

# From the Editors. Critically with Foucault: Anarchaeology of Education and Public Spaces

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**This** thematic volume was inspired by the discussions held during the academic conference *Critically with Foucault: Anarchaeology of Education and Public Spaces* organized by Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, in cooperation with the University of Gdańsk and the University of Lodz on November 27-28, 2018. The theme of the conference referred to two previous meetings devoted to Michel Foucault's thought and its present-day reception—the symposium entitled “Remembering Foucault. Power, Knowledge, Resistance in Contemporary Research Reflection”<sup>1</sup> held at the University of Lodz in 2014, and to the conference “Governmentality—What Comes Next?”<sup>2</sup> organized at the University of Gdańsk in 2016.

The discussions held during the conference at Kazimierz Wielki University were an expression of critical action “with Foucault.” As we believe, reflection encompassing the archaeology of education and public space has become particularly necessary when, in view of declining trust in scientific knowledge and the dizzying rise of the phenomenon known as “post-truth,” constructivist and post-structuralist researchers need to face the consequences of programmatic distancing from the “truths” subjected to analysis, and from absolutizing certain versions of “reality.” Michel Foucault's *oeuvre* can still provide impulses and conceptual

categories for dealing with the researchers' assumptions and the possibility of transgressing them and expanding their cognitive horizons in the research process, and in at least several ways.

First, following the “anarchaeology” mentioned in the title, we may practice criticality as a theoretical and practical stance preceding and concluding the research process, grounded in the principle of the non-necessity of power and understanding orders of knowledge. Michel Foucault, in his lectures delivered in 1980 at the Collège de France, used this neologism as a play on the words “anarchy,” “archaeology,” and “genealogy” (Foucault 2014). The term archaeology encompassed multiple levels of problematizing issues of truth, power, discourse, and subjectivity. Understood as a research stance, Foucault's term, exposing the non-obvious nature of power relations, practices of knowledge production and distribution, and “regimes of truth” about the social reality under study also comes to the fore in the researcher's reflexivity and criticality towards their scientific output. Such reflexivity can also be a way of intensifying epistemological paradoxes that are not seen in terms of obstacles or dead ends (see: Baker 2007; Saari 2017).

Secondly, it is also possible by adopting an interdisciplinary research perspective that, on the one hand, absorbs heterogeneous concepts and theories, and, on the other, does not shy away from experimenting with the research “toolbox” in the spirit of creating new conceptual constructs. Foucault's works on resistance, transgression, parrhesia, alethurgy, confession, aesthetics of existence, or governmentality (e.g., Foucault 1972; 1977; 1978; 2009; 2010; 2014), as well as the philosopher's well-known appeal: “Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same” (Foucault 1972:15) are an encouragement and,

<sup>1</sup> See the thematic volume of *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* entitled “Perspektywa Foucaultowska we współczesnej refleksji badawczej [Foucauldian Perspective in Contemporary Research],” edited by Magdalena Nowicka and Karol Franczak, 2016, vol. 12, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See the thematic volume of *Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica*—“Governmentality i co dalej [Governmentality and What Next]?”—edited by Marek Czyżewski, Dominik Krzyżmiński, Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka, Maria Mendel, and Tomasz Szkudlarek, 2018, vol. 19, no. 3.

at the same time, a methodological guideline for viewing social and educational phenomena in an “anti-disciplinary” way.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, and finally, the inclusion of diverse discursive and non-discursive elements (material, organizational, institutional, and other) in empirical research can help researchers with constructivist and poststructuralist orientations to face the difficult aporia between neutrality and distancing oneself from the phenomena under study and normativity and the need to value them. Methodological concern for grasping the “archive of discourse” and social practices empirically, in a multi-contextual manner, is conducive to conducting emotionally involved research, which also remains in line with the postulates of research reliability. It is criticality differentiated from criticism, as it manifests itself in a reflexive approach to socio-cultural reality in its empirical complexity and multi-faceted nature.

The texts gathered in this volume are a response to our invitation to speak up for criticism in education and public space, to reflect on the potential and limitations of Foucault’s ideas for investigating current, contemporary social and cultural phenomena and problems. Thus, the present volume opens with a transcription of the discussion panel *The Politics of Truth in Education and the Public Space*, which was held on November 28, 2018, as a summary of the proceedings taking place during the two-day conference. The issues raised by the speakers centered on the manifestations of the politics of truth in public space and education, while the philosophical achievements of the French thinker marked the theoretical and methodological horizon of the discussion. It was moderated by Helena Ostrowicka (Kazimierz Wielki Univer-

sity), and the following guests took the floor (in order of appearance): Marek Czyżewski (University of Lodz), Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka (University of Lodz), and Maria Mendel (University of Gdańsk). The discussants included Ryszard Mordarski (Kazimierz Wielki University) and Doctor Cezary Rudnicki, then a doctoral student at the University of Warsaw.

During his mini-lecture, Marek Czyżewski drew attention to the phenomenon of *governmentality without truth*, which is characteristic of the modern reality of communication. It consists in replacing the truthfulness of publicly proclaimed opinions with their populist attractiveness and emotional coloring. The contemporary implosion of ever more heterogeneous and multiplied meanings, resulting in reducing the sense ascribed to them, simultaneously strengthens the attitude of indifference to the issue of truth in public communication. The concept signaled by Czyżewski, significantly expanded in the article “Governmentality without Truth: An Essay on the Role of Foucauldian Thinking in a Post-Truth Society” published in this volume, does not avoid methodological inquiries either. Analyzing the limitations of such Foucauldian analytical categories as the will to know, speaking the truth, parrhesia, and admonition, the author formulates the need to include various postmodern concepts of power in the analysis of the phenomenon he is interested in.

The category of regimes of truth, understood as a relation binding the act of revealing the truth with the subject, was emphasized by Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka. Starting from the emphasis on the normative dimension of education, the author drew attention to the consequences resulting from the occurrence of mechanisms and self-management strategies in the relations between the educator and the educated. Considering Foucault’s understanding of

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault’s own formulation (cf. Taylor 1986).

subjectivity in the context of an always unbalanced educational relationship, she poses a fundamental question: Do the tactics and strategies (of self-leadership) described by Michel Foucault testify to the objectification, reification, and commodification (fr. *marchandisation*) of the relations in question, or do they rather reveal the need for their present shape in educational practice?

In her turn, Maria Mendel, by embedding education in the broadly understood public space, emphasizes the role of the past in establishing modern times. Referring to Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Heart* published in 1997 and to Zygmunt Bauman's book *Retrotopia* published exactly ten years later, the author formulates a kind of warning against the sort of *retromania* understood as the principle of returning to what was before. According to the author, the restoration of the idea of a strong state, the revival of nationalism, and the cultivation of social divisions based on race, class, and gender are indicators of a strong fear of confronting a future that is impossible to predict. In the process of overcoming it, it is necessary to organize educational conditions and practices whose indisputable basis is the experience of freedom and contact with the perspective of the other. For this reason, the author ends her considerations by referring to the concept of public pedagogy by Gert Biesta.

The article by Jacek Woźny, entitled "Archeology as a Metaphor in Contemporary Culture," opens the collection of texts which are elaborations on papers, theses, and statements presented at the conference. The author pays attention to the ambiguous status of archaeology in contemporary culture and science. The scientific classifications of this discipline, chronologically ordered and characterized by Jacek Woźny, indicate that archaeology went through var-

ious stages of development and improvement of research methods. Importantly, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, archaeology also became a cognitive metaphor and inspired other fields of culture and science to take a "stratigraphic" look at their history. The author considers the possible consequences of these inspirations in terms of the trivialization or ossification of the archaeological metaphor. Although, today it is still fresh and stimulating in the study of the media ("media archeology"), photography ("archaeology of photography"), dance ("archaeology of dance"), or modernism ("archaeology of modernism").

Marek Czyżewski, in turn, "deals with" Foucault's notions of knowledge and power. In the article "Governmentality without Truth: An Essay on the Role of Foucauldian Thinking in a Post-Truth Society," which is a continuation of the author's comments formulated during the panel discussion, he offers a separate look at the evolution of the ideas of knowledge and power in Foucault's work. The author puts forward and supports the claim that the usefulness and significance of Foucault's approach to knowledge and those of his approach to power differ in their application to contemporary culture. While Foucault's approach to the question of power and the direction of its shift towards the so-called governmentality is pertinent to the evolution of Western civilization, his approach to the question of knowledge developing towards the question of truth and truth-telling does not reflect contemporary cultural changes. Marek Czyżewski makes a nuanced assessment of Foucault's work, highlighting the dominant features of contemporary culture and the role of sociology in the processes of governmentality.

The considerations presented in the article by Miroslav Dopita and Jana Poláchová Vašátková indicate

the entanglement of the Czech higher education sector in the assumptions of neoliberalism. The main subject of the study described in the article is the organization and effects of pedagogical doctoral studies analyzed from the point of view of their adequacy to the requirements of the Czech labor market. The theoretical basis for the authors' investigations is the concept of arrangement, proposed by Michel Foucault, applied to the analysis of the most important legal acts, reports, and documents influencing the shape of the Czech higher education system. Its use led the authors to identify three paradoxes in the way pedagogical doctoral studies are organized in the Czech Republic. These refer, in turn, to study programs, training of university teachers, and accreditation programs.

Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak's research presented in the article "Post-Foucauldian Discourse and Dispositif Analysis in the Post-Socialist Field of Research: Methodological Remarks" is an example of theoretical and methodological considerations aiming at legitimizing a new area of analysis for post-Foucauldian discourse analysis and dispositif analysis. Searching for an answer to the question of the possibility of applying these perspectives to the study of governance, subjectivization, and power in post-socialist societies, the author reviews Polish and German studies in this field. Her reconstruction is preceded by a systematic reflection on Michel Foucault's attitude towards neoliberalism. The methodological directives proposed on this basis introduce elements of semiotics, contemporary anthropology, and selected approaches to cultural identity into the analysis of the dispositif. The assumptions of the post-Foucault discourse analysis are extended by the postcolonial perspective, which takes into account the practices of normalization in post-socialist societies seen in the center-periphery relation.

Postcolonial concepts constitute an important context also in Maciej Jabłoński's article, "The 'Illusion' of Social Research/Action. Reflections on Neo-Colonial Pedagogy," in which the author describes the mechanisms of limiting access and exclusion of people with disabilities from most of the rights to which healthy people are entitled. His characterization of the differences between colonialism and the post-colonial perspective shaped on its basis led to the conclusion that we are currently witnessing neo-colonial domination of healthy people over the interests, needs, and subjectivity of people with disabilities. The author finds examples confirming the validity of this assertion in selected areas of social practice, such as national educational policy and ways of producing scientific knowledge in such disciplines as special education, economy, or social policy. The entire reflection is set in the perspective of post-colonialism which, starting from the criticism of institutional tools of exerting coercion on the lives of subordinated individuals, simultaneously enables demystifying the mechanisms responsible for maintaining the illusion of decolonization.

The closing text by Helena Ostrowicka is a methodological proposal to integrate various Foucauldian concepts in analyzing the discourse on the reform of higher education in Poland. The author joins the discussion on the possibilities and limitations of concretizing such notions as knowledge, alethurgy, confession, or dispositif, and their application in empirical research on discourse. Within the frames of the post-Foucauldian research perspective, she singles out and describes the archeological, alethurgical, and dispositif-related strategies, and provides an example of their complementary application in a research project entitled "The Governmentality of University—A Discursive Image of the Contemporary Reform of Higher Education in Poland." The



broad aims of this study include discourses constructed in three institutional contexts: science, government, and the media. The preference for specific theoretical categories led the author to distinguish three analytical strategies, which are characterized by a differentiated distribution of accents in the analysis and understanding of discourse and its relations with knowledge and power.

For obvious reasons, the present volume does not exhaust the possible threads of reflection inspired by Michel Foucault's works, including those related

to the study of contemporary problems of education and the public sphere. It is the result of continuing the discussion on the contemporary reception of Foucault's ideas and the effect of meeting at a specific place and time of researchers studying various areas of social life. We trust that this thematic collection will meet with the interest of our readers and will provide impulses for reflection on the perspectives of using Foucault's work and developing criticality as a specific attitude and style of thinking, which would not fall—as Jan Masschelein (2004) put it—into the trap of trivialization.

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