

Archival gesture and critical attitude as an analytical leitmotiv in educational research

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ABSTRACT

This article, through a theoretical discussion, intends to point out the meaning and some of the possible potentialities of archival gesture and critical attitude — as advocated by Michel Foucault and some of his later interlocutors — when conceived as analytical leitmotiv for research in the field of education. It is argued that the articulation of such key notion from the Foucaultian legacy in the investigative work and the resulting *modi operandi* often give rise to a certain way of problematizing the educational present, asking about their conditions of existence, their meanings, their rules of action, their effects and, in view of that, perhaps outlining possible transformations.

KEYWORDS

archive; critical attitude; Michel Foucault.

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GESTO ARQUIVÍSTICO E ATITUDE CRÍTICA COMO LEITMOTIV ANALÍTICO NAS PESQUISAS EDUCACIONAIS

RESUMO

O presente artigo, por meio de uma discussão teórica, propõe-se a assinalar o significado e algumas das possíveis potencialidades do gesto arquivístico e da atitude crítica, conforme preconizados por Michel Foucault e alguns de seus interlocutores posteriores, quando concebidos como leitmotiv analítico para as investigações no campo da educação. Argumenta-se propriamente que a articulação de tais noções-chave oriundas do legado foucaultiano na lida investigativa e os *modi operandi* daí decorrentes ensejam amiúde certo modo de problematizar o presente educacional, indagando sobre suas condições de existência, seus significados, suas regras de ação, seus efeitos e, à vista disso, quicá delinear transformações possíveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

arquivo; atitude crítica; Michel Foucault.

GESTO DE ARCHIVO Y ACTITUD CRÍTICA COMO LEITMOTIV ANALÍTICO EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN EDUCATIVA

RESUMEN

Este artículo, a través de una discusión teórica, propone señalar el significado y algunas de las posibles potencialidades del gesto de archivo y la actitud crítica — según lo recomendado por Michel Foucault y algunos de sus posteriores interlocutores — cuando se concibe como leitmotiv analítico para las investigaciones en el campo de la educación. Se argumenta que la articulación de tales nociones clave que se originan del legado foucaultiano en el trabajo de investigación y el *modi operandi* resultante, a menudo dan lugar a una cierta forma de problematizar el presente educativo, preguntando sobre sus condiciones de existencia, sus significados, sus reglas de acción, sus efectos y, en vista de eso, tal vez para describir posibles transformaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE

archivo; actitud crítica; Michel Foucault.

INTRODUCTION

Foucault (2006a) used to name the conceptual and analytical operators who invented tools, as in an interview granted to Jacques Rancière, published in the French magazine *Les révoltes logiques*, in 1977. Such tools, according to the definition of the French philosopher, should always be manufactured with sights to a specific design, but could however be used by others in the way that best suited them. In a word, it was an invitation by Foucault to potential researchers, so that they would not only continue the investigations he undertook but would also twist and turn their own thoughts.

Thus, in the trail of this conception and particularly taking as a starting point two key notions of Foucaultian thought, namely, archive and critical attitude, it is proposed here to point out the meaning and some possible potentialities of the use of these “tools” in investigative reading in the educational field.

Today it is a well-known thesis that the periodization of Foucaultian thought is divided into the triptych: archaeology of knowledge, genealogy of power, and ethics or genealogy of ethics. The first projects, which comprise the publications from the 1960s, are presented by Foucault as an archaeology. Although there is, in fact, no unity in archaeological research, considering that each one presented particularities as to the object studied, variations of its principles, and also “corrections and internal criticism” (Foucault, 2008, p. 18). In general terms, archaeology sought to demonstrate the historical conditions for the emergence of human sciences and other knowledge in the process of scientificization during the nineteenth century.

However, one can hardly speak of a single research procedure undertaken by Foucault that has not gone through several modulations. Then, in the 1970s, genealogical research began, in which the emphasis shifted from concerns solely with the constitution of knowledge and its transformations, to the problematization of power in its bindings with knowledge. In other words, Foucault supports the thesis that what is agreed as truth happens in the mutual intermingling between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power. It must be said, however, that the methodological mobility and provisional definitions of his studies remain. Not by chance, the philosopher will say in the class of January 7th, 1976, of the course *Society must be defended* that, in recent years, “multiple genealogical researches have been outlined” (Foucault, 2005, p. 13).

In addition to archaeological and genealogical investigations, one speaks of a third analytical field of Foucault, often called the ethical phase or genealogy of ethics. This, still hardly discussed in studies in education compared to the reception of Foucaultian analytics of power (Pagni, 2011; Gallo, 2011), is occasionally the cause of some questioning. Highlighting the “inconsistencies” with regard to the divisions of Foucaultian thought, which usually combine chronological and methodological criteria, Veiga-Neto (2011, p. 37) argues that “in the third phase there is no new method; ethics is a field of problematizations that uses a little archaeology and a lot of genealogy, which leads some to say that, in the third Foucault, the method is archaeogenealogical”.

Without the intention of getting into the discursive cleavage with regard to Foucaultian analytical domains, it is only important here to emphasize that such division does not imply the closure of one phase and the beginning of another, since they are effectively interrelated methodological dimensions, successively incorporated into the analytics established by Foucault. In operating through strategic displacements, the Foucaultian thought does not include systematization, although neither is it a random project.

Well, having made this synthetic characterization about this *technê* of Foucaultian research, we will discuss, as anticipated, specifically about the notions of Foucaultian archive and criticism, seeking to point out the relevance of these to investigate the field of education. Before going any further, it is worth pointing out that the notion of archive, as we know, is evidenced by Foucault in his archaeological enterprise, especially in *The archaeology of knowledge*, while the notion of critical attitude, in turn, is presented in his genealogical enterprise, more specifically, from the late 1970s, when he subjected the concept of power to a certain theoretical displacement and will think of it in terms of government.

Notwithstanding, based on some further interlocutors of Foucaultian thought (Revel, 2005; Salomon, 2019), it seems feasible to cogitate that the procedures involved in such key notions foregoing were implemented by Foucault, to a greater or lesser extent, throughout his entire investigative project, and not only in occasional investigative circumstances. It is from this point of view, therefore, that we conceive the concepts that we are dealing with here.

SINGULARITIES OF THE FOUCAULTIAN ARCHIVAL GESTURE

The archive is commonly understood as a place of storage, classification, and preservation of documents, a repository of things said and done as a direct and presumably impartial representation of the facts of the past. Therefore, access to a certain archive would, most often than not, only reaffirming already consecrated and traditionally established readings.

Contrary to this traditional notion of the archive, whose purpose would be solely technical and which would allow us to access the past in a supposedly authentic and definitive way, some authors (Foucault, 2008; Farge, 2009; Artières, 1998, 2011, 2014; Didi-Huberman, 2012; Aquino and Val, 2018; Salomon, 2011, 2019) signal another dimension of the archive, that is, they advocate the viability of new strategies to explore the archive, through a multidirectional composition. Keeping the proper peculiarities of each study, of course, it would fulfill us to say, in broad sense, that the archive is understood as a discursive vestige of a given context and that it demands re-reading, exploration, deconstruction, recontextualization, and creation. As can be seen, the distinction between the conventional conception of the archive and that admitted in this study is of utmost importance.

It is known, however, that when the word archive is mobilized, ambiguous interpretations, in addition to those mentioned above, may come to light. It would not be in the best interest to detail such a question here. In any case, although with Derrida (2001) we can go back to Ancient Greece to visualize the historical

appearance of the word “archive”, containing in itself the notion of “*arquê*” which, in turn, means, indistinctly, origin and command, is effective in our present time, in some dimension, a certain idea of archive as a material subject to transformations, re-reading and survival (Duarte, 2018), thus breaking with the usual order of the archive. Moreover, as Artières (2011) argues, new social uses of the archive emerge.

In Contemporary times, archives are no longer the exclusive object of interest of historians and archivists, as there is a growing range of researchers, from the most diverse fields of knowledge, dealing with archival practice. In addition, in certain circumstances, policies of decentralization of public finances, investments in cultural facilities, as well as the “appreciation of the anonymous individual as a figure of history” (Artières, 2011, p. 103), have provided the compilation and recognition of previously neglected archives, such as those relating to personal archives, self-stories (postcards, administrative papers, letters, notebooks, etc.). In this respect, Artières (2011) mentions, among others, the documentary *No Pasaran*, 2003, directed by Henri-François Imbert, which draws on a set of photographs representing republican refugees, in 1936, on the Franco-Spanish border.

In addition, if previously it was necessary to go to an archives center and look at bundles of papers, handling them “with all delicacy for fear that an anodyne principle of deterioration will become definitive” (Farge, 2009, p. 9), today digitization and *online* availability make it remarkably easier and faster for researchers to access the most diverse types of “digital archives, an object that no longer accumulates dust, that bacteria do not attack and, above all, that are not affected by the consultation” (Artières, 2011, p. 107). In fact, this new configuration has made it possible, at times, to expand and add new elements to a given existing file.

In *The archaeology of knowledge*, a work that can be considered methodological, Foucault (2008) develops a huge amount of expressions and concepts, among them, the archive. The philosopher understands the concept of archive in a very particular way and explains that, from the latter, other operative concepts gravitate such as, for example, enunciation, discursive formation, discontinuity, discursive event, discursive practices. According to the Foucaultian perspective, there is a very particular relationship, a bond between the archive (set of enunciations) and the enunciate (molecular) — considered nuclear concepts — thus founding a circularity and reciprocity between the two concepts. Not by chance, these two notions occupy an entire chapter of *The archaeology of knowledge*.

The enunciate is the elementary unity of discourse and may be present in a series of signs or possibly in a single sign, as long as it is considered its substantial characteristic, that is, the enunciative function. The latter, in turn, will make it possible to describe the conditions of existence and production of the enunciate, the rules that control it and its correlations with other enunciations. The archive governs the enunciability system and defines both the irruption and the modification of the enunciate. According to Foucault (2008), the archive is the register of objects of knowledge, it is “the law of what can be said, the system that governs the emergence of enunciations as unique events” (Foucault, 2008, p. 147).

For instance, it is admissible to say that our society has an archive on what *Education* is. This archive forms and transforms what we can enunciate about

school, curriculum, teaching, learning, class, teacher, student, didactic, evaluation, etc. Thus, when operating analytically with the notion of the archive in the educational field, one starts from the assumption that the history of education is not really a matter of truth — at least it is not considered as its “traditional” designation, that is, as that which supposedly remains unchanged in the face of any contingencies —, but of real games surrounded by complex relationships of knowledge-power, allowing a given speech to impose itself and/or cohabit with others in a given context. The archival gesture, therefore, implies scrutinizing and reconstructing the real games of a particular educational archive from the present, denaturalizing them, that is, demarcating their contingency, their rules, their discursive struggles around language control.

In the words of Revel (2005), Foucault’s research work under the archaeological bias aimed, synthetically, to resume in an archive of a certain period, the “discursive traits that can allow the reconstitution of a set of rules that, at a given moment, defines at the same time the limits and the forms of saying, conservation, memory, reactivation and appropriation” (Revel, 2005, p. 18-19). However, the author points out a certain change of status in the genealogical domain of Foucault’s writings, as the problem of subjectivity is increasingly incorporated. From this point of view, the archive “works more as a trace of existence than as discursive production” (Revel, 2005, p. 19).

An analogous diagnosis, but not entirely equivalent in terms of a certain displacement or, if one wishes, a new type of interest in the archival literature of Foucault, is offered, more recently, by Salomon (2019). Analyzing notably what was at stake in the archival gesture undertaken by the French philosopher in editing and publishing materials pertaining the world of anonymous and socially declassified — such as the memoirs of the Norman parricide *Pierre Rivière* (1973), the extracts from the book by an unknown English libertine, entitled *My secret life* (1977), the dossier of the hermaphrodite *Herculine Barbin* (1978) and, finally, a compilation of judicial documents, called *Le désordre des familles* (1982), co-written with Arlette Farge —, the author elucidates that it was about outlining in these texts the event that denotes the moment when anonymous people begin to speak of themselves and then inscribe themselves in history, that is, in the archive. Thus, the “Foucaultian archivology is not a phenomenology of *rastros* but an analysis of what makes them possible, that is, an analysis of the types of power strategies that make it possible to archive how to know” (Salomon, 2019, p. 240, emphasis on the original).

It is noteworthy that, in Foucaultian terms, the archive breaks with the postulate of linear and chronological forms and supposes to detect the formation and transformation of the enunciations from a diversity of texts, from a documentary mass. Likewise, “the analysis of the archives constitutes, at the dawn of Foucaultian thought, a new way of questioning history about its present marks, no longer seeking permanence, but its dispersions, thresholds and discontinuities” (Oliveira, 2008, p. 171). It must be noted, however, that the archive should not be treated as a whole, it is not practicable to access it in its entirety, nor can it be considered the sum of all the texts of an era, a culture or a society. It is a material

support in which it is feasible to think of discursive practices and examine their rules, conditions of existence, and functioning. “The same archive, therefore, makes possible various configurations, depending on the problems and the reading choices of the researcher who takes it” (Aquino and Val, 2018, p. 47).

In this way, the archive arranged in a certain investigation is only *a* possibility of reading, extraction, creation, and reconstitution on the part of its archivist. There will always be, an unfinished archival reading in a given archive. In fact, it is also important to point out the gaping nature of the archive, as Didi-Huberman (2012, p. 210-211) observes:

Every time we try to construct an historical interpretation — or an “archaeology” in the sense of Michel Foucault — we must be careful not to identify the archive we have, however proliferating it may be, with the deeds and gestures of a world of which we are no more than a few vestiges. The nature of the archive is the gap, its gaping nature. But often the gaps are the result of deliberate or unconscious censorship, destruction, aggression, and the record of faith. The archive is grey, not only because of the time that passes, but also because of the ashes of everything that surrounded it and burned.

But that is not all. As Foucault (2008) argued, every enunciate is defined by a network of associative relations with other statements that precede it, update it, or even simultaneously coexist. Put in another way: every discourse is established on a previous one, every saying is “already said” elsewhere, responsible for the activation or oblivion of certain representations archived in the discursive memory.

This time, in order to deal with the problem-issue of a given research, in addition to the *corpus* that constituted the archival starting point, the researcher, inspired by the Foucaultian investigative instruments, tries to conjure up, at the same time, *corpora* of supplementary texts, that is, he uses multiple and heterogeneous sources in the course of the investigation and which, at first, had not been considered in the initial archive. Insightfully, such a procedure is referred to by Aquino and Val (2018) as archiving, which, it should be warned, in no way coincides with a documentary interpretive exegesis.

The *archiving* is opportune by a clear uneasiness about an investigative problem, propelling a vertical immersion in the density and dispersion of different correlated sources (from those molars to the topical, lateral, adventitious, etc.) with which the researcher is confronted in his toil. (Aquino and Val, 2018, p. 48, italics of the authors)

It is in the confrontation with the archive and in order to account for the delimited problem, that the problem-topic spreads, expands, that is, it can travel paths that, in most cases, distance it from the investigative theme listed at the beginning. To engender an archive is “to risk putting traces of surviving things next to each other [...]. This risk is called *imagination* and *montage*” (Didi-Huberman, 2012, p. 211-212, emphasis on the original). It will be seen then, according

to Farge (2009, p. 66), that “an unexpected archive, outside the stipulated field, comes to shake up the monotony of the collection”. From this point of view, the archive resembles the assembly of a puzzle, “with a view to proposing a map of the discourses that were possible at a given time and at a specific location” (Aquino and Val, 2018, p. 49).

Moving across the open path through the philosophies of difference, Campos, Olegário and Corazza (2018) conceive the archive as a generative support for new knowledge in the educational sphere. In other words, they claim the empirical reinvention of the knowledge contained in an “original” archive as a possibility for the proliferation of new meanings, of multiple imaginative connections in the field of education. It would be a will to power, a thought open to inventive-transitory actions, experimental actions carried out by the educator-translator on knowledge that constitutes a certain pedagogical archive.

In view of this, these knowledges “no longer pre-configure themselves as simple transmission in the sphere of the already given, of the already known, focusing on them the look of suspicion that makes them diverge as new problems are postulated on them” (Campos, Olegário and Corazza, 2018, p. 695). On that same train of thought about the translational and transcreative power of the educational archive and with his usual writing style, Corazza (2019, p. 7) argues that “when a teacher is born, it is not in a cradle that he is deposited, but in an archive”.

But let us return, once again, to the study of Aquino and Val (2018). In addition to the “archiving”, the authors explain that the archival reading would require a second procedure, it is the “archive”. In the trail of Didi-Huberman (2012) and taking as an example the later writings of Foucault, in which the thinker operates in a very peculiar way with the Greco-Roman archive, they maintain that the archival treatment of sources would require both strategies of imagination and (re) assembly. Such procedures would have the purpose of highlighting the struggles, the confrontations and even the incongruities for which all history is conceived.

The archive procedure resembles the composition of a police thriller analogously, in that the evidence is not hidden, although it is not immediately apparent to the lens of those who observe it. On the contrary, the saturation of the visibility of a set of current statements is what would prevent us from glimpsing the games of veridiction/subjectivation around certain cognitive nexus rooted in the present. (Aquino and Val, 2018, p. 50, emphasis on the original)

In addition to the archiving and archive as proposed by Aquino and Val (2018), it is considered here that the critical attitude or, if one prefers, the procedures inherent in criticism, in the terms of Foucault (2012), broaden the ways in which a given archive can be interrogated. Let us look at this more closely.

CRITICAL ATTITUDE AS A WAY OF QUESTIONING THE PRESENT

In May 1978, shortly after the end of the course *Security, territory, population*, Foucault (2012) gave the French Society of Philosophy the conference *What is*

critique? (*Critique and Aufklärung*), published later, in 1990, in the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*. There, he manifests the pertinence of approaching a theme so widespread in philosophy, which is the question of what criticism is, and warns that, in view of the countless possibilities of making a history of critical activity, it deals precisely with that concerning a certain suspicion about the arts of government that erupts in the 15th and 16th centuries. It should be emphasized that it is in this conjunctural picture that happens in the West, notably as a result of a crisis in the Christian pastorate, a marked expansion of the most varied domains — pedagogical, family, political, economic, military — involved in the arts of governing men outside the religious sphere, a kind of laicization of the arts of governing.

According to the Foucaultian bias (Foucault, 2012), this movement of intensification of governance, that is, of a State that increasingly aspires to the subjection of individuals and society, could not, in turn, be disassociated from a confrontation, from a certain mistrust regarding the very submission that is required to the arts of governing — whatever they may be — which would therefore induce one to wonder about how not to be governed in such or which ways. This question does not mean exiguity of government or disobedience in absolute terms, but seeks other forms of conduct and, in the aftermath, the constitution of new subjectivities: “Let us remember that Foucault tries to understand the possibility of unsubjectivation within the frameworks of rationalization without asserting that there is a source of resistance that is housed in the subject or some other foundational field” (Butler, 2013, p. 173).

It is from this angle that Foucault (2012) supports the idea that a way of thinking would emerge, a form of criticism that would be specific to modern civilization, a criticism as a decisional will not to be governed for this intent, for this purpose. Let us see it.

On the opposite side, and as an opposing party, or rather as a partner and adversary both of the arts of governing, as a way of distrusting them, of refusing them, of limiting them, of finding a fair measure for them, of transforming them, of seeking to escape these arts of governing or, in any case, of displacing them, on the pretext of essential reticence, but also and for this reason as a line of development of the arts of governing, there would have been something born in Europe at that time, a kind of general form of culture, both moral and political way of thinking and so on..., and that I would simply call art of not being governed or art of not being governed that way and at this price. And so I would propose, as a first definition of criticism, this general characterization: art of not being in that way governed. (Foucault, 2012, p. 59)

To this somewhat generic demarcation, Foucault (2012) presents in a very shortened form a genealogy of critical activity as a counter-conduct to the processes of governmentalization by which subjects become subjected, and which takes place from the 16th century through three anchorage points, namely: a critique linked to Scripture, which basically asks about the type of truth present in the elements of religious life

and ecclesiastical authority, aspiring to limit or even modify them; a form of critique which questions the limits of the right to govern, and which intends to no longer accept laws considered unjust, illegitimate — a critique mainly juridical, therefore; finally, a critique which is designed to no longer recognize something as true simply because it is enunciated by an authority, unless there are credible reasons for doing so.

In these terms, it comprehends that critical activity is not autonomous, it does not exist on its own, there is, so to say, no exteriority between the criticism and the conduction of the conduct, “it is always exercised in a specific field/ domain or in relation to a field — philosophy, science, law, economics, politics”. It could be supposed to be a “possible criticism” (Foucault, 2019, p. 13), a criticism inherent in counter-conduct and thought out in terms of reflection and knowledge.

Such a definition of criticism, inseparable from the subject of the government of conduct — a problem that would become one of the core issues of the “last Foucault” —, it would be similar to the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment, an argument defended by Foucault (2012), as we know, particularly from the reading of the Kantian booklet of 1784 about what the *Aufklärung* is, whose maxim is defined by Kant (2005, p. 64) as *sapere aude*, that is, as “the courage to make use of your own understanding” without the direction of another.

Before going any further, it should be noted that the French philosopher characterizes the Enlightenment, less as a historical period than in the condition of a space delimited by an *éthos*, an “attitude of modernity” (Foucault, 2003, p. 341), a way of acting on the questions of the present that does not fail to submit to uninterrupted criticism everything that is said to be true, thus, indicating another relationship with knowledge. “There is, in Foucault, a thought of criticism. It is, in fact, according to him, in this contestation to the evidence that lies the ‘modernity’ of criticism of which he makes Kant the inventor, and of the Lights, the moment” (Fassin, 2014, p. 293).

The practice of criticism means, therefore, to strive for a better understanding of the conditions of acceptability, to heckle the bonds, the juxtaposition between coercive apparatuses and a certain system of knowledge in order to, perhaps, limit them, move them, transform them. In this sense, an intrinsic connection between knowledge, power and subject is found in the critical attitude. More precisely, the critical attitude is, within a given historical experience, “the movement by which the individual is given the right to question the truth about its effects of power and power over his discourses of truth” (Foucault, 2012, p. 60-61).

We immediately see that the critical attitude proclaimed by Foucault (2012) corresponds to a distrust about the arts of governing and, in view of this, it is characterized as an exercise of permanent inquiry of the present time, thus enabling us to raise questions such as: what is happening at this specific moment in history where we are? What are we doing with what we are as belonging to today?

It should be noted that, in addition to the 1978 conference, Foucault alluded to criticism as an attitude on other occasions. Let us take as an example the autobiography that he writes, under the pseudonym of Maurice Florence, in the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*, in which he announces that his analytical enterprise is inscribed in the critical tradition inaugurated by Kant, and may well:

Name his work *Critical History of Thought* [...]. If by thought we mean the act that places, in its various possible relations, an individual and an object, a critical history of thought would be an analysis of the conditions in which certain relations of the individual with the object were formed or modified, once these are constitutive of a possible knowledge. (Foucault, 2004a, p. 234)

In a conversation with Didier Eribon in 1981, entitled *Is it really important to think?*, Foucault states that criticism is a procedure that aims to distinguish and, consequently, question the ways of thinking, taken as truth, that underlie daily practices and behaviors. It is about questioning our relationship with the truth, problematizing how it was established and what rationalities underpin it. Thus, “criticism consists in neglecting thought and rehearsing change; showing that things are not as evident as one believes, make sure that what is accepted as valid in itself is no longer valid in itself. To criticize is to make gestures too easy” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 180).

In the first two classes of the course *The government of self and others*, from 1983, once again, Foucault (2010) takes up the Kantian article *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?). According to the French philosopher, Kant is one of the first philosophers to problematize his own topicality and inaugurates two distinct traditions of critical questioning between which modern philosophy has broken down: a rationalist and universalist, regarding the formal conditions in which a knowledge is held to be true; and another, which Foucault is primarily concerned with and interested in, which concerns Kantian reflection on the meaning of what is happening today and which analyzes and questions the historical conditions of possibility, and the system of accepting singular rationalities of which we make use and which is, in fact, configured in a new way to pose the question of the present. In other words, “it would be what we could call an ontology of the present, an ontology of today, an ontology of modernity, an ontology of ourselves” (Foucault, 2010, p. 21).

Foucault (2010) adds that the core of the Kantian text on the process of Enlightenment is precisely to advocate in a decisive manner the detachment, a movement of exit (*Ausgang*) of the man from the state of minority in which he finds himself — a kind of *deficit* in the relationship of autonomy with himself, whose examples mentioned by Kant are: when the book takes the place of my understanding, when the spiritual director makes the times of my conscience and when a doctor decides for me about my diet — toward adulthood, which implies, as written above, an operation on oneself through the use of reason, it means being able to use one’s own understanding without submitting to the tutelage of any external authority, and which demands the attitude and courage to do so. The step taken by Kant is important, however, Foucault identifies that the German philosopher did not take the *Aufklärung*’s own motto to the last consequences and then aims to update it:

If the Kantian question was to know what limits the knowledge should renounce to transpose, it seems to me that, at present, the critical question must

be turned into a positive one: in what is presented to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what is the part of what is singular, contingent and the result of arbitrary impositions. It is a question of turning the criticism exercised in a form of a necessary limitation into a practical criticism in a form of possible overstepping. What we see, brings as a consequence that the criticism will no longer be exercised in the research of formal structures that have universal value, but as historical research through the events that led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as individuals of what we do, we think, we say. In this sense, this criticism is not transcendental and is not intended to make metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its purpose and archaeological in its method. (Foucault, 2003, p. 347-348)

It should be noted that, although Foucault's attachment to Kantian thought is evident — since his initial publications, with varying angles of approach (Kraemer, 2008; Castro, 2014; Stival, 2015) — in general terms, this affiliation is configured, as concluded by Deleuze (2005, 2017), in a neokantism *sui generis*. Indeed, it is by valuing the authors with whom he talks that Foucault becomes unfaithful to the scope of his reflections, replacing them. This means that the reading and the problematization carried out by the French philosopher is, often, dissimilar to those presented by Kant, as well as to the more canonical readings undertaken by commentators who are drawn to the Kantian philosophy. In spite of the fact that it is not aspired here to issue an accurate conceptual opposition between the two philosophers, let us have a word about it.

Foucault did not claim, in any way, an ethics based on a categorical imperative, something like a universality of values and norms embodied in the public sphere and in the institutions of the rule of law, or even a theory of the subject that considers the possibilities of action in transcendental terms, as claimed by Kant. As such, the Kantian implication in his theoretical project, particularly in subsequent writings (Gros, 1995; Castro, 2016), notably refers to the philosophical questioning inaugurated by Königsberg's philosopher about the present moment, that is, a historical-critical attitude toward the questions that the present proposes.

Nevertheless, by establishing his own point of view, Foucault rearranges the Kantian venture toward *Aufklärung* by manufacturing new "tools" to deal with the issues and challenges of a changing present. The most important thing for him from the analysis of the Kantian text, is not to decipher who we are, but to identify how we came to be who we are. In view of this, Foucault's kantism is equivalent to "kantism beyond Kant" (Bresolin and Valeirão, 2015), once that "the reference to the Kantian model does not constitute, for Foucault, a return to Kant, but an effort to disengage the *critical attitude* from the limits in which, since Kant himself, the *critical argument* had closed it" (Senellart, 1995, p. 5, emphasis on the original).

On that same train of thought, Lemke (2017) clarifies that both in the 1978 conference on the *Aufklärung* and in the subsequent writings about it, Foucault sought to reverse the negativity on which the notion of criticism was commonly supported, that is, a critical procedure linked to a legal-discursive thought and which aimed, in the end, "to judge and condemn, deny and reject" (Lemke, 2017, p. 86).

In a diametrically opposed direction, Foucault proposes to treat critical activity as a positive procedure, which results in a particularly theoretical-methodological choice. This investigative inclination, concisely, implies explaining the uniqueness and contingency of the practices taken as evidence in a given historical context, thus seeking to better understand “how we think and judge certain objects in order to distance ourselves from their naturalness or self-evidence” (Lemke, 2017, p. 92).

Still in terms of the critical attitude, it is important to keep in mind that in the overstrained Foucaultian lexicon, the term “problematization” (Foucault, 2004b, 2004c, 2017) seems to have a meaning close to that reputed to the historical-critical attitude. Let us see, then, the perspective of Foucault and some of his subsequent interlocutors in this regard. In an interview granted to the anthropologist Paul Rabinow, in May 1984, Foucault pointed out the uniqueness of his critical attitude:

It is true that my attitude does not stem from this form of criticism which, on the pretext of a methodical examination, would reject all possible solutions, except one, which would be the good one. It is preferably of the order of “problematization”: that is, the elaboration of a mastery of facts, practices and thoughts that seem to me to pose problems for politics. I do not believe, for example, that there is any “politics” that can, in the face of madness or mental illness, stop the fair and definitive solution. But I think that, in madness, in alienation, in disturbances of behaviour, there are reasons to question the politics: and to these questions the politics must answer, but it will never fully answer them. (Foucault, 2004c, p. 228)

In the sense of Chevallier (2013 *apud* Gros, 2015), the term ‘problematization’, a neologism engendered by Foucault from ‘problem’, is a “method of questioning the present from a critical attitude which considers that the experience of men is historically constructed” (Chevallier, 2013 *apud* Gros, 2015, p. 296). In the same step and partisan of problematization as a possibility for conducting research in the educational field, Marshall (2008) explains that problematizing consists in critically reflecting on a given object of thought as a problem, in order to take it not as an absolute truth, in order to take it not as an absolute truth or, which is the same, not to start from the universal ones, but to consider at the beginning its contingency, to question its concrete conditions of existence and rules of action, questioning the ways in which power is accepted — free, therefore, of interpretation beforehand.

Lemke (2017) similarly makes a point of emphasizing that the activity of criticism is marked by a gesture of problematization. According to the German sociologist, this term used by Foucault would have two meanings: one that aims to describe the emergency and the conditions of possibility of a given object of analysis; and the other, concerning the researcher’s own activity in problematizing singular experiences. “Here, problematization is no longer an object, but an objective of critical investigation” (Lemke, 2017, p. 93).

Although there is not a single definition in his writings, it could be argued that the concept of problematization, which appears in a rather punctual way

throughout Foucault's writings, is related to an investigative attitude that guides his entire production, according to himself: "The notion that unifies the studies I have carried out since the *History of Madness* is the problematization" (Foucault, 2004b, p. 242). This attitude, in general terms, does not refer to the search for a supposed resolution or to pointing out possible defects, but to keeping a certain "critical distance, from 'coming away'" (Revel, 2005, p. 71) of the problems and then questioning them.

So let us return to the issue of the critical attitude. In a study examining Foucault's critique of modern governmental reasoning, Senellart (1995) describes that, from the Foucaultian point of view, the critique, after Kant, would be like a kind of continuous counterpower that would have the purpose of preventing the excesses of modern political rationality — which results in a vigorous governmentalization of the State. Such governmentalization begins to become substantial in the 16th century, following the logic of the different techniques of pastoral power, and also a reason of the State that establishes rational principles and specific forms of calculation for a new mode of State action, aiming at its strengthening. From the 18th century onward, these two tendencies were linked to a police state, that is, a state which, in order to expand its power, began to occupy itself in a detailed manner with the happiness of its subjects, hence the term welfare State (*Wohlfahrtsstaat*).

The philosopher continues his text explaining that the notion of criticism, as proposed by Foucault, occasionally brings up some issues. One of them asks, more often than not, whether criticism "would be the appeased form of the struggle when the revolution is no longer desirable?" (Senellart, 1995, p. 3). Another question concerns the prism through which criticism could be exercised, since, according to the Foucaultian bias, there is no exteriority in relation to power. It is also questioned what links the concept of criticism would have with Kantian thought when Foucault analyzes liberalism as a critical reflection of governmental reason. At first, he warns, these questions may seem distinct, but they maintain connections with each other and "organize themselves around the search for an attitude that associates, in the same movement, resistance to power, the constitution of oneself and the diagnosis of the present" (Senellart, 1995, p. 3).

Regarding the objections mentioned above, Senellart (1995) points out that the criticism comes from a kind of crisis in the governance of society, however, "it escapes the imputation of reformism, without falling into the impasse of radical denial" (Senellart, 1995, p. 3). The function of reformism is a certain stabilization of a power system at the end of a process of change. In the opposite way and through a permanent onslaught, the critical procedure aims at the uninterrupted destabilization of power mechanisms. It is not, it has to be said, a question of rejecting the possibility of reform, of transformation, but this, from Foucault's point of view, must result from a real — and always interim — to a given relation of forces.

It should be noted, however, that the critical attitude is at the centerpiece of modern governmental rationality while at the same time challenging it. Indeed, this constitutes a cleavage with metaphysical thinking, with the pursuit for a transcendental one, since criticism as an attitude is not situated on the outside, but rather operates from within the rationality in which it is available and, in view

of that, you cannot intend to break it or reject it entirely. In such a way of acting, one seeks to act in the border areas of a given rationality, “in its points of tension or fragility” (Senellart, 1995, p. 6), with a view to coming up with other ways of thinking about it.

The conception of a critical attitude as a kind of counterpoint to the spread of the arts of governing, according to Senellart (1995), helps us to better understand how Foucault’s critical analysis of liberalism operates, as well as its proximity to the Kantian *Aufklärung*. According to Foucaultian historical-critical analytics, liberalism erupts precisely at this juncture of inquiry into the excesses of governance in modern society, starting with the question: how to govern, however, if one always governs too much? Even if liberalism is part of such a framework, Foucault explains that, just as the rule of law has proved reconcilable with some totalitarian regimes, so the liberal economy has produced anti-liberal policies.

That is not all. The imperative of freedom advocated by liberalism comprises an effectively problematic relationship, since it necessarily demands coercion, regulation, prescription, etc. It could be said that freedom is manufactured through numerous and thorough government interventions (Senellart, 1995). It is, after all, about governing forms of self-government, structuring and shaping the possible field of action of the individuals.

In *Foucault & education*, Veiga-Neto (2011), a renowned analyst of educational issues on the Foucaultian side, also proposes to give visibility to Foucaultian criticism, calling it “hyper-criticism”. In his peculiar way of writing, the author points out that Foucault, like Kant, seeks the conditions to know, but Foucaultian criticism is not taken, as the German philosopher proposed, as the path by which we would reach a supposed human majority through rationality, since hyper-criticism refers to an *êthos*, to an attitude of permanent questioning, which “is always ready to turn against itself to ask about the conditions of possibility of its existence, about the conditions of its own rationality” (Veiga-Neto, 2011, p. 24). Moreover, hyper-criticism does not resort to any *a priori* subjective entity, which would indicate the conditions of the totality of possible experiences; far from it, the *a priori* Foucaultian is historical, in this way, so it dwells on the analytics of the “concrete” world, of effective experiences, seeking to present and problematize its regularities and discontinuities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From what has just been brought up, it can be said, without much detail, that the compilation and organization of a *corpus* of analysis by a researcher inspired by the Foucaultian perspective, demands to consider and operate with the notion of archive, which in turn implies two complementary investigative procedures, namely, the archiving and the archive.

Furthermore, the idea that the gesture of archival assembly can be potentiated if taken into account the critical attitude, which refers to an investigative operation that, instead of seeking the objectivity and neutrality of its objects, tries to explicit and problematize the conditions of possibility by which the truth and

the individual are constituted. In short, it is a tool for the analysis of present times, a critical analysis of the historical forms that shape our present — among which, it is well known that the unique role of the school as a social and historical instance involved in the constitution of subjectivities cannot be underestimated, hence the relevance of such an investigative procedure.

In this sense, the archival gesture and the critical Foucaultian attitude make it possible to problematize a range of topics of prime importance and directly linked to school machinery, such as, for example, the constitution of pedagogical rationalities or, if one prefers, the conditions of acceptability by which, in a given context, certain knowledge was taken as truth in educational policies; disciplinary methods, punishments, and school insurrections; the technologies of governance of the conduct of pedagogical individuals and, consequently, the resulting processes of subjectivation.

In fact, it is about questioning — free of visions *a priori* let us stress once again — our relationship with educational truths, taking them as the object of thought and then questioning them about their conditions of existence, their meanings, their rules of action and their effects. Making use of such analytical tools therefore consists in constant epistemological vigilance and distrust, however eloquent this may seem. Finally, it should be stressed that this includes even — and perhaps more yet — those theorizations that constitute the basis of our pedagogical thinking and action. Not a trivial task, certainly.

If operating analytically on a given archive from a critical attitude demands an uninterrupted procedure of suspicion with regard to what is currently considered universal, indispensable, true, aspiring precisely to underline its arbitrariness, its contingency, its fabrication and, from this, who knows how to conceive other forms of conduction, of disassociation, of the invention of new subjectivities, it would be up to us to inquire: what archival documental mass, if not that one of the educational field — historically characterized by essentialisms, coercitivities, and prescriptivisms of the most diverse orders — would provide, after all, such a privileged locus for the accomplishment of such a *modus operandi*?

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