

**ON MODERNIST SOCIAL SCIENCES' UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY AND THE
ROLE OF POVERTY EXPERTS IN THE "CONDUCT OF CONDUCT" OF HUMAN
SUBJECTS: A CRITIQUE**

**SOBRE AS CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS MODERNISTAS, O ENTENDIMENTO DA POBREZA E
A FUNÇÃO DOS PERITOS DE POBREZA NA "CONDUTA DA CONDUTA" DE
SUJEITOS HUMANOS: UMA CRÍTICA.**

**A RESPECTO DEL ENTENDIMIENTO DE LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES MODERNISTAS
SOBRE LA POBREZA Y EL PAPEL DE LOS PERITOS DE LA POBREZA EN LA
"CONDUCTA DE LA CONDUTA" DE SUJETOS HUMANOS: UNA CRÍTICA.**

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Abstract:

The purpose of my paper is to show that modernist social sciences have been directly involved in the construction and reproduction of poverty, and in the "conduct of conduct" of the scientifically labeled poor or the produced and reproduced "object" of poverty experts.

Keywords: Poststructuralism, Foucault, subjectification, power, expertise.

Resumo:

O propósito de meu artigo é mostrar que as ciências sociais modernistas têm sido diretamente envolvidas na construção e reprodução da pobreza e na "conduta da conduta" daqueles seres humanos cientificamente rotulados pobres, ou o produzido e reproduzido "objeto" dos peritos da pobreza.

Palavras-chave: Pós-estruturalismo, Foucault, subjetivação, poder, expertise.

Resumen:

El propósito de mi artículo es mostrar que las ciencias sociales modernistas han sido partícipes en la construcción y reproducción de la pobreza y en la "conducta de la conducta" de aquellos seres humanos científicamente rotulados como pobres, o el producido y reproducido "objeto" de los peritos de la pobreza.

Palabras clave: Post estructuralismo; Foucault; subjetivación; poder; expertise.

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I INTRODUCTION

The late Michel Foucault observed that we need to engage in a critical evaluation of our present. He referred to this task as an “ontology of the present.”(1) And by that he meant, I believe, that we need to know, to find out, who we really are. While there is indeed a great and urgent need for an ontology of our present, I just do not see – and neither did Foucault, I think – in our present or in the near future the “conditions of possibility” for the initiation of the rather difficult journey into the ontological nature of our present, into a genealogical exploration of the non-transcendental but indeed contingent and “particular historical [and material] conditions which produced the types of ‘scientific’ truth peculiar to our society...” to our time. (2) So, we are doomed to continue to exist and live our highly administered lives under the illusions of an imaginary world brought to us by the philosophers of the Enlightenment and reproduced by the disciplines that transform individuals into “docile” subjects. Let’s look at just two examples of the illusions inherited from the Enlightenment.

Consider Humanism. Modernists still embrace ontologically and epistemologically the illusion of an objectively stable, sovereign and self-transparent Subject. The humanist tradition or *weltanschauung* still maintains as its foundation, the Cartesian *Cogito (Cogito Ergo Sum)* or the Kantian autonomous agent or subject. And it is this subject that is the “source and basis of all knowledge,” that dichotomizes human existence into “subjectivity” and “objectivity”, or “facts” and “values” (3) It is on this illusory self-constituted, centered and rational subject that classical Western philosophy and Political theory is built.

Consider the idea of Progress. Commonly represented via the metaphors of the Cycle and the Arrow, this assumption of evolutionary continuity argues that the present is better and more advanced than the past, and that the future will be even better and more advanced than the present. Originating in the Hebrew Bible, and adopted by early Christianity, the assumption of continuity was appropriated by the philosophers of the Enlightenment and Modernist social thinkers such as Darwin, Hegel, Marx and Spencer. Albeit in different ways, all those social thinkers postulated that humanity – in its biological form, and human history – in its anthropological and social configurations, follows a teleological and evolutionary journey towards progress, towards change for the better.

These are illusions – or secular superstitions – of Enlightenment. We have had throughout human history progress yes, but also much primitivism and barbarism. For a long, long time, we had in the West and in the East, the barbaric and terrorizing practices of imperialism, of colonialism. We had the violence of Leopold’s Congo, the violence of Apartheid and Jim Crow, the violence of the Nazi Holocaust, the violence of two atomic detonations in the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the violent ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, the violence of our present *vis-à-vis* the condition of the earth we will be passing on to future generations, and the violence of poverty.

The purpose of my paper is to show that modernist social sciences have been directly involved in the production and reproduction of poverty, and concomitantly in the “conduct of conduct” of the scientifically labeled “poor” or the produced and reproduced “object” of poverty experts. I shall first submit a limited elaboration of Modernist social sciences’ understanding of poverty. Secondly, informed by Foucault’s analytical work, I submit a critique of Modernist social sciences’ studies of poverty, and show that Modernist poverty experts not only have been constructing poverty, they have been conducting the conduct of poverty-subjects. This will be followed by a brief conclusion.

II MODERNIST SOCIAL SCIENCES’ UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

The received view is that “Modernity” emerged in Europe in the course of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. It was given full life, however, in the 18th century by the Enlightenment philosophers “to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic,” so that “the arts and sciences could promote not only control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings.” (4)

We know that from the very beginning human sciences, sociology in particular, have been modernist sciences. These sciences are the consequence of the historical “conditions of possibility” brought about by social change, by Modernity. The founding fathers of human sciences were, of course, Modernists, and all remained glued to modernistic thinking that was anchored in the natural science of physics and the Newtonian mechanistic *weltanschauung*. Thus, the modern world was ontologically “given” and epistemologically the object of inquiry of the new sciences. To Modernists in

both positivist or non-positivist incarnations, everything that exists in the social world has an objective reality, including poverty and the poor.

The literature about the Modernist study of poverty is vast and not new. It goes back to Charles Booth's 17-volume study of poverty in London in 1889, (5) and to Seebohm Rowntree's study of the poor in the northern English city of York, in 1902 (6)

Today the poverty–knowledge industry employs thousands of individuals, including, of course, poverty experts. The United Nations studies poverty and includes its findings in its annual Human Report. The World Bank is active in the study of poverty and also publishes its studies. The National Center for Children in Poverty is engaged in the study of children in poverty nationally and internationally.

Modernist social scientists perceive poverty as being either 'Absolute' or 'Relative'. Absolute poverty refers to the inability of the poor to afford the basic or minimal necessities of life such as food or shelter. Relative poverty is based on a more explicit socially constructed belief about the universality of a certain level of standard of living for every member of a society, or humanity. Most of the research work on measuring poverty is based on this definition of poverty – Relative Poverty. It considers standard of living as measured by income inequality.

While other variables may also be looked at, such as health care, family structure, employment, etc., income distribution is the variable most often analyzed statistically. A good example is the methodology used by the U.S. Census Bureau to determine poverty.

After computing income levels and assigning the individual to one of 48 thresholds, which vary according to family size and ages of the family members, it then classifies the individual poor. The currently used poverty thresholds were originally derived in 1963-64 when President Lyndon Johnson adopted the U.S. Department of Agriculture food budgets designed for families under economic stress and data about what portion of their income families spent on food.

With regards to the theoretical explanations of poverty developed by Modernist social sciences, the theorizing is dependent on whether the individual social thinker is a "Systemic" or "Critical" modernist. (7) Systemic Modernists are not only defenders of the Enlightenment project, of reason and rationality, they are also naturalists and positivists in the sense that they utilize the methodology of natural sciences in the study and explanation of human social phenomena. It is through neutral natural science, they

postulate, that social problems such as poverty will be understood and solved. Yes, Systemic modernists view poverty and the poor as “social problems”.

Critical Modernists are those thinkers who have not forgotten that the Enlightenment was a critique of excessive religious authority and belief in the power of reason and science to expose socially constructed restrictions upon individual autonomy. Moreover, with Kant’s famous evocation *Aude Saper*, or “dare to reason”, dare to know, Critical Modernist thinking represents the reflexive and emancipatory dimension of Modernist thought.

But, while they do not accept uncritically the natural sciences and the generally received view of their neutrality, Critical Modernists join Systemic Modernists in the embracement of the “humanist belief in the constitutive power of the human subject, that is, the sovereign subject which is able to bring under control, in the service of its own authenticated interests, both its natural and social environment.”(8)

Both Critical and Systemic Modernists, therefore, honor the Enlightenment illusion that knowledge sets us free from power, that there is a necessary iron curtain between knowledge and power, between ideology and science. Knowledge, reason, is to both Systemic and Critical modernists the means to identify and put an end to the irrationality of the modern world.

A pervasive biological determinism, individualism and positivism characterize much of the Systemic Modernist social science perspective about the causal factors of poverty. Systemic Modernist social sciences unabashedly postulate that poverty is the result of genetic inferiority, of psychologically defective individuals, and of subcultures of poverty. We find examples of this conservative view on the causes of poverty in H. Spencer, Murray, Herrnstein, Oscar Lewis and others.

Critical Modernists, however, faced with the paradox of “poverty amidst plenty”, and rejecting reductionistic explanations, typically locate the causal variables of poverty in macro variables such as the economic system, politics and ideology. They argue that we know all about poverty but are unwillingly to do the “scientifically informed right thing.”

So, while Systemic Modernist social sciences postulate that poverty is caused by genes, individual failings, and by cultural “deficits”, the Critical Modernists argue that poverty is caused by macro, structural causal variables.

III POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF MODERNIST SOCIAL SCIENCES' UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

A) THE POSTMODERNISM TURN

1) Some social thinkers have used the prefix or concept “post” to show that there has been tremendous economic, political, and social change in recent times and that consequently Modernity has given away to a new epoch, a new *Zeitgeist*: the age of Post-Modernity. We are told that postmodern society is the result of the shift from industrial to post-industrial society, the result of the advanced stages of capitalism, of the development of information technology. In this new era of Post-Modernity, production has declined in social significance, and a corresponding increase has occurred in the significance of consumption. According to Lyotard, “societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age, and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age.” (9)

2) For other social thinkers influenced by the work of French Post-Structuralists, the term Post modernity does not stand for societal change, epochal break, but for a critique of the Enlightenment Project or Modernist epistemology and, of course, ontology. Modernist social sciences are critiqued for their foundationalist, totalizing and universalistic postulations or grand-narratives. Absolutist transcendental categories postulated by Descartes and Kant, grand-narratives or comprehensive world views, and idealistic human communicative communities are rejected. (10)

One is not wrong in observing that while the Enlightenment freed humanity, in the Western world, from an ancient superstition, it gave rise at the same time to a new form of superstition. God and theology were replaced with Reason, Rationality, and Science. It was believed that the replacement of God the Knower, with Man, the new Knower, would bring emancipation, progress, or simply the good life. This has not occurred. Worse, instead of being emancipated, humanity has been subjected to new, more effective and less transparent forms or regimes of truth, of disciplinary power.

Instead of emancipating humanity, and instead of bringing progress Modernity has required the activities of making individual biological-human beings into new “subjects.”

In Medieval society, Foucault observes, a sovereign king monopolized power and exercised absolute control over his subjects – subjects, meaning simply the subjects of the

king – through the threat of open and public display of force, of violence. Sovereign power was exercised over the body of the subject by torture and even death. For the power of the sovereign king was the power to take life or let live. It was a power of “deduction” or extraction.

But while Foucault has observed that since the 17th century the West has undergone a very profound transformation in terms of mechanism of power, modernist philosophy and human sciences have not yet understood the practice and mechanisms of the new forms of power because Modernist philosophy is still anchored into the ontologically unproblematized Cartesian cogito or Subject. This is clearly demonstrated in the way Modernist thinking has viewed and still views power in human societies. Power is viewed always negatively, located or concentrated either in the State, or in an Elite or Class, and considered fundamentally as the activity that oppresses the “essential subjectivity.” of the individual. Hence, the effect of power is to crush the Cogito. This is so, because Modernist conceptual principles give a priori primacy to a self constituted subject. It follows therefore, that power is the social mechanism that oppressively crushes the subject that already existed prior to its encounter with power. Power is the mechanism that excludes, dominates, represses, oppresses and prohibits.

Consequently, Modernists have identified the presence and exercise of power in three distinct social contexts. In the first – and most common because of its empirical verification – is the situation of **A** ordering, or coercing **B** to do something **B** does not want to do or would not do ordinarily. In the second situation, **A** has the ability (power) of preventing **B** from doing what **B** wants or would like to do. And in the third situation, there is no ordering, no coercion, no forcing, because **B** is willing to do voluntarily what **A** desires or wants **B** to do, even if in so doing, **B** acts contrary to her “objective, real interests.” In the third situation, **A** exercises power surreptitiously via the manipulation of what **B** desires, wants. Propaganda or brain-washing are good examples.

But, in spite of the fact that Modernists are sensitive to the different ways in which power can be exercised, they still see power as fundamentally concentrated, negative and oppressive, and more importantly, have accepted the “**A's**” and the “**B's**” as given. (11) Social life is naturally about the powerful and the powerless.

Foucault's ‘analytics’ of the nature of power and of its effects in modern societies is diametrically opposed to the fashionable and modernist view. The operation and effect of

power takes a totally opposing direction. First, Foucault does not take the subjectivity or individuality of both the “**A’s**” and the “**B’s**” as “biologically given”. “Subjects [the **A’s** and the **B’s**] are understood as social constructions, whose formations can be historically described.” (12)

Second, power is not Negative but very much Positive. In its positivism, not negativity, power does not crush an essential, ahistorical and asocial subjectivity. On the contrary, Power, since the beginning of the modern era, has been exercised to promote, cultivate and nurture subjectivity. The violence of the sovereign power of life and death, of “deduction” or extraction, has been replaced by what Foucault calls Bio-Power. Exercised at both the micro or molecular level of human individual life, and at the macro or molar level of human populations, the task of Bio-Power is “production” not “deduction” and to foster life, not to take life. Finally, bio-power is dispersed, not concentrated, and it is the power of Modernity, of the new Age of Reason.

But besides being the age of reason, Modernity is also, and very essentially so, the age of the emergence and development of a capitalist social organization, of a new social world. This radically new social world demanded a radical transformation of the human individual, for it could not maintain the common ancient practice of destroying bodies, of taking life.

As Foucault observes, “the two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital can not be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them.(13) In this new social formation, therefore, the new social utility of individual human beings takes a radical new dimension for it is substantially increased. But it is precisely this new utility that requires a new political economy of power based on a discipline technology that directly acts upon the body of the individual and penetrates the most minute everyday activities of individuals’ lives. The new productive human individual must be made into a proper Subject.

Through a variety of disciplines that operate at different sites, such as family, schools, workplace, hospitals, military, asylums, churches, etc., the modern individual is made Subject. And this process of subjectification is initiated at “the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.” (14)

This will be so, because he subjectified, individualized, and made “docile” individual of modernity is concomitantly made also into an object of inquiry by and for the exact same disciplines that were actively engaged in the process of its subjectification. This I consider the double-cruelty of Modernity. Individuals are first made subjects, and then are made objects of scientific inquiry. The task of the human sciences or disciplines is to search for causal factors “inside” the previously made subjects by such “outside” disciplines.

The modern individual is made and studied via five specific procedures or devices:

1. hierarchical observation, 2. normalizing judgment, 3. examination, 4. surveillance, 5. panopticon. Conceptualized by Jeremy Bentham in 1791, the Panopticon was a radical way of exercising power in a prison: it enabled the surveillance of human beings whereby the observer is not seen by the observed. The result is that surveillance can be exercised by few observers and, much more crucial is the fact that not knowing when and if they are being watched, prisoners assume they are watched all the time and thus engage actively in the surveillance not only of themselves but also of fellow prisoners.

While never actually built, the Panopticon – the icon of a new technology of power - was an architectural design of surveillance. Hence it had two limitations: it was a spatial and thus a fixed arrangement, and the surveillance was only visual.

Today, thanks to the advancements of technology, the Panopticon of our time has no limitations. It is no longer spatially fixed, it is instead ubiquitous and omnipresent. And not only does it see what we do and where we are, it can listen to our speech and read the words that we write closely and from afar. In the “carceral” society brought about by Modernity, the purpose of the panopticon has penetrated all social institutions and arrangements and thus is present in every aspect of our everyday lives.

Foucault reminds us also that “the art of punishing in the regime of disciplinary [or bio] power is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. Bio-power brings five quite distinct operations into play. It “differentiates individuals from one another, compares, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short it normalizes.” (15) Placed in a “field of comparison”, the modern individual is normalized and, consequently, abnormalized.

For “the judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social-worker-judge, [the lawyer-judge, and the poverty-expert-judge]; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative

is based; and each individual, [John and Mary] wherever [they] may find] themselves] subject to... [the norm] [their] body... [their] gestures... [their] behavior..., [their] aptitudes... [their] achievements.” (16) In Modernity, the conducting of conduct is the task of the “judges of normality.”

Because of the limitations of space, I will point out just briefly that as Foucault observes Liberal Political Philosophy or Liberalism, was first a “critique of State Reason” and then a radical transformation in the practice of governing or of conducting the conduct of others. (17) The critiques developed by the “organic intellectuals” speaking on behalf of the emerging bourgeoisie, such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, postulated that it was impossible for the state to possess knowledge about the interests and preferences of individuals in the economic sphere. Under the rationalities of governing known as *Polizeiweissenschaft*, or the Science of Policy, and reason of the State, or *Raison D'Etat*, the state was the institution that alone regulated everything and gathered information on a variety of characteristics about the population. The word Statistics stood originally for the practice of gathering data about the population by and for the state.

Of fundamental importance to my argument here about the conduct of conduct by experts, is that Liberalism called into question the unity of knowledge and government practiced under the previous *Polizeiweissenschaft* and *Raison D'Etat*. And in so doing, what Liberalism initiates is a new relation between Knowledge and Government which at first gives the new science of political economy an autonomy and distance from the state control commonly exercised under Mercantilism, but eventually this new relation will be extended to other knowledge domains located in the new Civil Society, not in state bureaucracies.

The critical consequences of the new division between the State field and the Civil Society field, is that a) knowledge and power are to become different faces of the same coin, and b) that the conduct of conduct of individuals and groups ceased to be exercised exclusively by state bureaucrats and functionaries. Much governing or conducting began being exercised “at a distance” from the state, by increasingly new “domain[s] outside politics” but inside Civil Society. (18)

Karl Marx was wrong. He limited or reduced the explanation of control, exploitation and inequality among human beings to one cause: the will to ownership, the will to capital accumulation. Marx failed to see that there have been since Modernity, other “causes” or

better, historical “productive” reasons that gave rise to human inequality. These reasons are the “will to knowledge”, the “will to truth,” the “will to power.” They are neither located in the objective activities of capital accumulation, nor in the subjective superstructure sphere. They are somewhere, in between, here and there.

Consider the term “Discipline. In a very perceptive way, Foucault recognizes two meanings: a field of study and a system of control. Hence, he can observe correctly that, through knowledge/power, the “disciplines – subjugate the [individual] body,” at the molecular or micro level, and “control or regulate larger populations” at the macro or molar level. (19)

Modernist epistemology and ontology have been obstacles for the understanding that power to rule, to govern, and to conduct the conduct of others is not concentrated in a big brother, in a biologically determined elite, or in a hegemonic economic class. Power does not come from above exclusively. It comes from all directions, from above, from below and it horizontally traverses us. Having been subjectified and individualized, we are, all of us, conducted by the power of the Norm.

But, not only are we unaware of that, we are equally unaware that we are concomitantly, conductors of the conduct of others. In the home, in the bedroom, in the office, in the classroom, in the hospital, in the laboratory, in binary situations such of observer/observed, anywhere and everywhere, we, the “subjects of power...play [willingly] a part in its operations” and reproduction. (20) Governing, is not the exclusive task of state actors located in state sites, for it is and has been exercised by us all, while much more efficiently by experts.

Increasingly institutionalized in its professional form, expertise – via its truth claims – has played a fundamental part in the process of governing, in the process of conducting the conduct of others, of “governing the soul”. Foucault is correct when he observes that “government” is a process that is “at once internal and external to the state.”(21) Both human beings and human societies are constructs.

“Systemic” and “Critical” Modernist social scientists must cease to accept truth and social reality as being apophantic. There is nothing “out there”, nothing “real” to be discovered, to be explained. Modernist social sciences concepts of ‘causal factors’, ‘causal mechanisms’ and ‘causal powers’ must be removed from usage and replaced with notions

of “productive” contingent historical “conditions of possibility”. Modernist social thinkers must give up Platonist reifications.

Poverty, for example, is not real. Poverty is an invention, as madness, as race, gender and sex, are inventions. In his excellent archeology of poverty Majid Rahnema [1992] argues that “poverty is a myth, a construct and invention of a particular civilization.” With the emergence of capitalism in Europe, views and management of poverty were changed. Poverty and the poor were increasingly considered a social problem requiring intervention and policing not only family life, but also education, the work place, and in the creation of welfare assistance programs. In modern times and in capitalist societies the poor are commonly perceived to be “deficient” or “lacking” some qualities or some things “necessary to life. But this common perception of poverty, as Rahnema observes, begs the questions “what is necessary and for whom?” and “who is qualified to define ‘necessity’? If the answer is that “necessity” is what a capitalist and market society determines it to be, what better evidence do we need to show the artificial, constructed, invented, and relative nature of the concept poverty.(22)

Nevertheless, the Modernist hegemonic or dominant discourse, or “regime of truth” of poverty studies and measures, or theories and methods, understands and explains poverty via a scientific objectivistic and positivistic language or discourse. Modernists are still unaware that “discourse,” as Foucault argues, is not limited to linguistic utterances but refers to “a body of ideas, concepts and beliefs which become established as knowledge or as accepted world view. These ideas become a powerful framework for understanding and acting in social life.”(23) Or, more specifically, discourses are “best understood as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”(24)

The dominant modernist social science discourse of poverty actually forms or constitutes “poverty” and “poor”. The poor become “Cases.” Poverty experts scrutinize the lives of the poor and open dossiers which contain extensive and detailed bibliographic data. Through micro power exercised at the molecular level, the modernist practice of “descending”, or negative, individualization is once again realized.

Thus, poverty-knowledge experts far from explaining or understanding poverty, and far from solving the so called social problem of poverty, have been for a long time, and are still today very actively engaged in the production and re-production of the object of inquiry

that they have given form, and which justifies their professional expertise. They are and have been the conductors of the conduct of the poor.

They can not do otherwise. For no “conditions of possibility” are on the horizon enabling an epistemic or paradigm shift to a new discourse of poverty or to a new ontology of ourselves.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude, I hasten to point out that the effects of poverty are, of course, indubitably real to those human beings who are unable to satisfy the minimum existential requirements for food or nutrition, clothing, shelter, health and education. It is obvious that poverty is real in its somatic, psychic and social consequences or effects. The somatic effect of the inability to obtain minimum existential nutrition is profoundly disastrous.

Poor people also experience the negative psychological and social effects of poverty. As the late Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated, individual aspirations and motivations are very much determined by one’s ‘habitus’ and by ‘cultural capital’. And both are the effects of Bio-power and thus determined by existential conditions. (25).

For the experience of one’s phenomenological self, one’s identity, or even one’s name, is not essentially or universally given and it is not equally distributed in the various subpopulations of the human species. The dual cruelty of Modernity, subjectification and objectification, has clearly injurious effects on the experience of one’s phenomenological self. Who becomes a “Case”? Who is subject to “descending” individualization? Hence, the relevance of Nietzsche’s question: “How did I become what I am and why do I suffer from being what I am?”(26)

It is not my purpose to deny the existence of poverty among us. What I wish to point out is that poverty is not real in terms of its real or “inside” causal factors that most Modernist social scientists have been attempting to discover, and some have postulated they have discovered. Instead, my argument is that our poverty-discourse is a consequence of historical specific “outside” of poverty conditions constructed and reproduced by the “discourse practices” of modernist regimes of truth. Knowledge holders, poverty experts, not state bureaucrats, and not appropriators of labor power, are the conductors of the conduct of the poor.

My point may be more clearly conveyed through the words of Marshall Sahlins which I can not improve. He wrote:

The worlds' most primitive people [Hunters and Gatherers] have few possessions, *but they are not poor* [italics in the original]. Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is an invention of civilization. It has grown with civilization...[27]

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