

Discontinuity: This is not Foucault

Interview and movie about Foucault's philosophy

Miro Brada, 2004



In 2004 in Prague, I met Slovak philosopher Miroslav Marcelli, who had attended Foucault's lectures in Paris in 80s. We talked about the legacy of Foucault and contemporary philosophy. Mr. Marcelli taught me philosophy at Comenius University in 1995.. I never visited his lectures, I only passed the exam.. The most interesting point was his answer to my 'provocations' replicating the common prejudice about impracticability of the philosophy. He answered "Do you think that e.g. Descartes didn't know about it?" In fact, most people tend to assume that philosophers or mathematicians, are "asocial" without "social" intelligence, while their occasional isolation (e.g. Nietzsche) is a product of social exclusion, rather than their choice. In 2013 I applied Foucault's concept of Discontinuity to short 10 minutes movie: Discontinuity, projected in my exhibition "From Animation" in Holland Park, London. The film divided to 3 parts, ends as it starts to simultaneously show the significant historical events in 4 windows, when the same idea appears to disappear to re-appear..

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FREEDOM OF IDENTITY

You participated in Foucault's lectures...

In 1981, I was attending Foucault's seminars at College de France. His topic - History of Sexuality, seemed irrelevant to

DISCONTINUITY AND EXCLUSION

Did Foucault's criticism of universal concepts deny differences (in charm, intellect, morality)?

Foucault doesn't deny differences, only questions conditions of their possibility.

my traditional academic orientation. Everything changed after his first lecture.

What persuaded you?

In his view the topic mattered to classic German philosophy. Foucault commented Kant's article 'What's Enlightenment?' occupied by the same question: who are we, heirs of Enlightenment, now?

How he presented it?

I witnessed thinking developing with all drama of unexpected continuations and reversals. It was not that kind of 'course' repeating year by year with the same conclusion. It was immediately clear, although this not big, bald man read the prepared text. It induced a need to oppose some of his views.

What exactly?

I doubted 'archeology of consciousness' excluding non-linguistic aspects. Later Foucault left it, and several times very changed his way of thinking. He did not avoid criticism of his previous views neither present his work as completed. I'd add to his later ideas about power, self-reflection because people subordinated to the power still decide. Foucault in one of his last interviews said he was exploring freedom in all of his work.

The French had a passion for philosophy. Could Foucault develop his ideas in Russia?

He was tied to the French society in a particular period, so it's difficult not only to imagine the Russian Foucault, but his appearance could be hardly repeated in France today. He was maybe the last one called «*maître à penser*», master of thinking. It seems they don't need such masters nowadays. But his thinking isn't restricted to this historic situation. At the end of his life he thought to move to USA, where his work is still appreciated.

What would Foucault say about

The differences transfer in our responses to judgements whose basis is however neither natural nor stable. It emerged in certain historical moment whose circumstances reveal interest to exclude those who differ.

Fools?

There were times when the higher truth notifying the future was revealed through a mouth of a fool. How happened, that since Enlightenment a fool had been classified as a folly and got into enclosed institution? This question lead to the Foucault's first great book: History of Madness (1961). He will ask such questions during whole of his life. Why is an idea once a deep knowledge, marked as a blunder?

Is historical, social, cultural, science evolution illusionary?

Foucault doubted the progress of Western society that should be guaranteed by acquired privileges as scientific advance, humanistic base of law, progressive education. He was not the first critique. Psychologist Jean Piaget noticed similarity between Foucault's The words and the things (1966) and Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962).

What was his contribution?

He particularized steps and processes of preconditions. Episteme, the principle of power structure, notifies in an indefinite form, and then transforms itself to theory. The norm to supervise and punish had only gradually resembled a prison or school. These motions don't need to be overlapped by a story of unstoppable progress of modern society.

What's a message of Foucault's book This is not a pipe with a pipe's image?

Foucault thought that Magritte's painting of a pipe entitled This is not a pipe, deviated from imitation that long

society now?

To speculate what Foucault would say is risky and paradoxical, as we'd have to empathize his thinking whose essence is not to empathize (in searching for answers) other thinking.

Being homosexual (died of HIV, 1984) what he thought of gay marriage, drugs, euthanasia?

He demanded the equal rights including right to suicide, but did not consider himself a representative - sort of homosexual thinking, and refused any tries to develop e.g. homosexual art. He rejected the restricted identity, which could be also the identity of gay relationship. He wanted drugs being part of experimenting with own identity, but didn't propagate indulgence, instead he assumed ethic resulting from a need being master of self.

Focus on impractical (linguistic, historical) issues can't give clear answers. Could philosophy overcome it today?

Situation seems new, but philosophy deals with it from its beginning. Do you think that Athenians did not reproach Socrates impracticability? Or that Descartes did not know that people wanted final solutions? Philosophy set us free from belief that radical beginning starts right now. There is its tendency to historicise. It does not escape from presence, only reminds its instability. Philosophy offers nothing to those who hide behind it to still life of definite answers, theses, doctrines.

Internet opened the new experimental space: chat, media, web applications, while philosophy seems lagged behind..

Computers and internet revolutionarily enhanced communication space, but communication is not knowledge - even

dominated western art. Plato called such images - without predetermined pattern, simulacra and condemned their creators as producers of delusions. Simulacra can explain many phenomena of our contemporary visual culture.

According to Foucault, the power defines the "author" and its role, while the invention is secondary, irrelevant or an obstacle (e.g. Galileo). How was Foucault as an "author" defined?

Foucault challenged the idea of „author“, as a source of hidden abilities and inspirations. Likewise Russian formalists or art historian Wölfflin thought that creator's great secret was an illusion. So Foucault's position belongs here too.

What was Foucault's contribution?

He was dismantling this illusion being a challenge for a thorough historical analysis of assumptions. The author should be decomposed and reconstructed according to different social orders, by relevant archived texts. As we see the result of study in archives, we can see Foucault closer.

He - himself authority - viewed the authority a power tool. Isn't it a paradox?

Foucault taught us that history of thought of 19 century can be written without emphasis on the most recognized philosophers: Hegel, Marx. He didn't claim that power only represses us, and so we must release ourselves. He rejected the concept of punitive power, and understood its function to repress as well as create us. He just refused its innocent appearance. Power affects relation of teacher-student, which does not imply to remove the teacher. Understanding history of such relations transfers their character.

Why Bergson, Sartre, Foucault were

though they expect each other. Radical increase of communication does not need to radically deepen knowledge. Is art on internet more valuable than art in theatres or exhibition halls?

Is it true also for philosophy?

Yes, but philosophy does not escape from internet. Its concepts contributed to understanding of internet and related changes. E.g. Barthes hardly anticipated internet, but his concept of text as a net, is beneficial. Or cyberspace theorist Mitchel uses deterritorialization - a notion elaborated by Gilles Deleuze.

Nietzsche inspired German leaders of WW I / II. Can philosophy prevent itself from the abuse?

Every idea, theory, book is exploitable, which can't be prevented by its replacement with simplified receipts or appeals. Philosophy justified some totalities, but at the same time it doubted them. Well known Marx's thesis says, philosophers till now just interpreted the world, but it is about to change it. Some explained it that it should be changed according to their own needs. Philosophy offers only understanding, as an assumption for an action.

so popular in France?

Although Bergson was in a bit different environment than Sartre and Foucault, all these and similar thinkers, could interest public thanks to a solid system of education (philosophy was important part of high school in France), journals, later radio and TV. Philosophy could take advantage of its close link with literature, when Bergson and Sartre got Nobel prizes. Not last, it was a tradition of the French scientists to reflect knowledge.

Discontinuity, The New Art Form

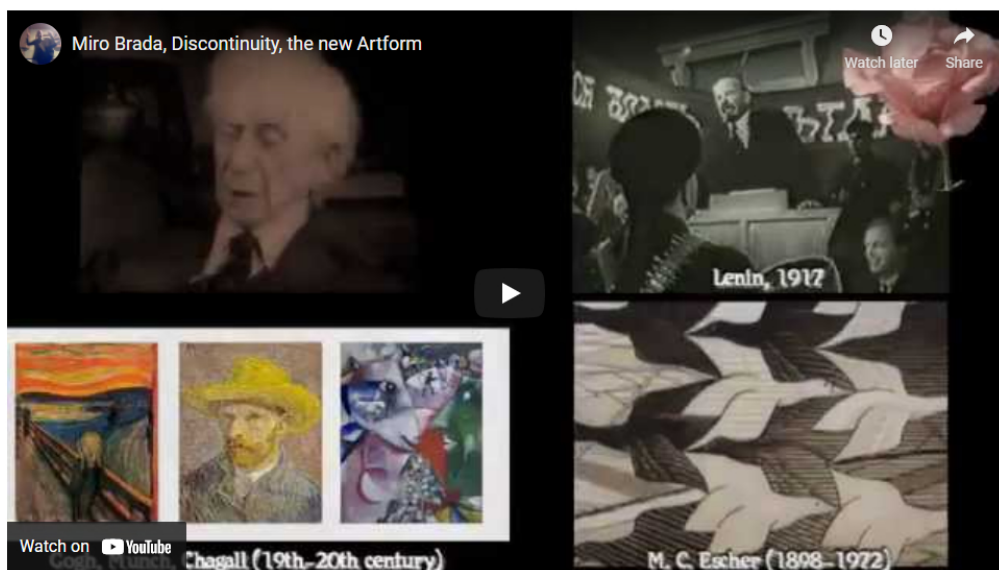
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0R0kp5nwRg_

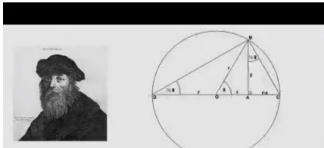
michel-foucault.com/2015/03/05/miro-brada-artform/

Miro Brada, Discontinuity, the new Artform (2013)

CLARE O'FARRELL

Miro Brada, Discontinuity, the new Artform

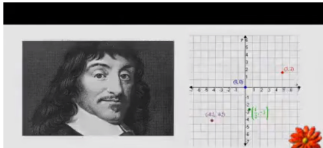




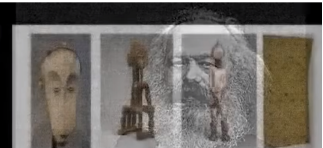
Pythagoras (570-495 BC)



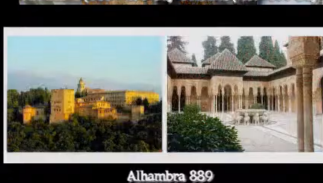
Heraclitus (535-475 BC) Socrates (469-399 BC)



Descartes (1596-1650)



Aristotle (384-322 BC) Plato (428-348 BC)



Alhambra 889



da Vinci 1503

Hokusai 1829



Lenin, 1917



Antonioni, Blowup 1966



Hungary 1956



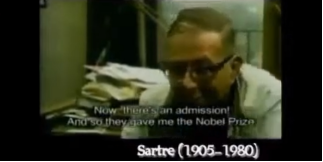
Cogh, Munch, Chagall (19th-20th century)



M. C. Escher (1898-1972)



Hitchcock, Vertigo 1954



Sartre (1905-1980)



Hiroshima 1945

...om 'n bepaalde sociale klasse we know that the educational system maintains the power in the hands

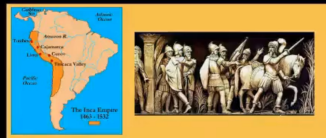


Jefferson Airplane, 1967



I have a dream 1963

Yuri Gagarin, 1961



Inca Empire 1463-1532



Sotomayor, 1993, 2.45 cm

Bob Marley, 1977



Bubka, 1994, 614 cm



Tesla 1856-1943

Vysotsky 1972



تاج محل / Taj Mahal

Fukuyama 1992

