in order to legitimize the changes that those stories presage. So as to be witnesses to “that-not-yet-realized”. In order to force the jump to “that-not-yet-occurred”. The traces of the Classics perpetuate, therefore, in the timeless trace that the researcher recognizes in them (as an excuse or pre-text) to re-create / re-think a history to be written, a revolution yet to come.

II

Re-thinking the University? Resistance and submission⁵

I belong to the University; that is how you look at me. Therefore, for me, re-thinking the University is only possible *from the inside*. This means that I must take into consideration the meaning of the institution today (its socio-historical justification) as well as its expectations for complicity in the immediate present and future. I will (also) have to speak in the first person to answer these questions. I am now *the voice of the university*, because you lend your ear to me. Sorry, therefore, for the metalanguage.

Supposedly, this is a space for the critical transmission of thought and, at the same time, for the design of new ways of thinking ... to act consequently. Supposedly. We are told that leaders are educated here: *normalizing agents*, in charge of balancing an *unstable stable equilibrium*. “In the service of society”, we are reminded of that too.

One insists on quality by playing with pairs of opposites: we will be *excellent* if we offer a *better production*. Even much more excellent (quantitative dimension) if profitability is guaranteed. A suspicious *feed-back*: inequalities have been worsened, profits have been brought together and, as a result the welfare state is on sale. Losses have been socialized.

Equally, by playing with those pairs of complementary-opposites, we are offered here a *better education* to reinforce a *greater profitability*. Priorities are

⁵ This outline and the previous one were used by the author for two interventions at the Università del Salento, Lecce-Italia, in June of 2011.

organized according to orders that respond above all to para- or extra-academic interests.

The pretended greater mobility defended by the EHEA is a trap. What is generated is a *greater disillusionment* because an uncertain manpower exchange is generated. This is available according to the local market, that *values* and *compensates* for qualified performance. But qualification, from this perspective, happens to be an instable fortuitous value. It is called upon in order to justify an option, a supposedly rational one.

I want to stop being an *anonymous offender* because I am an agitator. That is why I am and will continue being a resistance fighter. I speak and will speak *in public* till they manage to bump me off (professionally or physically). And because to say neighbor is to name the competitor, the enemy, I have emigrated, while leaving behind the corrupt republic of knowledge. Only nomads improve this world. The managers of this institution will have to coexist with moles. You must bear witness to that resistance. Saying “no” is saying “yes” to that-*yet-not-named*, to that to be named. That is why I do not give names to things. So that things do not remain slaves to the discourse of power. Today, in these saturated times, it is dearer to me *to give things to names*.

Throughout my life, I have not been interested in learning certain things. For instance, to say “*that is enough*”. Because I am unsatisfied by vocation and provocation. Because I want more or I want what I have, what I have got, *in a different way*. In a more flexible field: there, where it is not known what fullness, saturation, means. Because everything is now (beyond modernity) completed according to protocols that have been agreed to, regardless of our interest. Completing, that is, closing cycles or considering them *exhausted*.

The other is the image of exclusion or waste. What cannot be digested is expelled. Of one's own free will or due to the incompatibility with the rules of “healthy consumption”, the rules of the integration in a never finished body, always to be defined / constituted.

“To be a hell of a guy” (an “a-typical” thinker) is to dare to demystify “the sacred” (what has restricted access since “time immemorial”, likewise, recurrently invoked). To refuse being brutally separated from the medium that one controls, to refuse to be cataloged as a “*bien élevé - suspendu* / student”. You all are the hell of a guy because you have allowed vagrants and villains like me to keep undermining the academic and institutional discourse.

God is the set of things that we expel. God, for revenge, misappropriates what man cannot bear any longer: what he produces, thus he has no possibility of remaining provident about his ephemeral work. The gods, idle by definition, deduct or refuse *liquidity* as they please. Therefore, only what guarantees *profitability* is con-solidated. We were deceived because, initially, we were allowed to sin: an ill-fated slip, given that we were never able (to learn) to sin treacherously.

The modern strategies of domination call upon dialogue in order to integrate protest, dissidence. Do not fall into the trap: the University is you all. If it is not occupied by you all, it disappears. You are seduced so that the occupation is *supervised*. But thought does not circulate any longer along the corridors of

institutes and high schools. Or it circulates clandestinely. Only the elusive shadow of a discourse anchored in time remains. Panoptic structures, symbolically opened *reclusion centers*. That is what universities have transformed into.

Bologna (EHEA) represents the most unsupportive aspects of Old Europe. Bologna does not solve the problem. It reconverts it, while simulating modernity. Or rather, while institutionalizing suspicious mechanisms with an apparent will to “intercommunity compensation”, to competitive democratic distribution. Bologna has laid down, however, the socio-juridical bases for the privatization of the management of knowledge.

He who warns is not scorned. Take notice of the obvious: you are (can be) the neophytes / novices, easy prey for the abusers or pederasts of the system.

Since *keeping silent is a rebellious act*, I leave the floor to you, because you were so kind as to give it to me. A respectful kiss. Because this is no time for orgasms.

