

Regimes of Representation. Foucauldian View

PAWEŁ BYTNIEWSKI

Department of Philosophy and Sociology
University of Maria Curie Skłodowska
Lublin, Poland
p.bytniewskialex@gmail.com

In the paper, I chose the episode of the trajectory of Foucault's thought, that is not very intensively marked in his texts. It is about a topic that Foucault takes up multiple times, which, however, has not a separate and complete intellectual form. It's about the relationship between knowledge and literature and fine arts.

My main thesis is as follows: Foucault turns upside down tradition of speaking on the relationship between knowledge and art, in which the place of art is being the subject of criticism, criticism of aesthetic knowledge of *connoisseurs*. It reverses the roles between them. It's not knowledge allows for reflective distance to art, but the opposite: an art has critical privilege with respect to knowledge. Such role reversal Foucault recognizes in the critical moments of the history of knowledge, which he made the subject of its archaeology. According to Foucault, in particular periods of intellectual history, critical potential contained in literature and painting has an epistemological, not aesthetic sense.

Formulated above claim we can replace into a statement closer to Foucault's thinking, namely, the question is: what constitutes "regimes of truth"? The latter term is placed in the reflection, which already exceeds the limits of archaeology. For my needs, it is useful to see in Foucault's archaeology different type of regimes, namely "regimes of fiction". This allow us to formulate more general idea: The history of a representational systems in western culture is the history of relations between regimes of truth and regimes of fiction. Orders of representation, that allow the truth are regimes of truth, while the orders of representation that are not obligated to the truth about orders of things, but may, in certain cases, to tell the truth about relationships, which establish regimes of truth, are the regimes of fiction. In certain historical moments, moments of the crisis which haunted *savoir*, regimes of fiction can produce the truth about discourses that just lose the ability to produce truths. Sometimes, for a while, history opens window of regimes of fiction in which we can saw the truth about regimes of truth.

In the paper, to illustrate this claim, I analyze two cases of activity such regimes of fiction in the historical moments of a proof of the truth. First (which we can find in *Order of Things*) is an analysis of forms of activity of regime of fiction which we find in *Don Quixote*. My question is: How regime of fiction, which operates in *Don Quixote* discredits renaissance regime of truth based on resemblance? I'm going to ask the same question regarding the second case (which is not in *Order of Things*). This is *L'Aqua*, painting by Giuseppe Arcimboldo. What is interesting in these two cases is that in each we find the same orderliness of regime of fiction, the same mechanisms of a critique of epistemological pretensions put forward by what passes for knowledge in renaissance episteme.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, *Don Quixote*, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *L'Aqua*, regimes of truth, regimes of fiction, art, representation.

1. Regimes of representations

Michel Foucault is regarded rightly as an important innovator of the conceptual apparatus in philosophy of the late 20th century. Especially the critical thought owes him concepts that enabled peculiar philosophical discourse, as it seems, on a permanent basis. In the circulation of literature, philosophy, political thought, and the wider social reflection these concepts are present for more than 25 years and perpetuate Foucault's position as one of the most important thinkers in the decline of 20th century. Epistemological concepts of archaeology (*archéologie du savoir*) and episteme (*l'épistémè*), the concept of discourse (*discours*), genealogy (*généalogie*), the concept of apparatus (*dispositif*), biopolitics (*biopolitique*) techniques of the self (*techniques de soi*) hermeneutics of the subject (*herméneutique du sujet*) – all of these conceptual inventions can be found in the Foucauldian 'box of tools' but not always they are there in a satisfactory order, not always the usability of these tools is obvious.

I'm going to follow in the Foucault's footsteps, judging from this, that this is worth to do a way of travel, not only because of curiosity to Foucault's thought. I chose the episode of the trajectory of his thought, that is not very intensively marked in the texts. It is about a topic that Foucault takes up multiple times, which, however, is not a separate and complete intellectual form in his texts. It's about the relationship between knowledge and literature and fine arts.

In Foucault's writings, there is a significant disparity in the study of those areas of culture. You can also see differences in the way of their conceptualization. He devoted a few separate books to history of sciences. Art as a subject

matter appears repeatedly as a subject in his introductions to another topics, or on the sidelines of the high road of his thinking. Either as an illustration or emblem of another question. Another important difference in treatment of knowledge and art: treatment of literature and painting in Foucault appears in a short perspective, apart from history of arts and literature, however, the history of sciences is for him a privileged way for epistemological reflection – detailed and precise.

A knowledge he wanted to recognize in the great historical formations called him *epistemai*.¹ In looking at the painting or literature he directed towards a specific works. And yet, despite these differences – which I would like to stress – views on knowledge and the art strongly interlinks in Foucault's thinking about the history of modern Western culture.

Foucault turns upside down tradition of speaking on the relationship between knowledge and art, in which the place of art is being the subject of criticism, criticism of aesthetic knowledge of *connoisseurs*. It reverses the roles between them. It's not knowledge allows for reflective distance to art, but the opposite: an art has critical privilege with respect to knowledge. Such role reversal Foucault recog-

1 In the conversation with James Miller Foucault defines episteme in Kantian style: "If you like, I would define the *episteme* retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits separating out from among all the statements which a possible those that will be acceptable within, I won't say scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it possible to say are true or false. The *episteme* is the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific." M. Foucault, *The Confession of the Flesh* [in:] *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. C. Gordon, trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper, Pantheon Books, New York 1980.

nizes in the critical moments of the history of knowledge, which he made the subject of its archaeology. According to Foucault, in particular periods of intellectual history, critical potential contained in literature and painting has an epistemological, not aesthetic sense. Art, and specially literature and painting, have great privilege to judge our grids of cognition. Literature and painting reveal the historical boundaries of the systems of thought.

Formulated above claim we can replace into a statement closer to Foucault's thinking, namely, the question is: what constitutes "regimes of truth"? The latter term is placed in the reflection, which already exceeds the limits of archaeology as a theory of discursive knowledge. For my needs, it is useful to see in Foucault's archaeology different type of regimes, namely "regimes of fiction". This allow us to formulate more general idea: The history of a representational systems in western culture is the history of relations between regimes of truth and regimes of fiction.

Orders of representation, that allow the truth are regimes of truth, while the orders of representation that are not obligated to the truth about orders of things, but may, in certain cases, to tell the truth about relationships, which establish regimes of truth, are the regimes of fiction. In certain historical moments, moments of the crisis which haunted *savoir*, regimes of fiction can produce the truth about discourses that just lose the ability to produce truths. Sometimes, for a while, history opens window of regimes of fiction in which we can saw the truth about regimes of truth. Weakness of the capacity to produce the truth about things, historicity "of being in truth" (*dans le vrai*), we see in, just when fiction violate, interfere with that representational, truthful discourses. It happens, when

the relations between "words" and "things" submits to disruption, and the truth in general, given in the regimes of truth no longer be knowable. In a stylistic exception from the standards of modes of expression, in a kind of epistemological anamorphosis, in the regularities of distortion of epistemological relations between words and things shines the truth about regime of truth. Often in ironic game with epistemic habits shaped in *savoir*, in rhetoric of cognitive suspense, regimes of fiction carry away "being in truth". Thus, in the art regimes of fiction creates a pure game of representations without pretension to truth, in epistemological perspective they allow us to show the simulacrum of truth, paradoxes of cognition, and at last they allow us to see the truth about historicity of the regimes of truth.

Fiction is the narrative system, or rather the various systems according to which it is "narrated" [*"récite"*] – the narrator's stance toward what he is relating (depending on whether he is part of the adventure, or contemplates it as a slightly detached observer, or is excluded from it and comes upon it from the outside), the presence or absence of a neutral gaze that surveys things and people, providing an objective description of them; an involvement of the whole narrative in the perspective of one character or several in succession or none in particular; a discourse repeating the events after the fact or dubbing them as they unfold, and so on. The fable is made up of elements placed in a certain order. Fiction is the weaving of established relations, through the discourse itself. Fiction, an 'aspect' of the fable.²

2 M. Foucault, *Behind the Fable* [in:] *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, vol. 2, *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley and others, The New Press, New York 2000. p. 137.

Fiction is not a representation of the possible world; it is also not a denial of the real world. It is a form of discourse, a way of shaping any representation that resist the demands of discourses of knowledge. In such a way regimes of fiction shows the historical boundaries of being in the truth. Fiction opens the field of experiment and criticism to discourses of knowledge, because „things said” for the sake of experiment can connect with each other differently than „things in the world.” If we have in disposal an instrument of reflective attitude to systems of truthful discourses of knowledge its power sits in regimes of fiction.

2. Don Quixote

I made a mention about the fact that Foucault in his approach to fine arts, refers to specific works. Here is the example of specific works, which it attributed to the critical functions outlined in the above sense. This is the *Don Quixote of La Mancha* (1605–1615) by Miguel de Cervantes. It designates the boundary between pre-modern order of knowledge and its modern form. Although *Don Quixote* is so specific piece work, its role is epochal. Allow, in fact, catch *in statu nascendi* historical passing from one to another *episteme*.

A critical and most important cognitive function of the regime of ordering the narrator’s relationship with the plot is in *Don Quixote* to show the illusion of resemblance.³ The

critical power of fiction, which we find in *Don Quixote*, consists in this: similarity is the rigor of knowledge, ruling only the finite order of representations in the Renaissance episteme. Cognitive disposition of Renaissance episteme is based – according to the principle of difference between “words” and “things” – on the similarity as a standard relationship between representation and its subject matter. To be in truth is to find any similarity between signs (“words”) and things. “Thing” (epistemic object), according with this principle, articulate itself. The World is The Book. Episteme, which leads don Quixote through the world and allows him to be “in truth” lies in the fact that every truth captures its object by the similarity as a relation to the subject matter of the representation. Text of Cervantes in all its entirety discredits the resemblance as the basis for a cognitive relationship between representation and its object.

What the regime of fiction has at its disposal to reveal the structural grid of regime of truth in the era of knowledge, which in the day of Cervantes has just passed, the era of the Renaissance episteme?

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- The notion of *emulatio*, which is the very curious parallelism of attributes in distinct substances or beings, such that the attributes of one are like the reflections of those of another. (Thus, Porta explains that the human face is, with its seven distinguishable parts, the emulation of the sky with its seven planets.)
 - The notion of *signatura*, signature, which is, among the visible properties of an individual, the image of an invisible and hidden property.
 - And then, of course, the notion of *analogy*, which is the identity of relations between two or more distinct substances.” M. Foucault, Nietzsche, Freud, Marx [in:] *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, vol. 2, *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley and others, The New Press, New York 2000, p. 271.

³ According to Foucault, in the Renaissance episteme “there were at least five perfectly defined notions [of resemblance – P. B.]:

- The notion of conformability, *convenientia*, which is adjustment (for example, of the soul to the body, or of the animal series to the vegetable series).
- The notion of *sympatheia*, sympathy, which is the identity of accidents in distinct substances.

First and foremost, it is a paradox. By this I mean the regime's measure of fiction, which is exceeding the boundaries between literature and reality inside the story. Don Quixote has a chance to find in his world a book that is pretending to be the real story about him. To deny the story, he changes his travel plans. In fiction, which is based on *Don Quixote*, the literary world, the world produced rhetorically for the story penetrates the real world.

Secondly, this measure is a distance between the fiction and the story. This distance is ensured by the irony that can be so great that transforms a *Don Quixote* in self-reflexive text. In *Don Quixote*-the novel don Quixote, a character, reads the text of *Don Quixote* – a novel. Unmasking the similarities as a form of cognitive activity exhausting in itself, leads to explosion of the fable, explosion of a fiction as cognitive grid we read “things”.

Thirdly, the means of the regime of fiction in Cervantes is a metanarrative pointing the boundaries of the world presented. The narrator of compassionate, telling jokes, narrator involved – all these figures are metanarrative forms of criticism against similarity as a property of the Don Quixote world.

Fourthly, a representation of a representation. Cervantes also unmasks a writing techniques of a medieval romances. The text of *Don Quixote*, which produce an heroic being of characters, literary figures, plays with texts we know from history of literature.

All these measures serve to discredit, expose the similarity as a principle of episteme, all they play with similarity as a prop of the tale. This play reveals the job of the regime of truth as a finite mode of representation.

3. *L'Aqua*

The same mechanism of the “epistemic fiasco” we can find in *L'Aqua*, piece of art of Giuseppe Arcimboldo an Italian painter (1527–1593) known for painting portrait heads (sometimes well-known persons, for example emperor Maximilian II) made of such objects as fruits, fish vegetables, books, flowers, etc.

Is this a portrait, a paradigmatical piece of renaissance art, or is it a still life? What kind of resemblance enable us to see what is depicted? What is similar to what? What is the truth of painting? There is no good answer on this questions within episteme of resemblance, episteme of Renaissance. *L'Aqua* plays with the similarity, as the ruling epistemic principle ordering truths, and discredits it, humiliates in the visible forms of indetermination of shapes. *L'Aqua* is the play of the eyes against the episteme of resemblance.

What the regime of fiction, which we find in *L'Aqua*, has at its disposal to disclose attributes of regime of truth based upon resemblance?

First and foremost: the painting is a paradox. Paradoxical nature of *L'Aqua* consist in superpositioning two regimes of fiction in the same visual form of represented object. Is the object placed above the eye the eyebrow (“portrait”), or shrimp (“still life”)? Is it possible to be both the nose of a portrayed person and a fish thrown in unspecified space? Phenomenologically speaking, in *L'Aqua* two intentions of the same perceptual act, two regimes of fiction, fight for the same content given in visual form.⁴ There is a victim of this conflict:

4 H. Kenaan suggest that “Husserl himself had in fact never arrived at a systematic analysis of the experience of misperception, but his remarks are sufficient

a regime of truth based on resemblance. And there is one winner: the truth about historical limits, truth about finitude of such a regime.

Secondly, distance between the fiction and the story. What keeps a distance between fiction and story, between intention and fulfilment, between regime of fiction and regime of truth? What is a content of the “toolbox of fictionalization”? Irony, bracketing the depicted content, misperception, allusion, simulation of intention, suspension of perception, spectacularity and all similar measures by which what is depicted is in connection with orders of depicting only by negation.

Thirdly, a metanarrative pointing boundaries of the world presented. Confrontation and rivalry of the two regimes of fiction reveals not only simple truth, that pictorial representation is an aspectual mode of vision, subordinated to rules of visual fiction. Every part of painting reveals that what we see is depend on what is only alleged, only in presumption. Invisible is a part of finitude of vision. What we see, in blinking of com-



petitive shapes, refers to the boundaries of pictorial representability.

Fourthly, a representation of representation. What we see as depicted object is kept within boundaries of representation until regime of fiction is unproblematic. It spontaneously reigns as absolute monarch over our minds so we see direct, in *intentio recta*, nothing else but what we can see through it. The condition for seeing nothing else but only what is depicted is transparency of regime of fiction. In the case of multiplicity, duality of such a regimes, that operates in the same visual content – *established* in the *permanent* form or *ad hoc* – we will find some kind of supplementary moment: *intentio obliqua* covering as its target not only what is shown but showing itself as a mode of existence what is visible, the visibility itself.

Regimes of fiction, not only in the time of Renaissance, but in the all the time of epistemological crises takes the brunt of critical disclosure – sometimes joking, sometimes seriously – of modes of vision, boundaries of intelligibility of how we see, how we think through what we have developed vis-à-vis reality.

for reconstructing a general outline of the way this experience runs its course. As expected, the picture that comes across consists in an inversion of the Husserlian account of a harmonious perceptual experience. Unlike the fulfilment of potential intentions through the progressive determination of the perceptual object, the realization of misperception takes the form of a disappointment of these intentions. That is, unlike the typical synthesis in which an ‘original positing’ of a noema gradually ‘increases in weight’, the apprehension of error is the outcome of a conflict between perceptual components and their regulating meaning structure. Hence, with the gradual intensification of a conflict, at the very point of incompatibility, the explosion of perception occurs and a new form of sense organization replaces the noema which had collapsed.” H. Kenaan, *Subject to Error: Rethinking Husserl’s Phenomenology of Misperception* “International Journal of Philosophical Studies” Volume 7, 1999 – Issue 1 p. 57.