

## **“The discontinuity in the continuity”.** **Michel Foucault and the archaeological period**

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### **Abstract**

Undoubtedly, the topic of discontinuity has got to an extent where it has captured the attention of a good number of researchers. These researchers devote themselves to reflect on the philosophy of the French thinker. Focusing on discontinuity promises to open a new line of analysis that, perhaps, will allow the revaluation of its scope in relation to its philosophical contributions. For such a task, first, we will approach the notion of history in Foucauldian thought to study the development this notion has with the discontinuity; followed by a study of the archaeological method to unravel whether it is possible to analyze discontinuity through an archaeological view. Would it be possible to look at the topic of discontinuity as a characteristic feature of this French philosopher's thinking? This document aims to answer this question.

**Keywords:** Archeology, Discontinuity, Foucault's Philosophy, History.

### **Introduction**

“Every thought is a discontinuous thinking”.  
G. Canguilhem (2005)

The theme of discontinuity has come to occupy an important place in the posthumous studies of Foucault's thought, as numbers reveal, there are growing research bodies that have made this issue one of the driving force in the work of the French thinker (Morey, 2014; Deleuze, 2006; Castro, 1995, Revel, 2014). The increased attention that scholars of Foucault dedicate to this issue is certainly an incentive to try to investigate on our own what is at stake in this issue and determine which lights can be thrown for a better understanding of Foucault's thought. Certainly, the subject is new to the extent that the topics that have dominated the reception of Foucault's work have long been the history, the subject and power, on which, as we know, there have been fruitful studies that have been able to highlight the complexity and depth of his thought (e.g. Ceballos, 1997; Le Blanc, 2008; Sauquillo, 2001). Now to looking at the issue of discontinuity promises to open a new vein of analysis that, perhaps, allow reevaluate the scope of the philosophical contributions of the French

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thinker. But where does the interest in this topic arise from? What is making the question of discontinuity into a reading line of promise to get to Foucault's work?

Since the so-called archaeological period of his work, Foucault caused concern among its readers to clearly oppose an idea of history understood as a progressive and linear accumulation of moments that tend to be summarized in a final telos of meaning, rather, describe as traversed by jumps that make any causal or continuous explanation of events impossible. Such discontinuity prevented any sense from conferring the historical course. In the case of *The Order of Things* (1970), a book in which the succession of one *episteme* to another (from the classical age to the Renaissance, and thus to modernity) does not support to be seen as a progressive step rules discursive to more effective to describe reality, but involves abrupt breaks in the deep layers that each time makes it possible for the emergence of discourses of truth. Foucault reaffirmed this idea in the so-called genealogical period, when he adheres to Nietzsche's vision of history marked by breakdowns occurred by the struggle of performing forces in search of dominion (*cf.* Foucault, 1984). However, one wonders whether the issue of discontinuity only appears in the context of the reflection of Foucault on history or if it occupies other places in the author's work, if it is only marginal or if it constitutes a vein which runs on his philosophical reflection (*cf.* Foucault, 1977).

Edgardo Castro recognizes the importance of the issue by stating that:

Foucault does not address the history of knowledge in terms of continuity but discontinuity. Therefore, instead of being handled in terms of evolution, from what it anticipates and what it does, it does so in terms of rupture. Foucault wonders, in fact, about what makes certain things possible in a given time. Conditions of possibility of knowledge are conditions at the level of concurrency (2004: 56).

This thinker introduces the theme of discontinuity as an important reference in the texts of Foucault. It is true that Castro establishes a clear relationship between the discontinuity and the treatment that the French philosopher makes history against the grain of a modern vision where history has a fundamental feature, continuity, that is events are concatenated to form a compact, orderly and gradual result. In the vocabulary of Michel Foucault (2004), Castro stops quickly at the notion of discontinuity (a term which according to his count appears about 128 times in the Foucauldian corpus, unlike, for example, that of history where it appears 4687 times). This comparison suggests we are already interested in highlighting the interest in the issue of discontinuity, which although somewhat understated,

Meanwhile, Judith Revel has conducted a reading of Foucault's work inspired by the discontinuity as a key to reading the French writer. “The issue of discontinuity, that is, both the rejection of continuity and linear representation of history as, in general terms, in epistemological models that make continuity a piece of heritage is at the core work of Foucault” (2009: 49). Revel assumes that the discontinuity is a key notion in both Foucault's critique of the notion of history and the epistemological models. His attraction to the discontinuity would have led Foucault to give a new treatment to the notion of history as well as the notion of power. In my opinion, Revel

fails to describe his internal architecture, that is, he does not describe how the background theme of the discontinuity gives its shape to the whole of Foucault’s work; however, this author makes an important contribution to not being content to point out that the discontinuity is a central theme addressed by Foucault, but sees in discontinuity a feature of the French philosopher’s thought. Something like that discontinuity, unless under study, is its method or way of thinking. So the question that arises is: what is the discontinuity for Foucault? Could it be taken as a key concept for understanding the method of archeology or genealogy used by Foucault? How would this method of discontinuity work or function? How does this explain how Foucault establishes the historical cuts in his analysis, a matter that raised controversy at that time? Is this attention to the discontinuity in the way work is noticed and studied, for example? And is it a particular and peculiar way of thinking rooted in all the philosophical itinerary of the French thinker?

The two above references show us that this is a research project that can determine many features of Foucault. Above all, they confirm that the issue of discontinuity deserves special attention. In the following, I will leave these questions aside for the time being and I will concentrate on identifying how the issue of discontinuity arises in the initial period of philosophical itinerary of Foucault (1962-1969), particularly in the context of his reflections on history. So at first, a sketch will be done about his conception of history from the book *The Order of Things*, then relate it to the discontinuity. In the second stage, I will shift my attention to archaeological method, considering what has been pointed out.

### 1. The discontinuity in historical analysis

*The Orden of Things* is divided into two blocks and the first is the analysis of *The Meninas* of Velasquez. In this analysis, Foucault describes the complexity of views and positions in that painting and suggests the way of analysis and what he will seek to demonstrate in the following chapters: each period has its own peculiar way of thinking about things; In other words, each period of history has its own conditions to surface the truth of its discourses, what will later be accepted or not. In the analysis of the conditions as knowledge arises, the French thinker argues that these change over time, they are totally variable. For Foucault, it is of sudden twists, breaks and changes from one period to another. In the remaining part of the first block and throughout the second, Foucault is dedicated to arguing the *episteme* changes that occur in each period, through the Renaissance, the Classical period and ending its analysis in modern times. Then, there are two questions that are central to *The Order of Things*: on one hand, the notion of *episteme* and secondly, the description of three *epistemes* that occur between periods of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Foucault speaks, on the other hand, of archeology (as the subtitle of *The Order of Things* says: *An archeology of the human sciences*) to refer to the method with which it discusses the history of the human sciences, as it seeks to reveal the epistemological forms that at a certain time governing the organization and appearance of all scientific

discourses which then become part of a knowledge as such, that is, certain status of what we know today as human sciences. In this sense, the French thinker understands *episteme* as the hidden conditions of possibility that intervened for the emergence of such discourses. Revealing these epistemological forms is a method that departs from employing the conventional story, stopping Foucault in the manifestations of the same speeches and even more, away from scientific historiography. However, the epistemological forms, or *episteme*, is the science of what determines the issues, the problems, the intrinsic debates of an era. In that perspective, what Foucault discovers is that the story of speeches to would be characterized by a succession of *episteme* to know each historical period characterized by internal rules. The *episteme* is unique and determines its own speeches, limits the boundaries between speeches and also channels the ideas of knowledge and reflection that has made it possible. *Episteme* is, then, “set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems” (Foucault, 1972, p. 191). And, who knows all of this? Who can define the scope of an *episteme*? Who can analyze the consciousness of a historical moment? Who can diagnose the formation of an *episteme* between centuries? Foucault says, “Awareness is the privilege of the archaeologist episteme” (Burgelin, Revault and Amiot, 1970: 151). Therefore, the archaeologist, who is Foucault, offers a study of episteme of three periods: the Renaissance *episteme*, the Classical era and modernity.

Now, *The Order of Things* identifies the transformation of Western rationality between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries on their way through the three *epistemes* mentioned above. What Foucault seeks to counteract in this analysis is the idea of historical continuity, that is, the idea of a cumulative history of historical events that runs linear and unidirectional as well as describing its progress. The novelty that brings *The Order of Things* lies precisely in determining that there is no single coherent story touring several periods that find and describe the progress of a period to the next. It is not a process, covering the three *epistemes*, which describe a horizontal discourse that proceeds in a peaceful and absolute way. When Foucault shows the process, the relationship and the distinction of episteme to another does not find any explanation to the transition from one to another, either in a progressive perspective or progresses slowly toward the same point. The history of speeches of knowledge and the history of the human sciences, a subject that Foucault addresses has nothing of a positivist vision that would burn steps towards a progressive maturation process and lucidity of reason. It is more complex because the question is: *The Order of Things* describes the passage of three *epistemes*. In each there is an internal story, the story of an *episteme*; each *episteme* expressed in thoughts and language. Three *epistemes* were divided in two great breaks.

Renaissance *episteme* had a close relationship with language: “that nature, in itself, is an unbroken tissue of words and signs, of accounts and characters, of discourse and forms” (Foucault, 1970: 44). The world, language, knowledge and wisdom were dominated in this period by the similarity. Knowledge in this period had three channels of expression: orality, commentary and interpretation, these being ways of understanding knowledge. However, in the sixteenth century language,

according to Foucault, could not have direct contact with reality which has led in this period to discuss possible “approaches”.

In the similarity, there are two figures who tried to bring knowledge to reality: the madman and the poet. The madman, from his madness, came to reality, wanted to understand it, penetrating more and more with his movements, his gestures toward the world. Likewise, the poet, with his rhymes and verses, tried to approach and have a full experience of the present moment. Don Quixote makes reality his own and above all, eliminates the distance that the poet and the madman have been carrying. How does he do it? Through language. The language in this period is the one that speaks, the more you talk, the closer you will be to approach reality; the manifestation of talkativeness, of speech through language. The language of Don Quixote was the fullness of similarity; resemblance to reality, so that he could know about reality, “Don Quixote’s adventures form the boundary: they mark the end of the old interplay between resemblance and signs and contain the beginnings of new relations. Don Quixote is not a man given to extravagance, but rather a diligent pilgrim breaking his journey before all the marks of similitude” (Foucault, 1970: 51).

Who is Don Quixote? For Foucault, he was the bridge between one *episteme* and the other. It is the character of Don Quixote who will bring the similarity to the limit, “Don Quixote is a true likeness of all the signs that he has traced from his book” (1970: 52), and with the Renaissance period; the new *episteme* of the Classical era will be the representation, leaving aside and breaking the line that he had drawn first.

From the Renaissance to the Classical era, a change occurs: the language no longer speaks, now it analyzes the *episteme* of order and classification. “Since no approximations are made, it is discerned” (Burgelin et al., 1970: 39). From the similarity through representation, there was a step to talk about the order: “the possibility of establishing an ordered succession between things, even non-measurable ones” (1970: 63). This was the desire to capture the mechanical and calculable in nature. It is an application of the well-known *mathesis universalis*, that is, a logic, a kind of look, a form of analysis, a way of speaking was in force and paced throughout this period: the order, and in his hand, empirical domains were guided by mechanics and geometry. Here Foucault analyzed the representation from order through three sciences: general grammar, natural history and analysis of wealth. Replacing the similarity, representation is found: language understood reality through representations. How does he do it? Through grammar, history and natural wealth.

Now, in this period of the Classical era, Foucault analyzed the general grammar, natural history and the analysis of the riches, thinking that sensible realities are figurative. These sciences are the figure of the sensible world. From this, it follows that even under the same figures in the world, discourse always pretended to be ordered. Thus, Foucault foreshadowed what would later be called a discourse of order. Now, is it the man who ordered the knowledge of this period? Even the figure of man still lives in the shadow. Here man enters an ambiguous position, in the sense that he is the subject of knowledge and, at the same time, the subject that knows. The ambiguity lies precisely in the fact that man is the crucial and central point of all reflection and, above all, is the author.

*Juliette and Justine*, by Sade, like Don Quixote in the Renaissance, closes one period and another open; the Classical era was closed and modernity was opened. Both works had the function of hinged works. Sade's speech led to its logical representation. What sense did it make? The writings of Sade describing the brutality and licentiousness of his characters did not intend to represent the actions of an imaginary world, but to overcome them: the acts of their profligate lies on one hand, the destruction of writing itself and on the other hand, the destruction of man. This destruction was the full significance of the attempt to overcome the representation. The letters of Sade called things by their name; He did not lack, therefore, to follow the lines drawn by the representation; It was enough with what Sade wrote about man, gradually the destruction of the representation itself was felt, or at least its consummation, “So that the great narrative of Juliette’s life reveals, throughout the desire, violence, savagery, and death, the glittering table of representation” (Foucault, 1970, p. 229). It did not lack the words to represent the imagination of man and his relationship with reality. The writing, in the Sade a style, obfuscated representation and thus spoke the unvarnished reality.

The nineteenth century, the century of modern *episteme*, clung to the story in such a way that replaced the order, this notion that was in effect in the previous two age. In modern times, or in modern *episteme*, science acquired new characteristics and thus open the way to rigorous scientific approach, “the effort made to provide them with both a philosophical foundation and a formal justification; the endeavour to purify, formalize, and possibly mathematicize the domains of economics, biology, and finally linguistics itself” (Foucault, 1970: 267).

The *episteme* of the modern era defined the birth of man. The eternal man did not exist since the dawn of humanity. It is not man who always lived human sciences but, on the contrary, for Foucault it was modern *episteme* that made man a definite object. The most characteristic feature of this *episteme* was the discovery of a shadow that lived in anonymity, which was far from all anthropology that behind every science has always existed and there will exist an unconscious space, an unknown root. What is the theme of this *episteme*? The emergence of the unconscious knowledge. The progressive growth of the story is a lie, it is the “best known yet least recognized lie, to affirm that the very continuity of the movement of reason since the Renaissance is no more than an illusion of optics” (Burgelin et al., 1970: 53).

After analyzing the drawn lines that revolve around the *episteme*, we could notice the breaks and ruptures that occurred in previous centuries with regard to the emergence of a knowledge. However, the development of the speeches is a historical question. At this time, we conduct research around the question of discontinuity as a feature of history. Is it possible that Foucault's historical analysis is based on the discontinuity? Is the discontinuity a feature of the story itself and in what way does it reveal the movement of the *episteme*? This is the question I intend to analyze now.

## 2. Discontinuity as a trait of history

To advance in this work, I need to define a type of questions that I want to answer. How does discontinuity work in the historical analysis? How does it work in relation from one period to another? And finally, how do you study this object of survey in *The Order of Things*: the story of discourses of knowledge?

Foucault essentially does not describe the way or what happens so that one *episteme* is passed on to another. Or, how do these jumping process occur? Archeology offers no explanation of these processes (*cf.* Burgelin et al., 1970). But, what separates a period of another if not the same *episteme*? Foucault explains the *episteme* as a dispersion space, “a simultaneous set of specific remanences” (Aaron and Foucault, 2008: 50). It is possible to see more clearly the difference from one period to another, where an *episteme* can change or mutate, but not why such changes occur in that way.

So why do we tend to think that Foucault is a discontinuist? Around 1969, Foucault had an interview with the sociologist Raymond Aron, who asked the following question: “In what structure of thought, or in what *episteme*, are you?” Foucault replied:

First, the discontinuity. Discontinuity is, of course, a very serious problem, and you know well that it is a problem that is posed to historians. The problem of periodization arises in economic history as well as social history. There is no reason why historians of ideas are delayed from the methodological point of view with regard to economic historians or societies. In the field of ideas, periodization problems arise and this periodization is relative to the level at which we place ourselves and the object chosen.... I have the vanity having set, I think for the first time, the synchronous continuity, the simultaneity relations that existed between epistemological fields as diverse as the study of language, the study of economics and the study of biology. I bought a discontinuity at the price of a continuity or vice versa, as you prefer (Aaron and Foucault, 2008: 22).

Foucault's view, given to Aaron, directly serves to understand directly history-discontinuity relationship. Again the previous question: why do I tend to think that Foucault is a discontinuist? The answer is clear: Foucault is in the structure of thought of discontinuity. However, as he himself acknowledges, discontinuity is a problem, A problem that is mainly posed to historians, in what way? Historians generally have tried to erase or to forget the discontinuity, in as much as they are describing the historical courts and try in the same way the relationship from one period to another, thinking that there is an ongoing relationship between these. They also are omitting that there is a space and a break devoid of relationship. The intent of the historians, therefore, is to erase the discontinuity, to show, on the contrary, that there is an internal logic that runs from one period necessarily to the next. They seek to overcome discontinuity by determining an underlying continuity. But what does Foucault mean by saying synchronous continuity? How do you understand your claim that bought a discontinuity at the price of a continuity? To answer both questions one must refer to the analysis of the *episteme* that has been described.

In modern *episteme*, for example, Foucault describes the development of biology, economics, etc. At first glance, these sciences have no relation to one another; however, the finding of Foucault, his synchronic continuity, is to have determined that among these sciences it is possible to locate some relation in the way they produce knowledge. That is to say, how or the way biology produces knowledge resembles the way it is produced by the economy, among these sciences there are rules, perhaps bridges, which act, as Foucault, in an invisible way. On the other hand, this internal continuity that appears in an *episteme* following the sciences and their peculiar relationships are distinct and totally different if they are compared between one *episteme* and another. There is a radical discontinuity in the way of producing knowledge between the three *epistemes* from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In that sense, can the discontinuity express itself clearly away from the misunderstanding so far drawn? Is it possible to solve the riddle about what makes sprout a gap in the ground of the history leading to the succession, to the emergence of the unknown?

The centerpiece of the story that is described in *The Order of Things*, one might say, has two vectors: the empirical and positivist. Understanding the empirical and practices from the speeches of knowing, which is, all processed empirical exercises that are based discourse. The positivist side, on the other hand, describes the theorizing that the same book interweaves from the concepts located in history. In this sense, the history described by Foucault is attempting to register in history, in the course of history, various forms of appearance of empirical or practical formulas and the relationship they have with their respective theories, among them all mutations that have suffered in these movements analyzing their respective historical a priori. However, to carry out his historical analysis, Foucault defines its space of analysis. It describe the occurrences of different knowledge from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which were deployed to the three domains that are represented in the work, life and language. His analysis points out, then, the language with which it has been possible to understand “as it were – language as it has been spoken, natural creatures as they have been perceived and grouped together” (1970: 23), and the formation in which such language was born, or said languages, formed by means of codes, all of them from order. Therefore, among the knowledge that lies from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the formation of language must exist a code of knowledge, a possible systematic that regulates all birth, which regulates the birth of empiricities and positivities.

In that sense, *The Order of Things* seeks to find the starting point in which language, discourses and practices or empirical forms were born, in such a way that the history would be the identification of a mode or always random order which are subject of praxis. To determine the peculiar way of its principle of existence, “its laws, its regularity living beings, their representative value chain and the words must change” (Foucault, 1970: 23). In other words, according to the commentator Morey, it is to seek and follow in the footsteps of mutations “of the empirical in the empirical field” and “of theoretical in the theoretical field” (Morey, 1983: 231) or, as understood by Descombes, “[Foucault] seeks the evolution of the concepts and thought in the documents which are the different states of the different knowledge” (1982: 138). To carry out an analysis of what is visibly clandestine in a hidden way,

above all, analyzing the existence of an idea of order that has led to organize and sort it all: that is the task of Foucault, as an archaeologist.

What does the archaeologist do before history? Their task is to explain how during a given time, 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a knowledge were ordained, thus falling in the order of the speeches, their variations and from it came the way to make way to different knowledge (analysis of language reached linguistic), whose analyzes are marked by the historical conditions of possibility that have enabled their birth. In all this, the archaeologist has another more important task, developments, changes from one topic to another should not be described in their historical analysis, that is to say, the archaeologist does not develop a scheme wherein each occurrence of a follow the precedent speech is not a history of discursive appearances systematically, either continuous or discontinuous. But the task of the archaeologist is to identify historical priori, by which “ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards” (Foucault, 1970: 23). Well, what the archaeologist does is a sort of excavation of an epistemological field, an *episteme* that analyzing its possibilities, brings to light the reasons and motives for which this has been formed in this way and not another.

Then, what Foucault avoided was the linear analysis of the knowledge (as presented by science or conventional history), where the history of knowledge is described in an increasingly way and moved toward their gradual perfection, assuming as a result of the above a final telos. To what they take their interests as an archaeologist, instead, it is to the analysis of the depth of the epistemic spaces, always ordered in that way they were made in an *episteme*, which govern and determine changes in the theoretical discourse and practical, discourses or knowledge. In that sense, it is in this way that Foucault demonstrates his remoteness from the logic of conventional historical analysis. So the history is not historical, it is not becoming continuous, it is, on the contrary, a history without telos, without linear time (*cf.* Descombes, 1982). For the French thinker, it is a history describing the space of knowledge configurations of certain *episteme*, but not linked in a global and a one-way process. Therefore, archeology is the result of the explanation of the conditions of possibility of a knowledge.

*The Order of Things* then performed an analysis of history where it is not possible to see history as the rational deployment of a historical becoming, going on from the Renaissance and ending with modernity. However, the place where can situate the history described in the archeology of the human sciences would be in the analysis of spaces, the ground on which speeches were born, and thus the archaeologist draws the limits to identify changes, ups and downs always inexplicable to the description. All the speeches of an era, for Foucault, should be studied “envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms” (1968: 23). The Speeches, far from being a coherent description of historical facts which by itself explain the development of these, must be described in the manner of the patient sum of partial facts that do not seek to be universal Now the issue of discontinuity, will not

only be referred to as a trait of history, but also as the trait of the archaeological method.

### 3. The discontinuity as trait archaeological method

How does the archaeological method works? How does it conduct its analysis? And what roads does it follow when they intend to describe their research about history? The book *The archaeology of Knowledge*, as many scholars have said, is the description of the implementation of investigations carried out by Foucault (Castro, 1995; Morey, 1993; Diaz, 1993; Dreyfus, 1983). The French thinker said “[Archeology] it belongs to that field in which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate of” (1972: 16). So what does archeology want? To find and diagnose various changes and ruptures by speeches of knowledge been known. Bert J. Francois, meanwhile, says: “The problem was for Foucault to know how to regroup elements sufficiently related so that there is more clarification on each other, but also sufficiently heterogeneous to allow deduction of an available connection” (cit. in: Burgelin et al, 1970: 29). In this regard, the method that exposes the archeology of knowledge is, somehow, the comparison. Comparing common and different elements, from that, to describe a valid system.

While biology, economics and linguistics apparently had no contact, archeology allowed the composition of a valid system, beyond the apparent ruptures, continuities simultaneities or synchronic relationship. It should be asked Foucault about “how the fundamental discontinuity between the said two configurations of knowledge” (R. Aaron and Foucault, 2008: 44); as history or historical analysis to describe or analyze the relationship of one *episteme* to another will always be a fruitless activity: *episteme* have no relation next to each other. From the above, the distinction would be the second element of archaeological method.

Things, language, speech sprout themselves to the surface, there is an “erosion of the outside” (cf. Foucault, 1991b: 31-33; Blanchot, 1987: 22). That is, a time will come when the researcher discovers a type of erosion that appear on the surface, in history. No need of more homework than patient waiting and accumulating information about the birth and subsequently changes of speech, the development of a speech from one period to another; although the emphasis falling on it is not possible an analysis of rigid and serious of these changes way: “this profound breach in the expanse of continuities, though it must be analysed, and minutely so, cannot be ‘explained’ or even summed up in a single word. It is a radical event that is distributed across the entire visible surface of knowledge, and whose signs, shocks, and effects it is possible to follow step by step” (Foucault, 1970: 236).

Now, the question is, how is the archaeological method set against an *episteme*? Let’s say, archaeologist will need to gather a wealth of information documents about a period. Archaeologist task will be to read and reread every possible thing at their fingertips: a scholar in terms of all knowledge. After the study, then starts the

selection work: reorganizes a certain item from the data collected. Search the subject or the statement, “first, because on the one hand it is linked to the gesture of writing or to the articulation of speech” (1972: 28), which is among its archaeological interest. Later, the carry out the analysis of the division: what themes emerge as a degree of importance: “making possible the whole *episteme* (...) possible is primarily the relation to a knowledge of order” (1970: 79). This is in question “to seek a foundation in those figures of knowledge in which they participate, and are the radical novelty of the age of man: the figures appearing and beginning their twilight in history” (1972: 337). What happens to an issue that is presented gradually but not essential? Here the task of the archaeologist is to point out the difference or subordination. There are issues or speeches that have passed from one side to another in history, not because speeches are not related, but because there were other speeches before them, or were the first to a lesser extent (*cf.* Foucault, 1972: 31-40). For all the lines developed above,

References continue around the discontinuity as trait archaeological method which is offered in the archeology of knowledge in the light of the above. First, Foucault has taken the history of the human sciences as an archaeological theme, and speeches to know, in a historical perspective from archeology, is “a method of historical analysis freed from the anthropological theme” (1972: 16). Of Renaissance *episteme* to modern *episteme*, language has changed, has mutated so that it is pertinent to say that every era had a notion, more or less clear, of what was possible to talk about the idea that had the language and in which a knowledge is built, “reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed (...) it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it” (1972: 29). It should here be noted that since the Renaissance to modernity inner sense that analyzed the story was to sort the knowledge: in the Renaissance, as we saw, by the similarity (not to confuse one thing has similarity with another, this time defined four modes convenience, emulation, analogy and affinity); in classical times knowledge was ordered by representation and modernity handle the unconscious space, the space of knowledge, where language says nothing of himself, but his knowledge is oriented toward science: all our knowledge is determined by a language that controls, educates, governs and determines it.

Foucault always kept the idea that does not explain his work, specifically as regards their method. The iterative test is the lack of information about how to explain the trance, the change, the breakup of an *episteme* to another. Foucault “constantly underscores discontinuities between its historical blocks” (Merquior, 1985: 39). The circle of epistemology addressed in a letter to Foucault 1968 in response to the publication of their books and they generate misunderstandings. “What is the engine that transforms one configuration to another?” (Burgelin et al., 1970: 219), was the question of the circle of epistemology.

Foucault responded to the circle of epistemology. French thinker responses caused astonishment to all those readers, as that would become the main lines of his forthcoming book *The archaeology of Knowledge*. For now I will outline briefly some

of the answers given by the French thinker, moving to call the question of archaeological method before history and discontinuity.

Obviously, among the configuration of a period and another there is a discontinuity. The question of discontinuity in Foucault underwent a change of status, a profound change against the conception that history had it. For history, the issue of discontinuity was what the historian had an obligation to get rid of history, and could well be explained that task from two words of the given and the unthinkable. First, all questions about institutions, theories and practices reflect what is given, this set that can be perceived, and it is possible to study, analyze and, especially, register. This is reflected in society, in culture, in the sense that they are theories and practices available to the historian. Secondly, theories and practices that occur in the same way in society and culture, but they correspond to be anonymous, subjective and unfounded reflect the unthinkable. The historian must face it, as we said, the unthinkable delete history so that it does not come to surface, and therefore cannot appear. Indeed, given the history, the continuous and discontinuous is unthinkable. In that sense, below the discontinuity, continuity circulated illegally. The French thinker will move away from this conception of discontinuity, to give another sense. Foucault will say: “Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian's task to remove from history” (1972: 8). But everything was changing in that look, and this brought the discontinuity is the key, important basic element to carry out a historical analysis. Foucault, so I just said, always showed an interest about discontinuity as important element.

First, imbued in the archaeological look, the historian must define their scope of analysis to distinguish the possible levels of analysis and, above all, determine what period is the one you want. Second, what interests the historian is to discover all possible limits of development of the theme that has been proposed to analyze, “the limits of oscillation, the threshold performance” (Burgelin et al., 1970: 223). Finally, thirdly, the role of discontinuity does razor, cutting through the middle and separating two knowledge within a positive area, on the contrary, in each period, in each domain, each level takes a form and a function. In short, the discontinuity is instrument and under investigation; Foucault explains the above as follows: “[Discontinuity] allows to individualize the domains, but it can only be set by comparing these domains; not broken units, but to establish new ones; Scan series and split levels; and (...) it is not simply a concept present in the discourse of the historian, but it secretly, what is” (Foucault, 2012: 227).

Discontinuity, then, goes beyond being a simple gap between two spaces or historical moments; It is in each separation of facts or events, analyzes what disassociated with the preceding, their task is comparison, “it can only be established by comparing”. All the historian's task, then, is a task implicitly discontinuous “away from vast unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity” (Foucault, 1972: 4). We have been describing the continuity and discontinuity as simultaneous features of history, is it possible to see the continuity as visible and discontinuity as the invisible that story? Is it outrageous to suggest that continuity can be analyzed as the conscious and the discontinuity as the unconscious?

In an interview entitled Truth and power (*Verite et pouvoir*), says the French thinker about the discontinuity:

This business about discontinuity has always rather bewildered me. In the new edition of the Petit Larousse it says: 'Foucault: a philosopher who founds his theory of history on discontinuity'. That leaves me flabbergasted. No doubt I didn't make myself sufficiently clear in *The Order of Things*, though I said a good deal there about this question. It seemed to me that in certain empirical forms of knowledge like biology, political economy, psychiatry, medicine etc., the rhythm of transformation doesn't follow the smooth, continuist schemas of development which are normally accepted. (1980: 111-112).

According to Canguilhem, the contribution of Foucault's work was to discover the unconscious discourse of the West, which was behind all knowledge of modern society: “But his trenchant objections often routine responses, not only constituted a defense, but also, most of the time, fulminant lighting his forays into the unconscious knowledge, their questions and answers” (Burgelin et al., 1970: 77). History, in this sense, is the conscious process: the continuities not parceled, long chains, prolonged analysis of men, their words and gestures. And the discontinuity is the unconscious process: studying the always hidden, dark, why it is possible to look at all that space, all that continuous horizon, all that dawn of consciousness reasons, totalizing whole story that emanates from it. Suspicion of the unconscious to consciousness is confirmed once again: “when history does not offer enough security is the evolution of thought, of knowledge, of knowledge, is the evolution of consciousness always close itself (...) that it is asked to save what must be saved” (Foucault, 2012: 226).

## Conclusion

This research followed the intellectual journey of the French thinker from a broken key reading. Moving from the analysis of history as an object of study, and archeology, as a method of study, the period characterized as archaeological in Foucault's thought, I have outlined the key lines that support the claim that Foucault thought their journey intellectual from an inherent notion constantly marked by the issue of discontinuity; therefore, the issue of discontinuity is consequently dormant.

We saw that the issue of discontinuity is located inseparably vision of history of French thinker, thus determining a way to understand and carry out a historiography. This has its peculiarities. In this analysis we can, as did Foucault, assign a name to an *episteme* to refer to some use it turned in a period, but what is not available to anyone who makes a historical analysis inspired by the French thinker is to understand why the various changes, sometimes even sudden, between *episteme* and another occur. The discontinuity is present in the failure, or impossible, to understand what reasons *episteme* served for the jump or move to the next. A discontinuity, therefore, which does not prohibit the historian from raising the differences between *episteme*, but leaves it in a total silence when there is an understanding to why there is a change towards each other. Therefore, we can say that, in the archaeological period, the issue

of discontinuity is linked to not explain the separation between each *episteme*, but respects obviously, some consistency in the internal movement, that is, there is no kind of discontinuity in the game, running or how they form knowledge in each period. In short, a discontinuity that accentuates general aspects. How? The theme of discontinuity helps to understand how knowledge have been ordered, its variations, within a period; as method compares common and different elements; distinguishes a knowledge as is different from another. All of the above within a period provided. Therefore, it is a discontinuity that respects the internal process in the formation of knowledge within each period, but manifested radical change period to another. That's one side.

There is a fundamental contribution, I think, in understanding the issue of discontinuity in the archaeological period. Foucault introduced, then, in the analysis of history, discontinuity as the key to a deeper understanding of historiography, which must emerge following a set of clear facts and always hidden reasons. For a long time, some historical analysis sought to eliminate or get rid of discontinuity, as it was against a major interest to the filmmakers: continuity in their historical works. Foucault's contribution is to say that there is no need to make it disappear, because history is the result of continuous and discontinuous, conscious and unconscious analysis.

Two are then axes in which the subject of discontinuity moves: the inability to explain the gap between periods other and essentially positive view of this issue in historiography. Through the development hitherto treated we can ensure that the issue of discontinuity occurs in the framework of its reflection on history from the archaeological method, that is, the discontinuity is a vein that runs through much reflection Foucault archaeological period. It should open a new question facing the second moment of Foucault's work, that is, against the family period before to conclude this work: what happens at that time, that is, the issue of discontinuity present in the family was in the period as archaeological or perhaps time is a marginal issue? We may not be satisfied. The above question requires a prompt response.

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