

The woman's nature (?): or the nature of the discursive selection /

A natureza da mulher (?): ou do recorte discursivo

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I aim at meeting two goals, which will be examined in parallel. On the one hand, touched by a controversy in relation to Michel Foucault's perception of women, I will analyze discursive sequences that unveil the need for considering the (local) historicity of the discourse, in order not to assign to an author what cannot be assigned to him. On the other hand, in view of the selected sequences, I will attempt to show that much of what is said about women has a dated origin and that the erasure of the (global) historicity of meaning may claim as a-historical, timeless, universal and natural what is related only to its birth/production at a certain circumstance, thus avoiding making what is historical seem natural.

KEYWORDS: Discourse; Woman; Michel Foucault; Historicity.

RESUMO

Busco, com este artigo, atender a dois objetivos construídos contemplados em paralelo. De um lado, tangido por uma celeuma em relação a Michel Foucault no tocante à percepção que ele teria em relação às mulheres, analiso sequências discursivas que mostram a necessidade de considerar a historicidade (local) do discurso, para não atribuir a um autor o que não lhe pode ser atribuído. De outro, em face dos recortes selecionados, busco mostrar que muito do que se diz sobre as mulheres tem uma origem datada e que o apagamento da historicidade (global) do sentido pode fazer passar por a-histórico, atemporal, universal e natural o que se refere apenas ao nascimento/produção em determinada conjuntura, evitando, assim, fazer passar por natural o que é histórico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso; Mulher; Michel Foucault; Historicidade.

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1 Introduction

In a postgraduate class, in a conversation about place and position, French Discourse Analysis concepts, a student, when dealing with the condition of women, resorted to Foucault to defend the thesis that men and women are predisposed for some activities, therefore, each one should restrict themselves to what is their duty. I expressed my strangeness, because of the little I know about that author, he does not seem to authorize the reading presented. The student was incisive in his defense, referred to the **History of Sexuality 2** (1994) and removed the following quote from it to support his point of view: “*a natureza dotou a mulher de uma ternura particular para se ocupar dos filhos*”¹, which can be found on page 143. As I had not read the trilogy, I had to, not without controversy, state that I would return to the question; I did not come back, the discipline ended and the debate was suspended.

I return to this controversy, because, having read the work in which the student supported his argument, I realized that I did well not accepting the proposed thread of meaning with regard to what Foucault would have defended; there are current discourses that assume the primacy of the woman’s nature for some affections and events, but it is not what can be attributed to the author in relation to the highlighted, clipped, quoted or mentioned by the student. The cut made in the textual support of the defense erases what precedes and what follows the fragment and fails to disregard the whole of the work mentioned.

In the case of the excerpt, some lines before, Foucault explains that he is dealing with *Econômica de Xenofonte* (p. 137), that “*esse texto (...) é bem discreto sobre a questão das relações sexuais*”² (p. 143), in marriage and that it “*indica que a natureza dotou a mulher*”³ (my emphasis), in which the quotation mark of discourse stands out (or should be considered): “indicates”; how much more, because the “also” marker is added, which goes back to the use already made of the same attribution ingredient, making the operation stand out. In the case of the excerpt, the cited discourse marker is close and should not go unnoticed: it is a question of reading that demands a certain

¹ “nature has endowed women with a particular tenderness to care for their children”.

² “this text (...) is very discreet on the issue of sexual relations”.

³ “indicates that nature has endowed women”.

commitment to the project of meaning, whether it is the one who presides over the whole work, or the one who refers to the most punctual constructions.

Given the stir described, I was urged to read the work and I realized that there are passages in it in which there is no mark of distance, as in the case with “indicates”. There are excerpts in which the other’s discourse appears presented as his own and the interval is subsumed by the assumption that the reader must understand what comes from the author and what comes from the object discourse, even if it is due to the warning that “*Os estudos que se seguem, assim como outros que anteriormente empreendi, são estudos de ‘história’ pelos campos de que tratam e pelas referências que assumem*” (p. 13). The problem, therefore, is: if, with a discourse report mark, the reader can cut a passage in absentia and intend that the effect is that one, how much more can this occur in exceptions whose report marks do not exist. And it is not a question of blaming the author for demanding this, but of making the reader understand it and know how to deal with it.

It is on this issue that I build this study and relate it to a specific issue that exists in the work: the concept of *women*. There are several passages that take it as a focus and, without the mentioned care, one can attribute to the text what it does not support. And I am not in defense of the author; I only deal with a problem related to the discourse quote. And, in the face of the woman being able, due to the return of the retrograde discourse, to succumb in the face of a reactionary mentality, which claims to recover her “particular nature”, this study acquires a pragmatic dimension, which does not seem inappropriate. Returning to the point: I understand that Foucault would disagree with its use for some macho discourse. I hope that the more political bias of the second objective does not haunt the scientificity of the two goals that I pursue.

2 The setting of the object

Foucault’s work requested as support for the defense of the student’s thesis, in the section **Modificações (Modifications)**, brings alerts that should guide the reader along the way. The author states that he moves away from theorizing about sexuality as an invariant, whose historically singular

⁴ “The studies that follow, as well as others that I have previously undertaken, are ‘history’ studies by the fields they deal with and by the references they assume”.

manifestations would be due to the “efeitos dos mecanismos diversos de repressão⁵” (p. 10), and that he addresses the theme “como uma experiência **historicamente singular**” (p. 10 – my emphasis). He also assumes that volume 2 ““é dedicado à maneira pela qual a atividade sexual foi problematizada pelos **filósofos e pelos médicos na cultura grega clássica, no século IV a. C**” (p. 16 – emphasis added). Among others, these are passages that constrain the route and, at best, the reader can affirm that he does not agree with the Greek perspective, but cannot defend that Foucault thinks as the Greeks did; this may even be possible (I do not think so), but the French philosopher does not assume it for a moment.

There is, therefore, a tripe historicity that makes reading rarer: it presides over the basting of the work’s constituent parts; it links it to a moment in 90s history, when Foucault wrote it; it refers to a historical experience of sexuality. This is a triple constraint that prevents the attribution of fragments of discourse to those who are desired, disregarding the axes that anchor it. It is because the discourse is about a sexual practice, it is because the author, in some way, presides over the construction of the route, but it is, perhaps, above all, because, according to Eco (1993, p. 23), “as palavras trazidas pelo autor são um conjunto um tanto embaraçoso de evidências materiais que o leitor não pode deixar passar em silêncio, nem em barulho⁸”, which he cannot construct senses by default. Without becoming a puppet in the author’s hands, the reader cannot comfortably detach himself from the rigging that guides and induces him.

Very briefly: **O uso dos Prazeres (The use of Pleasures)** has five chapters, all designed to unravel the way in which *aphrodisiac* were the object of moral concern on the part of the Greeks, through reflective not on the sexual act, the pleasure provided or the desire to enjoy, but by the bond that unites them; they could, freed from sobriety, temperance and personal domination, cause unemployment, public disgrace and disqualification for citizenship in the face of inability to care for themselves. Foucault shows, in this way, that the Greeks organized an ethics (a *moral*), a dietary one (the *regimes*), an economy (the care of *oikos*), an erotica (the love for boys) and a reflection on true,

⁵ “effects of the various mechanisms of repression”.

⁶ “as a historically unique experience”.

⁷ “is dedicated to the way in which sexual activity was problematized by philosophers and doctors in classical Greek culture, in the 4th century BC”.

⁸ “the words brought by the author are a somewhat embarrassing set of material evidence that the reader cannot pass up in silence, or in noise”.

detailed love from a deliberate asceticism. And this movement would have a teleology: wisdom, truth and freedom (*sophrosune*), obtained by controlling oneself and by regulating sexual practice.

It is, above all, in Chapter III, **A economia (The Economics)**, that Foucault, bases on Xenophon, brings up the relationship between man and woman, since the work of the philosopher “*contém o tratado de vida matrimonial mais desenvolvido que a Grécia clássica nos deixou. O texto se apresenta como um conjunto de preceitos relativos à maneira de governar o próprio patrimônio*” (p. 137). It is in this context that the woman appears, it is in relation to the care of the self that she is thematized and it is by reference to the property that man must pay attention to her as a component of the oikos, which “*comporta as terras e os bens*”⁹ (p. 138), she must, led by her husband, be “*associada no governo de casa*”¹¹ (p. 139). Thus, “*A arte doméstica é da mesma natureza que a arte política ou a arte militar, pelo menos na medida em que se trata, tanto lá como aqui, de governar os outros*”¹² (p. 139). Emphasis: these are, according to Foucault, the general assumptions on which the Greeks of the period were based, the woman being thought of, “*no quadro do oikos, como um aspecto da responsabilidade governamental do marido*”¹³ (p. 140).

This set of parameters, presented briefly, delineate the general ambience of Foucault's research, being the determining thread of orientation for the movement of the reader and that affects, even, the fragments where no reported discourse mark is used, such as: “*A temperança do marido diz respeito a uma arte de governar, de se governar, e de governar uma esposa que é preciso conduzir e respeitar ao mesmo tempo, pois ela é, diante do marido, a dona obediente da casa*”¹⁴ (p. 148), where it is necessary to consider the implicit linguistic resources of discourse attribution, as second (according to/ conform/ for) the Greeks; those reported in the text, we must realize. The implicit presence of these constraints, therefore, leads to reflection on the problem of the historicity of the discourse.

⁹ “contains the most developed marriage life treaty that classical Greece has left us. The text presents itself as a set of precepts related to the way of governing one's own heritage”.

¹⁰ “includes land and goods”.

¹¹ “associate in the home government”.

¹² “Domestic art is of the same nature as political art or military art, at least insofar as it is a matter, both there and here, of governing others”.

¹³ “under oikos, as an aspect of the husband's governmental responsibility”.

¹⁴ “The husband's temperance concerns an art of governing, governing himself, and governing a wife who must be led and respected at the same time, since she is, in front of her husband, the obedient owner of the house”.

3 Of historicity: an example

Any language event would serve to demonstrate the constitutiveness of the discourse and its condition of appearance: said in a very imprecise way, due to its historicity, a comprehensive concept that brings together several application features; I will deal with it in the next section. Here, keeping my eye on Foucault's work, I bring a case commented by the author, which guarantees, on the one hand, the intuitive approximation of the inextricable relationship between the discourse and its exterior and, on the other hand, a data presented by a voice of authority, which gives greater authenticity to this study. It is the aphorism of Demosthenes, who would have said it at the end of the libel *Contra Nera*: “As cortesãs, nós as temos para o prazer; as concubinas, para os cuidados de todo o dia; as esposas, para ter uma descendência legítima e um fiel guardiã do lar¹⁵” (p. 129).

Seen apart from the context of its emergence, the statement seems to divide the world into three exclusive fields, entrusting courtesans with the pleasure of men (which is not the case, given the *Erotica* produced in relation to the love for boys), delegating daily tasks to concubines (which is also not the case, since the wives were also in charge of the internal care of *oikos*) and assigned to them the task of having children and starting a family. In any case, aphorism seems to constitute a legal or moral prediction that the role of woman would be linked to offspring, and pleasure is forbidden. According to Foucault, the statement “*foi algumas vezes lido como uma tripartição que implicaria funções excludentes: prazer sexual de um lado, vida cotidiana de outro, e enfim, para a esposa somente a continuação da linhagem*¹⁶” (p. 134).

Foucault's reflection makes it possible to maintain that the sexist view that came to be attributed to the excerpt is due more to the cut made by those who used it, removing it from the general fabric, than to the discriminatory and sectarian character that was attributed to it; the perceived machismo seems to be more in the eyes of those who detect it than of those who verbalized it, being marked more by the positive observation of cultural behavior than by the valuing segregation of different female places. I think that Foucault's reflection equates the problem related to the displacement of meaning to which the discourse was subject. For him,

¹⁵ “Courtesans, we have them for pleasure; concubines, for day-to-day care; the wives, to have a legitimate descent and a faithful guardian of the home”.

¹⁶ “it was sometimes read as a tripartition that would imply exclusionary functions: sexual pleasure on the one hand, daily life on the other, and finally, for the wife only the continuation of the lineage”.

*é preciso levar em conta o contexto no qual essa sentença, aparentemente brutal, foi formulada. Tratava-se de um litigante que pretendia invalidar o casamento aparentemente legítimo de um de seus inimigos, assim como o reconhecimento, enquanto cidadãos, dos filhos nascidos desse casamento; e os argumentos apresentados se baseavam na origem da mulher, seu passado como prostituta, e seu **status** atual, que não poderia ser outro que não o de concubina. O ponto não era, portanto, o de mostrar que se vai buscar prazeres em outro lugar que não junto à esposa legítima; mas que uma descendência legítima não poderia ser obtida a não ser com a própria esposa¹⁷ (p. 134 - grifo do autor).*

Even with some controversy, once considered the constitution of the historicity of the discourse, it can be argued that the allegation of impeding the prostitute's transit to the place of the family woman seems to be inopportune, which will say that pleasure can be served only courtesan. The aphorism, considered its context, seems to prevent the sexist reading that was attributed to it, having something innovative, even if it is considered that the argument also supports a thread that postulates that, if the wives were taken for "a legitimate descent" and if the woman in question had been received as a wife, even though she had been a prostitute before and had fathered legitimate children, they should be recognized as citizens by virtue of the mother's current status. There is, in Demosthenes' sentence, a precept that does not agree with the macho and discriminatory basis denounced by José de Alencar in "Luciola", whose prediction determines that the courtesan must die together with the child in her womb.

4 Of historicity: multiple foci

This section is based on the fact that a word/ expression / statement or fragment of discourse, and the discourse as a whole, if abstracted from its historical conditions of production, lose the effect of meaning first and may, in the end, migrate to another meaning sphere. In other terms, the discourse is constitutively marginalized by what circumscribes it and by the relations it weaves with the outside,

¹⁷ "it is necessary to take into account the context in which this apparently brutal sentence was formulated. He was a litigant who intended to invalidate the apparently legitimate marriage of one of his enemies, as well as the recognition, as citizens, of the children born from that marriage; and the arguments presented were based on the woman's origin, her past as a prostitute, and her current status, which could not be other than that of concubine. The point, therefore, was not to show that pleasures are to be sought elsewhere than from the legitimate wife; but that a legitimate offspring could not be obtained except from his wife".

that is, by its historicity, a concept that, judging by the uses made, covers a spectrum whose nuances range from the linguistic environment to the long-running story. I will cover them briefly, to choose a certain perspective.

One of the ways to deal with the dependence of the discourse in relation to the “historical” environment can be found in Pêcheux (1995), when the author refers to the intradiscourse, thereby addressing the phenomena of co-reference in the textual fabric, that is, what was said before and will be said later. Sometimes, this scope is designated as co-text, being one of the components of the historicity of the discourse, given that it places it on an axis of relationships that cannot be overlooked. More difficult to perceive in brief discourses, long constructions such as novels or the work cited by Foucault show the bonding between the constituent parts, weaving a dependency in which everything and part are in solidarity. This phenomenon always occurs, but, perhaps, in larger discourses, it becomes more noticeable. In other words: there is historicity, or a “narrative” chain, which organizes a before and after that cannot be ignored. In this way, it is even postulated that the discourse creates its conditions of production, in the sense that it either reports to a self-referred world or that it (re)build exteriority in a certain way, showing it and elucidating it.

A second nuance related to the historicity of the discourse concerns its connection to the most immediate context of occurrence or to the communicative situation. In this initial theses, Pêcheux (1993), based on the defense of imaginary formations as determining elements of points A and B, having been criticized for taking on the psychologizing perspective that he criticized, dealt with the determination of the processes of signification in the face of the dependence on who were the subjects involved in the discourse production process about a given referent. Whether the criticism is fair or not, it is not significant here, but it is not possible to erase from the author’s reflection that the meaning of the discourse has a close relationship with the subjects involved in the co-production of the theme they address. Here is a conception of historicity that prevents the linguistic event from being abstracted from its contexts of occurrence, sometimes perceived as constituted in an empirical and experiential way.

There is also a third problematization that takes into account the externality of the discourse as an ingredient, conditioner in this case, of the processes of signification: here, we talk about the production conditions themselves. Constituted ideologically, they would be, according to Pêcheux (1993, 1995, 2011), responsible for the interpellation of individuals in subjects. So, the discourse does not depend on the empirical speaker who produces it, since he is always-already a rarified subject by

ideology and determined to produce discourse in a way, being subjectivized about what and how to say it. The spaces occupied by A and B are seen as places and positions, and the discourse is the result of the interdiscourse that haunts him from a distance and in a decisive way. It is, therefore, about conditions of production in the same sense of subjecting the speaker, who must behave according to the discourse of which he is a spokesman. This nuance is sometimes referred to, as Orlandi (1999) and Mazière (2007), in a broad sense. Therefore, whether referred to the co-text, the communicative situation or the production conditions, of a more linguistic or structured nature from the outside, the historicity of the discourse is given as a constituent.

However, there is a fourth dimension of historicity that, without rejecting the first three, because there would be no basis for doing so, affect the discourse, this time, in relation to the meaning produced. If the discourse is historical (and ideological, as a result), it is because it does not work in the way of discovering the nature of things, but because it bypasses them moved by the imaginary that seizes them; he does not say what the thing is, but what is imagined to be. And if the discourse, according to Pêcheux (1993, p. 82), is an “efeito de sentido entre os pontos A e B¹⁸”, it is not because this effect is constituted ad hoc through subjective movements, but because it is the preferred space for the construction of meaning, which inhabits and conditions it, at times, tangles by convictions that cross consciences and times, creating a fabric of “evidence”.

For Pêcheux (1993, 1995, 2011), the paraphrastic movement that makes the discourse repeat produces an effect of transparency, making us believe that the meaning can only be one and no the other. The coincidence between a self that says *x* is *x* and *you* who agreed that *x* is really *x* occurs, because everything happens in the tuning fork of coexistence, complicity and identification, which generates the impression of literality, which transcends the punctual event and, at the limit, it has the dictionary to impose the “true” meaning. The assumption that things can only be one way, because they have always been this way, forces the sense to bend to the “agreement”, sustained by repetition, which results in the reproduction and defense of transparency. Having lost the founding moment of the constitution, the meaning seems to be one way because that is its way. In this case, if there is a historicity of the discourse, it refers, above all, to the historicity affected by the time of constitution of meaning that is repeated through the resumption. As stated by Orlandi (1999, p. 45 - emphasis added),

¹⁸ “sense effect between points A and B”.

“A evidência do sentido, que, na realidade é um efeito ideológico, não nos deixa perceber seu caráter material, a **historicidade de sua construção**”¹⁹.

In order to make the reflection on the historicity of the discourse/ meaning in the fourth nuance of the concept less abstract, I consider a sequence of Foucault’s work, which does not present marks of reported discourse, but does not allow understanding that the meaning is postulated by him or that this meaning assume “a existência evidente dos objetos a saber²⁰” (PÊCHEUX, 2011, p. 152): “mas existe, entretanto, algo que, na situação da mulher casada, demanda da parte do marido comedimento e limitação; trata-se justamente da sua posição de fraqueza que a submete à vontade do marido, como uma suplicante arrebatada de sua casa de origem²¹” (p. 160).

Abstract from the co-text / context / conditions of production / historicity, the sequence leads to the conclusion that the husband’s temperance should happen, even if with “restraint and limitation”, due to the “woman (being) married”, of to be in a “position of weakness” that “submits her to her husband’s will” and to be a “suppliant snatched from her home of origin”. However, even if the sequence has no marks of reported discourse, considering the co-text of the work already mentioned, the context of Foucault, as an author, and the historical conditions of the 90s prevent the philosopher from being claimed as a voice of authority for to sustain the supposed weakness of the woman in close dependence on her husband, whose will should be met. Above all, the historicity of the constitution of meaning, which goes back to the Greeks of the moment researched, shows that meaning has a dating, which inhibits the conclusion that is the nature of woman that is said to be and that is currently repeated in discourses characterized, not without reason, as conservative, since they stand against the movement and in favor of the repetition of conceptions that are not evident and whose constitution can be dated in historicity, in this case, quite precise.

Summarizing: the four-dimensionality of historicity (or, if applicable, its understanding according to the fourth perspective described), which locates the discourse in relatively precise anchors, prevents reading by default and the statement that the meaning belongs to the speaker, in general, making it clear that what one thinks was forged in another time, passed through the sieve of

¹⁹ “The evidence of meaning, which in reality is an ideological effect, does not allow us to perceive its material character, the historicity of its construction”.

²⁰ “the evident existence of the objects to know”.

²¹ “but there is, however, something that, in the situation of the married woman, demands from the husband restraint and restraint; it is precisely her position of weakness that submits her to her husband’s will, like a suppliant snatched from her home of origin”.

the relationship of forces (sometimes in a violet way) and managed to establish itself as a clear and transparent truth: pure crystalline literality. It is in its quadruple dimensionality, especially in the last aspect, that the historicity of the discourse, potentially liberating, can become a way of scanning the world in which it is immersed and submitting it to the necessary criticism.

5 From the object analysis: objective

Foucault divides *Econômica de Xenofonte*, which contains the matrimonial life treaty, into three parts: The Wisdom of Marriage, The House of Isômaco and Three Temperance Policies. From the last two, I take sequences (one from the second and three from the third) for the development of this part of the study, not because they are the only ones, but because they allow to achieve the objectives of this work in a more striking way. In The House of Isômaco, given as the desirable model of government and organization of oikos, it is possible to read:

Fora haverá, portanto, o homem que semeia, cultiva, labora e cria o gado; ele traz para casa o que produziu, ganhou ou trocou; dentro, a mulher recebe, conserva e atribui na medida das necessidades. 'É a atividade do marido que geralmente faz entrar os bens na casa; mas é a gestão da mulher que, o mais frequentemente, regula seu gasto'²² (p. 141).

In The House of Isômaco, the modeling of conjugality and temperance is contrasted by an inside and an outside, an interior and an exterior of the house itself. The interiority of the environment, intended for women because she is a weak supplicant, would be attributed to the regulation of family assets, through receipt, conservation and their destination. It is a management of domestic property that aims to avoid the wasteful expense of what was brought to the house by the husband. This prediction determines the fate of woman to the home that shelters them, including violence and harassment. On the other hand, the exemplary man belongs to the "*pequeno mundo dos proprietários de terra que têm que manter, fazer crescer e transmitir para aqueles que têm o seu nome, os bens da*

²² "There will be, therefore, the man who sows, cultivates, works and raises cattle; he brings home what he produced, won or exchanged; inside, the woman receives, preserves and assigns as needed. 'It is the husband's activity that usually brings goods into the house; but it is the woman's management that most often regulates her spending'".

*família*²³ (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 137). To him, belongs the exterior of the oikos' life and the activity of provision, through the work of cultivation, animal husbandry and business. With the prediction that he is the one who “brings goods into home”, as well as in relation to women, an ideological prediction is sealed. On his side, there are the collection, the provision and the quantity; on her side, there are the receipt, the forecast and the quality. Despite the appearance of complementarity that the prophecy determines, she is destined for the home, in the face of the natural weakness that constitutes her.

It is possible to see, therefore, that the pure paraphrasing of the highlighted sequence (re)aligned a discourse that is consistent with the theses that have inhabited the pronouncement of some current characters and, thus, the fragment of Foucault, detached from its historicity, suggests the consent with sectarian discourses. As I extended the commentary on the excerpt, transforming it into proper words (without the use of the conditional), I can be considered, if decontextualized, also as sexist, in the light of passages “for being a weak supplicant” and “the man is responsible for the provision of family goods”. It is exactly against this des-historicization of the discourse that this work is constructed, insofar as the effect of meaning is constituted by the interior and the exterior and is crossed by an objective that cannot be overshadowed.

In other words, a part of a discourse cannot be removed from the whole (although it is often so) to serve purposes whose goals do not fit with the hypothesis built by the work, which is now read by default. On the one hand, I find it difficult to input the above sequence to Foucault; on the other hand, it seems to me to be inappropriate to attribute to him the meaning that the sequence, inside, articulates. Even if it does not have explicit attribution marks, in this case, to the Greeks, it is not because it seems to belong to the author that the discourse should be given as his. This reflection makes me think about the possibility of a distinction between local and global historicity in terms of anchoring the discourse. In the first, the co-text, the context and the production conditions would appear; in the second, the constitution of meaning would enter, in that it has historical dating, which, sometimes, directs it to distant places, which, obliterated, can create effects of evidence and nature. If, on the one hand, in view of the first three guarantees, Foucault cannot be considered as sexist, on the other, given the fourth lair, the concept of woman belongs to the classical Greek world, which still

²³ “small world of landowners who have to maintain, grow and pass on to those who bear his name, family assets”.

reverberates. I repeat: I am not defending Foucault, but I consider the work referred to as relevant data for an order of problems.

The next sequence, as well as the previous one, taken in spite of the circumscriptions that determine it, could also inadvertently be linked to the knowledge produced by Foucault and, thus, be considered as illuminating the world in transparency and evidence given the paraphrastic repeatability in found (in the work and in the world):

E foi para esse suplemento do melhor-viver que a natureza dispôs, como fez, o homem e a mulher; foi visando a vida comum 'que ela organizou um e outro sexo'. O primeiro é forte, o segundo é contido pelo temor; um encontra saúde no movimento, o outro é inclinado a levar uma vida sedentária; um traz os bens para a casa, o outro vela sobre o que aí está; um alimenta os filhos, o outro os educa. A natureza programou, de certa forma, a economia da propriedade doméstica e os papéis que cada um dos esposos deve aí desempenhar²⁴ (p. 157).

Through contrasting parallelism, men and women are compared, placing, on the one hand, strength, movement, production and food, and, on the other hand, fear, sedentary lifestyle, care and education. Placed in dissimetric poles that compete with each other, women would be destined for domestic activities and educations, given their supposed predisposition to safeguard the interior of the *oikos*, while men, in the face of fearlessness and strength, would naturally have been willing for external toil and for business. This Manichean discourse is not hard to find today. Therefore, for one reason or another, the roles of men and women would be irreconcilable, given the differences that, by virtue of physical attributes, place them under different constraints.

This sequence presents one more ingredient in relation to the previous one, when it states that the differences between the sexes were arranged by “nature”, aiming at the “best living” and the “economy of domestic activity”. If it were that way, it would have to be concluded that what separates men and women does not have political-ideological determination, since, naturally, “both sexes” happened in a different way, establishing the role that “each spouse must play”. The effect of specular evidence and dispassionate description is highlighted here, and the lights of history can go unnoticed,

²⁴ “And it was for this supplement of better living that nature disposed, as it did, of man and woman; it was aiming at the common life 'that she organized both sexes'. The first is strong, the second is contained by fear; one finds health in the movement, the other is inclined to lead a sedentary life; one brings the goods to the house, the other watches over what is there; one feeds the children, the other educates them. Nature has programmed, in a way, the economy of domestic property and the roles that each spouse must play there”.

fixing the perception that it is so, because nature did it. Here, crossing of the discursive process to arrive at the supposed real of the world, as criticized by Pêcheux, seems to gain relevance and the historicity of the meaning that must be imputed to the Greeks can, inattentively, be attributed to Foucault or go back to nature, dazzling the Greek fabric of the image of a woman.

By attributing the split between spouses to nature, which would have equated the needs of the best living and the domestic economy, the reader can cling to the defense of the distinction between them, as being caused by an external force: what is far from non-existent, in view of some discourses. For this, contributes the fact that the sequence can (should not, but can) be removed from the place of appearance, producing an effect of autonomy and authenticity: decal of the world; unacceptable activity, it has a historicity (co-text, context and conditions of production) and attests to another, that of meaning, since it is not certain that men and women are conceived as in the passage, nor that nature has disposed them in or out of the house. It is up to the reader to recover the implicit marks of the reported discourse, so that the excerpt is placed on the most opportune anchor axis.

I highlight another sequence that, due to the absence of reported discourse marks, can be, in an untimely way, attributed to the author, if abstracted from his general historicity, and can be claimed as having an evident and specular meaning, due to the similarities that hound him:

Não se dá o mesmo com a mulher: sem dúvida esta é e será sempre inferior ao homem, e a justiça que deve reger as relações entre os esposos não pode ser a mesma que reina entre os cidadãos; contudo, por causa de sua semelhança, o homem e a mulher devem ter uma relação que 'se aproxime muito da justiça política'²⁵ (p. 159).

From the hypothesis that, for the Greeks, “*o homem deve guardar a superioridade permanentemente*”²⁶ (p. 159), the sequence produces the derivation that, between the man and the woman, there cannot be a relation of symmetry, once that, “without a doubt”, she “will *always* be inferior to man” (my emphasis). The “always” time marker, which, at the limit, anchors the defense of immutability in the face of the supposed natural determination of the object’s constitution, can thus induce that the difference is made *ad eternum* and that it does not allow for justice that is equal for

²⁵ “It is not the same women: without a doubt, women are and will always be inferior to men, and the justice that must govern relations between spouses cannot be the same as that which prevails among citizens; however, because of their similarity, men and women must have a relationship that ‘comes very close to political justice’”.

²⁶ “man must keep his superiority permanently”.

both, because it “cannot be the same that reigns among citizens”. Despite the analogy with the political link of city administration, the relationship between the spouses is given as perennial, while, there, it is changing. In view of the nature of the woman, who made her weak and fearful, a supplicant, among the spouses, there is “a relationship that is very close to political justice”, which would prevent the equal coincidence between them, since the woman “always” will be in a relationship of inferiority to man, given his strength and fearlessness.

Once the local historicity of the constitution was erased, the sequence, abstracted from the event that caused it, could be attributed to Foucault, due to the absence of reported discourse marks, and could be considered as referring to the woman's natural ontology, since it would be for “always” what “always” was. And, therefore, the relationship between the two can come closer to justice, even “very”, if applicable, but without losing the natural dissymmetry that would characterize it. Furthermore, if the global historicity of the sequence is erased, which scrutinizes it in relation to its ideological dictates, it can be believed that it resumes, as said, an evident and natural meaning, in this case, exceedingly, failing to perceive its birth in a more or less precise point of time (which Foucault researches), making him retreat to a perpetuity forged by nature, which would have shaped men and women to meet the need for “better-living”. The clipping or citation operation for disregarding historicity can, on the one hand, attribute a discourse to those who do not defend it and may, even in the face of an explicit occurrence, not realize that the meaning is historical and determined by conjunctural forces of embarrassment. Even if it has been said and still says that the woman is in a way, what is said is driven by dated socio-historical and, therefore, temporal forces.

I resort to a last sequence to maintain the theses that a fragment removed from its surroundings can make it attribute what it should not and lead to assume that the meaning is natural, when it is constituted in a moment, more or less, located in time and in space:

se, de fato, a autoridade do marido sobre a mulher é mais fraca, menos total que nas duas primeiras relações (escravos e filhos), ela não tem o caráter simplesmente provisório que se encontra na relação ‘política’, no sentido estrito do termo, isto é, na relação entre cidadãos livres num Estado; é porque, numa constituição livre, os cidadãos comandam e são comandados alternadamente, enquanto na casa é o homem que deve guardar a superioridade permanentemente²⁷ (p. 158-159).

²⁷ “if, in fact, the husband's authority is the woman is weaker, less total than in the first two relationships (slaves and children), she does not have the simply provisional character found in the 'political' relationship, in the strict sense of the

Again, the agenda of man's power and the dissymmetric relationship between spouses is addressed and, here, it is contrasted with other relationships under which they find themselves tangled, in oikos or in public life. Unlike the State, where power is alternated and requires symmetry, given the provisionality, in relation to slaves and children, it is more or less comprehensive and less total in the case of women, without being confused with equal decision-making powers. It is due to the alternation of power that characterizes a free constitution and the fact that the command is alternated that citizenship symmetrizes relations between men, which should not be taken to the government of the house, where slaves, children and wife have, each, a greater or lesser degree of submission. There is a hierarchy of obedience relations, and the slave must be in a position of maximum differentiation, while citizenship presupposes the highest degree of symmetry. The children and the wife are in the middle of the scale, with her being placed in a degree of less submission to the husband's authority, whose permanent superiority, however, gives the tuning fork.

Returning to the point: the sequence, given its effect of apparent completeness and autonomy, allows, in view of the lesser restraint of the reader, to be the statement of a thesis, given the supposed discourse of authority that it would be the support. As there are no reported discourse marks (second, according to, for, in this case, the Greeks), the abstraction of local historicity can lead the reader to make it a symptom of machismo or the finding of nature's work, imposing a sense that does not stand up to scrutiny and postulating a delegation of voices that cannot be sustained. If I return to the discussion with the student, I must conclude that his activity can only occur by erasing the borders that circumscribe the (badly) used passage. Furthermore, the historicity of the meaning that crosses the sequence does not allow the ideological nuance of the relationship matrimonial that is established in it is attributable to the author, erasing the global rarefactions established, nor that it refers to nature, which is prevented by the relationship with marriage and politics, institutions that go back, especially the second, to the Greek world. The meaning is a historical and ideological construct that has a dating and is changing, and may be different, but also, in the face of conservative forces driven by certain interests, remain the same, becoming "evident".

term, that is, in the relationship between free citizens in a state; it is because, in a free constitution, citizens command and are commanded alternately, while at home it is the man who must keep superiority permanently".

Final Considerations

I return to the objectives of this work: with one of them, I tried to demonstrate that, at times, the clipping of a fragment of discourse, in the face of certain purposes, is done in order to make it serve a goal for which it definitely does not compete. In this case, the sequence, because it has a certain completeness, wholeness and does not present marks of reported discourse, can be attributed to those who should not and be taken as a voice of authority to sustain a discourse with which it does not fit. In this way, co-text, context and conditions of production, which I have designated as local historicity, are essential to guarantee the effect of meaning. The gain with this necessary care would, in my view, lie in the fact that I act with a certain intellectual honesty, which always seems desirable to me.

With the other, I tried to reflect on the fact that the meaning, usually (if not always), in what is an ideological matrix, resumes previous discourses produced in an environment that, unnoticed, can lead the reader to assume an effect of evidence, of naturalness, isomorphism and specularity, which, however, has nothing a-historical, timeless and universal and should be asked about its moment of constitution and about the constrictions that affected it, to realize that, sometimes, what is said it belongs to other constraints and that the use without this perception can lead to repeat what is not sustained, falling into a sclerotic conservatism and an authoritarian dogmatism that does not evolve, subjecting the world to currents.

I realize now that the other thread that crosses the fabric of this text, perhaps, has co-opted me without realizing it: it is about the sequences having as a reflection thread the marriage relationship and, above all, the entry of women as the theme of writing. I realize that the theses present in the excerpts, although thought for millennia, continue to be postulated by some discourses, with the reiteration of statements that are not sustained in the 21st Century in the face of the advances achieved by women's movements and by society in general. They are still the simulacrum that guides discourses designated as conservative, with justice, because, in the light of the analyzed passages, they reissue ancient beliefs, forged after the taste of an agricultural and slavery era; and they continue to haunt certain minds, of no small importance, who claim, as did the "new" Minister of Education, that "man, inside the house, is the head of the home; he points the way". I always find it pertinent to listen to Bourdieu (1999, p. 100 - emphasis added) on issues such as these: "*é preciso reconstruir a história do*

trabalho histórico de des-historicização, ou, se assim preferirem, a história de (re)criação continuada das estruturas objetivas e subjetivas da dominação masculina²⁸”.

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²⁸ “it is necessary to reconstruct the history of the historic work of de-historicization, or, if you prefer, the history of continued (re) creation of the objective and subjective structures of male domination”.