

Dialogues in delay: speculations about a whole other temporality of the pedagogical encounter¹

Julio Groppa Aquino^{II}

Abstract

In order to conjecture an expansive ethical-political groundwork capable of fostering an eminently critical attitude before the educational present, the text hereby presented is organized according to three interconnected argumentative plateaux. The first of them is devoted to the novel *Memoirs of Hadrian* and, in particular, to Marguerite Yourcenar's reflections on the method of composition of the work and of her peculiar mode of addressing the past. Then, by means of a certain game of contrast with the writer's viewpoint, some hallmarks of the Foucauldian theoretical legacy are brought about, especially concerning the interplay between present, history and truth. Thus, one managed to create an argumentative ambience settled on the notions of regime of truth, of genealogical history and of the ontology of the present. The final text discussions are dedicated to focusing, alongside Michel Foucault's own experience as a teacher, on the two main topics – the care of the self and *parrhesia* – of the thinker's ulterior intellectual course, bearing in mind their possible pedagogical implications. With that, one sought to cast a gaze on the pedagogical encounter that, by conferring a certain ethical-stylistic potency on it, reclaims a time regime other than the transactions which take place therein.

Keywords

Pedagogy – Temporality – Michel Foucault – Marguerite Yourcenar.

I- Text presented as part of the exams for full Professorship at the Department of Philosophy of Education and Sciences of Education of the School of Education of the Universidade de São Paulo.

II- Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

Contact: groppaq@usp.br

Diálogos em delay: especulações em torno de uma temporalidade outra do encontro pedagógico¹

Julio Groppa Aquino^{II}

Resumo

A fim de conjecturar um plano ético-político expansivo capaz de fomentar uma atitude eminentemente crítica ante o presente educacional, o texto que ora se apresenta organiza-se segundo três patamares argumentativos articulados. No primeiro deles, debruçamo-nos sobre o romance Memórias de Adriano e, em especial, sobre as reflexões de Marguerite Yourcenar acerca do método de composição da obra e de seu modo particular de endereçamento ao passado. Em seguida, por meio de uma espécie de jogo de contraste com o ponto de vista da escritora, são trazidos à baila alguns marcos do legado teórico foucaultiano, especialmente no que se refere aos jogos cruzados entre presente, história e verdade. Tratou-se, assim, de criar uma ambiência argumentativa assentada nas noções de regimes de verdade, de história genealógica e de ontologia do presente. As discussões finais do texto dedicam-se a focalizar, a par da própria experiência de Michel Foucault como professor, as duas tópicas principais do percurso ulterior do pensador – o cuidado de si e a parrhesia –, tendo em vista suas possíveis implicações pedagógicas. Com isso, almejou-se perspectivar uma mirada sobre o encontro pedagógico que, ao lhe conferir certa potência ético-estilística, reclama um regime de tempo diverso nas transações que aí tomam lugar.

Palavras-chave

Pedagogia – Temporalidade – Michel Foucault – Marguerite Yourcenar.

I- Texto apresentado no concurso de títulos e provas para provimento de cargo de professor titular junto ao Departamento de Filosofia da Educação e Ciências da Educação da Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo.

II- Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil.

Contato: groppa@usp.br

Little by little this letter, begun in order to tell you of the progress of my illness, has become the diversion of a man who no longer has the energy required for continued application to affairs of state; it has become, in fact, the written meditation of a sick man who holds audience with his memories. I propose now to do more than this: I have formed a project for telling you about my life. To be sure, last year I composed an official summary of my career, to which my secretary Phlegon gave his name. I told as few lies therein as possible; regard for public interest and decency nevertheless forced me to modify certain facts. The truth which I intend to set forth here is not particularly scandalous, or is so only to the degree that any truth creates a scandal. I do not expect your seventeen years to understand anything of it. I desire, all the same, to instruct you and to shock you, as well. Your tutors, whom I have chosen myself, have given you a severe education, well supervised and too much protected, perhaps; from it I hope that eventually great benefit will accrue both to you and to the State. I offer you here, in guise of corrective, a recital stripped of preconceived ideas and of mere abstract principles; it is drawn wholly from the experience of one man, who is myself. I am trusting to this examination of facts to give me some definition of myself, and to judge myself, perhaps, or at the very least to know myself better before I die. (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 20-21).

By the borrowed voice of Marguerite Yourcenar, Hadrian, sovereign ruler of the Roman Empire between 117 and 138 A.D., undertakes a testimonial, and at the same time pedagogical, narrative. The monarch is perfectly aware of his deeds gaining notoriety throughout history, but the legacy of the truth, the living matter which had constituted his experience, would suit only one man to keep. A man yet to come.

His addressee is the young Marcus Aurelius, who himself would later become emperor. Committed to say everything, Hadrian offers himself to an unlikely dialogue, bearing in mind the spatiotemporal gap between both interlocutors. Hence the indeterminate character of the encounter triggered therein.

During more than two decades in which he had supreme power over the thus far known world, that cultivated man strove to imprint a style of command distinct from that of his predecessor Trajan – no longer in terms of territorial conquest, but of consolidation both of the borders of the empire and of the common life of the peoples under his aegis. In short, the statesman Hadrian aspired to rule well and – either by elective affinities or by strategic acumen – to the Hellenization of the Roman customs he attended to. The man who went by the nickname of “Little Greek” saw himself at the same time as a donee and as a guardian of the Greek *paideia* (HISTÓRIA AUGUSTA, 2011).

Having turned 62 and heavily stricken by an existence consumed firstly in the battlefield and later in the constant journeys through the provinces in times of peace, the Emperor decides to take his own life. Without succeeding in that, he shall do nothing but meditate on death. And he does so without repugnance of any kind, driven by a solemn brio in view of the irremediable.

In a stoic underpinning, dying would consist not only of a collapse of strength, but also of a culminating occasion for the labor of edifying oneself. In the last drop of all things there might reside the splendor of a life; and he was due to know it. Hadrian wants “to enter into death with open eyes” (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 295). His acts and words would echo through time, supplanting the ruin of oblivion or, even more importantly, of his enemies’ future plundering – something which by unforeseen means could not help itself from happening 18 posterior centuries.

Caesar Traianus Hadrianus Augustus is the character fictionally scrutinized by the Belgian

writer who lived in United States and, in 1980, the very same year of the publication in Brazil of her 1951 novel *Memoirs of Hadrian*, was the first woman elected to the Académie Française.

Later defined by Yourcenar (1983) herself as an invented monologue, *Memoirs of Hadrian* has a secure position among the outstanding literary works of the 20th century. To gauge, even cursorily, the impacting reception of the book, one needs to take into account two of its aspects: the socio-historical context of its appearance and the *modus faciendi* of its writing.

It is in *Reflections on the Composition of Memoirs of Hadrian*, a postscript to the book, that Yourcenar presents a set of her thoughts not only on the method of its composition, but also on the turbulent course of its writing, initiated 25 years before its publication. The first manuscripts were destroyed; the project was resumed and abandoned several times until, in 1948, the writer received a suitcase full of papers she had left in Switzerland during the war. After coming across a small set of typewritten pages addressed to one Marcus, she was bestowed with an epiphany: she had forgotten that the addressee was Marcus Aurelius and that, therefore, she was before a fragment of the manuscript which demanded once again the light of day.

The author then decided to recreate Hadrian's life by seaming the fragments, the gaps and the omissions which history had charged itself with promoting. The self-granted license to reconstructing imaginarily the life of the Roman Emperor was not, however, carried on without a careful clinging to the information available. It was necessary to roam through the sparse vestiges of Hadrian: his library, the commentators, the ruins of his Villa, his footsteps, in short, in order to "do, from within, the same work of reconstruction which the nineteenth-century archaeologists have done from without" (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 326).

In another passage, Yourcenar (2005, p. 120) declared: "It was three years of continuous

work, exclusively on this one book, during which time I lived in a symbiotic relationship with my character to such an extent that at times I understood that he was lying, and allowed him to get away with it". Thus, the writer strove to restore the full condition of living being to the countenance frozen in statues of the one who wanted to e did perpetuate himself as Hadrian.

If it is true that the book brings with it an undisputed appeal to the restoration of the ethical-political bases of a world devastated by World War II, it is no less true that such design could only have been accomplished by referring to a whole other world; a world from which we would be as apart as virtually close. This is due to the fact that, as Yourcenar (2005, p. 321) ponders, "some five and twenty aged man, their withered hands interlinked to form a chain, would be enough to establish an unbroken contact between Hadrian and ourselves".

The summoning of the distant past on behalf of the writer, it seems to us, aims not only at a virtuous exemplarity the ancient would bear, but also at an accentuated contrast with the very post-war world (SILVA, 2012). Hadrian, therefore, would be an exponent of that effulgent historical hiatus between the Greek and the Christian worlds during which some men would have been in fact free.

According to Yourcenar, the immersion in history would arise as a *school of freedom*, insofar as it would provide with the possibility of casting our choices after unforeseen, and perhaps less virulent, angles. For that, one ought to turn our eyes to the men of the past with empathy, respect and, often, pity (ROSB0, 1987). One has to take our ancestors for "men who, like us, nibbled olives and drank wine, or gummed their fingers with honey, who fought bitter winds and blinding rain, or in summer sought the plane tree's shade; who took their pleasures, thought their own thoughts, grew old, and died" (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 331).

Let ourselves imagine then the twenty-five old men that separate us from Hadrian disposed in a single spatiotemporal line.

Side by side, each one of them would barely recognize himself in the physiognomy either of the one who anteceded him, or of the one who succeeds him. No familiarity, neither necessary nor sufficient, designates them: they do not speak the same language, do not suffer from the same misfortunes, do not have the same beliefs, have not lived nor died in the same manner. Besides, they elbow each other, fight each other and refuse themselves, one by one, to reveal one's face to the other. Only a hollow clicking sound emanates from them. A lament, perhaps.

Thus, the twenty-five queued-up old men would espouse no predicate or essential faculty, except for a pallid, harsh chain of acts and words which are born, juxtaposed, exchanged, metamorphosed and, then, disappear, only to be reborn under other unpredictable forms. Their only common traits are dispersion, estrangement and, in the end, disintegration of the previous forms; pervaded, nevertheless, by the yearning for eternal recommencements and some ephemeral novelty.

Encapsulated in their own time, the twenty-five old men resemble statues abandoned to the elements, never having known a final form. Posterity is for them nothing more than bad luck. Blind and deaf, at times wounded and forever tormented, they receive the gusts of time as slashes. Neither visible, nor hidden, they still subsist. Neither dead, nor alive, they just persist.

In an essay published three decades after *Memoirs of Hadrian* and entitled *That Mighty Sculptor, Time*, it is the theme of statuary that Yourcenar turns her attention to. What other compromise solution would there be between the flesh in imminent dissolution and the promise of indestructibility of stone or iron? What other wager on human transcendence would figure more ostensive and, at the same time, more deserving of compassion?

One passage of the novel is exemplary in this sense. The Emperor refers to a statue of Antinous, his deceased lover.

I was counting desperately on the eternity of stone and the fidelity of bronze to perpetuate a body which was perishable, or already destroyed, but I also insisted that the marble, rubbed daily with a mixture of acid and oil, should take on the shimmer, and almost the softness, of youthful flesh. (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 132).

Artefacts forged in spite of the decay of the human form, the statues, altogether with the memory they were to preserve from the corrosion of time, have been adulterated, "have, in their own way, undergone the equivalent of fatigue, age, and unhappiness. They have changed in the way time changes us" (YOURCENAR, 1992, p. 87).

Similar to the mercilessness of nature, human humors also impinge indelible modifications upon the statues.

That emperor's face received a hammer-blow on a certain day of revolt or was recheised to serve for his successor. A rock thrown by a Christian castrated that god or broke his nose. Out of greed, someone extracted the eyes of precious stone from this divine head, thus leaving it with the cast of a blind man. [...] A world of violence turns about these calm forms. (YOURCENAR, 1992, p. 88).

The encounter of the stone or metal with an ever-moving, although turbulent, present will never be enough to ensure a dignified rest to those lives confined therein, which later will be tampered with, shattered and, ultimately, condemned to disappearance.

Therefore, the contusions, the mutilations, the rapine, the vituperations, the marks of violence against the world which is bequeathed from one generation to the other serve, paradoxically, to perpetuate a kind of halting clause to the human ambition to immortality: the intransitivity of the very present. One lives in it, speaks in it, wanes in it. And that is all.

Alongside the acts that statues are not capable of preserving, the words of our predecessors shall also never know a safe haven: “[...] human speech is relayed to us from the past in stages – staggering along, infected with miscomprehensions, eaten away by omissions, and encrusted with additions” (YOURCENAR, 1992, p. 4).

Counter to an understanding of history as the mass grave of acts and words ruined generation after generation, we must agree that a myriad of forces intertwine on the ground of the present and thenceforth send out their signals uninterrupted. Disparate fragments compose moving and uncertain mosaics. Successive layers of human affairs accumulate with the sluggish pace of the hours, producing wrinkles of time which cannot be captured by the secluded sleep of the museums or of the encyclopedias. It is on our skin that time spills.

While life evaporates swiftly from our organs, time burns gently on our skin, tattooing us signs that, at first sight, escape us entirely, since in a permanent state of becoming. The readiness to be scorched by such signs will therefore correspond to the forging of an open dialogue, albeit always in delay, with the very present. Therein lies the whole exuberance of the act of thinking.

If the digressions around Yourcenar’s ideas have absorbed so much attention so far, this was due to the necessity to locate an argumentative groundwork sufficiently open to engage in an equally open interlocution with the Foucauldian theorization and, in particular, with the key role of the historiographical question in the critical analysis of the present.

Although being contemporaries and both devoted to a reappropriation of the past at variance with that of the mid-20th century historiographers, there is no reference to Yourcenar in the Foucauldian *Dits et Écrits*, nor is there any reference to Foucault in her books and interviews. In the case of the French thinker, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* does not even refer to Hadrian, except for in brief

footnotes; the prioritized character is Marcus Aurelius. However, one should stress the fact that both of them devoted themselves to the second century A.D.

A resonance point between Foucault and Yourcenar is detected by Françoise Gaillard (2014, p. 118, our translation):

[...] addressing Greece, even on the wings of utopia or by the paths of history, forces us to think about other processes of constitution of the subject and other forms of relationship to oneself besides the ones we know and practice today. And just this matters. *Memoirs of Hadrian* invites us to conceive a regime of the self that does not resemble at all the Judeo-Christian heritage and to build a new ethical subject. *History of sexuality* too.

According to another scholar, Paul Allen Miller (2012), Yourcenar and Foucault turned to the ancient ways of living willing to checkmate the modern image of man and, particularly, the notion of freedom advocated by existentialism. But that seems to be the extent of the convergence of the two authors. Even if both repute the historiographic work as an operation akin to fiction, the humanist accent that underpins Yourcenar’s outlook finds no echo in the Foucauldian formulations.

In the same manner, Foucault has little interest in overarching representatives of history. His analytical project forwent the exemplary for the infamous: “Lives of a few lines or of a few pages [...] Brief lives, chanced upon in books and documents” (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 76). Even in the case of more canonical sources such as those utilized in his later investigations, what interests Foucault is the peripheral and the adventitious in the authors he elects. Filigrees instead of emblems.

In order to better gauge, by contrast, the Foucauldian philosophical-historiographical project, let ourselves return once more to Hadrian. The Emperor says:

I have done much rebuilding. To reconstruct is to collaborate with time gone by, penetrating or modifying its spirit, and carrying it toward a longer future. Thus beneath the stones we find the secret of the springs.

Our life is brief: we are always referring to centuries which precede or follow our own as if they were totally alien to us, but I have come close to them in my play with stone. These walls which I reinforce are still warm from contact with vanished bodies; hands yet unborn will caress the shafts of these columns. (YOURCENAR, 2005, p. 126-127).

Between the no-longer of the stones and the not-yet of the columns, only a diffused melancholy claims by who contemplates time in search of some transcendence. The same hands that caress the beautiful things of the world will stone them later, to be sure. Therefore, salvation and damnation amalgamate in the image of a copious, yet ever-tattered world. An imperfect world, doomed to permanent reconstruction, since liable to successive disruptive events, deemed as deviations from the civilization's march which human history should mirror and, at the same time, increment.

Herein lies precisely the analytical point of inflection featured by Foucault, in the wake of the Nietzschean genealogical hypothesis. In a movement opposite to Yourcenar's strategy, the historical perspectivation conjectured by the French thinker is altogether refractory to the dream – as lyrical as it is innocuous – of a benevolent continuism between past and future, and even more so to the belief that the existence of all creatures under the heavens issue from an immemorial origin understood as a transcendent nexus which would be laying dormant in the beginning of existence and watchful in its demise.

Having said that, Foucault (2000b, p.260, our translation) rises against the positivity-laden performativity of the historical discourse of Platonic extraction sustained by the metaphysical search for unsullied

determinations, “as if this world of things said and wished had not known invasions, struggles, rapine, masquerades, schemes”.

Dissent and outrage, successive errors and perpetual struggle. Along with Foucault, there are no founding principles, nor is there the wish to have them; neither permanence, nor the burden of upholding it. The Foucauldian contestation strives to set in motion what was wished to be settled, to tear apart what was found uniform, to graft heterogeneity in what was deemed identical to itself, to sprinkle multiple singularities over what was fiercely revered as universals. As Foucault (2000a, p. 255, our translation) reminds us, “knowledge is not meant to console: it disappoints, disquiets, severs, wounds”.

Tools at hand, the French thinker proposes to forsake what he calls “supra-historical history” (FOUCAULT, 2000b, our translation) by means of three shifts: instead of the history-reminiscence, a parodic and destructive use of reality; instead of the history-continuity, a dissociative and destructive use of identity; lastly, against the history-knowledge, a sacrificial and destructive use of truth. In other words, an insurrection of the thinking against the universalizing assault of reality, of identity and of truth, obliterating, furthermore, the belief in history as prosperity or as decadence.

The past will, then, be what we make of it in the present. And nothing more.

The contours we give to the past, the regions of it we illuminate, the subjects we gather from the dust and stage them once again, the plots we believe to hear between the gaps of the archives, they answer to problems and struggles of our time, in which our own lives are immersed. Nothing comes to us from the past that is not brought up by a strategy, set up by tactics, aiming at fulfilling some demand of our own time. (ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR, 2000, p. 123, our translation).

Indeed, what is revealed when the past is mobilized discursively are the problematizations operated by our peers. Hence the exclusive attention to current narrative scrimmages around this or that truth; the truth itself, therefore, always contemporary. Shifting uses of an equally shifting history, therefore, beyond a mere discursive relativism.

As the historian Arlette Farge (2009, p. 93, our translation) opportunely puts it, we can refute the “illusion of a universality, of a total and definitive truth to reconstruct globally. On the contrary, we cannot discard truth or even look down on it, neither should we ever deviate it, and the gap between these two ends is generally narrow”.

Let ourselves concentrate, then, on the topic of the regimes of truth. Paul Veyne (2010, p. 19) says: “False generalities and ‘discourses’ vary from age to age. But in every period they are taken to be true. In this way, truth is reduced to *telling the truth*, to saying whatever conforms to what is accepted as the truth, even though this will make people smile a century later”.

Counter to the regard towards the ancestors embraced by Yourcenar, the disregard which we confer on them would figure as a condition of possibility of the regimes of truth in the present. Neither negligence nor historical ingratitude, but the indefectible contingency of the human affairs. Paradoxically, it is the writer herself who offers us a proof that: “Our ancestors restored statues; we remove from them their false noses and prosthetic devices; our descendants will, in turn, no doubt do something else”. (YOURCENAR, 1992, p. 214).

We ask in turn: will they build other statues? Will they suppress the remaining ones once and for all? Or will they rebuild them in series, by means of indestructible materials? Will they perhaps endow them with artificial life? Rigorously vain questions, as one shall agree.

When seen from the perspective of an ever-shifting present, the men of the future present themselves as neither wiser nor more

ignorant than us. They will be self-absorbed passers-by of their own present, enthusiastic supporters of reigning truths, just like their predecessors were in their own manner.

Veyne (2010, p. 27) offers once again a lucid synthesis of what takes place therein: “Given that we cannot think absolutely anything at absolutely any time, our thinking does not stray beyond the frontiers constituted by the ‘discourse’ of the moment. Everything that we think we know is, unbeknownst to us, limited; we cannot see the limits and are even unaware that they exist”.

To the scholar, the discursive dome of truth, responsible for the retrogeneration of the schemes of cognition and conduct available at a certain moment, will always operate unreflectively. That means that generations previous to ours ignored the frontiers of their thinking in the same way that we are incapable of devising our own. By such judgement, the regimes of truth belong irrevocably to the domain of *Khrónos*, never to that of *Aion*.¹

The former covers unidimensional, successive and, therefore, measurable time, whereas the latter refers to the indecomposable stretch of time, and by extension, to the intensity of its duration; a notion later re-codified as eternity. There is still a third image of time, *Kairós*, which comprehends the moment of the opportunity/occasion, the space of emergence of contingency in the circularity of things. A different appropriation of such temporalities is offered by Peter Pál Pelbart (1998, p. 72, our translation), in the wake of the Deleuzian theorization: “*Khrónos* expresses the action of the bodies, of bodily qualities, of causes; *Aion* is the place of incorporeal events, of attributes, of effects. *Khrónos* is the domain of the limited and infinite; *Aion* is the domain of the finite and unlimited. *Khrónos* has a circular form; *Aion* is a straight line”.

1- The distinction between *Khrónos* and *Aion*, including *Kairós*, harks back to the main images of time formulated by the ancient Greeks, which described “active forces that influence decisively the unfolding of the facts, either favorably or unfavorably”. (PUENTE, 2010, p. 42, our translation).

Circumscribed to the possible extension of the chronological present, the true discourses are the lenses through which men, from a given quadrant of their experience, think, act and judge what they think and what they do. Not to be confounded with the *zeitgeist*, nor with the mentalities or ideologies, the regimes of truth consist before anything of the authenticating principle of the acts and words deemed as legitimate, until other discourses take their place, reconfiguring not only the limits but also the thresholds of human action. Such regimes refer, therefore, not to true propositions, but to the set of rules that make possible to utter and to accept the conventions deemed as true at a given moment.

An ingenious appropriation of this argument is offered by Gilles Deleuze (1995, p. 95):

History, according to Foucault, circumscribes us and sets limits, it doesn't determine what we are, but what we're in the process of differing from; it doesn't fix our identity, but disperses it into our essential otherness. [...] History, in short, is what separates us from ourselves and what we have to go through and beyond in order to think what we are.

One presumes, therefore, that history continuously unveils not what we secretly have been since the beginning of times, but, inversely, what we are ceasing to be, once the intransigent work of freedom is computed therein. Therefore, for Foucault (2000c, p. 305, our translation), thinking would constitute an activity by means of which “not without effort, hesitations, dreams and illusions, we separate ourselves from what is acquired as true, and seek other rules of the game”.

This has to do with the unavoidable struggle, according to Giorgio Agamben (2009), between the necessary rebuking of the present and a possible critical reunion with it. A mix of contemplation and insurgence, contemporaneity, to the Italian thinker,

implies an immanent tension operating between the present, defined by chronological verisimilitude, and actualness, designated by the eruption of ever-unruly, ever-disaggregating novelty. In order to situate it better, let ourselves return to Foucault.

On the opening of his 1983 lectures, *The Government of Self and Others*, the thinker makes use of a text by Immanuel Kant published in a newspaper in 1784, bestowing upon it all the honors. It is *What is Enlightenment?*, in which Foucault detects an emergence dear to the historical-philosophical contours of Modernity itself, anchored no longer in a longitudinal relation with Antiquity, but in a verticality of the discourse with its own time. It is the instantaneity of the moment that arises as object of the philosophical thinking.

Two great traditions of criticism that have demarcated modern philosophy would have unfolded from the Kantian gesture: on the one hand, analytics of truth, represented by the Anglo-Saxon philosophy and, on the other, ontology of the present, which would include the Frankfurt School, Nietzsche, Weber and Foucault himself.

The latter tradition does not postulate itself neither as a doctrine, nor as an aggregate of counter-knowledges, but as a recalcitrant attitude of disentangling from the doubly patrimonial and progressive rhetoric of supra-history; a rhetoric magnetized both to scientism and to its adversary, humanism – the two discursive forces which found in the educational practices one of the most effective forms of concreteness and dissemination.

That is when we arrive at the educational territory.

It is commonplace among Foucault's commentators the observation that the thinker paid scant attention to education. Except in *Discipline and Punish* (FOUCAULT, 1987), where he bares the device of examinations in schools, and in declarations scattered throughout *Dits et Écrits* about his teaching experience, Foucault would have been too sparing in

problematizing educational practices. It is also a unanimous agreement among researchers of the Foucauldian field that it would not be possible to extract a properly pedagogical set of ideas from the theoretical complex bequeathed by the French thinker.

In the vast majority of times in which Foucault referred to school rituals, he reputed them as authentic inheritors of disciplinary rationality, mostly in its inter-crossing with the normalization of sexuality. However, at other times, pedagogy and, in particular, the master-disciple relationship in Antiquity captured the attention of the thinker. This is the case of the 1982 course, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

In it, Foucault sheds some light on the historical basis of the pedagogic enterprise. What he used as the problematizing key in the 1982 course, entirely dedicated to the second century of the Christian Era, was the subordination, that took place in the two following centuries, of the care of the self to the imperative of the knowledge of the self, by which the renouncing of the self overcame the labor of ethical self-constitution.

The care of the self figured in Greco-Roman Antiquity as an occasion for the factual exercise of freedom and, at the same time, as a requirement for the conduction of the self and of the others. Foucault emphasizes the role of mastership among Greeks and Romans, deemed as one of the necessary conditions for the exercise of the care of the self.

One cannot care for the self except by the way of the master; there is no care of the self without the presence of a master. [...] Unlike the teacher, he is not concerned with teaching aptitudes or abilities to the person he guides; he does not seek to teach him how to speak or how to prevail over others, etcetera. The master is the person who cares about the subject's care for himself, and who finds in his love for his disciple the possibility of caring for the disciple's care for himself. (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 59).

Indeed, the figure of the master of existence is characterized by an obligation to the truth, materialized in the form of direction of conscience, of which the contemporary teacher would be a pallid heir or, otherwise, an antipode.

For, in pedagogy, the master [is such] inasmuch as he holds the truth, expresses the truth, expresses it properly and within the rules intrinsic to the true discourse he conveys. Truth and the obligations of truth fall on the master's side. This is true in all pedagogy. (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 408).

Developing the theme, Foucault establishes a cardinal distinction between pedagogy and psycagogy: whereas the former would be related to the transmission of a truth capable of endowing the subject with knowledges and skills he does not have, the latter would unfold around practices of the care aiming at the transformation of this very subject's way of being. According to Salma Tannus Muchail (2011, p. 127, our translation), "philosophy as the care of the self is knowledge and, more than knowledge, is mode of existence, lifestyle. It is this forgotten modality of philosophy that Foucault wants to restore to the possibilities of our present".

Since the emergence of Christianity, a radical divorce would have taken place, according to Foucault, between both modes of functioning of the master-disciple relationship, hitherto amalgamated. The obligation to tell the truth, previously allocated on the word of the master, will henceforth fall upon the disciple's back. Hence the eruption of Christian confession as motto and heritage of modern pedagogical action, to be sure, of pastoral tone.

Foucault (2003a, p. 213, our translation) formulates a precise definition of the mechanism of confession. Let ourselves see it:

The Christian West invented this surprising duress, imposed to each one, of saying everything in order to erase everything,

of formulating even the most minute faults in an uninterrupted, obstinate, exhaustive murmur from which nothing should escape, but that should not survive itself even for an instant. For hundreds of millions of men, during centuries, evil had to be confessed in the first person, in a mandatory and fleeting whisper.

Along with Christianity, one witnesses the dissemination of a morality materialized as obedience to a system of rules, in lieu of the search for a personal ethics previously based on the care of the self. With the emergence of the disciplinary society, instead, confession will be overcome by the systematic record of human faults. Forgiveness leaves the scene and in comes the examination, operating “a continuously growing memory of all the evils of the world” (FOUCAULT, 2003a, p. 213, our translation).

In the opposite direction of the mechanisms of confession and of its modern successor, the examination, Foucault unearths the Greco-Roman notion of *parrhesia*, defined in terms of an *ethics of speech* – a theme that will occupy him intensely in his two last courses. To the thinker, *parrhesia* constituted an axis of ancient politics and philosophy. However, within the limits of the discussion developed here, we shall restrict ourselves to its pedagogical context.

Practice opposite to rhetoric and flattery, it is one of the main resources of the care of the self operated by the master of existence, who utilizes it “to make proper use of it, from the true things he knows, of that which is useful or effective for his disciple’s work of transformation” (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 242).

In the next course – *The Government of Self and Others* –, *parrhesia* happens to be defined as the general obligation to tell the truth, that is, something that transcends the technical realm of mastership, consisting properly in a virtue, as well as in a duty of all those who, by knowing how to govern themselves, would be apt to govern others.

Understanding *parrhesia* as a practice that goes beyond the political principle of isegory, Foucault describes it as the freedom to take the floor and, in so doing, exercise free speech or, more precisely, the “courageous activity of a few who come forth, speak, and try to persuade and direct the others, with all the attendant risks” (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 158).

Four were the modalities of production of true speech in Antiquity, according to the thinker: prophecy, wisdom, *tékhnē* and *parrhesia*. On the latter, the truth sheltered in the master-disciple relationship would bear no revealed or second-hand content, confined as it is to the act of questioning frankly and bravely everything that is meant as peremptory, consensual or definitive. In this case, the truth will last the exact instant of the parrhesic speech. *Parrhesia*, as one sees, is the child of *Kairós*, not of *Khrónos*.

Acknowledging the premise that between the care of the self and *parrhesia* there is a relation of essential circularity – one practice will not exist without the other –, what is at stake here is not the domain of an aprioristic set of knowledges, but the indissoluble commitment to the search of truth by those who circumstantially takes the floor. It should, however, be clear that the *parrhesic* truth is opposed in every respect to that of *tékhnē*, the triumphant modality in Modernity and matrix of the regimes of truth based on a heteronomous authority, mostly of scientific descent.

Even bearing in mind the temerarious contemporary appropriations of the notions of *parrhesia* and, above all, of care of the self, in which the latter is transformed in another control strategy “aiming at extracting pedagogical lessons to reach a happy and successful life through the pastoral re-enchantment of the teaching activity” (FREITAS, 2013, p. 329, our translation), the issue that persists to us are the conditions of possibility of a way of living, under the contemporary educational framework, that would be capable of sheltering an enthusiastic speech of some level of ethical-

aesthetic novelty by those who decided to stand publicly in front of the young.

How can one make flourish the critical clamor in the heart of those practices that claimed to be the epicenter of the pastoring of conscience during the last centuries? Formulating the question otherwise, what would be the price of a certain courage of truth to be invested in the speech of those who have taken upon themselves not the burden of teaching well, but the prerogative of exercising the freedom of thinking without reservation before another – and, in so doing, put themselves at risk?

Evoking here the notion of *parrhesia* does not imply in any way a mimesis of the Greek *modus vivendi*, since there is nothing it could teach us. The arrangements offered by a historical time do not prosper in a different one, except as farce – we know that only too well. However, even if by absolute contrast, the Greek experience can offer some fruitful intelligibility keys for the ideas around current pedagogical practices. Let ourselves see why.

In a 1993 tribute to the philosopher Gérard Lebrun, Francis Wolff, then Professor at the *École Normale Supérieure* of Paris, disentangles the three figures he sees as typical of the disciple in ancient philosophy. And he does so by taking into account the fact that such figures are “on the one hand perfectly distinct (even when there are constants among them) and, on the other hand, entirely typical, and not just in the history of philosophy but perhaps of every master/disciple relationship” (WOLFF, 1993, p. 124, our translation). Let ourselves follow the ideas of the author in order to unfold not an imponderable psychology of the disciple, but some of the vicissitudes of the pedagogical encounter.

The first figure is that of the Socratic disciple who establishes a love relationship with the master who, in turn, devotes himself to an indirect guidance of the disciple through the path of maieutic. Each one of the disciples, however, will develop his own systematization of the master’s ideas after his disappearance.

The problem is that the other disciples will do the same. Hence the fact that each one of them “invokes the master and put under his name all the truths the disciple finds out in himself” (WOLFF, 1993, p. 151, our translation).

The second is the Epicurean disciple, opposed to the first. Doomed to repeat what the master bequeathed him, he can add or eliminate nothing to his words, seen as a closed totality. In the wake of a relationship shaped after the one between the patient and the physician who cured him, “his destiny is linked to this contradiction of being unable to be a disciple except by becoming master” (WOLFF, 1993, p. 125, our translation).

Lastly, the major task of the Aristotelian disciple consists in commenting and interpreting the master’s thinking. In this sense, the former wishes to finalize the unfinished writings of the latter, to whom a sovereign authority is conferred. Nevertheless, the text of the master bears “tensions or ambiguities which are impossible to overcome, condemning his enterprise to an endless recommending” (WOLFF, 1993, p. 126, our translation).

Thus Wolff synthesizes the three figures: the Socratic disciples are jealous orphan brothers; the Epicurean ones are cured but repeating patients; the Aristotelian are dissatisfied hermeneutists.

Fortunately, we would have here a complete picture of the possible types of the pedagogical encounter. However, the author himself contemplates an exception that calls our attention. In a brief footnote, Wolff concedes:

A priori, one should also add stoicism, which apparently offers a different model of the disciple’s relationship towards the master; the doctrine changes every generation, transforms and adapts itself; each disciple becomes a master who gives it a new direction. There are, therefore, almost as many stoicisms as there are generations of stoics. It does not seem to us, however, that we are dealing with a

typical figure of disciple. (WOLFF, 1993, p. 149, our translation).

As one can deduce, a nomadic way of thinking would deliver a double blow: it forbids the master to establish a lineage, and condemns him to an inescapable, albeit longed for, solitude. The dialogue established therein, always in delay, imposes itself as bullets that pierce the barrier of the instant, carrying forces that can consume themselves immediately or, perhaps, produce multiple, although always delayed, effects, upon which the master will not have any kind of control or prediction. He only throws the dice, but cannot witness the outcome of his action. Thus, master and disciple are linked to each other not by what the former is, but by what the second might become when they are apart from each other. *Khrónos* separates them; *Aion* reunites them.

Something similar seems to take place in Professor Foucault's aspirations (2003b, p. 23, our translation):

I conceive an object, and try to fabricate it the best I can. This gives me much work (not always, to be sure, but frequently); I take this object to the conference room, show it and, next, leave the public free to use it as they please. I see myself more as an artisan fabricating an object and offering it to consumption than as a master making his slaves work.

The Foucauldian refusal to the role of mastership is not justified by a supposed domination intrinsic to the pedagogical intervention, but rather by the fact that there would be an inexorable paradox in this type of encounter: teaching would imply fostering the emancipation of the disciple from the teaching relationship itself, so that "the discourse can be detached from the master who pronounces it, appropriated and rebuilt in the first person, finally allowing the constitution of a relationship with oneself in which the master

no longer has a place", according to the careful analysis by Mathieu Potte-Bonneville (2006, p. 141, our translation) on the relations between Foucault and stoicism.

It is precisely in a kind of critical-philosophical activism that Foucault engages when he occupies the pedagogical set. Relinquishing the the transmission of stable knowledges, he makes a call to the other for a public exercitation of certain cognitive restlessness, including here the observation of uncertainty and unpredictability immanent to the conduction of thinking on such basis.

Under this perspective, Humberto Quiceno Castrillón (2003), a Colombian researcher interested in the dyad Foucault/pedagogy, rushes to state that the concept of education closer to the French thinker would be *Bildung*, having philosophy itself, and not the novel of formation, as its formative raw material.

According to the English scholar Thomas Osborne (2009), one would have to establish the parameters of Foucault's performance as an educator, especially in his lectures during the 14 years in which he was associated to the *Collège de France*. It is in those lectures that he demonstrates in act the generation of his ideas, anchored in a notably singular style, whose development describes a horizon distinct from that of the books he authored. Furthermore, it is not the stability, but the variations of his thinking that emerge there. In short, the depth of a way of thinking acquires the statute of a living, incandescent thing. There Foucault breathes, gasps, loses and catches his breath, so to speak.

His procedure in the lectures could, therefore, be defined as problematological. The themes elected were approached through shifts and transformations, and never because of explaining concepts which would be generalizable to other domains. With Foucault, the research labor serves only to operate problematizations of previous problematizations, chasing the untiring murmur of certain themes echoing in the history of the present.

Obviously, the singular conditions of the experience at the *Collège de France* would ensure, from the start, an appropriation of teaching analogous to that of Foucault, given the inextricable connection between teaching and research pursued there. Nevertheless, according to Carlos Ernesto Noguera-Ramirez (2009) – another Colombian researcher devoted to the role of teaching in the trajectory of the French thinker –, the way Foucault's researches were conducted would consist of the main lesson he left: the investigative work as a properly pedagogical gesture, resulting in an ethical attitude. In other words, it is the benefit of an intensive and expansive way of living supported by an uncompromising will to problematize. The stylizing of oneself, therefore, exactly where one would presume to existence only of different orders of capitulations.

If the arguments of the scholars mentioned above were to be plausible, then so will be the chances of inferring a proto-pedagogical legacy from Foucault, not in terms of a system of ideas to be carried on, but as an invitation to a clear-eyed way of conducting oneself publicly before the deafening archive of the world. A gay pedagogy,² perhaps, substantiating a common, although shifting, ground for the equidistant encounter between the older and the younger ones.

There was, however, an obscure side haunting his lectures, of which Foucault could never rid himself altogether, although he wished it insistently.

Sometimes, when it has not been a good lecture, it would need very little, just one question, to put everything straight. However, this question never comes. [...] My relationship with the people there is like that of an actor or an acrobat. And when I have finished speaking, a sensation of total solitude... (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. xiv).

2- The expression, naturally, relates to the title of the 1882 book by Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, whose aphorism 382 states something decisive for what we conjecture here: "We who, new, nameless, hard to understand; we premature births of an as yet unproved future – for a new end, we also need a new means, namely, a new health that is stronger, crafty, tougher, and more cheerful than any previous health" (NIETZSCHE, 2001, p. 246).

Being one of the most prodigious spirits of the 20th century, the thinker who wanted to teach ends up surrendering to the hardships of his task. Would Professor Foucault have forgotten that mutually shared solitude is the just counterpart of a life shaped in a class, when this life turns out to be eager enough to ensure some critical distance from the present? Furthermore, would the Professor have held back the fact that when invested with certain courage of truth, the interlocution established therein can never be confined to the instantaneity of the present?

Just as in Hadrian and his chimeric dialogue with Marcus Aurelius, timelines supervene, intercross and erase themselves in the maelstrom of forces which unleash in this kind of mismatched encounter between the older and the younger ones. A havoc of sounds and gestures tangles under their feet, climbs up their legs and infiltrate their body tissues. To the older ones, all that is left is to keep their eyes open against the bitter winds and the blinding rain; to the younger ones, to seek the plane tree's in summer, in order to shut their ever fatigued retinae. Splendid dissent moving the harsh machinery of the world!

Therefore, unsuspecting arrangements of acts and words orchestrate a kind of interlocution that claims a different time regime, whose actualization presupposes a wrinkled time surface in which multiple layers cross each other incessantly. It is by means of wiggles and circumvolutions that infinity traces the instant of the instant.

Twisted by the waves of time, the emanations that some give out reach the others soaked in bewilderment and tenderness. By then, both already old, statues deposited at some near point along the ranks of time, they can finally dialogue, since now they have made themselves capable of understanding, without any intent of deciphering, the delay which had forever intertwined them.

And so, feeling no awe, they have entered *Aion*.

References

- AGAMBEN, Giorgio. **O que é o contemporâneo? E outros ensaios**. Chapecó: Argos, 2009.
- ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR, Durval Muniz de. Um leque que respira: a questão do objeto em história. In: PORTOCARRERO, Vera; CASTELO BRANCO, Guilherme. **Retratos de Foucault**. Rio de Janeiro: Nau, 2000. p. 117-137.
- CASTRILLÓN, Humberto Quiceno. Michel Foucault, ¿pedagogo? **Revista Educación y Pedagogía**, Medellín, v. 15, n. 37, p. 201-216, 2003.
- DELEUZE, G. **Negotiations**. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- FARGE, Arlette. **O sabor do arquivo**. São Paulo: Edusp, 2009.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **Power, truth, strategy**. Sydney: Feral, 1979.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. A vida dos homens infames. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Estratégia, poder-saber**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2003a. (Ditos & escritos IV). p. 203-222.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. Conversação com Michel Foucault. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Estratégia, poder-saber**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2003b. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2003a. (Ditos & escritos, IV). p. 13-25.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. Crescer e multiplicar. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Arqueologia das ciências e história dos sistemas de pensamento**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2000a. (Ditos & escritos, II). p. 253-259.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. Nietzsche, a genealogia, a história. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Arqueologia das ciências e história dos sistemas de pensamento**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2000b. (Ditos & escritos, II). p. 260-281.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. O filósofo mascarado. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. **Arqueologia das ciências e história dos sistemas de pensamento**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2000c. (Ditos & escritos, II). p. 299-306.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **The government of self and others**. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **The hermeneutics of the subject**. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **O governo de si e dos outros**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **Vigiar e punir**: nascimento da prisão. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987.
- FREITAS, Alexandre Simão de. A *parresia* pedagógica de Foucault e o *êthos* da educação como psicagogia. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 18, n. 53, p. 325-338, 2013.
- GAILARD, Françoise. A cultura da individualidade. Releer Michel Foucault e M. Yourcenar. In: ARTIÈRES, Philippe (Org.). **Michel Foucault, a literatura e as artes**. São Paulo: Rafael Copetti Editor, 2014. p. 105-119.
- HISTÓRIA AUGUSTA: Vidas de Adriano, Élio, Antonino Pio, Marco Aurélio, Lúcio Vero, Avídio Cássio e Cómodo. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos da Universidade de Coimbra. v. 1. Coimbra: CECHUC, 2011. (Autores gregos e latinos).
- MILLER, Paul Allen. Hadrian's practice of freedom: Yourcenar, Beauvoir, and Foucault. **Eugesta**, Lille, n. 2, p. 263-286, 2012.
- MUCHAIL, Salma Tannus. **Foucault, mestre do cuidado**: textos sobre a Hermenêutica do sujeito. São Paulo: Loyola, 2011.
- NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. **The gay science**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- NOGUERA-RAMIREZ, Carlos Ernesto. Foucault professor. **Revista Educación y Pedagogía**, Medellín, v. 21, n. 55, p. 131-149, 2009.
- OSBORNE, Thomas. Foucault as educator. In: PETERS, Michael et al. **Governmentality studies in education**. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009. p. 125-136.

PELBART, Peter Pál. **O tempo não-reconciliado**: imagens de tempo em Deleuze. São Paulo: Perspectiva: FAPESP, 1998.

POTTE-BONNEVILLE, Mathieu. Um mestre sem verdade? Retrato de Foucault como estoico paradoxal. In: KOHAN, Walter Omar; GONDRA, José. (Org.). **Foucault 80 anos**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2006. p. 129-150.

PUENTE, Fernando Rey. **Ensaio sobre o tempo na filosofia antiga**. São Paulo: Annablume, 2010.

ROSBO, Patrick de. **Entrevistas com Marguerite Yourcenar**. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1987.

SILVA, Nilson Aduino Guimarães da. Memórias de Adriano, confissão e história. **Gláuks**, Viçosa, v. 12, n. 2, 2012, p. 128-132.

VEYNE, Paul. **Foucault**: his thought, his character. Cambridge: Polity, 2010.

WOLFF, Francis. Três figuras do discípulo na filosofia antiga. **Discurso**, São Paulo, n. 22, p. 123-152, 1993.

YOURCENAR, Marguerite. **Memoirs of Hadrian**: and reflections on the composition of memoirs of Hadrian. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

YOURCENAR, Marguerite. **That mighty sculptor, time**. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

YOURCENAR, Marguerite. **With open eyes**: conversations with Matthieu Galey. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

Received on March 2th, 2105

Accepted on September 17th, 2015

Julio Groppa Aquino is full Professor at the School of Education of the Universidade de São Paulo. He has an MA and PhD in school psychology from the Institute of Psychology of the Universidade de São Paulo, and did post-doctorate research at the Universidad de Barcelona. He is a researcher at CNPq and FAPESP.