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ARTICLE

Sustaining Significance of Confessional Form: Taking Foucault to Attitudinal Research

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ABSTRACT. This paper offers a conceptual reconstruction and empirical case study of an often-eclipsed concept of Michel Foucault's genealogical project, confession. Departing from Foucault's dictum that his core research interest rests in the experience of the subject, I argue that, without a detailed understanding of diverse modalities of the confessional form, various subjectivation processes and epistemological procedures could not be fully grasped. In the first part, I systematise Foucault's incoherent confessional account against the backdrop of his entangled genealogies of modern man and the human sciences. Subsequently, I introduce a case study of a quantitative attitudinal survey based on face-to-face interviews to test Foucault's model of confession in present-day circumstances and demonstrate its sustaining analytical significance by disclosing the cognitive technique of coding behaviour. Thus far, governmentality studies have confronted positivistic methods in social sciences to display their objectifying functions. In contrast, I use the technique of coding behaviour to immerse into these scientific practices. Such a perspective delivers a fine-grained exposure of epistemological strategies in social sciences that are enabled by the appropriation of the confessional model and that constitute subjective identities on an individual and mass scale.

Keywords: Foucault, Confession, subjectivation, surveying, coding behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of his intellectual career, Michel Foucault indicated that he always focused on three interdependent axes of research: power, knowledge, and subjectivity, but the heart of his inquiry rests in the experience of the modern subject (Foucault 1997, 225). By analysing subjectivation processes in diverse socio-historical contexts, Foucault unwrapped the 'local cynicism' (Foucault, 1978, 95) of power to demarcate practices and techniques that constitute subjectivity and fabricate "regimes of truths". In my essay, I

recentre on one crucial technique in Foucault's project of 'historical ontology' – the confession – in the "games of truth and error through which being is historically constituted as experience' (1990, 7). Although the concern with confession runs through Foucault's writings during the last decade of his research, he never addressed it systematically (cf. Elden 2005, 2016; Taylor 2009; Büttgen 2021).

This paper provides a conceptual reconstruction and a case study that follows Foucault's account of the confessional form. First, departing from the assumption that Foucault's core interest rested in the experience of the subject, I explain that without a detailed and complex understanding of diverse historical modalities of confessional forms, it becomes difficult to understand the subjectivation procedures fully. Thus, I piece together Foucault's incoherent confessional account that he developed throughout his career against the backdrop of his entangled genealogies of modern man and the human sciences. I explain the former on the modes of subjective experience in Greek philosophical schools, early Christian monastic practices, early modern judicial trials, Counter-Reformation pastoral practices, and modern corrective and medical dispositifs; the latter on the processes that led to the integration of confessional technique to the truth production and theoretical knowledge about subjects and societies.

Second, I extend the genealogical discussion by bringing in a case study that discusses a cognitive approach to quantitative attitudinal research (Tourangeau 1992; Schwarz 1996; Watterbrink and Schwarz 2007; Crano and Prislin 2016) to explain how the confessional model as an analytical tool sustains its significance in present-day circumstances. I anchor my case study in Foucault's unfinished genealogical project of the formalisation process of Western consciousness, unveiling how the ritual of confession operates in the heart of modern social sciences and how Foucault's approach retains the analytical ability to irritate seemingly normalised everyday conduct. Hence, I extrapolate from Foucault's dictum that confession represents a pervasive technique in modern societies and remains an integral part of subjective experience (Foucault 1978, 59). I assume that the confessional technique represents a constant factor in the history of subjectivation, evincing continuities and discontinuities. I trace these transformations to account for the presence of confessional practices in modern scientific research designs, highlighting the intricate history that leads to one of the contemporary utilisations of the confessional model.

I defamiliarise face-to-face interviewing in attitudinal surveys that utilise the confessional model as a fundamental epistemological tool to establish individual self-relationships and theoretical and empirical knowledge of individuals and societies. I work with a concrete example of a quantitative attitudinal survey, the first wave of the *Czech Panel Research of Households* (2015-2018, CPRH), that rests on face-to-face interviews focused on respondents' self-evaluations based on explicit closed-ended questions concerning the left-right political identity.

I built on the governmentality studies marked by an oversight of the inner mechanisms of data collection that operate through confessional rationale (cf. Hacking 1982, 1991; Atkinson and Silverman 1997; Osborne and Rose 1999; Rose 2004; Miller and Rose 2008;

Dean 2010). So far, scholars have confronted various positivistic techniques to display their contingency, nominality and objectifying functions. I employ the positivistic coding behaviour technique against its grain to expose the inner confessional dynamics that inform epistemological conventions of attitudinal survey research. The *Panel Research* used the coding behaviour technique that, through audio recordings, records the interviewer-respondent interactions and helps to detect and fix the corrupt data to constitute a 'reliable' material for data analysis. But, simultaneously, this cognitive technique highlights the scientific apparatus surrounding the modes of interactions between interviewers and respondents; the confessional model disciplines subjects' responses, determines epistemological procedures and constitutes subjectivities *en masse*. Hence, I bring evidence to Foucault's observation that modern societies are obsessed with increasingly subtle techniques to control individual and populational truthful discourses through endless verifications (Foucault 1978, 159).

The coding behaviour as a positivistic method offers the possibility of entering the confessional situation on a mass scale through analysing the audio recordings and reveals how confession as a trans-historical epistemological mechanism fabricates and formalises individual self-relationships and empirical knowledge. This paper shows how the pedagogical process, through which the respondents are conducted and disciplined, establishes political attitudes and thus elicits positivistic knowledge about individuals and societies. In sum, the confessional form approached through the lenses of coding behaviour contributes to governmentality studies by establishing a bridge between distant scientific fields and injecting new evidence into the study of contemporary subjectivation modalities.

I organise the paper as follows. First, I reconstruct Foucault's understanding of the historical development of confession and subjectivation, then I examine the contemporary rendering of the confessional form to pinpoint its resilient features in the context of current sociological research.

FOUCAULT'S SUBJECT AND THE GENEALOGY OF A CONFESSIONAL FORM

I enter Foucault's complex work by explaining the development of his power-knowledge-subjectivity triangle to differentiate the varying positions he ascribes to the confessional form. Concerning subjectivity, Foucault operates with various approaches depending on the shifts in his power-knowledge perspective. I draw from Webermann's differentiation (2000) between the *relay* and *artefactual* models in Foucault's readings of the subject.

First, the *relay* model presupposes a subject as an active part of the system that reproduces only what it receives. The dimension of corporeality bestows on subjectivity a chimaera of unity situated at the intersection of power techniques (Foucault 1990b, 131). In this sense, subjectivity is deemed real because individuals believe in it and articulate it. This model is, in Foucault's work, imbued in *disciplinary* power research. The subject is derived mechanically from its 'fictitious' relationship to the panoptical gaze that

'induce[s] […] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault 1990, 201; cf. Jay 1996).

Foucault's succeeding concept of *biopower* binds together the disciplinary power and bio-politics of populations: 'The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organisation of power over life was deployed' (1978, 139). Populational governance is focused on both a bare life of individuals and the biological processes of masses accompanied by emergent scientific discourses. Subsequently, Foucault replaces the biopower perspective with an analysis of *governmentality* that determines how rationality is contained in governmental practices and relates to 'regimes of truth' (cf. Foucault 2008; Dean 2010). To govern refers to any effort to constitute, conduct, and, with subtle techniques such as confession, shape subjects' actions, emotions, and thoughts (Foucault 2008, 63; cf. Hacking 1991, 35; Rose 2004).

Further, Foucault searches for deeper historical roots of human individuation and modern political rationality through the genealogy of *pastoral* power (2009). Foucault accentuates that power is exercised over people, not the territory; the shepherd's gaze unites the flock, knowing its thoughts and guiding it towards salvation. In this context, Foucault accentuates two pastoral techniques in which confession reaches fruition: the *spiritual direction* that establishes a permanent bond between the 'governed' and the 'governing' and the *examination of conscience* that ensures a complete openness of the governed. Pastoral power expanded in Christian pastoral care and underwent deep transformations from the second to the eighteenth century, with "the great age of the pastorate extending from the tenth and eleventh centuries up to the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth century" (Ibid., 188-9). Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the new judicial, secular model was injected into the general pastoral practice, where confession represented "a permanent court before which every faithful had to regularly present him or herself" (Ibid., 269). As Foucault shows, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represent a critical struggle over who conducts the individuals' daily conduct (Ibid., 201). Another transformation in pastoral power occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as various pastoral practices began to be exploited by secular governments that began to exercise control over people's daily conduct (Ibid., 264). Notwithstanding, Foucault rejects that there was a "comprehensive transfer" of the pastoral practices from churches to state. On the contrary, reformation and counter-reformation intensified the pastoral control over spiritual matters, and the relationship between believers and their spiritual guides was ever more conducted (Ibid., 305).

Hence, the genealogy of pastoral power allows Foucault to expose the historical onset of governmentality in the context of pastoral revolts of the sixteenth century (Ibid., 279, 303). Foucault describes the beginning of governmentality through an analysis of Thomas Aquinas's concept of the "royal power" and "great continuum". In Foucault's interpretation, Aquinas explains the sovereign king's art of governing people by using

"analogies of government". The government imitates God, natural order, and the pastoral or fatherly relationships to flock or family, respectively: "this great continuum from sovereignty to government is nothing else but the translation of the continuum from God to men in the 'political' order" (2009, 309-11). In the sixteenth century, this "great continuum" that justified the sovereign government of men was broken and substituted by "principles". Governmentality, unlike pastoral power, is not reflected through analogies but through principles connected with emerging "classical episteme". Governmentality newly represents a specific function; not in the fashion of the cosmological analogies but a particular government over "state" (2009, 312-3). The autonomous governmental management supplements sovereignty: a single governmental model is absent and must be explored through governmental rationality (*raison d'État*) mixed with the principles of nature to facilitate the integrity and sustainability of the state (2009, 314, 321).

Webermann's second model refers to the *artefactual* subject that Foucault began to explore around the so-called 'ethical turn'.[1] Foucault focuses on the self-relation dynamics and micro-processes of intra-subjective governance and offers a genealogy of subjectivation techniques of a 'desiring man' (1986, 7) and judicial subject in Antiquity and early Christianity. Foucault seeks answers to independent subjectivation distinct from objectifying norms, strategies, and practices. Newly, the core concept is *technologies of the self* and *hermeneutics of the self,* in which the subject is an effect of both social forces and self-determination. With this scheme, Foucault approaches confession in a new way as a technique that examines and objectifies the subject while producing subjective veridiction and unblocks self-realisation or self-disposal (1978, 60; 2014, 90-114).

The Birth of Confessional Practice in the Greek Philosophical Schools

To anchor my case study in Foucault's genealogy of the confessional form and display the continuities and ruptures thereof in contemporary scientific methods, in the four following sections, I analyse different confessional procedures that Foucault diagnoses from Antiquity to modern scientific formations. To systematise the various forms of self-practice and to examine the function and position of confession in various ethical systems, in every section, I work with Foucault's fourfold analytical grid that features ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, ethical work, and moral teleology (1997, 263-265).

Foucault identifies roots of confession within the active forms of self-relations tied to the principle of *parrhesia*,[2] mainly in Sophocles' work (2012, 1-23; cf. Barker 2018) and

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[1] Although, we can find features of inter- and intra-subjective relations already in the Foucault's discussion of pastoral power (cf. Foucault 2009).

[2] Foucault differentiates four modes of veridiction that can operate simultaneously: parrhesia, teaching, philosophy, and prophesy, while he elaborates mainly on parrhesia (2021, 8-30). Parrhesiastic speech is a form of courageous speech (as opposed to bad parrhesia, which amounts to wilful speech); it is a modality of existence, not a technique; it is a risky truth-telling, tied to the ethos of critique (cf. Barker 2016, 361) and also gradually linked to martyrdom, the courage to manifest truth sanctioned by death, and the mode of being in monasteries. In the 12th century, the parrhesiastic way of life was enacted by the Walden movement

subsequently in the 'golden age' of the culture of the self in Hellenism. Foucault inspects the latter to unpack the concept of *desire* as an ever more detailed observation of oneself. Through self-care techniques, the individual becomes an object of knowledge to transform, purify and cultivate oneself. Self-care is a mode of being that citizens choose freely. The 'self' is not objectified; it is the existence itself to which 'one must apply aesthetic values' and create a 'beautiful existence' (Foucault 1982, 271). The care of the self is a commitment that provides freedom and principles to attain truth and the ability to govern oneself and others.

Further, Foucault discusses the confessional principles in the Pythagorean school that sought to equip ethics with rules according to which one should act without losing self-control over one's body and pleasures (*aphrodisia*). The confessional principle is embodied in the relationship between the individual and his spiritual master. Based on the master's advice to the disciple, he instils the ethical code, while the apprentice's veridiction is sidelined. Notwithstanding, the disciple undertakes self-purifying practices: memorisation and mnemonic methods to reflect on his past (mis)conduct. Daily, one has to remember every act committed and compare it with the ethical code through various techniques: writing letters, exchanging moral and spiritual readings, and recording dreams (Foucault 2011, 1-22).

Second, Foucault identifies different confessional traits in the Stoic school consultation practice between the master and disciple that introduced an administrative character to the self-practice that no longer rests in purification but in self-control. The subject supervises oneself in terms of ethical progress and reflects upon past deeds and offences to his only temporal master. The self-practice trains memory so that the general moral rules are retained and applied (Foucault 2007, 100-101).

Finally, Foucault discovers the extension of the intersubjective relationship within the confessional techniques in the Epicurean philosophical tradition. The confessional technique employs analogical methods to medical consultations such as 'addiction inventory'. It resembles a daily questionnaire, composing a systematic and coherent type of truth-telling procedure about oneself. However, Foucault argues that the truth is tied to insignificant details of personal life. The master-disciple relationship remains temporary and does not imply the Christian 'definitive obedience'. The master sheds light on the truth, which serves as a force to transform conscience and knowledge to attain a 'perfect life' (2007, 163).

Through the perspective of Foucault's fourfold analytical grid, we can observe in his analysis of Greek philosophical schools the central place he ascribes to the confessional technique in the genealogy of the desiring man. Practices that nudged subjects to establish relationships with themselves and others; to understand, analyse and produce themselves

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in their life as a "scandal of truth" and by mendicant orders with their life in poverty (2012, 3-14, 48-66, 233-43, 252-63). Parrhesia was inbuilt into the practices of self-relation and self-creation. In cynicism, parrhesia exposed one's truth; not through discourse but in life as such. In Christianity, parrhesia became identical with the attitude of "heart"; not necessarily manifested in speech but in faith as an apostolic virtue.

in a particular fashion by discovering the truth about themselves as subjects of desire. Hence, sexual acts, passions, and desires form the ethical substance in the framework of *aphrodisia* (Colombo 2021, 77- 78). The mode of subjectivation is temporal, and the confessional features are inbuilt into the individual and temporal submission to the master's discourse, who discloses the ethical code in the daily reflections of the disciple. Also, ethical work already entails core confessional practices: the examination of conscience, retrospection of one's actions, memorisation of the ethical code, and the exposure of ethical developments to the master and oneself. Moral teleology lies in 'beautiful existence', autonomy, and control of others.

Hermeneutics of the Self in Christian Monastic Practices

Foucault unfolds the confessional genealogy in the context of early Christian monastic practices to highlight its transformations and continuities with the Ancient philosophical schools (1980).[3] He shows how the practices of spiritual (self)direction, obedience, "nullification" of will, and confession replaced the self-mastery of Hellenistic self-care. The Greek philosophical imperative 'know thyself' evolves into the requirement to 'confess, to your spiritual guide, each of your thoughts' (2007, 156). The subject succumbs to constant transformations and self-exercises and must know and tell the truth about oneself and position oneself regarding the fundamental truths embodied in scriptures and dogma (2011, 170). The central element of self-knowledge is 'thoughts' (*Cogitationes*) as interpretable subjective data that must be endlessly entrusted to the other. As I will explain, for Foucault, Christian hermeneutical practice, unlike the Hellenistic self-care (cf. Foucault 1997; O'Leary 2002), remains very much present within modern science and its subjectivation technologies.

According to Foucault, the newly established link between truth-telling and forgiveness has affinities with the Stoic practices. It is connected to four subjectivation practices: *repentance*, *baptism*, *spiritual guidance* and the act of *confession* (2014, 93-114). In the ritual of repentance, the Christian novice must excavate the 'mysteries of the heart' and manifest them to his spiritual guide. Repentance extends the antique philosophical notion of *metanoia* ('a change'), referring to a soul's turn from illusion to the truth (2014, 93-103). It is a separation from sins and the old self, for which one receives conditioned impunity. Foucault notes that, through repentance, sin is newly embedded in the constitution of the relationship between subjectivity and truth; between wrong-doing and

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[3] Foucault also explores early Christian *lay* confessional practices that emerged prior to monastic discipline. The subject's responsibility for sins, accusatory verbalisation of sins and self-knowledge procedures were present only in 'all-encompassing and dramatic expressions of the sinner's state' (2014, 224). It is *exomologesis* ('the recognition of an act'; *confession* in Latin, cf. 2007, 174); an exceptional act of penance through which individuals expressed with both their body and their way of life their repentance and the aim to re-join the Church (2014, 208-9). Exomologesis, as a non-verbal exposition of truth, was transformed in monastic ascetic practices into the verbal analysis of thoughts under the supervision and direction of the other. Nonetheless, the "speechless confession" is retained, for instance, in Augustin's concept of the self-propelled motions of the flesh that defines the character of human nature (Büttgen 2021, 9-10).

veridiction (2014b, 125-163).

Metanoia, notes Foucault, was initially dependent on the unity of conversion and illumination concentrated in baptism: a single event of conversion that facilitated the access to truth that overcomes the original sin. However, this unity gradually disappeared, while Christian communities faced the problem of re-establishing the relationship between subjectivity and truth to create a system that endlessly 'sanctions the repeatable events of transgression' (2014, 195).[4] Foucault observes this change in Tertullian, where the subject's relationship to transgression is permanently monitored and controlled. The objective of Christian spiritual guidance is a 'perfect life' that rests in self-control and virginity. The novice must report every thought and decision to the master constantly. The disciple is related to the master by obedience as a way of being that aims to nullify one's will and libidinal desires (2014, 273; 1997, 178).

To account for the technology of the confessional act, Foucault looks at the patristic regime of truth that operates with the idea of evil conceiving the illusion and the impossibility to differentiate between good and evil. The soul needs to recognise whether the thoughts come from Satan or God. Christian confessional procedures bring ceaseless spiritual uncertainties into the truth-subjectivity relationship, facilitating the practice of *exagoreusis;* a permanent analysis of thoughts and their revelation to the other establishes the vanishing point of spiritual guidance (2014, 288-321). Exagoreusis in Christian monastic practices is concerned, according to Foucault's reading of Cassian, with immediate thoughts (not with past conduct, as in the Stoic school), which are to be endlessly examined so as not to deflect the soul from a road to contemplating God (Foucault 2021, 101-102). Hence, through examination, the soul is directed toward the ultimate Truth. The discernment between the thoughts does not aim at falsehood or truthfulness, as in the Stoic consultation practices, but at the "quality of the thoughts", rendering them real or illusory. The constant confession, the verbal exposition to the other and oneself, is combined with an examination in the framework of general and

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[4] Foucault analyses in depth the development of *metanoia* linked to the ritual of baptism. He studies how repentance relates to the remission of sins and access to truth. First, he looks at the second-century writings of Hermas, for whom purification and illumination happen at once, and remission of sins and access to truth is conditioned by penitence concentrated on the manifestation of the soul's transformation towards truth and its commitment to the truth. One consciously and willingly separates from his old self and renunciates oneself to be born into new life. The third-century Tertullian proposed transformation and enlargement of *metanoia* concerning baptism, and he emphasised the prior practice of repentance and purification of oneself. The baptism keeps its efficacy, but the preceding purification practices are insufficient. Tertullian reacted to those who did not repent fully before receiving baptism or to those who delayed the baptism, so they may sin and wash away all the sins at once before their death. Catechesis and the teachings of truth and rules are newly coupled with a discipline of ethical purification, while *metanoia* is situated already in these practices. The sinner must renounce his misdeeds before he is pardoned in the baptismal ritual. Metanoia is not only the movement through which the soul is illuminated and detached from its old self and its sins but also the conduct of oneself in which the soul must be examined; the soul has to manifest its truth before receiving baptism. In other words, Tertulian changes the temporality of conversion towards the discipline of baptism that Foucault relates to the development of catechumenate (Foucault 2014, 128-135; 2021).

unquestionable obedience to the other with a performative function to tell, show, expel, and liberate.

Nonetheless, as Foucault argues, the ultimate concern lies not in the thoughts' truthfulness but the truth about the subject. And the only escape from the paradox of illusory self-examination is possible through confession. If the thoughts' quality is in line with truthfulness, the sinner can confess them. If not, the subject expresses them with difficulty. Another mechanism presupposes that evil thoughts disappear when they are poured out during a confession because the devil, as a fallen angel, cannot survive in the light into which a subject enunciates her thoughts. The last mechanism of the confessional act is the fact of speech itself: 'What is now on the tongue is already no longer in the heart' (2014, 305). In Foucault's interpretation, the eventual success of these conversions and purifications depends on the spiritual guide and God's grace.

In Foucault's account of monastic practices, the ethical substance is informed by thoughts, will or libido in the framework of the flesh as a mode of self-knowledge, self-experience, and production of truth. The accent is newly put on exagoreusis: thoughts' exploration and discernment ("hermeneutics of the self") and their verbalisation in the confessional act that facilitates conversion in terms of ethical work.[5] It is no longer objectivation of desire as with Stoics. In Augustine's definition of libido, desire becomes a core feature of human nature and not only an isolated subjective feature that has to be controlled (Colombo 2021, 80). The subjectivation mode lies in unconditional obedience to the spiritual guide and God. The teleology of the ethical system consists of attaining perfection, chastity, illumination, self-disposal, and salvation. Foucault notes that the truth-telling ascetic techniques lie in the middle of the relationship between the subject and the truth, crucially oriented towards self-transformative practice and spiritual purity in Greek philosophical schools and Christian monasteries.

Juridification of Confessional Form

In the *Confessions of the Flesh* (2021), Foucault observes the onset of the reflection of man as a subject of law based on reading Augustine's treatment of marital sexual relations entangled with consent, accountability, and responsibility. As Harcourt shows, legal norms are not imposed on subjects by legal bodies. Still, they are produced as rights and responsibility-bearing individuals through subjectivation practices and ethical work that regulates marital sexual relations (Harcourt 2021, 49). In fact, Foucault began his investigations of the confessional form's development and juridification in the late Middle Ages (cf. 2004). The confession newly structures the relationship between subjectivity and truth in terms of evidence and rigorous method to secure knowledge about subjects (Foucault 2006, 1-25). The monastic forms of auricular confession are 'transformed into a

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[5] In this respect, Büttgen observes Foucault's inability to sufficiently account for all dimensions of confession, not only of sins but also of faith. In Foucault's genealogy of the self, one becomes oneself by confessing his thoughts or past deeds. Still, in his lectures from the 1980s, he turns to a genealogy of veridiction, not necessarily tied to penitentiary practices but *parrhesia* (Büttgen 2021, 6, 11).

general pastoral function to be exercised by any priest, bishop, and anyone who had general responsibility for the community' (Foucault 1997, 177). As a repeatable act, Foucault contends, confession is 'encouraged, deployed, and strengthened' (2014, 226) whenever one sins, while the form of repentance becomes fixed to a particular sin. The subject declares guilt in an interrogation conducted by the authority granting repentance by knowing the moral and theological code through which sins can be forgiven. Here, the act of verbalisation guarantees the dimension of shame, which represents the first instance of satisfaction. The confessional function is to reduce punishment vis à vis the Last Judgment (Foucault 2004, 181–192).

Another significant moment in Foucault's confessional genealogy is located between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries when the confession was established as a sacrament and became compulsory (2014b, 184). The transformation of the subject is not central anymore but rather the performance of the confessional act itself. Foucault notes that several institutional apparatuses emerge with the *Canon XXI* of IV. The Lateran Council in 1215 sets out procedures surrounding the confessional act and mandates compulsory confession for every Christian at least once a year. Further, the priest acquires a prominent position because he absolves and grants the form of repentance at his discretion. He is stripped of the altruistic quality previously ascribed to the spiritual master. The confessional act itself is formalised and has a rigid structure and composition. It begins with an act of faith; then, the penitent confesses his conscience, followed by a standardised confessional pattern organised by the Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, and the Twelve Articles of Faith (Foucault 2014b, 189).

Moreover, Foucault shows how the late Middle Ages' legal institutions become gradually contaminated by confessional mechanisms and vice versa. As pastoral care integrates the legal model into the heart of the church organisation, the 'relationship between God and man is of a legal nature' (2014b, 187; cf. 2021). Foucault employs *avowal* as a term that emphasises the function of confession aimed at objective knowledge. Avowal penetrates judicial procedures, and its importance grows in the practice of torture, where knowledge is extracted from the suspect's soul and body, creating essential evidence for the judicial system. Foucault describes that the core of the indictment procedure, where the proof feature is established, concentrates on the 'inquisitorial test of truth' (2014b, 204).

Foucault shows that the avowal follows a similar Christian confessional pattern; it constitutes a truthful discourse that enables the authority (the judge) to operate with unquestionable knowledge and to punish. Nonetheless, unlike in Christian pastoral practices, the defendant confirms the already existent truth established by the court to legitimise a punishment. Eventually, the judicial apparatus can certify the veridiction as the crime is publicised in its truth through public execution and annulled in the culprit's death. The avowal shows how legal subjects are implicated and implicate themselves by veridiction in the social order and self-relations and how they co-produce them.

The ethical substance in the context of legal procedures entails deeds and thoughts; the

mode of subjectivation is refocused on obedience to the other who defines the truth; and the ethical work is conducted in terms of case exposition based on precise methods, both corporeal and verbal. The subjectivation teleology consists of rendering an individual into an object of empirical knowledge.

Confessional Human Sciences

Foucault discusses the confessional practice in the genealogies of various modern human sciences that retain the Christian pastoral functions from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The confessional form becomes a ubiquitous 'perverse machine' (2014b, 200) because the legal-political system requires an individual who confesses to establish an empirical subject. In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault enriches the analysis of examination that acts on silenced bodies, emphasising the enunciations of autonomous truth (1978, 18). The confessional configuration allows the subject to find the most profound truths in oneself and establish an adequate self-relationship. Foucault looks at the confessional technique predominantly from the perspective of *scientia sexualis* and traces its development from Reformation and Counter-Reformation to the 'explosion' of sexuality discourses. Through confession, the Christian pastoral incites the subject to confess the 'temptation of the flesh' to limit desire by constantly transforming it into discourse. Foucault is also attentive to the post-Tridentine tone of the confessional manuals, which are increasingly chaste. The confessor should not investigate the details of the sexual act as manuals no longer offer a detailed itinerary of the sexual intercourse. Foucault observes the appeal for an intense frequency of confession in which the Church reserved greater importance to the temptation of flesh than other sins. Foucault also reflects upon the introduction of the confessional booth in the sixteenth century, which renders the relationship between penitent and confessor even more intimate and secretive.[6]

However, in the eighteenth century, the apparatus of sexuality newly problematises 'sex' at the expense of flesh: 'an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail' (1978, 18). As Foucault argues, the confession newly examines the correlation between body and soul not from the perspective of the sexual deeds themselves but through its ramifications in the senses, thoughts, or dreams of the subject, reinvigorating the minute examinations already present in monastic practices (1978, 19-20). According to the pastorate, sex per se should not be verbalised but rather its subtle effects to transform desire into discourse to limit it: "[a] twofold evolution tended to make the flesh into the root of all evil, shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings – so difficult to perceive and formulate – of desire" (1978, 19-20).

In this respect, Foucault argues, the sexuality dispositif secularises Christian confession

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[6] Taylor (2009, 29) proposes an analogy to this transformation by comparing the concept of the self between Augustine, who understands the subject's inwardness as a roofless courtyard of a palace, and John Locke, who depicts the self as a private darkroom that resonates with the design of a confessional booth.

into a scientific procedure that entails consultations, questionnaires, correspondence, or autobiographical narratives collected and included in 'a field of scientifically acceptable observations' (1978, 65). For Foucault, confession newly represents 'a clinical codification of the inducement to speak' (1978, 65). The sexual discourse was translated into acceptable medical language. The medical dispositif thorough examination requires patient confession through exams, continuous observation, and a set of questions. These practices exposed patients' latent sexual practices and imaginations. Moreover, the intimate relationship between the priest and the penitent transforms into a relationship between an expert and a patient. The confessional interpretations require an expert who can extract the truth based on corresponding scientific rationality. Through confession, Foucault infers that the subject is defined under a concrete identity marker and is guided to accept this identity as authentic.

Foucault ties the confessional technique with *examination* understood as a 'political detail'; a feature of disciplinary technologies that will be very much present in the exposition of my case study. The subject is a product of physical discipline and science-imposed norms. Examination techniques are focused on the hidden details of the inmates' daily conduct to discipline and correct them, constituting the 'orthopaedics' of individuality (1990b, 10). The examination mechanism includes a micro-regime of punishments and normalising techniques of 'notation, of registration, of constituting files, of arranging facts in columns and tables' (1990b, 190). Examination fixes individual differences and particularities so that every individual can be described. In synergy with the documentation apparatus, the examination authorises the comparison of subjects to decide what is (ab)normal.

Hence, modern humanities cannot detach themselves from the initial power embeddedness as they, in Foucault's view, originate in corrective institutions (prisons, hospitals, schools). The subject begins to confess thoughts and deeds to new authorities, especially psychiatrists or doctors, that subsequently transform them into scientific discourses (cf. 1978), and humanities employ the confessional form as a decisive epistemological vehicle to extract and construct the truth about the private lives of individuals and populations (2007, 189–190).

Regarding the sexuality dispositif, the ethical substance is the desire and volitions of a subject; the mode of subjectivation is assured by the authority of a doctor or an expert; ethical work lies in endless confession and submission to the authority not through constraints but by the promises to attain freedom (Foucault 1978, 15-51). In the case of the human sciences surrounding the corrective institution, Foucault approaches confession as an exposition of a case. The ethical substance is the individual's soul and body; the mode of subjectivation is facilitated by examination; the ethical work lies in the training of the body, thoughts, and desires; a moral teleology rests in the scientific construction of a describable and disciplined subject.

What is Confession?

As we have seen in the first section, the modern shift of focus from self-surveillance (the confessional model) to institutional surveillance (the panoptical model) also discloses how the confessional technique is integrated into Foucault's ever-changing methodological apparatus and in his analysis of pastoral, disciplinary, and governmental power relations. The confessional model is not entirely divested from institutional surveillance in Antique philosophical schools and Christian monasticism, representing self-surveillance and a form of external guidance related to the power of the other. The panoptical model exposes the subject to an outward, objectifying gaze, and Foucault leaves only a little space in his analysis concerning subjective self-examination and self-transformation. The confessional technique ties together objectifying technologies (observations and examinations) and active self-relation and self-expression technologies. As a 'meticulous procedure' (1997, 85), the confession is embedded within institutionalised relations and makes the relationship between individuality, discourse, and truth visible. In Foucault's reading, the power-knowledge nexus is accepted if it 'masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms' (1978, 86). This concealment is secured by the seemingly neutral 'regimes of truth', 'dispositifs', or human sciences that operate through confessional techniques (1980, 194).

In Foucault's work, confessional praxis is the epistemological constant *sui generis* as it represents the central truth-producing ritual that obsesses the Western mind (1978; 2007, 148; 2014b, 28-29). It establishes a personal obligation to know, express, and authenticate the truth about oneself. Only knowledge distilled from intimate confession permits proper conduct guidance regardless of whether the goal is salvation, well-being, or mental health. To confess also presupposes faith in certain truths, religious dogmas or scientific standards (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). In Foucault's historical narrative, endless confessional enunciations facilitate power irrigation, without which the power-knowledge network dries up (Hacking 1991, 84). Thus, the confessional practice dovetails with Foucault's concept of dispersed power, where the subject is already positioned within a network of multiple relationships and fixes them by speaking, acting, and thinking.

For Foucault, confession is a technique of both gaze and audit interweaved with examination procedures. The verbalising element of confession inserts the subject into the social order and makes the subject visible to oneself and others. The confessional configuration assumes both subject's truthful enunciations and an instance of controlling audit of the authority (a priest, a judge, a scientist, or an imaginary other) that imbues the relationship with power dynamics (Kelly 2009, 99). The appropriate confessional act incites subjects to establish the possibility of self-interpretation and self-control while learning the rules of subordination. The authority collects subjective enunciations and subsequently governs them through hermeneutical intervention and independent interpretation, deciphering and formulating the complete truth about the subject

(Foucault 1978, 66). The authority conducts the confessor through evaluation, punishment, pardon, or comfort based on these resources.

CASE STUDY: THE CONFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN ATTITUDINAL SURVEYS

In this case study, I first examine Foucault's genealogy of contemporary neoliberal forms of rationality by outlining the genealogy of statistics and public opinion research. Subsequently, I indicate how the confessional model is inbuilt into the contemporary standardised questionnaire survey mechanisms. I delineate the intervention of the cognitive approach to statistical data collection processes to tease out the epistemological tool that relies on the confessional practice of the face-to-face interviewing. I demonstrate how the strategies of scientific apparatus collect data from respondents rooted in entangled operations of self-examination, confession of one's immediate thoughts to the other, the production of subjective veridictions, examination by others, and transformation of subjective veridiction into objective scientific truth.

In his genealogical account, Foucault showcases that statistics penetrate the human sciences in the eighteenth century, producing a new field of visibility, a numerical form of reality, and the new rationality of government. The government of numbers through statistics is born primarily in *police science*, introducing a new type of state self-knowledge regarding populational variables (Foucault 2009, 256-283). The nineteenth century witnessed a significant accumulation of data primarily due to industrialisation and urbanisation (Hacking 1991). Statistics promised to enhance the scientific character of humanities by quantifying the social facts. Statistics have become regarded as a 'moral science' designed to assure the highest possible happiness for as many people as possible by studying the moral behaviour of each individual and the population to administer and conduct life (Rose 2004, 209).

The phenomenon of public opinion emerged in the twentieth century with the democratisation of 'opinion' itself that begins to be seen as an aggregate of individual, rational and self-reflexive stances. Public opinion research is bolstered by the emergence of the survey and a representative sample. Gradually, public opinion is legitimised as a constitutive feature of democracy, promoting a simplification of fundamental socio-political issues translatable into language that the general public could be responsive to. Based on individual confessions, surveys produce data concerning the respondent's subjectivity while numerically objectifying these enunciations and reporting them in a representative sample that allows projecting the survey results to society. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of public opinion 'is an artefact of the technical procedures that are designed to capture it' (Osborne and Rose 1999, 382).

I focus on the confessional situation between the interviewer and respondent built into the questionnaire survey. I will show that, despite the confession's inconspicuousness or apparent banality in data collection procedures, it forms the survey's critical epistemological instrument. The survey represents an administrative form in which

individual interviews are combined with the totalising technique of statistics, thereby granting society a self-hermeneutical ability. The frequency of individual questionnaires is analogous to the repetitiveness of other historical forms of confession. The individual is continuously interviewed about the same elements of his life as in the Pythagorean school (Atkinson and Silverman 1997). The questionnaire assumes a concealed truth about the subject from which a scientific truth can be inferred. In this sense, the confessional practice incites respondents to reveal their traits and confirm their identity according to the proposed questionnaire possibilities. The goal is to translate the individual veridictions through the self-examinations of respondents. The case exposition is facilitated by the questioner-respondent interaction traced by coding behaviour or through the paper and online questionnaires to produce scientific discourses concerning subjects and societies. The scientific presumption is that if the research design properly filters the respondents' statements, it guarantees validity and reliability. In what follows, I will expose how the confessional practice is situated within the data collection framework.

Cognitive Approach to Confession

The prevailing mathematical-statistical approaches of contemporary social sciences to the concept of subjectivity correspond with the behavioural psychology paradigm (Vinopal 2008, 11). The behavioural approach does not problematise the relationship between the subject and the apparatus; it merely measures the subject as a passive component whose sole purpose is to listen to the question posed by the interviewer or virtual interface and answer it. The interviewer, who is the mediator between the respondent and the scientific apparatus and guides this relationship, also holds an uncontested role. If the respondents cannot answer – concerning mainly abstract themes – these attitudes are defined as non-attitudes (cf. Converse 1970). However, in the 1990s, the cognitive approach advanced a critical approach towards behavioural ontological and epistemological assumptions. Importantly, it challenged (among other things) the neglected and, therefore, hidden process of interaction between the interviewer and the respondent and underlined the respondent's self-relationship, elaborating on issues such as memory organisation, modes of decision-making, or answer editing, concluding that these variables may systematically alter and subvert the research results and validity.

In particular, the cognitive approach contests the concept of attitude as an object of measurement and the idea that attitudinal research records pre-existing, rational positions (Watterbrink and Schwarz 2007). For the cognitive approach, attitudes are – to varying degrees – constructed during the confessional situation: to a known topic, the attitude is recalled from memory; to an unknown issue, it is made from scratch. Thus, cognitive research fails to capture 'real attitudes'. Responses to the research design are constructed preferences because several cognitive schemes related to the subject matter may be available to respondents at a given time (Tourangeau 1992). In short, the cognitive approach holds that surveys do not measure public opinion but co-create and co-guide it

(Zaller and Feldman 1992, 600-606).

The cognitive approach ascribes a central place to the structure of long-term memory and formalises the research apparatus's confessional situation between respondent and interviewer into four stages. First, the process of comprehension and interpretation of the question establishes the relation of attitude with the researched issue. Second, the relevant resources (assumptions, existing evaluations, emotions) are recollected from long-term memory and constitute considerations. Considerations are strongly influenced by the question-wording, previously drawn conclusions and evaluations, incentives from the interviewer and the interviewer's traits. The cognitive approach is based on the premise that interviewing is a specific type of communication as there is no 'common ground' regarding values, beliefs, or attitudes between the participants in the interrogation. Thereby, the interviewer is forbidden to clarify the research question, for there is no assurance of a mutual understanding of the question. The third stage traces the response process, a derivation of an answer from what was evoked from memory. Revoking memory contents is superficial and generates a small number of relevant considerations. In the final stage, the response is limited by the pool of possible answers or the context of already answered questions. The attitudes are created only in the enunciation that is further restrained by auto-correction based on societal desirability and acceptability of the attitudes and by the self-presentation of the respondent as he conceals or softens his views on politically sensitive questions (Tourangeau 1992, 36; Crano and Prislin 2016, 43, Schwarz 2004, 43).

Hence, the cognitive approach deems subjective attitudes as unstable. Individuals generally do not have prepared attitudes but create them in this fourfold process; immediate experiences and questionnaire features establish attitudes. The attitudinal research designs only "reflect consideration most accessible in the memory in the moment of answering" (Zaller and Feldman 1992, 585). The attitude is a mental construct captured at a certain point in time, and the attitudes most susceptible to the context are the issues to which respondents have ambivalent answers. The cognitive approach is not vested in the source of thoughts, as in Christian confession, but in aligning the individual consideration and intentions of the survey with the formal and nominal procedures surrounding the confessional act.

A branch of cognitive science seeks to surpass these contextual factors by implicit measurements that resemble what Foucault calls *exomologesis*. These indirect measurements encompass techniques such as measurement of pressure, eye motion, and sweat and withdraw from observing intentional recollection of commiserations and responses as they want to detect attitudes, the truth about individuals, that respondents have difficulties enunciating (Schwarz 2004, 43; Vargas, Sekaquaptewa, Hippel, 180).

In this respect, the cognitive approach's ultimate interest lies in analysing possible sources of error, thereby elucidating the unreliability of self-examination and the confessional relationship between respondent and interviewer within the data collection process. Therefore, the cognitive approach carefully controls the whole confessional

process and formalises it to overcome the context-dependency of the interviewing and enhance the methodology. As I will demonstrate in the following section, such an approach epitomises what Foucault saw as the modern obsession with controlling individual and populational truthful discourses through endless confessional verifications.

Coding Confessions

The last section charts how the cognitive approach to the confessional technique operates within the *Czech Panel Research of Households 2015-2018* to unearth its function and make-up. The author of this paper participated as a research assistant in the data cleansing process and had access to all the panel interviews, which are otherwise private and considerably expensive. I depart from the first wave (7.7.2015 – 10.11.2015) of the data collection that encompasses a broad battery of questions. I focus on a question concerning the left-right political identification in which the cognitive approach is employed; concretely, the coding behaviour technique.[7] This technique records and monitors the confessional interviewer-respondent relationship and allows researchers to see its dynamics. Behaviour coding covers every individual interview based on line-by-line transcripts of audio recordings. Generally, this method is used in experimental or laboratory conditions; however, in this case, it is applied directly to the field research (Fowler and Cannell 1996).

The *Panel Research* was conducted by significant state-funded research institutions, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Masaryk University. The data collection was executed by the most credible public opinion research agencies, MEDIAN and STEM/MARK, which collected the data in 5159 households using address-based sampling (ABS). The panel survey utilised a standardised face-to-face interview with a standardised paper questionnaire and CAPI. The data collection was administrated by 308 experienced interviewers who undertook specialised training for *Panel Research* (Röschová 2015). The question under scrutiny had the following wording: 'The left and the right are often discussed in the context of politics. Use this card and tell me where you would place yourself on this scale when zero means left, ten right?' The controlling audit of recordings was performed in 82% of surveyed households by a scientific team in the Czech Academy of Sciences.

The coding behaviour recordings disclose the actual course and configuration of the relationship between the respondent and interviewer and between the subject and the scientific formation. It gives access to a situation that represented a secretive space in historical forms of Christian or scientific confession. At the same time, coding behaviour exposed how the self is formalised through detailed techniques and how it strives to legitimise survey research by surpassing the face-to-face interviewing unreliability. I argue that the fundamental epistemological procedure in surveys constitutes a further

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[7] The cognitive approach has developed several other methods of verifying the attitude measurement, such as *cognitive interview* or *reaction time measurement*.

development of the technique of confession, albeit with various modifications.

Based on the coding behaviour technique, the research design formalised the confessional situation by four dichotomous variables to study the modes through which individual respondents were disciplined by interviewers' interventions to relate, examine, and confess their political positions in a certain way. Subjects were offered a limited field of options for expressing their own choice of political identity in a quantified way. The first variable charted an 'answer offered', which captures a situation when an interviewer proposes to the respondent a specific answer. It is recorded in 888 cases (19.3%). The level of incitement varies from the situation when the interviewer fills the answer on behalf of the interviewee to cases where he recommends a specific position on the scale to the respondent.[8] The second variable traces a 'question explanation' when the interviewer interprets the left-right scale while giving examples or translates the scale with the help of words such as 'extreme' and 'absolute' or confirms the respondent's interpretations. Such a situation is recorded in 387 cases (8.4%).[9] The third variable maps a 'differently asked question'; the situation when the interviewer retells, in her own words, the standardised question and possible answers. It is recorded in 1186 cases (25.8%).[10] Finally, the fourth variable is a 'reverse change' in which the interviewer comments on the respondent's answer and the respondent subsequently changes the answer.[11] It occurs in 78 cases (1.7%). In sum, the coding behaviour exposes that the political self-identification is affected by the interviewers' transgression of the survey standards in 42.5% of all the cases (IS–CAS 2017).

The coding behaviour goal is to buttress the legitimacy of the confessional form through which it gains knowledge about the individual ability of political self-reflection. Coding behaviour also describes how the respondent is, in the confessional procedure, pedagogically guided and trained and learns how to properly deliver political self-identification in a formalised manner and co-produce public opinion.

There are multiple forms through which the subject is brought to himself by different regimes of truth or discursive formations. In what follows, I focus on how the subject is conducted to define his political identity through cognitive approaches to surveys based

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[8] Variable 1. Example: *Respondent*: 'I should lean somewhere, right? Not to give five, I would be a divided personality. I wouldn't go to the communists.' *Questioner*: 'A little to the right from the middle, so six?' Respondent: 'OK.'

[9] Variable 2. Example: *Questioner*: 'Now left-right, where are you situated?' *Respondent*: 'Well, I don't know.' Interviewer: 'In the middle?' *Respondent*: 'I don't want to go to the communists.' *Questioner*: 'So rather, the right?' *Respondent*: 'I don't know if the Civic Democrats are left or right.' *Questioner*: 'The Civic democrats are on the right-wing.' *Respondent*: 'Really?' *Questioner*: 'So, eight? Or how much do you want?'

[10] Variable 3. Example: *Questioner*: 'Left, right - does that mean anything to you?' *Respondent*: 'Yeah in politics? I thought –.' *Questioner*: 'This is a controversial thing because right-wingers can behave the other way around and leftists can do the opposite.' *Respondent*: 'Yes.' *Questioner*: 'But let's assume that where would you place yourself right-left. Zero ultra-leftists, ten ultra-rightists?' *Respondent*: 'Five, like half, you see? Because I really don't know.'

[11] Variable 4. Example: *Respondent*: 'Probably to the right.' *Questioner*: 'Really? Or in the middle?' *Respondent*: 'Then put some centre in there.'

on face-to-face interviews. I understand interviewing as an extension of the confessional technique because that stands for a core epistemological tool in the survey apparatus. The coding behaviour technique exposes the confessional situation and the relationship between individuality, discourse, and truth. It presupposes that individual considerations are produced in the experience of the questioning that disciplines subjects on how to think about themselves. The coding behaviour applied to the survey interviewing apparatus can operate on the individual and on a mass scale by asking, auditing, transcribing, verifying, standardising, examining, and coding the interviews' interactions.

Although Foucault designed his genealogy of subjectivation and the fourfold ethical grid to analyse various ethical systems, it can be fruitfully applied to face-to-face survey interviewing, in which a scientific form of confession brings individuals to political self-relationship. The cognitive approach defines the long-term memory structures as the substance – the domain of the self – from which the considerations as interpretable data are derived and exposed for examination.

The ethical work is determined by the respondents' immediate examination of their memory; this process produces considerations based on past choices, and the apparatus demands immediate disclosure to the interviewer and the questionnaire interface. The cognitive approach requires truthful enunciations, meaning they are to be aligned in the best possible way with the recollections and considerations and that the enunciations are aligned with the intentions of the research design. That is why interviewers must conduct respondents to ensure their openness and sincerity in the examination process and structure the possible space of their thoughts concerning the political space. The research design critically organises the order of significant and insignificant questions to guarantee the most authentic statement, free from negative influences. Interviewers are set to emphasise the anonymity of the confession marked by the respondents' intimate home surroundings where the survey takes place and explain the respondents' irreplaceability in the survey, given the sampling requirements.

Concerning the mode of subjectivation, the figure of the other is both individual (interviewer) and collective (a scientific team), which assures the 'truthfulness' of the confessional situation. The rationality of the research filters the individual enunciation that, in effect, guarantees objective, scientific truth. It renders the self-interpretations and truths into corresponding scientific rationality. Surveys employ the confessional form as a decisive epistemological vehicle to extract and construct the truth about the private lives of individuals and populations. The subject is not created as a legal or desiring subject but as a scientific subject capable of producing political identities. The subject is inserted into the visible social and political order field through normalising practices of the scientific apparatus.

The coding behaviour reveals that almost half of the cases are submitted to the interviewer's authority, who directs the respondents' answers. The cognitive approach is suspicious of what happens between the one who confesses and the other. It tests the techniques of self-examinations and the exposition of the individual cases to generate

reliable scientific results of political subjectivity. Through the core epistemological confessional procedures, the survey collects and publishes all the utterances that initially operated in an anonymised way but, in the end, are made public and massified. Based on these discourses, subjects are translated to the scientific semantic field that claims legitimacy to describe the political, allow for spatial and temporal comparison, and represent a domain to be governed. In other words, the expert team formalises and collectivises the individual veridictions and translates them into the scientific language to calibrate and quantify political identities (cf. Rose 2004, 199).

The subject certifies his consideration in the interaction with the other (interviewer, research apparatus) and temporarily succumbs to the empirical discursive formations by defining himself on a numerical scale and acknowledging that the scientific apparatus can ask sensitive questions. The subject is defined under a concrete identity marker through confession and is guided to verify this identity. Through surveys, the confessing subject becomes both the subject of his interpretations and the subject and object of the discursive formation. In this sense, the confession is very close to Foucault's concept of *avowal* as the survey apparatus is designed to secure knowledge and evidence about the subject. However, in this case, the confessor's authority is multiplied by the scientific team that evaluates individual cases, determining what a scientific standard is and what deviates, establishing hegemony over the researched topic.

Confession represents the root epistemological tool of surveying, a technique of audit connected with procedures of (self)examination and case exposition. The verbalising element of confession inserts the subject into the social order and makes the subject visible to oneself and others. The confessional configuration assumes both the subject's truthful enunciations and an instance of controlling audit of the authority that imbues the relationship with power dynamics. The appropriate confessional act incites subjects to establish the possibility of self-interpretation and self-control while learning the rules of subordination.

The teleology on the respondent's side lies in a self-presentation or financial incentive and is detached from self-mastery, apatheia, contemplation of God or health considerations. Each household received a financial reward for the research participation (from EUR 20 to EUR 40), depending on the number of completed questions and the timely completion of all the interview tasks. The financial objective also lies on the side of the interviewer. The teleology of the cognitive approach strategy rests not in the actual evidence of respondents' self-knowledge but in the purification of the confessional procedure to elicit research validity – scientific truth. The purity of the confessional procedure itself is more important than its content.

CONCLUSION

In my essay, I offered a comprehensive reading of Foucault's genealogical project of different subjectivation practices through the perspective of the confessional technique.

The reconstruction illustrated how various modes of confession shape the subjective experience of oneself, others and truth both in history and today. I demonstrated how the confessional technique and its function developed throughout history and acquired a strong position as an epistemological tool within different regimes of truth and human sciences that endeavour to relate to man and produce him in a desired fashion.

Subsequently, I presented a case study to supplement Foucault's research on the confessional modes of subjectivation from the perspective of today's human sciences. I tested the model of confession as a persisting hermeneutical key that can help deconstruct contemporary positivistic research, such as the cognitive approach to data collection in an attitudinal survey. Ironically, a cognitive, positivistic method can be utilised to unmask the hidden confessional procedure that fabricates and formalises a concrete scientific type of the contemporary self. The coding behaviour technique facilitated a way to problematise the confessional epistemology of the survey research. My analysis re-confirmed Foucault's suspicion and critique of the reductivity of modern human sciences that seeks to improve the ability to relate and capture subjects in their finality through persisting confessional practices.

This paper contributed to the governmentality studies by demonstrating how a positivistic method can be used in fruitful combination with Foucauldian hermeneutics to disentangle contemporary subjectivation practices and interpret how a particular discursive formation operates. By employing the coding behaviour technique against its intentions, I exposed the relationships established by the confessional form, from which the modality of the subject's self-relationship and relationship towards scientific formations concerning political self-identification can be inferred. That is, the confessional form approached through a coding behaviour perspective can enhance the tradition of critical hermeneutics since it enables a fine-grained insight into the delicate forms of governmentality that operate in omnipresent forms of interviewing and data collection.

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