

## ARTICLE

### **On Historicity and Transcendentality Again. Foucault's Trajectory from Existential Psychiatry to Historical Epistemology**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper I focus on the emergence of the concept of the "historical a priori" at the origin of Foucault's archeology. I emphasize the methodological function of this concept within Foucault's archaeology, and I maintain that despite the different thesis it entails as compared to its philosophical sources, it pertains to one of the main issues of phenomenology, that is, the problematization of the relation between reality as it appears in its historicity, and transcendentality. I start from the interest of the young Foucault in existential psychiatry, and I focus on the French philosophical context in which Foucault's Introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's "Dream and Existence" (1954) was conceived. My aim is to show that the first "phenomenological" phase of Foucault's work is coherent, from a methodological point of view, with the development of archaeology intended as "historical epistemology." I conclude by arguing that Foucault's archaeology is methodologically linked to Canguilhem's epistemology, in that the latter presents itself as an important attempt at linking together historicity and transcendentality.

**Keywords:** Michel Foucault, phenomenology, historical a priori, Ludwig Binswanger, existential psychiatry, historical epistemology.

### **Critical and Pseudo-Critical Appropriations**

At present, we are witnessing a growing interest in the question of Foucault's involvement with phenomenology. It is an interpretative and philosophical debate in which one can distinguish three different positions. While some scholars seek to interpret or evaluate Foucault's work in light of the conceptual and historiographical categories of the philosophical tradition—gnoseology and ontology<sup>1</sup>—others make a case for simply "taking up Foucault in light of Foucault." Yet, even some of these authors ultimately identify philosophical influences for

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<sup>1</sup> I consider the works of respectively Hubert Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982, 1983), and Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, translated by Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) as the most representative of this line of interpretation. More recently, Paule Veyne has tried to deduce from Foucault's work the principles of an empiricist theory of knowledge: *Foucault: His Thought, His Character*, translated by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).

this Foucault; to give a recent example, the Kantian one.<sup>2</sup> Thus, these two positions only appear to be different, since they share not only the same interpretative point of view, but also the idea that philosophy is always trying to answer the same questions (e.g. how do we know?) using the same theoretical alternatives (e.g. empiricism, idealism, criticism etc.).

By contrast, other scholars have recently tried to emphasize the *methodological* role that categories of the philosophical tradition play within Foucault's work. Regarding phenomenology, for instance, these scholars seek to examine the *use* that Foucault makes of some of the concepts and the problems outlined by what one can provisionally call the "phenomenological tradition." In particular, I refer here to some works that I consider among the most meaningful and fruitful of the most recent Foucault studies: Kevin Thompson's "Historicity and Transcendentalism: Foucault, Cavailles, and the Phenomenology of the Concept," (2008)<sup>3</sup> and the collected papers in French edited by Pierre Cassou-Noguès and Pascale Gillot: *Le concept, le sujet et la science. Cavailles, Canguilhem, Foucault* (2009).<sup>4</sup> Also, Johanna Oksala's *Foucault on Freedom* (2005)<sup>5</sup> corresponds in part to such a methodological perspective, insofar as it investigates Foucault's relation to phenomenology without looking for a philosophical ground, but instead analyzing it in terms of "critical appropriation," even though this inquiry is confined mainly to Foucault's reading of Husserl.

This methodological approach goes hand in hand with the need to reassess and specify the different meanings, resources and aims that have belonged to phenomenology throughout the course of its various readings.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, the strength of such an approach lies in that it neither takes Foucault's claims textually, nor confines itself to a scholastic pursuit of influences and lineages, but is rather able to look beyond them, in order to account for Foucault's "immanent critical appropriation"<sup>7</sup> of some of the concepts belonging to the philosophical tradition. In this way, such a perspective does not insist on criticizing Foucault's lack of philosophical accuracy, and does not judge him in terms of his success or failure in building a coherent and viable philosophical project, according to the traditional philosophical categories. Rather, it problematizes Foucault's work from within, by questioning its own reasons and aims. Furthermore, it is an approach that considers philosophical thought as inseparable from the context of its different readings and developments, and shows that such readings—

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<sup>2</sup> Colin Koopman, "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages," *Foucault Studies*, no. 8 (February 2010), 100-121.

<sup>3</sup> *History and Theory*, vol. 47, no. 1 (February 2008), 1-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Le concept, le sujet et la science. Cavailles, Canguilhem, Foucault* (Vrin: Paris, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> In his response to Koopman, Kevin Thompson rightly points out that in Foucault's work, one should distinguish between almost two different ways of accounting for phenomenology: on the one hand, Foucault refers to constitutive phenomenology, and on the other one, he refers to what Thompson calls a "phenomenology of the concept" ("Response to Colin Koopman's 'Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages'," *Foucault Studies*, no. 8 (February 2010), 122-128). Similarly, Colin McQuillean claims a greater precision in accounting for the terms "critique" and "transcendentalism" respectively in Kant and Foucault ("Transcendental Philosophy and Critical Philosophy in Kant and Foucault: Response to Colin Koopman", *Foucault Studies*, no. 9 (September 2010), 145-155).

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentalism," 11.

rather than preserving or betraying the purity of their sources—reflect nothing but the richness of these sources themselves.

Besides, it is Foucault himself that seems to suggest that we take up this methodological direction, insofar as he presents German phenomenology as the object of different readings in France from the end of the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> In this way, he not only contextualizes phenomenology—thereby differentiating the French reception from its Husserlian source—but he also situates his own work within one of the possible appropriations of this source. It is this that allows us to speculate on Foucault's relation to something like the "phenomenological tradition," and to analyze it in terms of an immanent critical appropriation. All this, however, on the condition that we do not insist that if Foucault aligns himself with one of the two lineages he identifies in French phenomenology—the "philosophy of knowledge, of rationality, and of the concept" led by Cavaillès, Bachelard, Koyré, and Canguilhem—he therefore has absolutely nothing to do with the other one, the "philosophy of experience, of meaning, and of the subject"<sup>9</sup> led by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. In proposing this, I agree entirely with Jean-Michel Salanskis, whose recent paper "Les deux triades de Canguilhem-Foucault"<sup>10</sup> examines critically the viability of the separation outlined by Foucault between a "philosophy of knowledge" and a "philosophy of experience," and—instead of establishing or strengthening any divisions and lineages—considers what is at stake for the two sides, as well as their actual and possible mutual relations. I think this is the most appropriate way to deal with the ambivalences and outward inconsistencies of the thought of Foucault, a philosopher who claimed to have "learned more from Cuvier, Bopp, and Ricardo than from Kant or Hegel."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is also the best way to contribute fruitfully to the thorny debate about Foucault's relation to phenomenology.

For this reason, in what follows I suggest approaching this debate by considering the phenomenological research beyond the more or less orthodox adherence to a singular philosophical program. In particular, I suggest considering two general methodological principles of phenomenology which are common to its various lineages: the complementary "principles of experience"<sup>12</sup> and of "immanence."<sup>13</sup> The first emphasizes the priority of the phenomena and entails the conviction that philosophical research should take root in experience in the way in which it appears, beginning by describing it. It is a position that refuses the idea that the reason or the "essence" of phenomena lies externally to them, for example, in what founds, deter-

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, "Introduction by Michel Foucault," (1978) in Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, translated by Caroline R. Fawcett and Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 7-24. This text was revised by Foucault in 1984 and published as "Life: Experience and Science," translated by Robert Hurley, in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, vol. 2: *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 465-478.

<sup>9</sup> Foucault, "Introduction by Michel Foucault," (1978), 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Michel Salanskis, "Les deux triades de Canguilhem-Foucault," in Pierre Cassou-Noguès and Pascale Gillot (eds.), *Le concept, le sujet, la science*, 237-270.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 155. All further references to this work are designated in the text as "MC" followed by the page references to the French edition and then to the English translation.

<sup>12</sup> Salanskis, "Les deux triades," 247.

<sup>13</sup> Jocelyn Benoist, *L'idée de phénoménologie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001).

mines, or causes them. This means—and this is the second principle—that the essence or “a priori” of experience is immanent to the experience itself. That is to say, that the conditions of possibility of the phenomena should be found in the phenomena themselves, in the way they give themselves.

From this methodological point of view, Foucault’s archaeology, in that it probes the phenomena (the forms of knowledge as well as the forms of experience) by focusing on “the specific form of their mode of being,”<sup>14</sup> seems to correspond to such a phenomenological attitude. It is probably no accident that Foucault still conserves the term “a priori” for naming such a “form,” that is the internal explanatory principle of the phenomena. Now, phenomena change historically and Foucault’s archaeology is concerned with how to account philosophically for the historicity of experience in a way that should keep to the givenness of experience itself. Foucault emphasizes this position often throughout his archeological works, as we can see already in the programmatic manifesto of archaeology, the Preface to *The Birth of the Clinic*, where he presents the archaeological inquiry as a “study that sets out to disentangle the conditions of history” not from some material causes, nor from a purely-transcendental point of view, but “from the density of discourse.”<sup>15</sup> Or in *The Order of Things*, where he claims that “the history of knowledge can be written only on the basis of what was contemporaneous with it [...] in terms of conditions and a prioris established in time.”<sup>16</sup> But one could mention also the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, where Foucault states that the “specific history” of the phenomena for which he aims to account for “does not refer [them] back to the laws of an alien development.”<sup>17</sup> That is to say, that the laws that govern the forms of experience’s phenomena are immanent to the phenomena, and they can be grasped only by describing these forms themselves. This is why Foucault calls “historical” the a priori in which he recognizes the internal reason or condition of possibility of the phenomena, and he makes it the pivot of his historical-epistemological research.

In this way, Foucault’s archaeology pertains to one of the main issues of phenomenology, that is, the problematization of the relation between reality as it appears in its historicity, and transcendentalism. Nonetheless, it is exactly on this point that one should recognize the main distance between the Foucauldian archaeological project and Husserl’s phenomenological research. I refer to Husserl here, since, although Husserl is not mentioned by name in Foucault’s *Archaeology*, the term “historical a priori” reminds us immediately the *Crisis of European Sciences*, whose aim was precisely to determine the “concrete, historical a priori which encompasses everything that exists as historical becoming.”<sup>18</sup> Despite the source of the expression, it

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<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002), 143. All further references to this work are designated in the text as “AS” followed by the page reference to the French edition and then to the English translation.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic. An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973), XIX. All further references to this work are designated in the text as “NC” followed by the appropriate page reference to the French edition and then to the English translation.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, *MC*, 221/207.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *AS*, 167/143.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology; An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 372.

would be wrong to recognize a direct Husserlian lineage in Foucault's "historical a priori." It is perhaps no accident that Foucault, by the deep irony that often characterizes his style, adopts Husserl's expression precisely in order to emphasize the distance between his own archaeology and Husserl's philosophical historiography. Indeed, the "historical a priori" in Foucault does not aim, like Husserl, at making explicit the "a priori structure contained in historicity"<sup>19</sup> in order to trace a "universal teleology of reason."<sup>20</sup> According to Foucault, the historical a priori is not the a priori of history, but just a methodological tool whose historicity consists in its concurrence with the form of the phenomena that it aims at explaining, while simultaneously describing them. That is why Foucault, in his archaeological works, does not look for the gnoseological foundation and the scientificity of knowledge,<sup>21</sup> since nothing *before* the historical actuality of knowledge itself can lead to its formation and assess its value. According to this view, the "a priori of the historical knowledge" (*savoir*) and the "a priori knowledge" (*connaissance*) sought by Husserl's phenomenology are both subordinated to the frame of a "concrete a priori"<sup>22</sup> that is simply the "configuration" that sets out and justifies their historical possibility. That is to say, in Foucault's words, that archaeology is not concerned with the "condition of validity" of knowledge, but rather its "condition of reality."<sup>23</sup>

In what follows I inquire into the historicity of such a concept of "a priori" from a purely methodological perspective. By emphasizing its function within Foucault's archaeology, I maintain that—despite the different thesis that it entails as compared to its philosophical sources—the "historical a priori" satisfies the need of immanence that characterizes phenomenological research, and finally, I consider it as the connection between the phenomenological attitude and Foucault's "historical epistemology." My argument consists of demonstrating that the emphasis on the methodological principles of experience and immanence of phenomenology was characteristic of a certain way in which German phenomenology was received in France during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular at the time when Foucault began to conceive his first works in the early 1950s. I will focus particularly on the role that disciplines other than pure philosophy—such as psychiatry and biology—played in the way in which Husserl, together with Heidegger's phenomenological insights, was received and reworked in France at that time. I believe indeed that the way in which not only philosophers, but also psychiatrists and biologists, proclaimed their closeness to the "phenomenological attitude"<sup>24</sup> towards experience could lead us to bring to light the methodological core of pheno-

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; On Foucault's opposition to Husserl's philosophy of history, see Bernard Charles Flynn, "Michel Foucault and the Husserlian Problematic of a Transcendental Philosophy of History," *Philosophy Today*, no. 22 (Fall 1978), 224-238.

<sup>21</sup> Husserl, 373: "The very problem here can be made understandable only through recourse to the historical a priori as the universal source of all conceivable problems of understanding. The problem of genuine historical explanation comes together, in the case of the sciences, with 'epistemological' grounding or clarification."

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, NC 11/XVII; 196/238. Also Husserl characterizes his historical a priori as "concrete": cf. *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 372.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, AS, 167/143.

<sup>24</sup> Georges Lanteri-Laura, *La psychiatrie phénoménologique. Fondements philosophiques* (Paris: PUF), 1963.

menology—and not just the doctrinal one—as it was received by the young Foucault. This will lead us not only to understand the sense of Foucault’s own early agreement to phenomenology—as it appears in particular in his “Introduction” to Ludwig Binswanger’s “Dream and Existence” (1954)<sup>25</sup>—but also to show the methodological coherence between this first phenomenological phase of his work and the later development of archaeology. Thus, rather than accept or reject outright the thesis of Foucault’s agreement with phenomenology *tout court*, in this paper I seek to identify a certain Foucauldian “attitude” or “style” of phenomenological research. By means of the concept of “historical a priori,” I try to show that this methodological attitude shapes Foucault’s archaeological project since the 1950s, at which time Foucault firmly believed—as did Ludwig Binswanger—that “man, in his forms of existence, is the only means of getting to man.”<sup>26</sup>

With this goal in mind, I will first focus on the context of the interest of the young Foucault in existential psychiatry and especially in the work of the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, which Foucault introduced to France by means his “Introduction” of 1954.

### The Phenomenological “Attitude”

Recent commentators focusing on Foucault’s early works concur in recognizing the phenomenological horizon within which they were conceived.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the Introduction to “Dream and Existence” would be phenomenological for at least two reasons: first, to the extent that it dwells on and develops—through Binswanger—Husserl’s problematization of meaning; and second, because it embraces the cause of the “existential analysis” (*Daseinsanalyse*), an anthropological project whose founding guidelines Binswanger recognized in Heidegger’s philosophical program.<sup>28</sup> Actually, one should rather note that Foucault’s agreement to Binswanger’s

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<sup>25</sup> Michel Foucault, “Dream, Imagination and Existence,” *Review of Existential Psychology & Psychiatry*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (1985), 29-78. All further references to this work are designated in the text as “DIE” followed by the page reference to the French edition and then to the English translation.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 67/32.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Revel, *Michel Foucault: expériences de la pensée* (Paris: Bordas, 2005). José Luis Moreno Pestaña, *En devenant Foucault: sociogenèse d’un grand philosophe* (Bellecombe-en-Bauges: Éditions du Croquant, 2006). Todd May, “Foucault’s Relation to Phenomenology,” in Gary Gutting (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 284-311. For a wider bibliographical account, I permit myself to refer to my monograph: *Foucault e la “Daseinsanalyse”: un’indagine metodologica* (Milano: Mimesis, 2007), 124.

<sup>28</sup> “Traum und Existenz,” *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, vol. XXIII (1930), 673-685; 766-779; now in his *Ausgewählte Werke: in vier Bänden*, vol. 3, edited by Hans-Jürg Barun (Heidelberg: Asanger 1992-94), 95-119; translated by Jacob Needleman, “Dream and Existence,” in *Being-in-the-World. Selected Papers of Ludwig Binswanger* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963, 1975), 222-248; this translation was revised by Keith Hoeller in *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (1984-85), special issue on “Dream and Existence”. “Dream and Existence” has a crucial role within Binswanger’s *corpus*, since the Swiss psychiatrist expresses there, for the first time, his philosophical ambition of combining Heidegger’s “analytic of *Dasein*” with psychopathology, under the form of an “existential analysis” (*Daseinsanalyse*). In this paper, I use indifferently the expressions “existential psychiatry” and “phenomenological psychiatry.” Actually, the latter expression is more general and includes some forms that differ from each other. “Existential” psychiatry is one of these forms, which comes precisely from Binswanger’s involvement with Heidegger’s analytic. Already at the time of Binswanger, one has to distinguish, for instance, between Binswanger’s *Daseinsanalyse*,

“existential analysis” presents itself already as a criticism towards, at once both Husserl and Heidegger’s positions. If Foucault praises Binswanger’s approach to phenomenology, it is to the extent that this approach was able to deal with the problem of experience without referring—as the pure philosophical phenomenology did—to either the transcendental structures of knowledge (Husserl’s eidetic of pure consciousness) nor the purely ontological structures of existence (Heidegger’s analytic of *Dasein*). According to Foucault, instead of presenting itself as “some a priori form of philosophical speculation,”<sup>29</sup> the existential analysis indeed allows the philosopher to “outflank the problem of ontology and anthropology by going straight to concrete existence, to its development and its historical content.”<sup>30</sup> By applying the philosophical phenomenology to the concrete, historical individual experience (*Lebensgeschichte*), Binswanger’s agreement to phenomenology not only exceeded the boundaries of Husserl’s gnoseology, but also braved the ban that Heidegger had imposed on phenomenology regarding its temptation of crossing the limit that separated it from some positive sciences like psychology, biology, and anthropology. In Foucault’s own words, “the existential analysis of Binswanger avoid[ed] any a priori distinction between ontology and anthropology,” and relocated such a distinction “at the terminus of an inquiry whose point of departure is characterized not by a line of division, but by an encounter with concrete existence.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Foucault’s agreement with Binswanger’s *Daseinsanalyse* should be understood as an important indicator of a non-doctrinal commitment to phenomenology, as he states quite ironically in his Introduction: “we are fallible enough to believe in history even when it is a question of *Existenz*.”<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, to most Foucault scholars the Introduction to “Dream and Existence,” as well as the encounter between Foucault and Binswanger,<sup>33</sup> appears to conflict with the anti-

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and phenomenology as it was understood by other psychiatrists such as Karl Jaspers and Eugène Minkowski. To be precise, already within Binswanger’s work one could distinguish more “phases,” throughout which the keystone moves initially from Husserl to Heidegger (from “Dream and Existence” until Binswanger’s works of the 1950s on schizophrenia), and then toward Husserl again (when Binswanger comes back, in the 1960s, toward a more gnoseological approach grounded in Husserl’s late genetic phenomenology). It is a matter of important and necessary differentiation. Nonetheless, I wonder if it is not equally plausible to take into account the common use of the expression “phenomenological psychiatry,” one that somehow implicitly accounts for the fact that it is not an ultimate and definitive philosophical program that psychiatrists referring to phenomenology look for, but rather an “attitude,” namely, a more general methodological inspiration.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, *DIE* 66/32.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 67/32.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 67/32-33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 80/43.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault visited Binswanger’s psychiatric clinic in Kreuzlingen (Switzerland) at the beginning of the 1950s, in order to submit to Binswanger the French translation of “Dream and Existence.” See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). See also Roland Kuhn, “L’essai de Ludwig Binswanger ‘Le rêve et l’existence’ et sa signification pour la psychothérapie,” in Hervé Mésot (ed.), *Des interprétations du rêve. Psychanalyse, herméneutique, Daseinsanalyse* (Paris: PUF, 2001), 153-164. The correspondence between Foucault and Binswanger is now kept in the Binswanger Archive of the University of Tübingen (Germany). Some letters—translated into Italian by Chantal Marazia—have been published in the on-line journal: *Pol.it. The Italian on Line Psychiatric Magazine*

anthropological and anti-phenomenological struggle that characterizes Foucault's thought since the 1960s. Thus, commentators usually consider Foucault's writing on Binswanger as merely the result of a kind of youthful fascination for an anthropological psychiatry aiming to reach something like the verities of the human being. This is the reason why any attempt at bringing closer archaeology and *Daseinsanalyse* seems to be destined to fail. Besides, this is a position that is supported by Foucault's own later criticisms against the existential approach in psychopathology, at the time of the publication of *History of Madness* (1961). At the beginning of the 1960s, on the one hand, Foucault can no longer be satisfied with the historical uncriticalness of Binswanger's anthropological commitment, one which was limited to the individual history and therefore had an "ambiguous link with a psychiatric practice, which it simultaneously ignored and took for granted."<sup>34</sup> Faced with concrete historical psychiatric practices, existential anthropology now appears to Foucault to be something like a "mythical explanation."<sup>35</sup> This is the reason why in the second edition of *Mental Illness and Personality* (1954)—published in 1962 with the new title of *Mental Illness and Psychology*—the final chapters are no longer concerned with the "existential forms of illness," but with their "historical conditions," and Foucault goes so far as to conclude that "it is only in history that one can discover the sole concrete a priori from which mental illness draws, with the empty opening up of its possibility, its necessary figures."<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Foucault can no longer accept the project of building an anthropology, a project that he had strongly opposed in his complementary dissertation of 1960 on Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*,<sup>37</sup> and which will later be the main polemic target of *The Order of Things*.<sup>38</sup>

Still, I think it is worth coming back to Foucault's interest in Binswanger's phenomenological approach and considering if it is possible to recognize in some points a coherence or continuity between it and the archaeological project. One should consider first that phenomenological psychopathology had a strategic philosophical importance in France since the 1920s for many of the most meaningful figures of Foucault's philosophical education. For instance, consider the role Georges Canguilhem acknowledges to the phenomenological approach of psychiatrists like Daniel Lagache, Eugène Minkowski, and Henry Ey in order to account for

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(<http://www.psychiatryonline.it/ital/chantal2004.htm>), section "Epistemology and History," directed by Mario Galzigna.

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, "Preface to *The History of Sexuality Volume II*," in Paul Rabinow (eds.), *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 333-339, 334.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1987), 85.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Foucault concludes the first part of *Mental Illness and Psychology* by arguing that "if this subjectivity of the insane is both a call to and an abandonment of the world, is it not of the world itself that we should ask the secret of its enigmatic status?" (56) The reference to the concept of "world" is quite ironic here, since this concept—as I will show later—is central in Binswanger's existential psychiatry, whose aim was exactly to inquire into the patients' "world project," a concept taken by Binswanger from Heidegger's *Dasein* or "being-in-the-world."

<sup>37</sup> Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, (1961) translated and edited by Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008).

<sup>38</sup> On this point, see in particular Béatrice Han's *Foucault's Critical Project*, and "Foucault and Heidegger on Kant and Finitude," in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (eds.), *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 127-162.



the normative conception of the pathological as it is outlined in his thesis of 1943 *On the Normal and the Pathological*.<sup>39</sup> But one should also consider the importance that psychopathological research has for the École normale's philosophers in the second half of the 1940s, at the time when Foucault is a student, Georges Gusdorf and Louis Althusser are philosophy lecturers who organize conferences and encounters with some of the most meaningful psychiatrists of the time, including Georges Daumézou, Julian de Ajuriaguerra, Henry Ey or Jacques Lacan.<sup>40</sup> Jean Hyppolite, when he becomes the director of the École normale in 1954, is also strongly convinced of the philosophical role that research in psychopathology could play for philosophy, and he frequently discusses with Foucault the essays that the latter publishes in the same year: *Mental Illness and Personality*, and the Introduction to Binswanger. Furthermore, at this time Foucault reads Lacan's writings, and it seems that he also attends some of his lectures at Sainte-Anne hospital.<sup>41</sup> Now, it is worth emphasizing that Lacan was among one of the first psychiatrists in France—from the beginning of the 1930s until at least the first half of the 1940s—to adopt in psychopathology the phenomenological approach of Binswanger and Karl Jaspers.<sup>42</sup>

It is exactly within this context that Foucault reflects upon the problem of madness throughout the 1950s. In fact, despite his objections he ends up addressing the phenomenological psychopathology in 1961, his *History of Madness* still owes a lot to the phenomenological perspective. First, one should compare Foucault's intention of writing the history of "madness" before any psychopathological conceptualization, to the psychiatric-phenomenological project of approaching the mental disease by considering it as non-scientific phenomenon, independently from any clinical classification and before any medical appropriation, as a "vital and human truth." A truth—according to Minkowski's words—"of which history could grasp only what it can understand 'historically,' and that it is far from being the whole."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Foucault aims to trace the "degree zero of the history" where madness "was undifferentiated experience"<sup>44</sup> and "still remains for us the mode of access to the natural truth of man."<sup>45</sup> But, while Minkowski, faced with this "essentially human madness" that "affects the

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<sup>39</sup> Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, translated by Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordrecht, Boston: Reidel, 1978), Part II, chap. 1.

<sup>40</sup> For all these biographical accounts, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*.

<sup>41</sup> According to Maurice Pinguet, Foucault attended Lacan's seminar at Sainte-Anne hospital in 1953: see "Les années d'apprentissage," *Le Débat*, no. 41 (1986), 122-131, 125. David Macey, in his biography of Foucault, mentions the French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu, who stated that himself attended Lacan's lecture together with Foucault, although unfortunately he does not specify which one: see *The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> On this point, see Henning Schmidgen, "Fortunes diverses. L'œuvre de jeunesse de Jacques Lacan et la phénoménologie," *Psychanalyse à l'université*, vol. XIX, no. 76 (1994), 111-134.

<sup>43</sup> Eugène Minkowski, "Psychiatrie et métaphysique. A la recherche de l'humain et du vécu," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, no. 52 (1947), 333-358, 339.

<sup>44</sup> Michel Foucault, "Preface to the 1961 edition," in his *History of Madness*, translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), XXVII.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 74.

human being's destiny by excluding him from the living beings' community,"<sup>46</sup> opted for reforming psychiatry by giving it an anthropological turn,<sup>47</sup> Foucault prefers to investigate the phenomenon of the exclusion, that is "that other trick through which men, the gesture of sovereign reason that locks up their neighbour, communicate and recognize each other in the merciless language of non-madness."<sup>48</sup> Thus, Foucault ends up denouncing *any* kind of psychiatry, since "if carried back to its roots, the psychology of madness would appear to be not the mastery of mental illness and hence the possibility of its disappearance, but the destruction of psychology itself and the discovery of that essential, non-psychological because non-moralizable relation that is the relation between Reason and Unreason."<sup>49</sup>

It is a position that, at the time of publication of *History and Madness*, roused the reaction of the group of psychiatrists of *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*, a journal that—since its foundation in 1925—had a fundamental role in supporting the existential stream of psychiatry in France,<sup>50</sup> thereby becoming the election platform for all French psychiatrists who aimed to develop the phenomenological approach to psychopathology. The leading figure of the group, Henri Ey, accused Foucault's intellectual position of being "ideological," and he considered such an "archeological" way of "killing psychiatry" to be inconsistent with Foucault's early interest in "the fundamental problems of psychopathology."<sup>51</sup> Yet, on this same occasion, Eugène Minkowski recalled Foucault's Introduction to "Dream and Existence" and he maintained that one should consider it as fundamental "in order to situate Foucault's thought."<sup>52</sup> I think this call to situate or contextualize Foucault's work is valuable if we want to understand the sense of Foucault's reading of phenomenological psychiatry and, consequently, the meaning this kind of call to phenomenology has at the origin of Foucault's archaeological research.

The compatibility between the existential approach in psychiatry and Foucault's archaeology has also been indirectly argued by another French psychiatrist, who had a great role in

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<sup>46</sup> Minkowski, "Psychiatrie et métaphysique," 339-340: "Elle [la folie] se traduit par une brèche, profonde et irréparable à première vue. Mais placé en face de l'un de nos semblables, quel qu'il soit, nous ne saurions nous contenter de l'idée d'une brèche comme telle, ni renoncer à voir en lui un "semblable". [...] Et c'est ainsi que naît le désir de réduire la brèche au strict minimum [...]. Et là prend naissance le courant, non pas philanthropique, mais anthropologique de la psychiatrie."

<sup>47</sup> On this point, see also Henri Ey, "La 'folie' et les valeurs humaines," (1945) in his *Études psychiatriques*, vol. I (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer & Cie, 1948, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. in 1952), 15-21; and "Anthropologie du malade mental," *Esprit*, vol. XX, no. 197 (1952), 891-896.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, "Preface to the 1961 edition," XXVII.

<sup>49</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 74.

<sup>50</sup> See the "Avant propos" of the first issue of the journal, by Angelo Hesnard and René Laforgue: *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*, vol. I, no. 1 (1925), 7. It is precisely *L'Évolution psychiatrique* that published in 1938 (vol. X, no. 1, 3-34) the first article by Binswanger in French: "La conception de l'homme, chez Freud, à la lumière de l'anthropologie philosophique," translated by Hans Pollnow.

<sup>51</sup> See Henry Ey's opening speech to the "Journées annuelles de l'Évolution psychiatrique," 6-7 décembre 1969: "La conception idéologique de l'Histoire de la folie de Michel Foucault," *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*, vol. XXXVI, no. 2 (1971), 225. Henry Ey had written a review of the French translation of Binswanger's "Dream and Existence" in 1956, and he had described Foucault's Introduction as "great and substantial" ("Rêve et existence," *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*, vol. XXI (1956), 109-118).

<sup>52</sup> Ey, "La conception idéologique de l'Histoire de la folie," 288.

developing the phenomenological approach in France: Georges Lanteri-Laura. Lanteri-Laura starts by wondering about the issues of the stream of “anti-psychiatry,” a movement that, since its origins in the 1960s, has linked together the existential tradition of psychiatry and Foucault’s archaeological analysis.<sup>53</sup> He maintains that phenomenology lent to anti-psychiatry its skills and issues, insofar as it did not present itself as a doctrine, but rather as an “attitude” able to “put in parentheses any preliminary theoretical position” towards any established (reductive) system of knowledge.<sup>54</sup> Hence, phenomenology would formulate the need to doubt the validity of any interpretation intended as the “reductive choice” performed on a subject, which should be considered instead from an historical perspective. From this point of view, Foucault’s essay of 1954 on Binswanger shares with *The History of Madness* such a phenomenological need, to the extent that it refuses to conceive the forms of existence and their expressions from the perspective of a science “of the order of positive knowledge.”<sup>55</sup> Through Binswanger, Foucault clearly expresses the phenomenological project of overcoming at once “science” and “speculation,” in order to let the phenomena appear, rather than tracing them back to a given order of meanings or categories. As Foucault himself makes clear in 1980, if “reading what has been defined ‘existential analysis’ or ‘phenomenological psychiatry’ certainly was important for [him] at a period when he was working in psychiatric hospitals,” it is because such a current showed him “something different to counterbalance the traditional grids of the medical gaze.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, this archaeology, that ends up criticizing phenomenological psychiatry, locates in its turn the grids that rule the different ways of experiencing reality as well as the systems of orientation of the gaze that delimit and classify it.

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<sup>53</sup> It would probably be an exaggeration to affirm—as the French philosopher Henri Maldiney has done—that “if the phenomenological attitude had prevailed in psychiatry, the anti-psychiatry would not be born” (“Psychose et presence,” (1976), in his *Penser l’homme et la folie. A la lumière de l’analyse existentielle et de l’analyse du destin*, (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1997), 5-82, 9). Yet, one should admit that existential psychiatry had an overriding place in the works of such “anti-psychiatrists” as Roland Laing and David Cooper, that refer explicitly to the projects of, respectively, Karl Jaspers, Eugène Minkowski, and Ludwig Binswanger. Just think, for instance, of Laing’s main work’ subtitle: *An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (London, Tavistock, 1960), or the title of the collection in which appeared in 1964 Laing and Cooper’s *Reason and Violence: “Studies in Existential Analysis and Phenomenology.”* One could mention also the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, who linked together existential psychiatry and Foucault’s work (see his works of the period 1953-1968: *Scritti*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1981-82), edited by Franca Ongaro Basaglia, vol. I: *Dalla psichiatria fenomenologica all’esperienza di Gorizia*).

<sup>54</sup> Georges Lanteri-Laura, “Le Voyage dans l’anti-psychiatrie anglaise,” *L’Évolution psychiatrique*, vol. LXI, no. 3 (1996), 621-633, 623. A similar remark has been done by Todd May in regard to Foucault’s career itself, in order to find a common thread between the early writings on phenomenology and the later political works. According to May, what remains continuous throughout Foucault’s career is an underlying non-reductive approach to the questions: “What are we? What might we be?” (“Foucault’s Relation to Phenomenology,” 307-308: “As Foucault’s thought matures, the character of what is ‘heavy and oppressive’ changes. But what is at issue—who we are, who we might be—remains the same. In the end, Foucault leaves phenomenology, but the spirit of phenomenology does not leave him.”)

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 66/32.

<sup>56</sup> Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx. Conversation with Duccio Trombadori*, translated by R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 72.

Furthermore, in another of his last writings—the Preface to the American edition of his *History of Sexuality*—Foucault takes up again his early work on Binswanger and explicitly asserts that:

To study forms of experience in this way—in their history—is an idea that originated with an earlier project, in which I made use of the *methods* of existential analysis in the field of psychiatry and in the domain of ‘mental illness’.<sup>57</sup>

This is obviously not a matter of taking such a statement textually. Yet, I believe that this way of emphasizing the methodological meaning of the phenomenological psychiatry, at the early stages of archaeology, could somehow orientate an inquiry into Foucault’s relation to phenomenology.

I now propose to again take up Minkowski’s suggestion about the expediency of situating Foucault’s archaeology of madness within the theoretical context of the Introduction to “Dream and Existence.” I consider it to be highly relevant that it is Minkowski who makes this remark, since Minkowski was one of the first in France to refer explicitly to the work of Ludwig Binswanger, since his early writings of the 1920s, with whom he shared the project of reforming psychopathology according to the “new orientation” that phenomenology could give to it.<sup>58</sup> And it is Minkowski again who—in the early 1950s—stressed the expediency of translating into French the works of his Swiss colleague in order to thereby introduce the “existential analysis” in the context of French psychiatry.<sup>59</sup> One should be reminded, in this respect, that the Introduction to “Dream and Existence” of 1954 is not an isolated case among Foucault’s works, since the philosopher later worked on the French translation of Binswanger’s clinical case of Suzanne Urban in 1957.<sup>60</sup>

Actually, with the exception of Minkowski’s references during the 1920s, Binswanger’s work in France begins to be known only during the 1940s, and—interestingly—not only within the field of the clinical psychopathology, but in the context of a philosophical-

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, “Preface to the *History of Sexuality* Volume II” 333-339. The italic is mine.

<sup>58</sup> Minkowski presented his first phenomenological essay (“Étude psychologique et analyse phénoménologique d’un cas de mélancolie schizophrénique”) in 1922 at the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the “Schweizer Verein für Psychiatrie” in Zürich, the same occasion in which Binswanger presented his lecture “On Phenomenology” (“Über Phänomenologie”). There are many references to Binswanger throughout the work of Minkowski: cf. “La genèse de la notion de schizophrénie et ses caractères essentiels,” *L’Évolution Psychiatrique*, vol. I, no. 1 (1925), 193-236; *La schizophrénie. Psychopathologie des schizoïdes et des schizophrènes* (Paris: Payot 1927; Desclée de Brouwer, 1953); *Le temps vécu. Études phénoménologiques et psychopathologiques* (Paris: d’Artrey 1933), 285; “Phénoménologie et analyse existentielle en psychopathologie,” *L’Évolution Psychiatrique*, no. 1 (1948), 137-185; “Le contact humain,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, vol. LV, no. 2 (1950), 113-127; “Les notions bleulériennes: voie d’accès aux analyses phénoménologiques et existentielles,” *Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, vol. XV, no. 2 (1957), 833-844.

<sup>59</sup> Eugène Minkowski, *La Schizophrénie* (1953), 237. See also J.H. van Den Berg, “Bref exposé de la position phénoménologique en psychiatrie,” *L’Évolution Psychiatrique*, no. 2 (1947), 23-41.

<sup>60</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, “Studien zum Schizophrenieproblem: Der Fall Suzanne Urban,” (1952-53) *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 4: *Der Mensch in der Psychiatrie*, edited by Alice Holzhey-Kunz (Heidelberg, Asanger, 1994), 210-332; French translation by Jacqueline Verdeaux, Roland Kuhn and Michel Foucault, *Le cas Suzanne Urban. Étude sur la schizophrénie* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957).

epistemological problematization of psychology and the various “explanatory idols” by which it was attempting to grasp “human reality.”<sup>61</sup> I refer here to Jean-Paul Sartre’s criticism of empirical psychology’s postulates as it appears in the “phenomenological ontology” of 1943 (*Being and Nothingness*), although the reference to Binswanger’s *Daseinsanalyse* is not explicit in his outline of an “existential psychoanalysis,” and despite Sartre’s belief that “this psychoanalysis has not yet found its Freud.”<sup>62</sup> But above all, one should refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). This work refers in turn to Binswanger’s phenomenological approach, and presents it by making use of Sartre’s expression: “existential psychoanalysis.”<sup>63</sup> Yet, differently from Sartre, Merleau-Ponty distances the concept of “existence” from any implication with the concept of “consciousness,” and analyzes it within the context of a wider problematization of the experience of the “lived body” in the phenomenon of perception. Now, Merleau-Ponty’s way of employing Binswanger’s methodological approach for his own phenomenological purpose appears to me to be very important in order to grasp not only Foucault’s own reading of Binswanger, but also the role that this early interest in phenomenological psychiatry plays throughout the course of Foucault’s thought.

Like Binswanger, Merleau-Ponty conceives the notions of “expression” and “meaning” as the “direction” or the “embodied sense” according to which existence realizes itself as an irreducible whole of body and world. He presents this argument by giving an example of a clinical case of Binswanger, that of a young girl who lost the use of speech. According to Merleau-Ponty, what characterizes the phenomenological-existential approach is its attitude towards the phenomenon, in this case the symptom: instead of looking for the hidden cause (internal or external) or meaning of it, the phenomenologist explains it by a “return to existence” that consists in dwelling upon its “modalities” or “forms.” Now, according to the phenomenologist these forms actually *are* already the phenomenon’s explication, so the loss of the speech *is* the refuse of co-existence. In other words, the expression is already what it signifies, the sign “does not convey its significance, it is filled with it.”<sup>64</sup> The phenomenological or existential analysis thus works within the plane of immanence of the phenomenon, and it is exactly this methodological attitude which characterizes Merleau-Ponty’s approach to experience.

Now, the concern of liberating expression from the grip of a pure “theory of meaning” also characterizes Foucault’s approach to the themes of “meaning” and “expression” as it is

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<sup>61</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), translated by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), Part IV, Chap. 2-II: “Existential Psychoanalysis,” 559.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 575.

<sup>63</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), translated by Colin Smith (London, New York: Routledge 2002), 161. Actually Binswanger has never used the expression “existential psychoanalysis” for characterizing his psychiatric approach. The Binswanger’s works to which Merleau-Ponty refers are: “Über Psychotherapie” (1935); “Traum und Existenz”, (1930); *Über Ideenflucht* (1932); “Das Raumprobleme in der Psychopathologie” (1933).

<sup>64</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 161. On this point, see Ludwig Binswanger, *Le cas Suzanne Urban*, 67: “Dans la métaphore théâtrale d’Ellen West, nous ne verrons pas seulement une métaphore au sens psychologique et poétique, une image évocatrice, mais surtout une expression immédiate verbale du mode de son être dans le monde.”

outlined in the Introduction to “Dream and Existence.” Here Foucault in his turn distinguishes between “image” and “expression” or poetic imagination, and he maintains that the latter does not find its greatest expansion “where it finds the greatest number of substitutes for reality, where it invents the most duplications and metaphors, but, on the contrary, where it best restores presence to itself—where the proliferation of analogies well up, and where the metaphors by neutralizing each other, restore the depth to immediacy.”<sup>65</sup> Foucault’s argument here is very close not only to Merleau-Ponty’s approach, but also to the arguments outlined by both Minkowski and Lacan during the 1930s, when they claimed the immediacy of the phenomenon or the expression against any hermeneutical approach intended to discover in it a hidden meaning.<sup>66</sup> So, what draws Foucault’s attention to the existential analysis in the middle of the 1950s is not only its “basic opposition to any science of human facts of the order of positive knowledge, experimental analysis, and naturalistic reflection”<sup>67</sup> but its distance from a philosophical approach that needs to go *beyond* or *before* the phenomena in order to explain them.<sup>68</sup> It is exactly this call to immanence that Foucault emphasizes when, in the 1980s, he recalls the “methods” of phenomenological psychiatry as a way of approaching the forms of experience “in their history,” namely, in their concreteness. By turning to Binswanger, so Foucault suggests, like Merleau-Ponty before him, the opportunity of looking at phenomenology not from a doctrinal perspective, but only as a “philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world

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<sup>65</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 115-116/71-72.

<sup>66</sup> See in particular Eugène Minkowski, *Vers une cosmologie. Fragments philosophiques* (Paris: Mouton, 1936), 256: “Quant au concept du symbole, à l’instar de la métaphore, il disjoint trop à notre gré ce qui symbolise et ce qui est symbolisé, et fait ainsi violence aux données immédiates que nous avons devant nous.” As regards Lacan, I refer here to his first writings on paranoia, that analyze the psychopathological expression not from a “semantic,” but from a “syntactic” perspective. See Lacan’s “Le problème du style et la conception psychiatrique des formes paranoïaques de l’expérience,” in his *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (Paris: Le François, 1932; Seuil, 1975), 387.

<sup>67</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 66/32.

<sup>68</sup> The two targets of Foucault’s criticism, in his essay on Binswanger, are Freud’s interpretation of dreams and Husserl’s eidetic of consciousness. At the origin of the defects of Freudian theory Foucault sees “an inadequate elaboration of the notion of symbol: Freud takes the symbol as merely the tangential point where, for an instant, the limpid meaning joins with the material of the images taken as a transformed and transformable residue of perception. The symbol is that surface of contact, that film, which separates, as it joins, an inner world and an external world.” (*DIE* 72/36) Thus, psychoanalysis has exhausted image in the multiplicity of meanings, but “the imaginary world has its own laws, its specific structures, and image is somewhat more than the immediate fulfillment of meaning.” (70/35) The criticism against Husserl’s phenomenology is more moderate. According to Foucault, while the Freudian analysis sees only an artificial connection—the symbol—between meaning and expression, “phenomenology, on the contrary, enables one to recapture the meaning in the context of the expressive act which founds it,” (*DIE* 78/41) thereby “reinstat[ing] acts of expression in their fullness.” (*DIE* 79/42) Thus, phenomenology would show the possibility of developing itself towards a “theory of expression.” Nevertheless, even though phenomenology is able to reinstate the act of meaning in its expressive base, “it cut [it] off from any form of objective indication. No external context can restore it in its truth,” so there is no possibility of a “real encounter” with time, space, and others. (*ibid*) This is why, Foucault concludes, the expression cannot be understood “along the lines of pure phenomenology.”

from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'."<sup>69</sup> In this sense, the phenomenological approach would consist, for the young Foucault, in the "analysis of the immanent meaning of any lived experience."<sup>70</sup>

So, what emerges from this analysis, and—more generally—from the interest of these French philosophers in phenomenological psychiatry, is a methodological reading of German phenomenology that goes beyond the traditional philosophical concerns of gnoseology and ontology. Hence, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in France, phenomenology is not intended to be just a philosophical doctrine to be accepted or rejected as a whole, nor does it coincide outright with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, or with Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. For this same reason, it is also not intended to be a means for doubting the plausibility of the empirical sciences from a purely philosophical point of view. The phenomenological "attitude" is rather employed by these same sciences as a methodological tool by which they could define and grasp better, "from inside," their own objects.

One should consider, in this respect, that the phenomenological criterion of immanence at that time becomes in France the theoretical core not only of a certain part of psychiatry, but also as part of a biology whose goal is to approach life not by an extrinsic rationality, but from the immanent normativity of life itself. It is worth remarking, for instance, that in 1946 the French psychiatrist Daniel Lagache considered Canguilhem's thesis on *The Normal and the Pathological* as an "anthropological phenomenology," and he concluded by urging both psychology and biology to become aware of the potential implications of considering the "position of man in the world."<sup>71</sup> Canguilhem himself, indeed, in a paper written in 1947 on "biological philosophy," shows the expediency of conceiving of biology not just as "the universe of science, objectivity, and *hors de soi*" as opposed to the "universe of consciousness, subjectivity, value, and meaning,"<sup>72</sup> but as research that would be able to grasp all these concepts as emerging as the intrinsic determinations of the organism. It is exactly the immanence of the philosophical concepts to the living being that Canguilhem claims in his harangue against rationalism, or what he calls "a philosophy of *après coup*."<sup>73</sup> And this is also the sense of his almost Heideggerian argument, according to which man distinguishes himself from plants and animals to the extent that he "inhabits the world."<sup>74</sup>

Foucault will describe very well the concern of this philosophical biology in 1978, in his Introduction to Canguilhem—namely, the text where he outlines the two lineages of the

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<sup>69</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, VII.

<sup>70</sup> Michel Foucault, "La psychologie de 1850 à 1950", in *Dits et écrits*, vol. I, 127.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Lagache, "Le normal et le pathologique d'après Georges Canguilhem," *Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg*, no. 24 (1946), 117-130, see 129-130.

<sup>72</sup> Georges Canguilhem, "Note sur la situation faite en France à la philosophie biologique," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, no. 52 (1947), 322-332. It is worth remarking that this paper preceded a contribution of Eugène Minkowski on "Psychiatrie et métaphysique. A la recherche de l'humain et du vécu," 333-358.

<sup>73</sup> Canguilhem, "Note sur la situation faite en France à la philosophie biologique," 327.

<sup>74</sup> Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, 104; "The Living and Its Milieu" (1946-47), in his *Knowledge of Life*, translated by Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 98-120.

French way of receiving phenomenology—where he recognizes the specificity of the biologist's knowledge in that it examines "a type of object to which he himself belongs, since he lives and since he [...] develops this nature of the living in an activity of knowledge."<sup>75</sup> It is exactly this concurrence of the philosophical investigation with its "objects" that Merleau-Ponty emphasizes in 1947, in the same issue of the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* where Canguilhem publishes his "Note" on philosophical biology. He writes: "The universality of knowledge is no longer guaranteed in each of us by that stronghold of absolute (*a priori*) consciousness," neither is it guaranteed by "the evidence of the object."<sup>76</sup> "The germ of universality," is to be found "in the thing where our perception places us."<sup>77</sup> This means that the "universality" for which philosophical research looks is always embodied and situated in a historical existence; it is to be found in existence as experiencing, living, being in the world, or, to quote Foucault's essay on Binswanger: "existence which is living itself and is experiencing itself, which recognizes itself or loses itself, in a world that is at once the plenitude of its own project and the 'element' of its situation."<sup>78</sup> Hence, Merleau-Ponty concludes, the only *a priori* the philosopher can turn to in his analysis of experience is something like an "*a priori of the species*," an *a priori* that coincides with the concrete, historical "normative structure" of being in the world. This is an *a priori* that Merleau-Ponty borrows from the Gestalt theory, and

of which [man] forms no distinct concept but which he puts together as an experienced pianist deciphers an unknown piece of music: without himself grasping the motives of each gesture or each operation, without being able to bring to the surface of consciousness all the sediment of knowledge which he is using at that moment."<sup>79</sup>

Here, Merleau-Ponty's point is that the "facts" of behavior correspond to a structure or norm, and that this norm is "inscribed in the facts themselves."<sup>80</sup> That means that this "internal rule" which lets these facts appear "is not the external unfolding of a pre-existing reason," but coincides with this same appearance ("*it is the very appearance of the world and not the condition of its possibility; it is the birth of a norm and is not realized according to a norm.*"<sup>81</sup>) Now, such a concrete *a priori*, conceived as the norm of the phenomena and targeted to uncover in the experience itself the principle of its own justification, is the methodological core of Binswanger's phenomenological approach. As I will show later, Binswanger, like Merleau-Ponty, emphasizes the common methodological thread between the phenomenological attitude towards phenomena and a biology that inquires into the living being starting from its immanent normativity.

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<sup>75</sup> Foucault, "Introduction" to Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, IX-XX.

<sup>76</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Le métaphysique dans l'homme," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, vol. LII, no. 3-4 (1947), 290-307; translated by Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, "The Metaphysical in Man," in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 83-98, 93.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 66/32.

<sup>79</sup> Merleau-Ponty, "The Metaphysical in Man," 93.

<sup>80</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, translated by Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965 [1942]), 123.

<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 61.



I believe that this reference to biology is crucial in order to understand the methodological meaning the French philosophers give to phenomenology at the moment they receive and rework it during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is worth remarking, on this point, that it is exactly in this scientific and philosophical context that the young Foucault, in 1958, translates into French the main work of the German physiologist Viktor von Weizsäcker: *Der Gestaltkreis: Theorie der Einheit von Wahrnehmen und Bewegen* (1940),<sup>82</sup> a work that, at once, claimed its closeness to the phenomenological attitude towards existence and put the idea of the “inner normativity” of life at the heart of the study of the living being and the structure of its being in the world. Now, this work, together with Kurt Goldstein’s *Der Aufbau des Organismus* (1934)<sup>83</sup> had already been the subject of Merleau-Ponty’s research in the 1940s (*La structure du comportement; Phénoménologie de la perception*), and was published in the same collection of Binswanger’s French translations (“Dream and Existence” and the clinical case of *Suzanne Urban*).<sup>84</sup>

I think this theoretical context is fundamental not only in order to understand Foucault’s own reading of Binswanger’s project during the 1950s, but also in order to find a common thread between Foucault’s early interest in phenomenological psychiatry and archaeology. In what follows I dwell first upon Binswanger’s methodology, and in particular on his approach to the phenomenological concept of “a priori.” I will try then to show that Binswanger’s own approach to this concept, intended as the immanent condition of possibility of experience, is compatible, from a methodological point of view, with Foucault’s archaeological project of uncovering, in a given system of knowledge, the “conditions which define, together with its historical possibility, the domain of its experience and the structure of its rationality.”<sup>85</sup>

### A Paradoxical A Priori

The main question at stake in Binswanger’s commitment to phenomenology is a methodological one. From the beginning of the 1920s, Binswanger looks indeed for a scientific method that would let the psychiatrist link the analysis of the individual, historical existences to the

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<sup>82</sup> Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Der Gestaltkreis: Theorie der Einheit von Wahrnehmen und Bewegen* (Leipzig: Thieme 1940; 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Thieme, 1948); *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Dieter Janz, Wilhelm Rimpau, Walter Schindler, Peter Achilles, Mechthilde Küttemeyer (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1997); *Le cycle de la structure*, French translation by Michel Foucault and Daniel Rocher (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958). The French edition of this work was preceded by a Preface written by the French psychiatrist Henri Ey. Cf. also Henri Ey, “A propos de ‘Cycle de la structure’ de V. von Weizsäcker,” *L’Évolution Psychiatrique*, no. 2 (1957), 379-389.

<sup>83</sup> Kurt Goldstein, *Der Aufbau des Organismus. Einführung in die Biologie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Erfahrungen am kranken Menschen* (Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1934); French translation by E. Burckhardt and Jean Kuntz, *La structure de l’organisme. Introduction à la biologie à partir de la pathologie humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951). This work was published in the philosophical collection directed by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

<sup>84</sup> To this same collection belonged also the French translation of one of the main works of the Dutch physiologist Frederik J.J. Buytendijk: *Attitudes et mouvements: étude fonctionnelle du mouvement humain*, translated by L. van Haecht (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957), prefaced by Minkowski, and a work on the Rorschach test by Roland Kuhn, the Swiss psychiatrist thanks to whom Foucault met Binswanger in the early 1950s: *Über Maskendeutungen im Rorschachschen Versuch* (Basel: Karger, 1944, 1954); *Phénoménologie du masque à travers le test de Rorschach*, translated by Jacqueline Verdeaux (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer 1957).

<sup>85</sup> Foucault, NC, XI/XV.

rational “form” that encompasses them and by which they could be explained. It is a matter of both respecting the individuality and concreteness of existence and going beyond its singular and contingent expressions in order to look for their conditions of possibility. According to Binswanger, these conditions of possibility of phenomena are the principles or the “norms” that governs them. It is exactly in this sense that Binswanger’s reading of Husserl’s concept of “essence” (*Wesen*) and later Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* respectively, should be understood. So, Binswanger’s reading of phenomenology consists less in the application of some phenomenological concepts to the field of empiric science than in a methodological use of them. The psychiatrist indeed employs these concepts as a kind of “systematic clue” to be used in order to understand the different basic forms or styles by which men organize and structure their “being-in-the-world” as a “world project.”<sup>86</sup> Hence, *Dasein*, conceived as the “structure” of existence, could guide the psychiatrist through the various expressions of mental diseases, furnishing him with the “structural a priori” that let him understand and explain them, but also classify them from a scientific point of view.

This perspective is particularly clear in Binswanger’s 1946 article on the existential approach in psychiatry. Here Binswanger explicitly states that, in the field of psychopathology, the concept of *Dasein*—that in Heidegger is an ontological thesis—should be employed by a “practical existential analysis” as a methodological tool or “thread” targeted to study the forms that structure the patients’ world project. Hence, Binswanger conceives the *Dasein* as a “structure” functioning “according to a positive norm,” a norm that one should consider on the basis of its expression as an action.<sup>87</sup> Now, it is worth remarking that at the time of his theoretical commitment to Heidegger’s philosophy, Binswanger also emphasizes the “harmony between the *methodology* of the sciences of the spirit (*Geisteswissenschaften*), and the natural sciences.”<sup>88</sup> In this respect, he mentions both Kurt Goldstein’s and Viktor von Weizsäcker’s conception of the behavior’s biological normativity,<sup>89</sup> and he remarks with these authors that all the vital events, from their most elementary biological expressions, are not fixed responses to environmental stimuli, but the original creation of “forms” of behavior that function as “directions” for further future forms. These forms are the immanent conditions of possibility of the behavior’s expressions. In other words, according to Binswanger, there is something in existence that cannot be reduced to its simple material facticity: it is the condition of the possibility of facticity, or its “a priori structure.” Now, such an a priori structure is immanent to facticity, as it corresponds to its inner, normative organization.

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<sup>86</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, “Über die daseinsanalytische Forschungsrichtung in der Psychiatrie,” *Schweizer Archiv für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, vol. LVII (1946), 209-235; now in his *Ausgewählte Werke in vier Bänden*, vol. 3, edited by Hans-Jürg Barun (Heidelberg: Asanger 1992-94), 231-57, 242. “The Existential Analysis School of Thought,” translated and edited by Rollo May, Ernest Angel and Henri F. Ellenberger, in *Existence—A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 191-212, 201.

<sup>87</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, “Über Ideenflucht,” *Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, vol. XXVII, no. 2 (1932), 203-17; vol. XXVIII, nos. 1-2 (1932), 18-26, 183-202; vol. XXIX, no. 1 (1932), 193ff; vol. XXX, no. 1 (1933); 68-85; now in his *Ausgewählte Werke in vier Bänden*, vol. I, 2-231; published also as *Über Ideenflucht*, Zürich: Orel Füssli, 1933 (reprinted, New York: Garland 1980).

<sup>88</sup> Binswanger, *Über Ideenflucht* (1992), 209.

<sup>89</sup> Binswanger, “The Existential School of Thought,” 198-199.

Foucault gives a clear example of the *daseinsanalytical* concept of “a priori structure” in *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, where he presents the existential analysis of the structure of “anxiety,” a structure that Binswanger had analyzed in particular in the clinical case of Suzanne Urban. Foucault describes this structure in terms of an “a priori of existence,”<sup>90</sup> meaning that it is a form of experience that, at once is both anchored to its individual and historical manifestations and cannot be thought *before* them, and also goes beyond them, in that it organizes and explains them, by giving the phenomena their norm. So, the “existential a priori” is “historical” in that it is inseparable from the phenomenon in which it manifests itself by furnishing it with its form. This is why Binswanger attaches a special importance to the dream and considers it as an expression of existence, insofar as the dream presents itself as the dramatization of this “a priori of existence” that Binswanger also calls the “sense-direction” (*Bedeutungsrichtung*) or the “spiritual trend” (*geistigen Tendenz*) of existence.<sup>91</sup> This is also the reason why Foucault—in his Introduction to “Dream and Existence”—remarks that what the dream “anticipates,” is “a prefiguring of history.”<sup>92</sup> That is to say, in the “perfect future” represented by the dream the *a prioris* of existence present themselves as *actual* conditions of possibilities of history. Thus, Binswanger does not conceive of dreams as phenomenon to be “interpreted,” but as “leading-category” (*leitenden Kategorie*)<sup>93</sup> targeted to disentangle the “basic, a priori structures” of the pathological experiences.

Here, Binswanger’s reference to both Goldstein and Weizsäcker’s medical anthropologies is again of the utmost importance, in that for them, too, the biological concept of “a priori structure” of behavior was targeted to explain the forms of the living being not on the basis of a causal past, but from the perspective of the future. In other words, even though these structures are “a priori”—they are “directions” of existence, leading-categories, so they are not yet actual—these *a prioris* emerge from the living being’s history and cannot be conceived separately from this history. For it is a matter of “empirical a priori.” It is exactly this model that Binswanger has in mind when he turns to Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*. Thus, Heidegger’s methodological intuition that “the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself”<sup>94</sup> is declined by Binswanger in the field of the psychological research, and the *Dasein* becomes the theoretical tool by which the psychiatrist uncovers, *in their history*, the a priori structures or the conditions of possibility of the various existence’s expressions.

This methodological approach to existence—one which moves from existence’s concrete historical forms in order to explain these forms themselves—is exactly what drew the attention of the French philosophers towards Binswanger at a time when Canguilhem, by referring in turn to Kurt Goldstein, held that “the thought of the living must take from the living the idea of the living.”<sup>95</sup> That is to say, the phenomenon of living cannot be explained but

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<sup>90</sup> Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: PUF, 1954), 54.

<sup>91</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, *Wandlungen in der Auffassung und Deutung des Traumes* (Berlin: Springer, 1928), 108.

<sup>92</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 99/58.

<sup>93</sup> Binswanger, *Wandlungen in der Auffassung*, 38.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1962), § 4, 33.

<sup>95</sup> Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*, XX.

from inside, from the living itself. Therefore, it is no accident that Foucault focuses his attention on Weizsäcker at the same time he studies Binswanger. More than in a doctrinal or “existentialist” sense, so phenomenology in this context is received by Foucault—through Binswanger—as a methodological direction that asked philosophy to study the forms of experience in their history, in their concrete expressions. On this basis, it is possible to understand better the sense of the repeated warnings that Foucault gives in his Introduction to “Dream and Existence,” where he claims that “detouring through a more or less Heideggerian philosophy is not some initiatory rite which might open a door to the esotericism of the analysis of Dasein.”<sup>96</sup> This is also the reason why he explicitly maintains that existential analysis—even though it looks for the “*a priori* of existence”—does not refer anthropology to some *a priori* form of philosophical speculation.<sup>97</sup>

I think that such an approach opens the way for conceiving transcendentalism differently from the purely gnoseological transcendentalism with which Foucault deals in his archaeological analyses of, respectively, the Kantian “analytic of truth,” and Husserl’s “constituting subjectivity.” What Foucault outlines in his Introduction to Binswanger is the conception of a paradoxical *a priori*, a “structural” *a priori* that emerges from the concreteness of experience, before being theorized. It is a matter of a paradoxical transcendental that presents itself at the same time as a tool targeted to *diagnose* a particular existential configuration, and as the configuration principle to be *diagnosed* by means of such a diagnosis which is actually grounded on it. The emphasis that Foucault—in his presentation of Binswanger’s analysis of dream—places on the future in order to show the (*a priori*) structures of existence is targeted exactly to point out this concurrence or simultaneity of reality and transcendentalism: “The dream is *already* this *future* making itself,” it “is not a later edition of a previous form, it *manifests* itself as the *coming-to-be*.”<sup>98</sup> That is to say that the conditions of possibility of existence coincide with existence itself, with an “existence which makes itself through time, that existence in its movement toward the future.”<sup>99</sup>

### Toward a Historical Epistemology

Thus, what attracted the young Foucault towards Binswanger—at a time when he was looking for something different from the alternative between pure phenomenology and Marxism’s material causality<sup>100</sup>—is exactly the immanent way by which the existential analysis was able to explain experience by means of experience itself. Binswanger’s approach indeed appeared as a thought that refused to lay the foundations of reality on a historical-material determination, on a constitutive subjectivity, or on some ontological speculation.

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<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 67/32-33.

<sup>97</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 66/32. Interestingly enough, in these same years the French psychiatrist Henri Ey defines Heidegger’s phenomenology in terms of “structural psychology” (“Le développement ‘mécaniciste’ de la psychiatrie à l’abri du dualisme ‘cartésien’,” in his *Études psychiatriques*, vol. 1, 65).

<sup>98</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 99/57-58.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Michel Foucault, “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism,” (1983) translated by J. Harding, in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, edited by Paul Rabinow, vol. 3: *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), 433-458.

Even though it functions in a different context and presents different goals from clinical psychopathology, I believe that Foucault's archaeological concept of "historical a priori," from a theoretical point of view, presents a methodological affinity with the "structural a priori" outlined by Binswanger's *Daseinsanalyse*. Therefore, it is at a methodological level that one should consider the compatibility between Foucault's early work on Binswanger and the development of archaeology. The "history" to which Binswanger and Foucault each refer is certainly not the same: while the psychiatrist is concerned with the patients' individual life history, the "archaeologist of knowledge" aims at unraveling the epistemological changes and developments of sciences. Furthermore, the young Foucault's agreement with Binswanger was driven in part by something like the search for the verity of "man"'s existence, a search that, on the contrary, is strictly banned from the archaeological epistemological concerns. Yet, the way in which the two approaches inquire into phenomena—by means of a *historicized a priori*—appears to me to be still compatible. In other words, both Binswanger's existential analysis and Foucault's archaeology deal with and work out the problem of reconciling the historicity of phenomena and the transcendentality of the theoretical research. Just as Binswanger's "a priori of existence" was the actual form or the normative, structural condition of possibility of the phenomenon, so Foucault's historical a priori is "a condition of reality for statements," "the specific form of their mode of being." It is "the a priori of a history that is given."<sup>101</sup> More precisely, it is phenomena's normativity: the "group of rules that are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect."<sup>102</sup>

Such a concurrence or simultaneity between the conditions of reality and reality itself is why Foucault gives a theoretical account for the concept of historical a priori—in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*—only after he had already used it in *The Order of Things*. In this latter work, Foucault indeed presents it as the "organization," the "articulation," the "arrangement" or the "mode of being of the objects," the "structure" that "provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognized to be true."<sup>103</sup>

In this passage of *The Order of the Things*, the concept of historical a priori is supposed to account for what Canguilhem—during those same years—had recognized as the epistemological distinction between the "true saying" (*dire vrai*), and the "to be in the true" (*dans le vrai*).<sup>104</sup> Many scholars have already pointed out what distinguishes Foucault's perspective from Canguilhem's.<sup>105</sup> I would rather note here that the first occurrence of the notion of "his-

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<sup>101</sup> Foucault, *AS*, 167/143.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 168/144.

<sup>103</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 155.

<sup>104</sup> Georges Canguilhem, "Galilée: la signification de l'œuvre et la leçon de l'homme," (1964) in *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), 37-50.

<sup>105</sup> Étienne Balibar, "Science et vérité dans la philosophie de Georges Canguilhem," in *Georges Canguilhem, philosophes, historien des sciences*, edited by the Collège International de Philosophie (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), 58-76. Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, 79-85. François Delaporte, "Foucault, Epistemology and History," *Economy and Society*, vol. XXVII, nos. 2-3 (1998), 285-297. Arnold Davidson, "On Epistemology and Archeology: From Canguilhem to Foucault," in his *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the*

torical a priori" from Foucault appears in a article of the early 1950s, which is then published in 1957 as "La recherche scientifique et la psychologie."<sup>106</sup> In this paper, Foucault recognizes the main feature of psychology in that it can choose to be scientific or not. Different from sciences like physics or chemistry, which "emerge as possible research fields within an already scientific objectivity" (that is to say that they work in the frame of the "*dire vrai*"), psychology "does not articulate itself within the horizon of a science," "in the space of a science," "under the constellation of objectivity."<sup>107</sup> So psychology must decide about its own status. It is a necessary choice, since only to the extent that it opts for scientificity could psychology become "true psychology."<sup>108</sup> Now, what outlines the contour of this horizon within which the "status of truth" of a science like psychology can be defined is exactly the historical a priori. And yet, this a priori is the same horizon of which it maps out the conditions of possibility. In other words, the historical a priori is contemporaneous to the reality that it detects and describes, it emerges and expresses itself only by its functioning. That is why it should not be considered as an autonomous philosophical theme, but rather as an operational concept, a "diagnostic" or methodological tool. A tool that is finally able to answer Foucault's archeological demand for immanence, according to which "*the history of knowledge can be written only on the basis of what was contemporaneous with it.*"<sup>109</sup>

Hence, the historical a priori presents itself as an explication of the phenomenon that is always immanent to the phenomenon's description. This is the reason why I maintain that the historical a priori is a concept that answers to at least two of the main methodological concerns of phenomenology: first, what I called the "principle of immanence," according to which philosophical research should respect the phenomena and start from them in order to find their rationality; and secondly, the idea that phenomena are normative, and organize themselves according to a normative structure. Thus, Foucault's archaeology, from a methodological point of view, would correspond to the concerns of the phenomenological research. But, different from the purely philosophical phenomenology, it expands these concerns beyond the theory of knowledge (*connaissance*)—a theory working at the level of "*dire vrai*"—in order to study the historical emergence of knowledge as "*savoir*" (*être dans le vrai*). As Foucault explains in his *Birth of the Clinic*, archaeology presents itself as an epistemology that "defines not the *mode of knowledge*, but the *world of objects to be known.*"<sup>110</sup>

Interestingly, in this same passage from *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault employs a metaphor taken from the psychological field. With a critical reference to Gaston Bachelard's *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*,<sup>111</sup> Foucault asserts that what occurred to medical perception towards the end of the eighteenth century, "was not a 'psychoanalysis' of medical know-

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*Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 192-206. Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentalism," 12-17.

<sup>106</sup> Michel Foucault, "La recherche scientifique et la psychologie," (1957) *Dits et écrits*, vol. I, 137-158.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-138.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>109</sup> Foucault, *MC*, 221/207.

<sup>110</sup> Foucault, *NC*, VI-VII/X.

<sup>111</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, translated by M. McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen, 2001).

ledge." He goes on to state that "'positive' medicine is not a medicine that has made an 'objectal' choice in favor of objectivity itself,"<sup>112</sup> but a medicine that operates in an another "world of objects." Now, archaeology is interested in exactly such a world, that is, the "articulation of medical language and its object"<sup>113</sup>—an articulation which defines, "with its *historical possibility*, the *domain of its experience*."<sup>114</sup> Foucault emphasizes the fact that, between the articulation of the medical language and its object, "there can be no priority,"<sup>115</sup> as words and things are contemporaneous. That is to say that at "the heart of thing" there isn't any primary and ultimate truth-origin, any objective evidence, but a "penetrating, profound historicity."<sup>116</sup>

Thus, Foucault distinguishes the gnoseological approach to knowledge (*connaissance*) from his own archaeological account for knowledge intended as "*savoir*." Now, it seems to me that such a distinction reflects at some points the way in which Foucault, in the 1950s, distinguished the theory of the objective meanings outlined by psychoanalysis from Binswanger's attention to the particular world or "world-project," within which meanings *can* mean what they mean, and they *actually* mean what they mean. What emerges from Foucault's position is a holist approach targeted to grasp the configuration of the "world" within which meanings are inscribed, that is, the global structure that rules the historical meanings of meanings, thereby furnishing them with their conditions of possibility.

Hence Foucault's epistemology is historical in that it does not aim to penetrate the objective meanings of discourses, but "our own world of discourse."<sup>117</sup> Now, I believe that such an "historical epistemology" maintains a strong methodological link with the phenomenological approach in psychopathology with which the young Foucault had dealt during the 1950s. So, like Binswanger's "Dream and Existence," Foucault's Introduction too, "brings us even more than it says."<sup>118</sup> And it brings us the idea that phenomenology could have its say in an epistemology which would not limit itself to a theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnistheorie*), or a general theory of science (*Wissenschaftslehre*), but which works together with the history of sciences.

I found quite interesting, in this respect, the way in which Kevin Thompson—in the above mentioned paper on "Historicity and Transcendentality"—considers Foucault's archaeology as working under the rubric of a "phenomenology of the concept." Such a phenomenology, according to Thompson, would go back to Jean Cavailles' methodological reading of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, to the extent that Cavailles's theory of science has opened "a new way of doing phenomenology, one that takes its bearings from the integration of the historical and the transcendental."<sup>119</sup> Still, I think that what Thompson calls the pheno-

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<sup>112</sup> Foucault, *NC*, VI-VII/X.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, VII/XI.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, XI/XV.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, VII/XI.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 14/XXI.

<sup>117</sup> Foucault, *AS*, 32-33/24.

<sup>118</sup> Foucault, *DIE*, 68-69/34.

<sup>119</sup> Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentality," 11. Also David Webb recognizes the influence of Cavailles in Foucault's concept of historical a priori: "Cavaillès, Husserl and the Historicity of Science," *Angelaki*, vol. VIII, no. 3 (2004), 59-72.

menology of the concept, in Foucault, does not arise from a theoretical option for the historicity of the transcendental, but from a *methodological* one. As I have tried to show, Foucault's historical a priori is an operational concept, a tool that can be grasped only by its functioning. It is a concept that cannot be thought independently from those sciences that, at the same time, it structures, and from which it can be disentangled. The historicity of Foucault's a priori consists exactly in its contemporaneousness with these sciences, and not—as in the case of Cavailles—in a theoretical intention of “accounting for the necessary intrinsic progress of scientific knowledge.”<sup>120</sup> Foucault's historical epistemology accounts for a necessity that is not the necessity of logic and science, but of the reality “of a history that is given.” Nor such a necessity concerns the “scientific” rationality of knowledge, since the level in which such a necessity is analyzed is not the level of objectivity. Actually, what the paradoxical concept of historical a priori points out is the concurrence of necessity and contingency: what Foucault's epistemology calls “historicity” is not the “progress” of scientific knowledge, but the concurrence, the contemporaneousness of rationality with the sciences that embody it.

For this reason, I equally contest Thompson's idea that Foucault would have been able to go beyond Canguilhem in that he has “moved from epistemology to archaeology.”<sup>121</sup> In fact, if it is true—as Thompson rightly points out—that Foucault is not concerned, like Canguilhem, with “true saying,” but with the principles that determine what is to be “in the true,” this does not mean that, compared to Foucault, Canguilhem's approach is limited. According to Thompson, since the latter “remains within the internal parameters of its object,” then it “fails to account for the changing nature of scientific knowledge as a whole,” while “a phenomenology of the concept demands, then, that transcendentalism and historicity be thought together.”<sup>122</sup> I object to the thesis that Canguilhem's epistemology presents itself as an important attempt at historicizing the transcendental.

I contend that Canguilhem's choice of not going beyond the internal parameters of its object is exactly the methodological link between his approach and Foucault's archaeology. Indeed, Canguilhem's epistemology cannot be conceived separately from the history of science.<sup>123</sup> Most importantly, this history is immanent to the object itself. As Canguilhem maintains in his famous conference of 1966: “The history of sciences is the history of an object which *is* a history, which has a history, whereas science is the science of an object which is not history, which does not have a history.”<sup>124</sup> This means that, even though Canguilhem analyzes the scientific objects at the level of “*dire vrai*,” this analysis cannot be done independently from the “*être dans le vrai*,” since it presupposes it. The fact that epistemology cannot be conceived independently from history of science indeed implies an original and important meaning of historicity. What makes the historicity of the scientific object, for Canguilhem, is not just the

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<sup>120</sup> Thompson, “Historicity and Transcendentalism,” 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>123</sup> See Georges Canguilhem, “The Object of the History of Sciences,” in Mary Tiles (trans.) and Gary Gutting (eds.), *Continental Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 198-207, 200: “Without relation to a history of sciences an epistemology would be a less important labor which was completely superfluous to the science of which it pretends to speak.”

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 202. The italic is mine.



fact that sciences develop and change along the time, but the fact that the scientific object is an “object of the history of science.” This means also that, in the last analysis, the historicity of such an object consists in its contemporaneity with the historian that analyzes it. This is the reason why it is not possible to go beyond “the internal parameters” of the object, and this is what makes the political sense of Canguilhem’s historical epistemology.<sup>125</sup>

Sure enough, compared to Canguilhem, Foucault’s archaeology widens the frame of the inquiry of epistemology, in that it moves from the parameters of the objects to the wider frames of the epochs. Yet, the methodological principle of the two analyses is the same, that is, an immanent inquiry into a reality in which the *conditions* of knowledge are at the same time *conditioned*. I think that the sense of such a methodological affinity becomes clearer in the development of archeology into genealogy, insofar as genealogy—in that it is a critical analysis of the present by the present itself—emphasizes the paradoxical character of both archaeology’s historical and transcendental critiques. Thus, it is no accident that Foucault comes back to Canguilhem precisely in the 1970s, at a time in which he dwells upon Nietzsche. A Nietzsche that, by means of a genealogy intended as an immanent critique of reason, had been able to achieve the project of judging the finitude by the finitude itself.<sup>126</sup> So, in 1978—through Canguilhem and Nietzsche—Foucault returns to the problem of “a rationality that aspires to the universal while developing within contingency”<sup>127</sup> and, like Canguilhem, instead of recognizing here the failure of historical epistemology, he locates the *powers* of reason in the *limits* of reason.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> On this point, see Jean-François Braunstein, “‘Désunités’, styles et épistémologies historiques,” in his *L’histoire des sciences. Méthodes, styles et controverses* (Paris: Vrin, 2008), 227-243.

<sup>126</sup> On this point, see Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson, (London, New York: Continuum, 1983, 2002).

<sup>127</sup> Foucault, “Introduction by Michel Foucault,” 468.

<sup>128</sup> See Georges Canguilhem, “The Role of Epistemology in the Contemporary History of Science,” in his *Ideology and Rationality in the History of the Life Sciences*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: MIT Press, 1988), 1-23. For this reason, I cannot agree with Todd May, who argues that Foucault’s rejection of phenomenology depends on Canguilhem and Nietzsche, in that these latter “teach us [that] our knowledge of ourselves is more constituted than constituting, then we must step back methodologically from experience in order to understand it. We must seek its nature elsewhere than within it.” (May, 305-306)