

MICHEL FOUCAULT WITHIN THE INTRICATE WEAVE OF DISCOURSES¹

EDITORIAL

Pedro Navarro*

Universidade Estadual de Maringá

Atilio Butturi Junior**

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Cleudemar Alves Fernandes***

Universidade Federal de Uberlândia

Vanice Sargentini****

Universidade Federal de São Carlos

1 INTRODUCTION

¹ This text was published, with some modifications and in a Portuguese-language version, in *Acta Scientiarum* available at: <https://periodicos.uem.br/ojs/index.php/ActaSciLangCult/article/view/84143>. The Part I of this dossier was published in *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, available at <https://periodicos.uem.br/ojs/index.php/ActaSciLangCult>.

* PhD in Linguistics and Portuguese Language from São Paulo State University (UNESP), Júlio de Mesquita Filho, Araraquara, SP (2004); Associate Professor at the State University of Maringá and CNPq Researcher. E-mail: navarro.pl@gmail.com.

** Professor in the Graduate Program in Linguistics and in the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Human Sciences at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). CNPq Research Productivity Fellow (PQ). Leader of the Discourse Studies Research Group. E-mail: atilio.butturi@ufsc.br.

*** PhD in Linguistics from the University of São Paulo (USP). Full Professor at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU). E-mail: cleudemar@ufu.br.

**** Professor at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil. Researcher in Discourse Studies, with a focus on French Discourse Analysis and Michel Foucault's thought. CNPq Research Productivity Fellow.

On the centenary of Michel Foucault's birth, we deem it timely to reaffirm the fruitfulness of his thought, which has illuminated intellectual production practically since the middle of the last century, as noted by Eribon (1990, p. 12): "Foucault: a man and a body of work whose light continues to illuminate intellectual activity in France and abroad."²

Notwithstanding the problematic nature of the Enlightenment metaphor, specifically regarding its silence about questions of colonialism and violence in the formation of modernity, this constitutes a constant presence across a variety of fields which, in one way or another – or, more precisely, in a particularly telling way – confirms Michel Foucault's own expectations regarding his books, as expressed in an interview with Roger Pol-Droit:

All my books [...] can be little toolboxes. If people really want to open them and a particular phrase, idea, such as an analysis, as they would use a screwdriver or a wrench, to produce a short circuit, discredit or break systems of power, including, perhaps, the very systems from which my books emerged... well then, so much the better! (Foucault, 2006a, p. 52).

Given that "[...] the scope of Foucault's thought is simultaneously theoretical and political [...]" (Eribon, 1990, p. 9) and bearing in mind that our work falls within the research field known as Foucauldian Discourse Studies, we begin this text by drawing on two excerpts from Foucault, one concerning madness and the other concerning punishment. Based on these excerpts, we engage in a practice of discourse analysis that articulates power, knowledge, and subjectivity, a practice that underpins the discussions brought together in this Dossier. The thematic axes that organize the collection are also presented.

In his doctoral dissertation defended in 1961 and subsequently published, he states the following regarding madness:

Those who are in a critical state are left to die. The others are subjected to the 'Great Remedies': never more and rarely less than six weeks of care. It begins, naturally, with bloodletting, immediately followed by purging. One week is devoted to baths, approximately two hours a day; another purge is administered, and, to conclude this first phase of treatment, a thorough confession is required. The mercury rubs can then begin, with all the efficacy at their disposal; they continue for a month, at the end of which two purges and a bloodletting are to expel the last morbid humors. A fifteen-day convalescence period follows. Then, after having definitively settled accounts with God, the patient is declared cured and discharged (Foucault, 1972, p. 97).

Regarding punishment, somewhat later, when addressing the displacements of the prison and the carceral, Foucault (2013a, p. 90) defines "[...] the semiotecnic with which an attempt is made to equip the power to punish [...]" and its material and discursive rules.

What are these categories which, like those of the Chinese emperor in Borges's encyclopedia, encompass at once bloodletting, confession, and the settling of accounts with religion, and which can be read as a relational semiotecnic, as in Deleuze's (1986/1998) description of the panopticon: at once an architecture and a norm, at once a building and the production of discursive events.

Now, in presenting these issues devoted to the centenary of Michel Foucault's birth, published here in *Fórum Linguístico*³, we situate ourselves in the interstice of his thought, which the author often calls the filigree. As researchers, we intend to undertake a Foucauldian analysis of discourses, but each author here traverses it from the standpoint of their own interests. In our collaborative work, how should we think about discourse and practice, the material and its strategies, the dispositives, and the production of subjects or forms of subjectivity? To answer this question, we will take two excerpts drawn from *The History of Madness* and *Discipline and Punish*, elevating them to the status of enunciative sequences.

The task we propose here has been attempted many times before; therefore, based on these two excerpts—which constitute the dispositif of madness and the carceral dispositif—and on the ambiguous relations, series, displacements, and forms of description

² All direct quotations have been freely translated into English by the translator.

³

with which Foucault worked. To this end, we open the discussion with the concept of the *dispositif* and its boundaries between the discursive and the non-discursive. Then, we delve further into this problem through readings of the visible and the enunciable. Thus, we inquire into how this “heterogeneous” theoretical wager requires a certain conception of materiality. To conclude this analysis, these three movements provide us with the basis for understanding the effects of power linked to the discursive process of subjects’ constitution and the production of subjectivities.

2 THE POWER-KNOWLEDGE DISPOSITIF

Within the Foucauldian Discourse Studies field, the term ‘*dispositif*’ is a concept, as proposed by Foucault (1979), considered by some to have originated in the notion of *episteme* (Chignola, 2003; Castro, 2004/2009)⁴. The *dispositif* occupies a central place in these Studies, since it can only be understood in dialogue with discourse: “[...] if there is something that seems to leave no doubt, it is indeed the fact that there is no discourse outside *dispositifs*, and there are no *dispositifs* without discourse” (Courtine, 2013, p. 29). This concept’s productivity is confirmed by its presence in several articles comprising the issues of *Acta Scientiarum* and *Fórum Linguístico* organized here.

The concept of *dispositif* (i) encompasses heterogeneous elements that are inscribed within a ‘network’, “[...] which encompasses discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions [...] the said and the unsaid” (Foucault, 1979, p. 244). The *dispositif* also encompasses a twofold process: (ii) ‘functional overdetermination’, as it turns to an analysis of the nature of the link among the elements of the network, which at times bring previously silent discursive practices to light, as well as relations of resonance or contradiction that produce positive or negative effects, often readjusting or rearticulating heterogeneous elements that emerge in dispersed form; and a strategic process in which (iii) “[...] a certain formation, at a given historical moment, had as its principal function responding to an urgency. The *dispositif* therefore has a ‘dominant strategic function’” (Foucault, 1979, p. 244).

Foucault (1979) believed that the *dispositif* functions as a lens to analyze objects that are thereby regarded as inevitably heterogeneous in character. Foucauldian genealogy, which studies “[...] the formation, at once dispersed, discontinuous, and regular [of discourses ...]” (Castro, 2009, p. 185), relies on the concept of *dispositif* for the description and analysis of its object of study. Through his analyses of the disciplinary *dispositif* and the *dispositif* of sexuality, Foucault develops the methodological function of the term *dispositif*.

Foucauldian innovation also lies in the formulation of the question to be investigated. He is interested in knowing ‘how’ madness is understood rather than what madness is; and ‘how’ punishment is carried out rather than what the prison system is, thus presenting an analysis of the regimes of emergence of statements and discursive practices.

Although the concept of *dispositif* was explicitly formulated in the 1970s, with the publication of *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (Foucault, 1976/1988), it can be observed that *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault, 1961/1972) already contained a way of articulating discursive practice with an archaeological analysis that describes the construction of a heterogeneous network of power-knowledge. The distinction between reason and unreason emerges in medical discourse, is also present in moralistic practices, and is materially represented in the construction of institutions such as the General Hospital. In short, a heterogeneous network that sustains the *dispositif* of both social and moral exclusion. In the nineteenth century, the asylum, as described by Foucault, is an *dispositif* that produces the mentally ill, responding to a historical urgency and serving a society that does not seek a cure, but isolation. It is the power-knowledge *dispositif* that operates in the silencing of unreason.

In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 2013a), the carceral *dispositif* is grounded in a technology of power that draws upon discursive practices and an architectural and administrative structure. The panopticon is the metaphor for this disciplinary *dispositif*, which is

⁴ “*Dispositif* is a much more general case of the *episteme*—which has a specifically discursive character—[...] unlike the *dispositif*, which is itself both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogeneous” (Foucault, 1979, p. 246).

not located within an institution, since it operates as a network across diverse sites such as schools, factories, hospitals, and prisons, intending to create docile bodies. In short, the *dispositif*, although not named as such, is present in the way Foucault organizes the history of madness and the prison system.

Mindful of M. Foucault's view that his writings can be understood as small toolboxes to be used to produce 'short circuits', new ideas, and, ultimately, alternative keys for reading. Authors such as Deleuze (1989/2016) and Lemke (2024) have also devoted themselves to analyzing the scope of the concept of '*dispositif*'. We aim to indicate the nuances and contributions of these authors, who have demonstrated the fruitfulness of this concept.

Deleuze (1989/2016), in *What Is a Dispositif?*, rereads Foucault's propositions on the subject, invoking the metaphor of lines arranged in skeins of a multilinear ball of yarn organized into bundles of knowledge, power, and subjectivation. To untangle these lines is to draw a map; it is to map what is not yet known. From this perspective, he points to a methodological orientation for analysis. These lines are entangled in curves of enunciation, which reveal the regimes of enunciation, and in curves of visibility, regulating a regime of light that determines elements to be illuminated or left in the shadows. The *dispositif* thus operates as a machine for making visible and sayable, and these enunciations cannot be reduced to linguistic statements; rather, they focus on the heterogeneous discursive and non-discursive elements that constitute the network.

Within this tangle of threads, in addition to the curve of enunciation, which reveals the regimes of enunciation, and the curve of visibility responsible for the regimes of light, Deleuze (1989/2016) attributes lines of force and lines of flight to the subject. For the philosopher, the process of subjectivation is a project of resistance that refuses an inevitable mechanism of subjugation and draws upon the dimensions of knowledge and power, questioning the normalizations of life and opening spaces for another way of living. Lines of force refer to the dimension of power,

[...] they 'rectify' the preceding curves, draw tangents, envelop the trajectories of one line with another, operate back-and-forth movements between seeing and saying and vice versa, and act as arrows that never cease to penetrate things and words, that never cease to lead to battle (Deleuze, 2016, p. 360).

We might ask what contributions or displacements Deleuze introduces into the concept of *dispositif*. Foucault recognizes the existence of a strategic imperative working as the matrix of the *dispositif*. Deleuze articulates the existence of this continuous process of strategic elaboration with lines of flight. Lines of force (rigid and supple) are segmentarities that organize life. The rigid ones create social divisions (man/woman, educated/uneducated, white/black, reason/madness), while the supple ones are more flexible variations that continue to stratify. Lines of flight, in turn, represent absolute destratifications as they completely break with the limits of established stratifications. The line of flight suspends the 'I am' in favor of an 'I am becoming', constructed through the desire to establish new relations and territories. These lines make it possible to resist fixations and foster an ongoing 'becoming'; the subject conducts their continuous process of subjectivation. Deleuze attributes the property of being a process to the concept of *dispositif*, offering the possibility not only of describing a structure or a history, but also of mapping the lines (of visibility, enunciability, and force) and producing openings, escapes, and creativity (lines of subjectivation and flight) that would only be further developed in texts and courses produced by Foucault in the early 1980s.

Thomas Lemke (2024), drawing on the concept of *dispositif*, explores it not from an analytical-philosophical or philosophical-cartographic perspective, but from a political-analytical standpoint, by articulating the concept with governmentality, neoliberalism, and neo-materialist analyses of discourses that include technical artifacts and biological processes. This gesture reaffirms the potential and productivity of the toolbox we have inherited from Michel Foucault. Lemke (2024) argues that, within a neoliberal rationality, the central issue is not merely the minimal State, but the presence of a governmental *dispositif* that operates through supposed freedom. A kind of freedom that offers choices and holds the subject responsible for outcomes; one that does not prohibit but rather governs coercively by inciting and holding this entrepreneurial subject responsible for themselves. In this way, the author understands that, in the contemporary *dispositif*, nature and technology are no longer separable, showing that the heterogeneous network contains the various elements listed by Foucault, but also technological *dispositifs*, technical objects, and biological processes.

In reviewing authors who explore the potential of the notion of *dispositif*, we see that the scope of this concept extends and becomes denser, at times in a theoretical-methodological direction, replacing the notion of structure, of a web, with lines to be mapped and constantly intersecting in the work of mapping who we are today (Deleuze, 1989/2016). And at times, in a political-analytical direction that expands the analysis by considering the technological dimension, in which the object also acts intrinsically within the ontological and strategic dimensions (Lemke, 2024).

Viewing the *dispositif* as a methodological contribution to the study of discourse (Sargentini, 2015), we consider that studying an *dispositif* requires several gestures, among them denaturalizing what is presented as established in history, bringing the event to the fore, and activating a process of eventalization. An *dispositif* emerges from the network of discourses and must be conceived “[...] in the full extent of its dispersion, in the full diversity of its ramifications, in the full depth of its sedimentation” (Courtine, 2013, p. 127). Interpretations of the concept of the *dispositif* have often been simplistic, tending toward one of two extremes: either viewing it as a structure that determines everything—thereby diminishing its value through a determinism that obscures singularities, fissures, and spaces of resistance—or, conversely, treating it as such a fluid network that the sheer breadth and diversity of its elements and analytical angles could lead to applications lacking a solid foundation. These are the risks of an interpretation centered either on structural Marxism or on empty postmodernism. Work on discourse analysis, always articulated with *dispositif*s, across various academic studies, reaffirms the pertinence and relevance of approaching archives as a network of statements brought together by different threads. Analysis expands and gains density when it reaches *dispositif*s and their displacements. Power-knowledge *dispositif*s, the *dispositif* of sexuality, disciplinary *dispositif*s, *dispositif*s of subjectivation, and the *dispositif* of governmentality are some of those that Foucault brought to light in his studies. Among the articles comprising the issues of *Acta Scientiarum* and *Fórum Linguístico*, there are analyses of the algorithmic *dispositif*, the musical-cinematic *dispositif*, and the *dispositif* for controlling discourses. Ultimately, the readers should assess the scope and productivity of the concept, as discussed today.

The problematic of the *dispositif* now leads us to a second point in Foucauldian theory: the formation of knowledge, in accordance with the distinction between the visible and the sayable, with attention to the aforementioned enunciative sequences.

3 VISIBILITIES/STATEMENTS ON MADNESS AND PUNISHMENT

The knowledge formed within the various strata of a historical formation comes from a certain way of speaking about things and a certain shift in the gaze. Such a shift makes those very things visible. In other words, on one side are the rules of formation, and on the other, the interplay of light and shadow, which allow things spoken and seen to present themselves as truth through a machinic process or enunciative procedure, as conceived by Deleuze (2017).

Truth and knowledge concerning things that are said and seen: this constitutes a substantial part of Foucault’s theoretical undertaking, particularly concerning the rules of formation of discourses and the forms of subjection and punishment of bodies. This undertaking requires us to consider that the sayable and the visible constitute two stable forms in any given era, since what defines a historical formation is a complex field of visibility and an equally complex regime of enunciabilities.

That said, we return to the two excerpts in the Introduction, one concerning madness and the other punishment, attempting to extract theoretical-methodological elements that enable us to address the statement/visibility of infamy. This requires two complementary analytical movements: splitting words open and bringing things to light.

To this end, let us consider Foucault’s explanation:

[...] the statement is, at the same time, neither visible nor hidden [...]. Enunciative analysis is therefore a historical analysis, yet one that remains outside any interpretation: concerning things said, it does not ask what they conceal, what was said within them and the unsaid that they involuntarily cover, the abundance of thoughts, images, or phantasms that inhabit them; rather, it asks how they exist, what it means for them to have manifested themselves, to have left traces, and perhaps to remain available for potential reuse (Foucault, 1995a, p. 126).

If we take the aforementioned excerpts on madness and punishment as enunciative sequences concerning infamy and bearing in mind the condition of the statement as presented by Foucault, we are led to problematize certain elements necessary for the initial movement of splitting words open, with a view to extracting the infamy that appears there as a condition of existence for a power-knowledge concerning bodies. In this regard, Navarro (2018) points out that the infamous lives analyzed by Foucault gain visibility through the exercise of power manifested in the statement-event of the *'lettre de cachet'*. Through this mechanism, the infamous come into existence by means of the power dispositif that casts light upon their bodies, which then come to be seen as deviating from the norm.

The possibilities for a discursive entry into these two excerpts, thus conceived, proceed from the premise that they are enunciative sequences because they occupy a place within a power-knowledge *corpus*—of which the General Hospital, analyzed by Foucault, would be a point of light projected onto the lives found there: the highest point of visibility and discursivity.

Madness and punishment, as integral parts of the historical formation concerning infamy, are neither hidden nor immediately visible. It is necessary to dig, so to speak, to reach their conditions of possibility within a given stratum of knowledge. Methodologically, this implies rejecting an interpretation that aims to uncover hidden meanings. Nevertheless, the statement concerning the infamy of madness that emerges from the General Hospital, for example, lies in what is said in Foucault's account of it. Madness does not appear as an unsaid that would remain implicit. It lies within the play of the rules of formation of this discourse, a play that allows such knowledge to emerge with the status of an event.

Moreover, this statement is not visible because it cannot be reduced to speech acts, sentence structure, or the true-or-false parameters of any given logical structure. Although its materiality becomes legible through the way the account organizes the hygienist procedure adopted by the General Hospital:

Naturally, one begins with bloodletting, immediately followed by a purgative; one week is devoted to baths, approximately two hours a day; another purge is administered, and, to bring this first phase of treatment to a close, a good and complete confession is required (Foucault, 1972, p. 97).

The analysis requires an archaeological effort to perceive and describe this sequence within the dispersion of the positivity of discourse.

The description of the enunciative level must therefore “[...] interrogate language, not in the direction to which it refers, but in the dimension that produces it” (Foucault, 1969/1995a, p. 126). Splitting words open and observing the evidence of knowledge concerning madness and punishment is a path through which Foucauldian discourse analysis interrogates the historical dimension that produces this knowledge, particularly the specific perspective on it undertaken by Foucault. Once this has been done, the statement of infamy described in the excerpt makes the discursive practice of the General Hospital knowable to us.

About such practice, Foucault (1961/1972; 1963/1977) argues that it should not be viewed merely as a development within the field of medicine, but, above all, as an exercise of power-knowledge that, in the history of madness, performs social control as well as the normalization of the social body. If we return to the excerpt, each procedure adopted presents itself as an instrument of medicalization and disciplinarization. The infamy statement gains legitimacy as it is articulated between medical knowledge and power to produce, in and through discourse, a place and a position of subjectivity, one regarded as ‘abnormal’; therefore, segregated into spaces where a cure is not necessarily obtained, but rather the sanitization of the city of individuals considered inconvenient. In the second excerpt, which focuses on the semio-technics of punishment, the infamy inherent in this practice enunciates and renders visible not only a body that must undergo suffering, but the body in the condition of a representation of the tortures. This concerns what Foucault calls the ‘rule of sufficient ideality’, according to which punishment

[...] does not need to use the body, but rather its representation. Or rather, if it must use the body, it does so as the body is not so much the subject of suffering as the object of a representation: the memory of pain may prevent recidivism, just as the spectacle, even if artificial, of physical punishment may prevent the contagion of crime (Foucault, 2013a, p. 91).

The machinic process/enunciative procedure now produces a displacement in the statement of infamy, in terms of the type of subject produced within it. The subject of infamy present in punitive practices shifts from a subject-body position of torture to another position within this semiotechnics: the subject of a body made docile.

The enunciative rules governing the formation of this discourse come to encompass an associated domain comprising forms of knowledge belonging to the legal, medical, and psychological orders, themes and strategies related to the idea of what constitutes justice, morality, and normality, as well as concepts of what may be understood as crime, deviance, and social danger.

In both the practice of confining the mad and the semiotechnical punishment of the criminal, we can observe the articulation of a form of power-knowledge that manifests itself through statements/visibilities that produce subjects and legitimize their exclusion/normalization. In terms of a particular historical account of infamy, the regimes of sayability and visibility of knowledge concerning such subjects produce the categories of 'delinquent' and 'mad', promote their social confinement, legitimize themselves through constitutive elements of law, medicine, and psychiatry, and use disciplinary dispositives.

One final observation remains concerning the statements/visibilities of infamy produced by the practices inferred from the enunciative sequences concerning madness and delinquency. Here we turn to Deleuze's (2017) reading of the Foucauldian project. According to this author, the General Hospital and the prison are sites of visibility for madness and delinquency; however, the discourse formed concerning the subjects confined in these institutions is of another nature. In the first form of visibility, medical discourse enunciates unreason, whereas criminal law produces an entire set of sanctions without referring to the regime of light of the prison.

The analysis acquires a complexity that must be confronted, given that the functioning of this discursive machinery imposes a condition upon anyone who works with discourse that can never be disregarded: in the case at hand, what is seen concerning infamy will never be housed within what is said about it, because "[...] there is no isomorphism between seeing and speaking, that is, between the visible and the enunciable. In other words, there is no conformity" (Deleuze, 2017, p. 32).

4 RELATIONAL MATERIALITY

As previously described, if dispositives manifest themselves through the relations between the discursive and the non-discursive—and by means of a machinic process or discursive procedure—it is important to reflect on this from the perspective of Foucault's discourse theory. This theory, which has appeared in Brazilian research since at least the beginning of the 21st century, addresses the configuration of a space characterized by both indistinction and marking; ultimately, what is at stake is a line involving both appropriation and categorization—a line that, in Foucault's trajectory, is often elucidated through the inherently dual nature of materiality.

In a much-discussed text by Paul Veyne, we read the following about this materiality: "Foucault is a materialist, in the sense that he believes only in practices; but he is a singular materialist, since he believes in neither a determining instance nor an infrastructure that explains the rest" (Veyne, 2008/2011, p. 27). Veyne further argues that this is "[...] a materialism of the incorporeal" (Foucault, 1996, p. 58).

Let us consider the material relationship inhabiting the boundaries between the discursive and the non-discursive—a relationship highlighted by Veyne (2008/2011)—and, drawing on Deleuze (1998) and Lemke (2021) (cited in the first section), outline an approach we shall term "material-discursive." As Veyne (2011) proposes in his reflections on the present and the event, at stake is the problem of materiality—a theme that appeared in the work on the "lived body" within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (2011) (to which Foucault responds) or in the Marxian perspective articulated as early as the ninth and tenth Theses on Feuerbach (Marx, 2007), which reject "contemplative materialism" in favor of a materiality understood as practice.

Our first point, then, is the assumption of the ‘singularity’ of materialism, but, at the same time, a call for matter—contrary to Veyne’s text. Along this path, it is always prudent first to return to the texts of Michel Foucault (1969/1995a) and to the assertion in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that the statement has ‘a material existence’. Let us take a frequently repeated excerpt, but attend to the definition of materiality, to think with Veyne:

Could the letters of the alphabet that I write at random on a sheet of paper, as an example of what is not a statement, could the lead type used to print books—and one cannot deny its materiality, which has space and volume—could these signs, displayed, visible, manipulable, reasonably be considered statements? (Foucault, 1995a, p. 96).

Foucault (1969/1995a) is posing here the dual and negative problem of the statement: it can be reduced neither to the sign systems of a language nor to the play of ‘space and volume’ of things in the world. But our interest here is that it cannot dispense with them either, because it is a ‘function that operates vertically’ so that there may be the said and the enunciable, while this appears “[...] with concrete contents, in time and space” (Foucault, 1995a, p. 98).

Thus, we are already confronted with a double marking in the statement: statements are simultaneously what history and the event make possible, as material practices, and what constrains language as a demand made by things—because there is paper, there is the lead of the typed characters, “[...] at the limit of language” (Foucault, 1995a, p. 127).

Still in his classical account, Foucault takes Copernicus’s sentence ‘The Earth is round’ to address enunciative materiality. The initial solution is not entirely opposed to a theory of ideologies as practice: the statement is not the same, just as it is not the same in the present, in which science itself is called into question, and we witness the popularization of what is known as ‘flat Earthism’. This enunciative economy opposes a linguistic referent to a ‘correlate of a statement’, understood as the more or less material domains that function as conditions for the emergence of statements and that call into question their repeatability among other statements. Yet there is another repercussion concerning “[...] conditions of utilization and reinvestment, the field of experience, of possible verifications” (Foucault, 1995a, p. 112). Note that the vocabulary points toward ‘experience’ and ‘verification’. What would this entail? Foucault is explicit and points out that there is a distinction between a ‘unity of matter’ and “[...] a complex regime of material institutions” (Foucault, 1995a, p. 116). These material institutions concern the series of technology and materiality, but the ambiguity separating the material and the historical exists only in regularities that make possible, we might say, the book as a parallelepiped and the links of a text, such as the one we are writing. In the case of ‘The Earth is round’, what possible implications might message applications have for the material production of discourses?

If there is a new materiality to be confronted, unlike Veyne, we might add that there is no ‘without matter’, but that there are regulated conditions under which materiality itself becomes visible and enunciable. These tenuous lines of implication and disimplication find in the concept of *dispositif* a new breath of air that seems prudent to consider. Deleuze’s (1998) proposition concerning the panopticon still offers certain advantages for reading the ‘semiotronics’ proposed by Foucault (2013a). This is our second point.

Deleuze opens the chapter ‘A New Cartographer’ with a non-innocent assertion: “It is as if, at last, something new were emerging from Marx [...]” (Deleuze, 1998, p. 42), to which we add: from Marx’s materialism. The difference of this materialism lies in a diffuse form of power that operates through technologies which are, at the same time, machines for saying and machines for seeing, as explained in the previous section. Deleuze takes the panopticon, read as a diagram—because more disjunctive than an *dispositif*: “[...] it ignores any distinction of form between a content and an expression, between a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation” (Deleuze, 1998, p. 44). To reach this conclusion, the panopticon is read as a Hjelmslevian quadrilateral: its regime of enunciation concerning madness, crime, or imprisonment has a ‘form of expression’ and a ‘form of content’—a comfort, so to speak, for a theory of discourse. Yet its regime of visibility—the hospital, the school, the factory—as architectural materiality involving the division of cells, the position of a surveillance center, and so forth, is likewise doubled into ‘form’ and ‘expression’. And to this quadrilateral Deleuze then adds the contingency of time and the event: things and words that relate to one another under certain

regimes, through certain injunctions, in response to certain urgencies, but whose plasticity continually calls into question the reality of discourse as truth and the reality of materiality as thing.

This Foucauldian materialism, demanded even in the lectures on the ancients, when Foucault questions true speech as a manifestation of material-corporeal truth, as will be discussed in the following section, has once again produced interesting theoretical effects. From a supposedly outdated problem, Lemke (2015) argues that materialism and its 'neo-materialist' counterparts have reappeared on the academic scene: "At least in academia, it has become respectable, reliable, and serious—even 'fashionable'" (Lemke, 2015, p. 490). As it reappears, this materialism often brings to light the Foucauldian innovation which, while drawing upon Marxian series, decenters them and demands from them an attentiveness to other levels of materiality—and thus, as in these volumes devoted to his centenary, we encounter genealogies of bodies, of algorithms, of reproductive technologies, and so forth.

The *dispositif*, then, once again gets attention precisely because of its material-discursive character, which complicates the place of discourse in explaining the 'production of things'. In this case, authors such as Karen Barad (2017) and Thomas Lemke (2021) not only assume the radical and material relationality of *dispositifs*, but also postulate an agential and distributed materiality between humans and nonhumans, between language and the world (Butturi Junior; Camozzato, 2023), following in the wake of what Michel Foucault suggested through his problematization of events and his demand for a "[...] materialism of the incorporeal [...]" to describe them (Foucault, 1971/1996, p. 58).

It is as an event, then, that the next section turns to the problem of the subject and its inscription in material *dispositifs*, as both a question and a possible invention.

5 THE SUBJECT AND THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

Michel Foucault states that man is a modern invention and, focusing on the relationship between subject and discourse, investigates the different ways in which human beings become subjects. Regarding the subject's insertion into discourse, Foucault (1992, p. 69–70) raises the following questions: "[...] under what conditions and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourses? What place can the subject occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it perform, and according to what rules?"

Following the direction indicated by these questions, Foucault (2003/2006b, pp. 55–56) discusses "[...] the linking of the subject-function to a particular body, which can only occur discontinuously, incidentally, momentarily, for example, in ceremonies." In this line of thought, the relationship between subject and body is explained to show that the subject cannot be reduced to a corporeal individual, but that a functioning body is needed for the exercise of the subject-function. What is at issue, however, is not the body, but the subject of action, historically produced by social and political exteriority. Indeed, as Foucault points out, the body has "[...] a 'soul' that inhabits it and brings it into existence, which is itself a piece in the domain exercised by power over the body" (Foucault, 2013a, p. 3). The soul is "[...] the subject of all these bodily and linguistic actions" (Foucault, 2004a, p. 60). And from the body "[...] all possible places, real or utopian, radiate" (Foucault, 2013b, p. 14). Such analyses and/or observations are possible through the functioning of discourse, understood as constitutive of the subject and also as that which operates in the production of subjectivity, an aspect reiterated in Foucault's words (2004a, p. 394): "[...] so that it [discourse] may become integrated into the individual and command their action, becoming, in a certain way, part of their muscles and nerves."

Considering these brief observations, the excerpts presented at the beginning of this text refer to bodies objectified by power-knowledge *dispositifs* that lead subjects to segregation. Madness and infamy are discursive objects that classify subjects and define the places occupied by the subjects produced by these discourses. Thus, the mad and the infamous have their bodies regulated, subjected to punishment or even extermination. Yet the mad and the infamous are presented as discourses in operation, discourses produced by *dispositifs* of power in relation to knowledge, which objectify subjects in relation to historically produced subjectivity, that is implicated in the constitution of the objects' madness and infamy. Within this framework, truth is responsible for defining

madness and infamy and, through discourse, objectifying the subjects encompassed by these classifications. Madness, for example, understood as a manifestation of subjectivity, is constituted as incompatible with the ordering of the social world, which entails the resulting divisive practices, such as the separation between the mad and the non-mad, the criminals and the normal. We observe that, ultimately, the subjects subjected to these interdictions have their souls removed from their bodies, for, even if only temporarily, they cease to be subjects of possible practices of freedom. The places that radiate from these bodies are those defined by an exteriority constituted by forms of knowledge that impose segregation upon them. Temporarily, because despite the impossibility of acting upon themselves, one may be “declared cured and discharged.”

Once it has been established that discursive practices function as practices of objectification and subjectivation, to write a critical history of subjectivity, Foucault (2004b, p. 221) inscribes the history “[...] of the relations between the subject and truth within the framework of a culture of the self [...]” characterized by mutations and transformations. These are the relations between the subject and everything that surrounds them: “[...] in what way can what we know about the gods, human beings, and the world have an effect on the nature of the subject, or, rather, on their way of acting, their *ethos*” (Foucault, 2004b, p. 290). A subject’s way of being, that is, their *ethos*, is produced and modified by movements external to them, by discourses that capture them (as we have pointed out in the excerpts). In contrast to this line of argument, we bring to bear the following words of Foucault (2004b, p. 276): “[...] I am in fact interested in the way in which the subject constitutes themselves actively, through practices of the self; these practices are not, however, something that the individual invents themselves.” The non-invention of the self reiterates the constitution of the subject through discourse; that is, the subject is spoken by the discourses that constitute them, while at the same time enunciating them; yet, for this to occur, the subject must find themselves within practices of freedom.

Taken as a whole, Foucault’s work, as well as the critical studies that engage with it, problematizes the subject and subjectivity through questions such as: What forces construct the subject? What are the power relations that construct it? How do modern forms of knowledge produce subjects in various fields? (Foucault, 1983/1995b). In this context, as Prado Filho (2005) and Fernandes (2012) reiterate, Foucault shifts subjectivity from the domain of knowledge toward that of the body, and continues to ask: how is the body produced? How is sexuality constructed, and how do we use it? Ultimately, how is the subject subjectivized? This is not a relationship between the subject and themselves from the perspective of interiority, but rather a matter of governing the self.

The reflections coined by Foucault also bring biopower into the discussion: power over life and over the body, whether through forms of domination, as seen in the analyses of the excerpts revisited in the previous sections, or through techniques and practices of the self, or through governmentality (the government of the self by oneself and by others; or the government of oneself and of others). A form of governmentality emerges, understood as “[...] a strategic field of power relations [...] that must refer to an ethics of the subject defined by the relationship of the self to itself” (Foucault, 2004a, pp. 306–307). There is an entire “[...] technology of power over the body that the technology of the ‘soul’ [...] can neither conceal nor compensate for, for the simple reason that it is merely one of its instruments” (Foucault, 2013a, p. 29, emphasis added). In this line of thought, the soul, as we have indicated, is understood as the subject of bodily and linguistic action, upon which relations of knowledge and power operate. “[...] The subject-function comes to fit precisely the somatic singularity: the body, its gestures, its place, its changes, its strength, its lifespan, its discourses—it is all of this to which the subject-function comes to be applied and exercised” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 69).

After scrutinizing a problematic of the subject through which “[...] one would seek to bring out, in its historicity, the different modes of being of subjectivity, [Foucault proceeds] to the analysis of the modalities and techniques of the relation to oneself, or, again, to the history of this pragmatics of the subject” (Foucault, 2010, p. 42). But earlier, Foucault (1995c, pp. 231–232) had already enumerated three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects:

[...] i) ‘the mode of inquiry that seeks to attain the status of a science.’ The subject envisioned as the object of a field of knowledge; ii) ‘dividing practices.’ The subject divided within himself in relation to others [...] criminals and ‘good boys’; iii) ‘the way in which a human being becomes a subject’.

And discourse is an integral part of a game of struggles, of antagonisms inherent to the lives of subjects in history. As we have already shown by revisiting the initial excerpts, madness and infamy result from discursive constructions sustained by dispositives of power

and regimes of knowledge, and objectify subjects divided in relation to others; within these antagonisms, modes of subject construction exist.

With its constant mutations, the subject is an object constantly reinvented, or reconstructed, through the discourses that border it. And “[...] language seems always to be populated by the other, by the absent, by the distant, by the faraway; it is haunted by absence” (Foucault, 1995a, p. 126). Inscribed within this line of thought, when referring to himself, Foucault (1995a, p. 20) asserts: “[...] do not ask me who I am and do not tell me to remain the same.” Thus, “[...] the subject—the ‘I’ who speaks—fragments, spreads out, and disperses until it disappears into this empty space” (Foucault, 1990, p. 13).

Having made these considerations, which indicate discourse as the threads of a filigree that adorns Michel Foucault’s thought, in the next section, which serves as the conclusion of this text while also opening the way for further research in Foucauldian Discourse Studies, we will briefly reflect on the studies gathered in this publication commemorating the centenary of this thinker.

6 THEMATIC AXES OF THE DOSSIER

The two volumes of this dossier are part of the academic initiatives celebrating Michel Foucault’s centenary. They represent a tribute that reflects a re-evaluation of a thinker who always rejected closed systems in favor of a constant capacity for shifting perspectives. With this in mind, the seventeen articles gathered in this volume demonstrate that honoring Foucault goes beyond merely reaffirming his legacy; it involves applying his ideas in new contexts, thereby challenging his analytical tools when confronted with contemporary objects, new configurations of the diagram of power, and the potential connections between subjectivity and truth. Like a rhizome, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective (1980/1995), this Dossier brings together articles that link interconnected themes to generate knowledge about the subject, power relations, and discourses in various manifestations of language, highlighting their multiplicity. In this context, the gathering of articles can be seen as an attempt to map research on these themes, highlighting thematic axes that go beyond mapping studies conducted in Brazil. Instead, it is an act of resistance by the authors against the various forms of domination and subjection that currently exist.

The first axis groups several works that discuss the connections between discourse, body, violence, and sexuality. In *Violence as a discursive event: Foucauldian contributions*, Maria Eduarda de Paulo Reis and Cleudemar Alves Fernandes treat violence as a discursive event and question the processes of its constitution, circulation, and production of subjectivities. Nelly Andrea Guerrero Bautista analyzes the Colombian magazine *Ventana Gay* to discuss discursive processes of normalization of male homosexuality in *Cleaning the window: The sanitization of male homosexuality in Ventana Gay*. In the text *Discourse as producer of sexuality and the surveilled body: Michel Foucault and the São Paulo Course (1975)*, Marília Amorim and Priscila Piazzentini Vieira articulate sexuality, surveillance, and the Brazilian political context based on Foucault’s time at the University of São Paulo. Also, the conduct of male governance is addressed by Aline Salles Panham and Bruno Franceschini in *Reflective groups of men who commit violence against women: A discursive reading from a Foucauldian perspective*. Concluding this thematic axis, Deise Ferreira Viana de Castro problematizes the relationships between power, gender, motherhood, and incarceration in *Foucault, power, motherhood, and female incarceration in Brazil*.

The second axis brings together studies on neoliberal rationality, labor, education, and subjectivation. Luciana Aparecida Silva de Azeredo and Laís Camargo de Barros discuss the relationships between work, life, subjectivation, and resistance in *When life becomes work: Subjectivation and resistance in the neoliberal fabric in “I am saving myself for when Carnival comes”*. The production of the self-entrepreneurial subject is addressed by Patrícia Diógenes de Melo, Izaías Serafim de Lima Neto, and Francisco Vieira da Silva in *Neoliberal rationality and the entrepreneurial self on social media: Problematizing the phenomenon of child coaches*. In the field of education, Adéli Bortolon Bazza and Gabrielle de Fátima de Brito discuss the contemporary processes of the constitution of the teaching subject in *Ethical constitution of the teaching subject in times of the platformization of education*. Whereas Matheus Trindade Velasques and Fernanda Wanderer analyze the emergence of digital competence as an educational tool in *The digital competence device in education in OECD and Brazilian documents: A response to digital urgency*. This axis is completed with Rafael Araldi Vaz and Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar y Soler, in *Manual for secondary school teachers in*

Mexico (1968): Archaeogenealogy of a pedagogical device, investigating the historical constitution of pedagogical practices and knowledge.

The third axis focuses on work dedicated to media, technologies, and contemporary devices for the production and circulation of discourses. **Laís Di Lauro** and **Regina Baracuh**y problematize the algorithmic regulation of visibility and discursive circulation on social media in *Towards an Instagrammical archaeogenealogy: Shadowbanning as a technology of algorithmic governmentality*. An analysis of the interplay between image, music, and discourse in the production of emotions and subject positions is carried out by **Íngrid Lívero** and **Pedro Navarro** in *Speech and K-dramas: The image and the soundtrack as an dispositif in the discursivization of emotions and infamous subjects*. The relationships between race, knowledge, and power are discussed by **Aline Mendonça Santana** and **Andréa Costa da Silva** in *Black population health: Race and class in academic power-knowledge discourse*. For their part, **Ticiano Jardim Pimenta** and **Luciana Carmona Garcia**, in *Critique of identitarianism and regimes of truth: An archaeogenealogical reading of a media archive in contemporary Brazil*, investigate the emergence of “identitarianism” as a category of contestation within the contemporary media archive.

The final section brings together works that more directly revisit issues concerning subjectivity and Foucault’s conceptual tools. In *Heterotopias, or the desire to be otherwise*, **Fábio Feltrin** articulates heterotopia, desire, and the production of other modes of existence. **Tiago Viotto da Silva** addresses writing as a practice of transformation and discontinuity in *Writing so as not to die? Foucault and writing as a practice of discontinuity*. Closing the issue, **Jade Luiza Andrade Ferraz** and **Francisca Carolina Lima da Silva** establish a dialogue between Foucault and Edward Said based on the notions of discourse, archive, and authorship in *Michel Foucault and Edward Said: Discourse, archive, and authorship in Orientalism (1978)*.

Overall, the articles collected here confirm the relevance of Michel Foucault’s thought regarding the conditions that enable what can be said, seen, felt, and lived within specific historical formations. This was made possible because the authors did not shy away from the task of using the philosopher’s toolkit to describe and understand discursive events drawn from digital media, feminist practices, urban representations, literature, academia, and more-than-human ontologies.

Given their rhizomatic nature, the compiled studies demonstrate that ‘100 Foucault’ (1 and 2) does not represent a unified whole, but rather a multiplicity in constant motion as it investigates the limits and possibilities of discourse. From the outset, a specific desire has driven us as the organizers of this dossier: for us, commemorating Michel Foucault would only be meaningful if we accepted the challenge of confronting the restlessness sparked by the conflict-ridden relationships between power and knowledge, between dispositifs and resistance, and between processes of subjectivation and the forces that transform individuals toward a more creative life.

REFERENCES

- BARAD, K. Performatividade pós-humanista: para entender como a matéria chega à matéria. *Vazantes*, v. 1, n. 1, p. 6-34, 2017. Disponível em: <https://repositorio.ufc.br/handle/riufc/33329>.
- BUTTURI JUNIOR, A.; CAMOZZATO, N. M. Prolegômenos a uma análise neomaterialista dos discursos. In: SEVERO, C. G.; BUSATO, M. E. K. (orgs.). *Cosmopolítica e linguagem*. [S. l.]: Letraria, 2023. p. 76-95.
- CASTRO, E. *Vocabulário de Foucault: um percurso pelos seus temas, conceitos e autores*. Tradução de I. M. Xavier. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2009.
- CHIGNOLA, S. Sobre o dispositivo: Foucault, Agamben, Deleuze. *Cadernos IHU Ideias*, v. 1, n. 1, p. 1-32, 2003. Disponível em: https://www.academia.edu/8544924/Sobre_o_dispositivo_Foucault_Agamben_Deleuze.

- COURTINE, J.-J. *Decifrar o corpo: pensar com Foucault*. Tradução de F. Morás. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013.
- DELEUZE, G. *Foucault*. Tradução de C. S. Martins. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1998.
- DELEUZE, G. O que é um dispositivo? In: DELEUZE, G. *Dois regimes de loucos: textos e entrevistas 1975-1995*. Tradução de G. Ivo. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016. p. 317-326.
- DELEUZE, G. *Michel Foucault: as formações históricas*. Tradução de C. Medeiros; M. A. Marino. São Paulo: n-1 Edições; Filosófica Politeia, 2017.
- DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. *Mil platôs: capitalismo e esquizofrenia*. Tradução de A. Guerra Neto; C. P. Costa. 2. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 1995. v. 1.
- ERIBON, D. *Michel Foucault: uma biografia*. Tradução de H. Feist. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990.
- FERNANDES, C. A. *Discurso e sujeito em Michel Foucault*. São Paulo: Intermeios, 2012.
- FOUCAULT, M. *A história da loucura na idade clássica*. Tradução de J. T. Coelho Netto. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1972.
- FOUCAULT, M. *O nascimento da clínica*. Tradução de R. Machado. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1977.
- FOUCAULT, M. Sobre a história da sexualidade. In: MACHADO, R. (org. e trad.). *Microfísica do poder*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1979. p. 243-276.
- FOUCAULT, M. *História da sexualidade 1: a vontade de saber*. Tradução de M. T. C. Albuquerque; J. A. G. Albuquerque. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1988.
- FOUCAULT, M. *O pensamento do exterior*. Tradução de N. Falci. São Paulo: Princípio, 1990.
- FOUCAULT, M. *O que é um autor?* Tradução de J. A. B. Miranda; A. F. Cascais. Lisboa: Passagem, 1992.
- FOUCAULT, M. *Arqueologia do saber*. Tradução de L. F. B. Neves. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1995a.
- FOUCAULT, M. Sobre a genealogia da ética: uma revisão do trabalho. In: DREYFUS, H.; RABINOW, P. (org.). *Michel Foucault, uma trajetória filosófica: para além do estruturalismo e da hermenêutica*. Tradução de V. Porto Carrero. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1995b. p. 253-278.
- FOUCAULT, M. O sujeito e o poder. In: DREYFUS, H.; RABINOW, P. (org.). *Michel Foucault, uma trajetória filosófica: para além do estruturalismo e da hermenêutica*. Tradução de V. Porto Carrero. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1995c. p. 229-249.
- FOUCAULT, M. *A ordem do discurso*. Tradução de L. F. A. Sampaio. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1996.
- FOUCAULT, M. *A hermenêutica do sujeito*. Tradução de M. A. Fonseca; S. T. Muchail. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2004a.
- FOUCAULT, M. A ética do cuidado de si como prática da liberdade. In: MOTTA, M. B. (org.). *Ditos & escritos V: ética, sexualidade, política*. Tradução de E. Monteiro; I. A. D. Barbosa. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2004b. p. 264-287.
- FOUCAULT, M. *Entrevistas*. Organização de R. Pol-Droit. Tradução de V. Portocarrero; G. G. Carneiro. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 2006a.

FOUCAULT, M. *O poder psiquiátrico*. Tradução de E. Brandão. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2006b.

FOUCAULT, M. *O governo de si e dos outros: curso no Collège de France (1982-1983)*. Tradução de E. Brandão. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010.

FOUCAULT, M. *Vigiar e punir*. Tradução de R. Ramalheite. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013a.

FOUCAULT, M. *O corpo utópico, as heterotopias*. Tradução de S. T. Muchail. São Paulo: n-1 Edições, 2013b.

LEMKE, T. Varieties of materialism. *BioSocieties*, v. 10, n. 4, p. 489-502, 2015. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/biosoc.2015.41>.

LEMKE, T. *The government of things: Foucault and the new materialisms*. New York: NYU Press, 2021.

LEMKE, T. Emaranhados material-discursivos: entendendo o conceito de dispositivo. Tradução de A. Butturi Junior; C. A. Lara. In: BUTTURI JUNIOR, A.; BUZATO, M.; CAMOZZATO, N. M. (org.). *Pós-humano, novos materialismos e linguagem*. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2024. p. 201-241.

MARX, K. Teses sobre Feuerbach. In: MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. (org.). *A ideologia alemã*. Tradução de R. Enderle; N. Schneider; L. Martorano. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 2007. p. 533-535.

MERLEAU-PONTY, M. *Fenomenologia da percepção*. Tradução de C. A. R. Moura. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2011.

NAVARRO, P. Acontecimento discursivo e efeitos de poder sobre o sujeito idoso. In: BUTTURI JUNIOR, A.; SEVERO, C. G. (org.). *Foucault e as linguagens*. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2018. p. 251-271.

PRADO FILHO, K. Uma história crítica da subjetividade no pensamento de Michel Foucault. In: FALCÃO, L. F.; SOUZA, P. (org.). *Michel Foucault: perspectivas*. Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé, 2005. p. 41-50.

SARGENTINI, V. Dispositivo: um aporte metodológico para o estudo do discurso. In: SOUSA, K. M.; PAIXÃO, U. (org.). *Dispositivos de poder/saber em Michel Foucault: biopolítica, corpo e subjetividade*. São Paulo: Intermeios; Goiânia: UFG, 2015.

VEYNE, P. *Foucault: seu pensamento, sua pessoa*. Tradução de M. J. Moraes. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2011.



Published on October 15, 2026.