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History as the Possibility of Rebellion

History as Critique of the Present

History, as a story about the past, about what "we used to be like," is in its own kind a description of "what we are like" and/or "how come we are what we are." This way it is a projection of both how we perceive ourselves (or how we wish to perceive ourselves) and how we have become to be what we are (or how we wish to become what we are). Reality described in such a way is thus mostly postulated, wished; is an image of ourselves (as a society and individuals constituting the society) which is expected to evidence that our actions made sense, to rationalise our conduct and to clarify/explain potential faults.[1] It can be justly construed that what results from this is, inter alia, "irritability" to certain "historic topics"—acknowledging to be true descriptions of guilt (often unremedied), "sins" towards others (individuals, groups, communities, societies, mankind) or self-caused evil is often impossible as it would mean acknowledging, accepting and, what is more, reconciling with the image of the self (own group, society to which one belongs) that is not only unheroic, but sometimes simply painfully low and criminal.[2] This would also mean resigning from seeking explanation, which, in fact, would be nothing more but reasoning or justification to the committed acts (valorised negatively among the accepted values).

[1] The assumption of the expressiveness of the examined reality does not mean giving up the idea of producing true images.

[2] Cf. M. Bugajewski, *Brzemię przeszłości. Zło jako przedmiot interpretacji historycznej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2009.

Usually, however, history does not, at least in the foreground, deal with the lack of nobility in the past known as "our" past. It rather provides clarification to past events in the light which employs a repertoire of arguments to justify the atrocity of the acts that constitute it in order to show e.g. their inevitability, necessity or relativizing their extent. For example, historical examination of anti-Semitism (or intolerance, e.g. religious) is sometimes seen as a "dealing with" its contemporary presence. "The past" anti-Semitism can be relativized through pointing to its greater presence elsewhere at a given time, whereas the present—through clarifying that its intensity was much greater in the past. In this way, of course, contemporaries feel better—it turns out that it is better now than it used to be, and/or it used to be better "here" than elsewhere. Consecutively, though, the opportunity to deal with a specific phenomenon (e.g. anti-Semitism) is very limited (if not eliminated), because through such a statement, which reduces its significance (or even abolishing it as a problem altogether) instead of seeking a solution, an attempt is made to bypass the problem, describing it as actually non-existent, or at least of little significance. Other events are similarly justified through accepting and proving that it was necessary and inevitable, e.g. war, conquests, violence of any kind. At the same time, anachronisation happens here translating the extent of the modern "high" and/or "low" intensity of the phenomenon and establishing the present as a measure of a "higher" and/or "lower" intensity.

This occurs most often at the level of reception and circulation of history in the society. We ascertain it when we ask about the use of history or what it is used for, in other words, when we ask about the social context of its operation. It is less visible at the level of creating historical work. Its occurrence is, however, inevitable in historians' discourse as they are members of the society in which their work operates.[3] Historians themselves (as well as many of their readers) will rather refer to themselves as "truth seeking," "aiming to produce a true description of the past reality." It should be emphasized that there is no special reason why such declarations should not be taken at face value, and why historians should be attributed consciously evil actions under the banner of "guards of good name." However, we should not go to the other extreme and describe the situation as: "good and noble historians" and "manipulative reception." What develops here is a rather more complex web of dependencies associated with the operation of history as a product/cultural construct, serving a social use.

It is difficult to imagine historical discourse being analysed outside its social context (and therefore cultural). It only makes sense as a construct

[3] W. Wrzosek, *O myśleniu historycznym*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Epigram, Bydgoszcz 2009.

of a culture that being created for its own purposes. Therefore, in order to learn about a given culture/society, it is worth asking: what does it need history for? It seems to be a crucial part of these structures; an element which is the cause of battle and the writing of which is delegated to specially selected members of the society. Why does the modern (the present) need to describe what has already come to pass? The easiest answer may be that societies whose thinking is enclosed in a triad of the past—the present—the future need to know the past to be able to understand what surrounds us and look to the future. The idea behind "looking to the future" is to think about the possible development of a society. The development which is understood in a certain way. Such an approach is enclosed in cliché questions "where do we come from?" and "where are we going to?" The answers to these questions, in the colloquial sense, are to outline the point where we are and indicate the direction where we want to go and/or the goal we want to achieve. Determining the surrounding situation, this point where we are seems essential here. Such thinking implies a certain developmental concept in which covering the subsequent stages are arranged into a specific whole, e.g. from barbarism, primitivism to becoming gradually civilised. Although individual presents that have been reached set temporary "civilising" (they define what it means to be "civilized"), the ultimate meaning of "becoming civilised" constantly remains with the future as we do not know the final stage of civilisation, "being civilised," "becoming civilised." Assuming the development of civilisation (sometimes known as the "progress of civilisation"), we only know its past stages, we establish points of reference—e.g. selected countries, societies which we consider to be "highly developed"—we do not know, however, what the ultimate point of reference is. The latter is still uncertain, under constant construction.

Determining "where we are going" is realised on the basis of capturing signals of the present—heralds of things to come. Occasionally an attempt is made to identify laws which determine that when one event triggers another which is seen as a consequence of the original "something." Repeatability of certain links is assumed here—if it has happened once before, it will also come to pass in the future. This encourages a thought that "history is the teacher of life." However, this way of thinking, typical rather of a colloquial view on history than of historians, overlooks volatility as a trait characteristic of historical reality. The answer to the question "where are we going?" is thus not so much about reflexion on the desired direction of development, but about capturing the signs of approaching of the imminent. It is, therefore, about deciphering what is certain to happen rather than trying to shape the look of what will come. This type of behaviour will be defined as fatalistic for it involves the inability to influence what will come (since it is inevitable).

The thinking about history which I postulate here emphasises reflexion on what the desired direction is, describing the present through examining its historicity in order to understand it and determine why this direction and no other is/was seen as desirable. It is therefore about history that allows the understanding of the present thanks to the understanding of the past presents, which we call the past.[4] "Understanding the present" can be defined as the ability to navigate the surrounding social world thanks to the knowledge of it. This knowledge, also built by historical cognition, can be defined as an ability to decode surrounding cultural schemes.[5] At the unit level, it allows to move among them and to increase the likelihood of achieving set objectives, including the ability to set achievable objectives. At the group level—to become aware of interests and determine a way to achieve them. In prosaic terms—the knowledge about the surrounding world should enable happy existence.

What is worth noticing in the "understanding of the present" is the possibility to design the future.[6] Yet not in the sense of anticipating the direction in which the human world is going, but as the possibility for reflexion on the direction towards which it is desirable to go. Historical cognition offers here a privileged position, resulting from its specificity—drafting a vision of continuous shift of the human world, telling a story that since the former world was different from our own because it operated upon rules which sometimes provoke astonishment in the contemporary world that it was possible to think about the world in such a way, then it is also possible that the world to come will operate upon rules equally different to the ones currently in operation.

History as Critical Thinking

History is often seen and used as an argument to promote (or contest) assertions concerning the contemporary situation or social phenomena. "We know from history…," "history shows…," "history proves…"—expressions of this kind enjoy being the status of irrefutability and the final argument for the thesis advocated: since "history" supports our thesis (or undermines

[4] I refer here to Marc Bloch's reflexion on the role of history in his The Historian's Craft; he points out there, inter alia, that the will to understand is stronger than the will to know, cf. M. Bloch, *Pochwała historii, czyli o zawodzie historyka*, trans. W. Jedlicka, PWN, Warsaw 1962, p. 34.

[5] W. Wrzosek, *op. cit*.

[6] The inspiration for this kind of thinking can be found in Michel Foucault, cf.: M. Solarska, *Historia zrewoltowana. Pisarstwo historyczne Michela Foucaulta jako diagnoza teraźniejszości i projekt przyszłości*, Wydawnictwo IH UAM, Poznań, 2006.

someone's thesis), who could raise objections to it? In popular discourse, history exists simultaneously as a historical reality and its description prepared by historians. To be more precise, historiographical description is treated as a historical reality—and as such it constitutes the key evidence to support the preached views: it the reality of historical events that speaks for the case and not interpretations of those events which were created by the historians. The narratives of the latter are taken to be pure and simple relations of how it truly was, and the "reality" has the ability to show, proves, convinces.

Treating historians' work in such a way, on the one hand, is very flattering—as they act as an oracle, sages that proclaim the final truth. On the other hand, such treatment is very instrumental towards themselves and their work. Their voice is not heard as the voice of autonomous entities that participate in discussion, but as a description treated instrumentally by the participants in the discussion. In addition, it is not they who are speaking, but history speaks through their mouths. Historians are mere scribes here[7] faithfully recording what "the past tells them."

When we look at the historical knowledge as a thinking process, such functioning of history must seem very depleting. Historical knowledge and intellectual operations related to its acquisition carry a much greater potential for their use by the contemporary in discussions on the surrounding social world than, as mentioned, their non-reflexive and instrumental use.

It seems quite trivial to say that cognition begins when there occurs astonishment with the existence of something and/or the existence of something of a particular form. Cognition takes the form of the social institution of science and is placed within the frames that define ways to arrive at explanation of the original astonishment. The results of the explanation are as follows: on the one hand, understanding achieved through the rationalization of the surrounding world: uncovering the "mechanisms of its work"; on the other hand, projecting an image of what the surrounding world is like, i.e. constructing real descriptions of the world.[8] Within social sciences, the explanation must be based on the identification of man-created events, activities and/or mechanisms that create the world under examination. The world, thus, is presumed to be human in two ways—it concerns people (societies) and is created by those people (their actions, relationships). Scientific cognition and the knowledge obtained through it, therefore, result

[7] Historians are well aware that writers' role often did not limit to recording, a merely reconstructive role, but sometimes it was also creative. In addition, records often provide researchers with more information on the writer than their subject. In the case referred to in the main text, scribes are more counterparts to audio tape or recorder than the writing agents.

[8] I leave aside the debate on the status of the truth.

from creating distance towards the obviousness of the world in which we live and of which we have certain knowledge (alas colloquial), shaped by the culture in which we grow and participate. This critical distance in relation to what appears to be obvious may develop as a question addressed to the "social world": why is anything considered obvious in it? What the question refers to is the image of the world (consisting of certain obvious aspects) that operates in a given society. We can also ask: what is the purpose of maintaining this and no other image. We assume, therefore, that its order (the layout of the obvious) is not neutral—it consists of power relations and the resultant hierarchy. Within the latter, individuals are assigned their possibilities and liberties. Questioning the purpose of maintaining a given image of the world means, therefore, determining whose point of view and position in a hierarchy are relevant in deciding why maintaining a specific image is useful. It is not, certainly, only about indicating mundane interests, individuals and/or groups, consisting in maintaining a privileged position, but about analysing power relations that cause specific groups and/or individuals to occupy a specific place in the hierarchy.

The critical distance mentioned above towards the obvious of the world can also be developed as self-criticism of scientific cognition, i.e. exposing the knowledge obtained through it to rational doubt. This cognition is not, in fact, excluded from power relations and its mechanisms permeating the society within which it occurs. Although its social legitimacy stems from creating true descriptions of reality, the truthfulness is subject to the same verification procedures as the cultural obviousness of the examined phenomena, beliefs, actions. The truthfulness of a given cultural world is as historical as the world itself of which it is a product and the matrix; thus, it is variable. Its historical variability does not mean, however, that it loses in its truthfulness as the new truth arrives—which is later in time. It remains in force as for the worlds to which it was relevant, and its subsequent effect does not have to incorporate the correction of predecessors' erroneous thinking, the discovery of the falsity of what was considered to be true. The discovery made from the perspective of the new truth, which, in turn, will probably be negatively verified by an even newer truth. Nevertheless, the historical story rather shows us that however odd it might seem to acknowledge to be true certain beliefs constituting the image of the world, they were simply true in certain times and places. In the same way as the current truths are simply true for us today.

In the case of historical cognition we are dealing not only with the rationalization of the world—describing and explaining it through showing the factors that make it the way it is. The surrounding world relates to a kind of parallel world—the one that is not here (any more), and which the

researcher brings to life as a world of the past. Understanding the latter makes the focus of the historian's efforts. Thanks to the understanding, the researcher is to come to understand the contemporary. Like other social sciences, history is supposed to help to understand the surrounding social world, and thus facilitate individuals' efficient movement within it (allowing to achieve set goals, existential satisfaction). Although they are often radically different, there occurs coherence between the two worlds—the past and the contemporary. The coherence construes an imagined community of these different worlds—what they have in common is the fact that they are "our worlds." Other past worlds are part of "our world," are part of our imagined community that combines contemporaries with those who lived differently before. In this way, these worlds exist in parallel to the present which construes the said community.

The position of history may in this way be compared to the position of anthropology or ethnology which examine the diversity (otherness) of cultures. The examined cultures—in the case of both history and ethnology—are unknown rather than alien, as it is assumed that a linking element exists between them, i.e. belonging to a universalized humanity (to the "we" in its widest sense). In this way other cultures are "ours," although different, and are interesting to us precisely because they tell us something "about us."

This reference to the imagined community of mankind has yet another feature which should be mentioned. Other worlds are referred to the universalized humanity, which is a product of an investigating culture. It is, thus, its point of view from which other worlds are described and those descriptions, in fact, explain the universalized humanity. In this way, it is constantly applied a network of values in relation to which the networks of values of the examined worlds are reconstructed. Ascertaining the non-existence and/or existence in a radically different form elements creating values of the investigating culture is possible by reference to their existence and familiar forms. In this way, universalised humanity has a particularistic European culture "we" as its starting point. It is, thus, within this framework that the imagined community of mankind is constructed and placed in a modern network of values of that culture. It also "creates" a perception which constitutes cognition (scientific), both in terms of what should be the object of cognition as well as the manner in which this cognition should take place.[9]

Immersed in the world whose product it is (contemporary to the researcher), history is also the constructor. While describing the past world clearly, it presents a certain image of the world. The latter is built on the

[9] Attempts to break the Eurocentricity e.g. in post-colonial discourse; E. Domańska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksje o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań, 2006.

elements of constructing the cultural world from which the historical description comes and is inevitably transferred onto the past world. The historian, while examining the obviousness of the latter, inevitably transfers into it the obviousness of his/her culture. He/she does so by reconstructing the past obviousness, questioning and explaining why it was self-explanatory then, asking: how could one think that?, the researcher faces an opportunity to ascertain its otherness from his/her own culture—which is, in turn, invisible without reference to otherness. Stating the difference, ascertaining the past non-obvious actually enables the perception of the obviousness of the investigating culture. In this way, the obviousness is also possible the be challenged.

Historical cognition treated in this way can be understood as a question whose price is the possibility of revolt. The message that we can read from it is as follows: another social order took place, the reality (what is considered to be real) was completely different from the modern, so the surrounding social world may be different; it is not necessary, but casual. As another reality was possible, its otherness in the future is also possible, including the future that happens as the present. In other words, change is possible, and indeed inevitable against the continuous changeability of the world as depicted in the historical story. What is important, this potential change is not merely an imagined possibility, nor a (mythological) return to the (equally mythological) "gold age." It is „another world" whose continuous happening is told by history (which is an increasing sequence of other worlds).

The self-undermining of clarity and stability of the existent social order, history constitutes a space where critical distance is possible to the obvious which constructs the order. The obvious which is often recognised as the natural. Preparing maps of what used to be "natural," it sketches the "natural" of the present. With these maps it is possible to identify strategic locations and tactics necessary to achieve the desired change. In other words, by pointing to the inevitability of change, history also tells us to think about its desired directions and the purpose of the procedures to conceal the possibility of change. It does so by denaturalising the social world in which the ideology of nature is used to conceal hierarchy and power relations. This potential of depicting the non-obvious of what today appears to be obvious is worth emphasising in the social operation of history.

Criticism and History

History is primarily a story of the human world. When I say "story," I do not mean its "literariness" but merely its narrative character, the form

which applied in its analysis. Although its narrativity does not contradict its scientificity, it poses specific problems that need to be taken into account if we look at history as a certain cultural practice.[10]

It is not the narrativity of history, however, that draws my attention, but the characteristic function of the story as a cultural practice. History is often perceived as the story of "the past" or, in other words, of the "past reality." However, the role and function as well as its possible significance is set in the world around us, in the contemporariness surrounding the formation of the historical story. Historical stories are, after all, written for contemporaries (although sometimes also "the descendants").

Historical knowledge is often a place of appeal thanks to which reasoning, argumentation gains its basis or point of reference. Historians' findings are rendered as objective, "hard" as it were, as facts which are undisputable. Anyway, such conduct is understandable in works where specific events are not given consideration. They function as a kind of anchor, references to common knowledge which is certain, standardized and established. In this way, however, history is "frozen" as the undisputable. At the same time, such works legitimise the objectivity of historical knowledge, following the standardised cultural positioning of history as the true story about the past reality. Historical findings in humanistic works (and probably not only in them) appear as points of reference—restitution of the previous, illustration of changes to the situation, showing certain roots. Thus they play a constructional role—change would not be possible to evidence without them, but probably it would also be impossible to outline the current situation due to the lack of a cultural code that historical discourse supplies.[11]

It should be noted, however, that it is history itself (scientific historical description) that provides the possibility to create a distance to the surrounding world; the distance that allows the description and criticism. Criticism as an attitude towards the existing world and history as a scientific description of the human world, in fact, overlap each other on various levels. Particular attention should be paid to two of them. The first concerns the very heart of historical research—a critical method. The second refers to the critical dimension of historiographical practice. Analysing the two aspects of the relationship between history and criticism will allow us to recognize and highlight the major advantages of historical thinking—its usefulness for conscious participation in the world around us. The desire to understand the examined reality is a constitutive characteristic of a historian's work,

[10] On reflexion on historical narrative cf. J. Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Warsaw 1996.

[11] W. Wrzosek, *op. cit*.

and hence also to understand the reality surrounding the researcher. This understanding is achieved through cognitive tools which enable the identification of what the reality is like (it is, thus, about establishing the certain truth about it) and rational explanation of it. With such intellectual conduct it is possible to take successful action based on own knowledge about the world.[12]

Two aspects of the link between criticism and history[13]

The first aspect of the line between criticism and history concerns the critical method—a historian's basic research tool. The method is worth looking at more closely, both in a narrow context of its application to historical material—historical sources—as well as in a wider context of its applicability in the use of all sources of knowledge about the world. Such an approach allows to highlight the usefulness of historical thinking (understood here as the way of thinking used in the so called historical research, based on its typical tool) in participating in the surrounding world them and adopting a particular attitude towards it. In other words, what should be emphasised here is the usefulness of the ability to create consistent descriptions of historical reality, understood to be past, in the preparation of such descriptions of the surrounding historical reality.[14]

"There is no work for a historian if there are no sources, but you cannot follow them. … It is the historian who must juggle the sources, and not the opposite"—writes Jerzy Topolski.[15] Because, according to him, the sources are not mirror reflections of the pieces of reality which can simply be glued back together to create a story about it; the researcher must perform work on them which allows him/her to build his/her narrative about a given historical reality. This work is essentially grounded in rationalized doubting what the documents claim to be and doubting what they say. Marc Bloch puts it as follows:

> Even the most gullible police agent knows very well that you should not believe what witnesses say. Anyway, one does not always draw the right

[12] Cf. G. Banaszak, J. Kmita, *Społeczno-regulacyjna koncepcja kultury*, Instytut Kultury, Warsaw 1994.

[13] This part was published as: *Krytyka i historia*, in: Problemy współczesnej metodologii historii, W. Wrzoska (ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza Epigram, Bydgoszcz 2009, pp. 45-54.

[14] Cf. historicity omnipresence in, inter alia: K. Zamorski, *Dziwna rzeczywistość. Wprowadzenie do ontologii historii*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2009.

[15] J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, Poznań 1998, p. 55.

> conclusions from this theoretical knowledge. Similarly, it was acknowledged long ago that you should not blindly believe all historical sources. We were taught this by experience almost as old as mankind itself: many texts pretend to belong to another era or to have another origin than its actual one. Not all relations are reliable, and sometimes even material remains can be faked.[16]

However, a mere intuitive, common-sense "critical" approach is not enough to practise the science of history. After all, "common sense" is most often a combination of "unreasoned statements accompanied by precipitously generalised experience."[17] To practise criticism in a scientific manner it is necessary to have a tool which will allow to go beyond the frames of common-sense thinking. It took a long time to develop, and the work of Jean Mabillon De Re Diplomatica (1681) can be regarded as the ultimate foundations for scientific criticism of archive documents. At the end of the 17th century "criticism" takes on a nearly modern meaning: attempted truthfulness. Until now, it has rather meant assessment which has taste as the essential criterion. To quote Bloch again—the master of critical method:

> Similarly to "science" within the Cartesian meaning, historical source criticism excludes any faith. Historical source criticism, like Cartesian science, relentlessly undermines all the old pillars only to arrive at new certainties, or at least claims of a high degree of probability, subjected so far to diligent verification. In other words, the idea that inspired this criticism assumes an almost complete reversal from the old concepts of doubt. … Until then, doubt was considered a purely negative mental attitude, common turning one's back, regardless whether its "stings" were painful or, on the contrary, they were found to be sources of noble pleasures. Since then, it is believed that, if used rationally, doubt can become a cognitive tool.[18]

Historical criticism is thus rationalized doubting the obviousness of what appears to us as true. It is to this truth that a historian's first question is addressed. Other ones concern the truthfulness of the message of the examined document—whether what it "says" could be true. Let us note here that the word "truth" used here should rather be replaced with the word "probability." Historical criticism is therefore more attempted probability of truth than attempted truth itself.

> To what extent are we allowed to use the big word "certainty"? Mabillon already admitted that the criticism of documents cannot reach "metaphysical" certainty, and he was not wrong. It is only for simplicity that

[16] M. Bloch, *op. cit*., p. 105.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 106.

[18] *Ibid*., pp. 110-111.

> we sometimes substitute the language of probability with the language of obviousness. But today we know better than in Mabillon's days that this arrangement is by no means specific to us. … By limiting its certainty to dosing probability and improbability, historical criticism is different from most other sciences about the real world only in its more subtle degree variation.[19]

One should not seek any weakness in this kind of relativization of historical criticism results. On the contrary, it is a sign of critical thinking about criticism itself. While seeking the person behind documents—the one who prepared them and who was driven by such and no other motives to do so in a specific way—according to historical criticism, the person who carries the criticism out is subject to the same conditions as are examined in his/her investigation. The historian who draws up a historical narrative based on sources, through the use of the critical method, he/she also produces historical source(s). Historical narratives as such and their creators are themselves material to which the critical method should be applied.

Writing his The Historian's Craft in the early 40s of the 20th century, Bloch wondered:

> How scandalous that, more than any other, in our times exposed to the toxins of lie and gossip critical method has not been given even the smallest part in the curriculum: and this method is no longer just a humble servant of practical workshops. The method sees far more extensive horizons spilling before it, and history is entitled to include among its most enduring achievements the fact that forging the tools of its work, it opened up for mankind a new path towards truth, i.e. towards justice.[20]

Today, we can still ask: does the modern flood of information not require critical method practice even more? The variety and number of information sources seem all the more to compel one to selecting and verifying the probability of their truthfulness. The benefits from the application of critical method in the "quality control" of information that reaches us and shapes our knowledge of the world and its image are undisputed.

This way of thinking arises when we remember that "any place where we can obtain information about the past is a historical source."[21] All aspects of the surrounding reality are therefore a potential source for future historians. They can also be for us today a source of knowledge about the surrounding world if we can read them, when we can be historians of the present. History is indeed a science which sets understanding the human world as its primary

[19] *Ibid*., pp. 159-160.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 163.

[21] J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, p. 35.

objective—understanding the past world in order to understand the world contemporary to the researcher and the reader of historical works. It should be noted that in this way we can find that history displays a critical dimension towards the present. Because it has the variability of the social world at the centre of its focus (after all, it is a science about "people in time"[22]), history shows the fortuitousness of the modern. "It tells" us that although the social order around us is enforceable for us—i.e. we must somehow conform to it (or at least take its existence into account) in order to function in the society—it is also possible to be changed. Historical thinking recoils against any fatalism, seeking predestined fate. Historical discourse, after all, tells about the world of people where the processes and events described are caused by human actions, though their authorship is not always direct.

The second aspect of the link between criticism and history—a potential critical dimension of historical discourse itself—appears when you think of it as a potentially revolutionary (subversive). It is also possible, of course, to think of history as a conservative discourse—the one whose primary function is to tell of the inevitability of the surrounding social order, of the necessity to its existence or even the need to defend it. Michel Foucault places such history within the philosophical and legal discourse[23]. It is a discourse of power and it is supposed to legitimise and strengthen it. Thus, the search for truth means in this case seeking confirmation to the prevailing power order, and variability is evolutionary and understood to lead to the current situation. So there is no room for projecting the future in which a different order of things would prevail than the surrounding one which is understood as the culmination of development or as one passed from above. History does not establish a critical distance from the present, but shows it as obvious. The obviousness of the present raises questions, however, if we remember the critical method and its assumptions. If we question this "obviousness of the present"—asking if it is really as obvious as it claims to be, or, in other words, asking about the probability of the truthfulness of its description as obvious truthfulness—we do take a critical stand and move over to the revolutionary side history. The latter shows the possibility to change the existing social order, examines its non-obviousness and asks who would benefit from presenting it as "obvious."

It is worth mentioning here that often, instead of the "obviousness" of the surrounding social order, we encounter the term "natural." "Naturalness" is inevitable, unquestionable and obvious—what is "natural," is the way it is unarguably. What is "natural," is also constant and independent of a

[22] M. Bloch, *op. cit*., p. 52.

[23] Cf.: M. Foucault, *Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa. Wykłady w Collège de France*, Warsaw 1998.

man/mankind. We can therefore ask: can historical discourse, exploring the variable reality of human action, show as a result of its description the reality as "naturalness" without being contradictory? An affirmative answer seems unlikely. The critical dimension of history appears to be a constitutive element of the discourse.

History and the Idea of Revolution

History can be understood as a call to rebellion. How could we perceive resistance, rebellion, revolution which history is to encouraged? Their first aspect is the possibility of thinking about the surrounding world as unnecessary, possible to be changed. At the so-called first glance it may seem rather trivial, but it should be noted that without thinking about the possibility of changing that change is impossible. In other words, as long as we think of the world as imposed on us from above, natural (and thus governed by non-human forces, mechanisms), we have no real possibility to change it. It is necessary therefore to break with this kind of fatalism to be able to perceive oneself as an entity shaping one's destiny and to take action towards such shaping. It should be emphasized that it is not a tend towards another extreme—the belief in unlimited power and possibility to move in the world; the belief that "it is enough just to want." It is about a belief that although we operate in the existing world, which is governed by relations systems forming the surrounding order, being able to identify them enables resistance against them, refusal to promote, adopting an individual (or collective) strategy to redefine them. This is the second part of the answer to the question: what kind of rebellion does historical thinking encourage? The rebellion based on knowing the limitations, obligations of the already existing definitions. History thus encourages rebellion in the same way as it indicates its real possibility. The latter does not result merely from reflecting on historical investigation, but is attested in historical papers that show the diversity of individual and collective life practices, fates of individuals and groups. It just shows that resistance against the existing order is not only a theoretical possibility, but the reality of human actions and choices which constitute the historical variability of the social world.

When we think of the revolt or revolution, we usually consider past events that were described in these terms and/or on their basis we reflect on the possibility of its recurrence, sense, or on potential desire or going for it. Considerations of this type are usually conducted by historians, though their findings are an indispensable point of reference. You can of course identify historians e.g. of the French Revolution (such as Mona Ozouf or François

Furet[24]) who constantly contemplate revolution from every possible angles. However, what the main point of interest is here are the specific events that are considered revolutionary (which define therefore what we think constitutes a revolution). It is about describing them, pointing to the main agents, participants, causal factors, acting out its course, outcomes, consequences. One may wonder how far describing certain events as revolutionary turns them into a revolution, how far a historical narrative predefines the social, conventional perception of revolution. Considerations about revolution and various types of revolts make considerable reading. Looking at its size, we can see almost obsessive interest in this issue. It generally can be divided into two streams: one cursing revolution and revolt, saying that it should be avoided at all costs, and the other which presents it as something which must be sought and hoped for. Investigating these issues is in itself very engaging, but from the perspective of the issues that interest us, it seems more significant to consider a link between reflexion on revolution and history as a research practice. In this context it is worth analysing, on the one hand, Hannah Arendt's text On Revolution,[25] on the other hand, Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, 1976, published as Society Must Be Defended.[26] The first one considers revolution asking about its implications for thinking about the world and political action, drawing attention to the distinction between liberation and freedom. The second, however, examines the history of the discourse of race struggle and asks about the possibility of revolution.

Hannah Arendt On Revolution

Arendt's point of departure is the question: what is revolution "with its broad implications for the human being as the public being, with its political significance for the world we live in, its role in the modern history"? The author is seeking answers, comparing primarily two revolutions: French and American. Her analysis is based on a reference to their course and accompanying documents from participants, "creators," observers and, later, thinkers reflecting on

[24] Furet's very interesting deliberations make us wonder whether the French Revolution as an event, commonly referred to as such and which has become a model for thinking about the revolution at all, actually took place; F. Furet, *Prawdziwy koniec rewolucji francuskiej*, Znak, Kraków 1994; J. Topolski, *Mit rewolucji w historiografii*, in: *idem*, Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, Warsaw 1996, pp. 217-231; W. Wrzosek, *Spór o metafory we współczesnej historiografi i francuskiej*, in: *idem*, Historia—Kultura—Metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii, Leopoldinum, Wrocław 1995, pp. 38-55.

[25] H. Arendt, *O rewolucji*, Wydawnictwo X/Dom wydawniczy Totus, Kraków 1991.

[26] M. Foucault, *op. cit*.

them. Among the many interesting threads discussed in that work, in terms of the issues we are involved with, three of them require attention: the indication of freedom as the goal of the revolution, the distinction between freedom and liberation, and semantic shifts of the word "revolution."

At the beginning of her deliberations Arendt observes:

> The modern concept of revolution (inextricably linked with the idea that the course of history starts afresh, giving birth to a brand new story never heard before) was unknown until the two great revolutions of the late eighteenth century. Before accepting their role in what turned out to be a revolution, none of the agents was able to sense the intrigue of the new drama. But when the revolutions began to run their own course (long before their participants were able to figure out whether their project was going to end in victory or defeat) the novelty and innermost sense of the story were revealed to both the agents and the audience. As for the intrigue, it was undoubtedly the emergence of the problem of freedom. …
>
> So to understand the essence of modern revolutions, it is necessary to remember that the idea of freedom coincided in them with the experience of a new beginning. And because the modern concept of the Free World claims that no justice or greatness, but freedom is the highest criterion justifying the creation of political bodies. Therefore, not only our understanding of revolution, but also our concept of freedom—clearly revolutionary at the source—are factors that may underlie our readiness to accept or reject the above coincidence.[27]

Thus, the most important element of the modern understanding of "revolution" is its intertwining with the idea of freedom and a new beginning; starting a new story about the surrounding world. However, both these issues are shown to be problematic in the further course of the argument here. Firstly, freedom should be distinguished from liberation, which "may be a requisite of freedom, but in no way does it automatically lead to it."[28] Secondly, its establishment as the goal of revolution turns out to be subject to certain transformations, as a result of which it is replaced by happiness or well-being. Similarly, the establishment of a new beginning appears to be an ambiguous question, because initially revolutionaries did not mean to create the new order as much, but to restore the old world order disturbed by governments against whom they rose.

This is reflected in the use of the word "revolution" to describe the events that constitute the model of a revolution for us. The span between the original meaning and what it means today is important here:

[27] H. Arendt, *op. cit*., p. 27.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 28.

> The fact that the phenomenon of revolution is unprecedented in the pre-modern history is by no means obvious. Many people would agree though that the "desire for new things" connected with the cult of novelty as such is the characteristic feature of the modern world; this "modern" nature is often identified with the so-called revolutionary spirit. If, however, through the revolution spirit we understand something that grows out of the revolution itself, then we must carefully distinguished it from the avaricious desire for novelty. But in psychological terms, the experience of creating new bases combined with the premonition of the arrival of a completely new era, predisposes people "conservatively" rather than "revolutionarily," encouraging them to protect what has already been accomplished and to ensure the stability of the existing status quo, and not to open up to new things, new events, new ideas. From a historical point of view, one could add that the people of the first revolutions—i.e. those who not only took part in a coup of one kind or another, but introduced revolutions into the political arena—did not desire at all new things nor did they want any *novi ordinis saeclorum*. The word "revolution" itself atests this; a relatively old notion which has been acquiring its new meaning very slowly. Sheer use of the word seems to indicate a lack of expectations and inclination towards the new by "agents" of the revolution, who, like the "audience," were completely unprepared for something unprecedented. … The word "revolution" was originally an astronomical term which gained its significance in the natural sciences through Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*. In this scientific usage, the word has retained its strict Latin meaning. It meant regular rotary motion of stars consistent with the laws of nature. It had been known it was beyond human control and that it was impossible to refute it. Nobody, of course, associated such a "revolution" with novelty nor violence and aggression. On the contrary, the word suggested repetitive, cyclical movement, and was a faithful Latin translation of Polybius αααααααααα, i.e. the concept which also came from astronomy, and was sometimes used metaphorically in the field of politics. With regard to the worldly affairs of people, it could mean only that several known systems circulated among mortals and that they are in the eternal recurrence with the same irresistible force that makes the stars move in the sky around the established routes. It is therefore difficult to find something more distant from the original meaning of the word "revolution" than an obsessive premonition of all the agents of the revolution, who believed that they were involved in a process leading to a definitive end of the old order and giving birth to a new world.[29]

The occurrence of change in the understanding of the word "revolution" which modifies its astronomical meaning coincided with the French Revolution, when the emphasis shifted to compulsion. This, in turn,

[29] *Ibid*., pp. 39-41.

transformed in the 19th century into the idea of historical necessity, but without the connotations associated with circulating recurring movement.[30] It is possible to point to at least two important consequences of this, born out of the French Revolution, thinking about a compelling, anonymous force that governs revolution. The first of these was the "birth of the modern conception of history, which took place in Hegel's philosophy."[31] This meant, on the one hand, that "the old philosophical absolute is also manifested in the world of interpersonal relations, i.e. exactly in the same field which philosophers unanimously disregarded as the place of birth to absolute models."[32] In this way, philosophers also started to seek the truth in the world of interpersonal relations. Since the truth, "even if understood 'historically'—i.e. emerging with time, and therefore not necessarily always applicable—had, nevertheless, to be valid for all people, regardless of where they happened to live and to which country they belonged," history as a means "to reveal the truth, had to be the world's history, and the self-revealing truth had to be the 'spirit of the world'."[33] History (as acts) has therefore become as universal as the truth that it the manifested. On the other hand, acts, understood as a process, contained the inevitability of their course. The anonymous force of revolution, understood as the necessity that people have submit to, has become the same feature of history as the inevitability of the movement of the heavenly bodies. It also lay down the dialectics of freedom and necessity (within the dialectical movement and history counter-movement). The perspective from which reflexion on history is performed should be emphasized here. This is the position of the observer, a spectator looking at the world from the outside; the person who knows the end of the story and it is from this place that he/she decodes the inevitability of a given event, the destiny of a given individual or group. (This is the position that Foucault will philosopher's or legislator's position; see the remaining part of the text.)

Although freedom and liberation, deliverance from something, are separate issues, demarcating the boundary between them often caused difficulty. Arendt notes:

[30] The belief of the operation of anonymous forces of revolution, whose will it was necessary to rely on, was in opposition to the feeling characteristic of the American Revolution agents that man is the master of his fate, at least in the political sphere. But it was the French Revolution that triumphed in the struggle for an idea of revolution, it became its model; for the metaphor of revolution, cf.: W. Wrzosek, *Spór o metafory*; J. Topolski, *op. cit*.

[31] H. Arendt, *op. cit*., p. 50.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 52.

> The problem is that the revolution as we know it from modern times has always sought both freedoms and liberty. Since liberation (the result of which is freedom of movement) is really a requisite of freedom (because no one would ever reach the point where freedom rules if they could not move freely), we often cannot tell where what we call the desire for liberation ends—i.e. being free from oppression—and where the desire for freedom as a way of political conduct begins. The thing is that the first of these desires (being free from oppression) could be fulfilled even under monarchy (although not under tyranny, let alone despotism), whereas the other one calls for constructing a new form of government, or rather for the form of government that has been discovered anew. Namely, it requires the establishment of a republic.[34]

Thus, the fundamental difference between liberation and freedom lies in the fact that liberation means specific negative freedoms, such as the liberation (freedom from) oppression, poverty or fear. However, freedom consists in participation in public affairs. As shown by the French Revolution, "liberation from tyranny only brought freedom to few, whereas the majority overwhelmed by poverty hardly felt it. The majority had to be liberated once again."[35] The purpose of this liberation, however, did not lie in freedom, but in common happiness built on a particular perception of man and his/her rights. The Declaration of Human Rights was to list basic positive rights of resulting from his/her nature, and not his/her political status.[36] These natural human rights (human perceived as a natural being) were, therefore, in essence the rights of life necessities and were to become the foundation of the new state:

> Those rights were not considered to be some pre-political reasons that could not be violated by any government or any political authority, but the basic substance and the ultimate goal of government and authorities. Ancien régime was accused of depriving its subjects of these rights. These

[34] *Ibid*., p. 31; the establishment of republic and democracy, however, was accomplished on the basis of the exclusion of women from them, cf.: J. W. Scott, *La citoyenne paradoxale. Les féministes françaises et les droits de l'homme*, Albin Michel, Paris 1998; G. Fraisse, *Les femmes et leur histoire*, Gallimard, Paris 1998.

[35] H. Arendt, *op. cit*., p. 74.

[36] This perception is therefore very different from the concept of the isonomy in the Greek city-states. It meant equality before the law and did not relate to living conditions (which were a criterion that allowed participation in politics open only to owners of goods and slaves), but was the equality "of those who formed the group of 'equals'." Isonomy thus provided equality not because „all men were born or were created equal, but precisely because by nature…they were not equal and needed a purpose built institution (policies) that could make them equal by virtue of its law…." Therefore, it was an policy attribute, and not a human trait (particularly as a private person) (H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 29).

> rights were related to life and nature rather than a citizen's freedom and dignity.[37]

Freedom understood as a natural human feature, almost his/her biological property, was, in fact, a demand for liberation from all poverty that threatened physical existence. Such perception reverberates in Marx, who made the social issue into a significant political argument and coined the term "exploitation" in which poverty is the result of exploitation by the ruling class who had and applied means of violence. In this way, the revolution aimed for prosperity, and not freedom. In addition, through seeing necessity in compelling urges of life, Marx contributed to the reinforcement of a doctrine proclaiming that life (as a biological process) was the highest good, and that the society's existence was the most important human effort. The role of revolution, therefore, does not lie in liberating people from the oppression by others, but in liberating the society's existence from the chains of shortage.[38]

In her reflections on revolution Arendt points to the American Revolution as the one that achieved its goal—the establishment of freedom by establishing a state based on the Charter of Rights (Bill of Rights) exercising control over all political authority. It, however, did not became the revolution model for its social perception. The French Revolution did, though it suffered a defeat from the point of view of the goal indicated by Arendt. The author points to the reasons for the failure of the latter in the fact that:

> The hidden wish of the poor was not "to each according to his needs," but: "to each according to his desires." Although it is true that freedom only visits those who have already satisfied their needs, it is also true that it avoids those who insist on living to desire. The American dream (as it was understood in the 19th and 20th centuries due to mass immigration) was not, under the American Revolution, a dream of true freedom, nor, under the French Revolution, a dream of the liberation of man. Unfortunately, it was a dream of a "promised land," a land of milk and honey. Since the development of modern technology soon could realise this vision, "dreamers" believed even more deeply that they lived in the best possible world.
>
> …This transformation of the citizen revolution into an private individual of the 19th-century society is often elaborated in literature—typically using concepts developed during the French Revolution which spoke of the citoyens and bourgeois. On a more speculative level, we can regard the disappearance of "the public freedom desire" as the withdrawal of the individual into the "inner realm of consciousness" that seemingly represents "the proper sphere of human freedom." As if in a crumbling

[37] *Ibid*., p. 109.

[38] *Ibid*., pp. 61-62.

> fortress, an individual, overtaking the citizen, defends him/herself here against the society, which in turn "overtakes the individual." This process is, to a greater extent than revolution, determined the face of the 19th century, and in part also determines the face of the 20th age.[39]

Arendt sketches the history of revolution which does not inspire much optimism as to its effectiveness as a means to bring about change, which results in the establishment of freedom. Even the possibility of it establishing universal happiness or prosperity turned out to be illusory. However, its prospect infiltrated the perception of the world action, implementing changes into its course, that it still seems to prevail. Comparing the American and French Revolution, Arendt draws attention to the victory of the latter over the revolution perception and the consequences of this victory. Although it was the American one that ended up successful from Arendt's point of view and did not "devour its children," it did not become the model of revolution we associated it with. The question that arises while reading Arendt, therefore, is: why do we identify revolution with the failure in the implementation of its ideas?

The French Revolution has become the revolution model in general.[40] To be more precise, some historiographical image of it has become a point of reference for all other events described as revolutionary. Its various stages, characters considered to be the most important have become elements of the nature of revolution as such. However, as François Furet shows, among others, when we look more closely at the French Revolution, we can see that the events commonly associated with it as constitutive of it are not as clear as it is believed. Even determining its chronological framework (beginning and end) is problematic. It is difficult to maintain the belief that it was an instant end to the old order and the establishment of a new one, that the change with which it is identified, was a sudden revolt, or even that there is one revolution.

The phantasmatic model of the French Revolution, however, has become the main reference which is today associated with the word "revolution" and provides for an ideological stand whether one seeks it or tries to prevent it. Events of the 70s. The 20th century in France—the birth of the women's liberation movement—also referred to the revolutionary rhetoric. The history of women, where its roots stem from, can also be read through the prism. It is worth, however, to include an additional thread here that Michel Foucault proposes when he analyses the history of race struggle discourse.

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[39] *Ibid*., pp. 140-141.

[40] Cf.: M. Janion, *Bogini Wolności (Dlaczego rewolucja jest kobietą?)*, in: *idem*, Kobiety i duch inności, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warsaw 1996, pp. 5-49.

Inter alia because without the emergence of this discourse, the revolutionary idea seems impossible to appear.

Michel Foucault—Discourse of Race Struggle

In his lectures at the Collège de France[41], 1976, published as Society Must Be Defended, Michel Foucault pointed to the issues associated with "oppressed knowledge" and the historical knowledge of struggles. In two of them (Lecture of 21 January, 1976 and Lecture of 28 January, 1976) he particularly examines a very important question from the point of view of issues of interest to us. He means the emergence of the discourse about the war that permeates the society and a new form of historical discourse, which surfaced together with it. The thread which is very interesting in these considerations is to show the relationship between the dominant discourse and the discourse of resistance as well as a certain mechanism to neutralise the opposition by the dominant discourse.

Historical-Political Discourse as the Discourse of Opposition

The main issue raised by Foucault in these lectures is to develop tools for the analysis of power relations permeating and construing the fabric of the society. The way aiming to accomplish this task is determined by the question: "to what extent can the dominance balance be related to or translated into the concept of power balance? And how closely can the power balance be related to war?"[42] War is the extreme example of power balance in which it emerges most intensely and blunt. In this way, Foucault's question translates into a series of questions:

> Is the balance of power in fact the balance of battle, a struggle for life and death, war? … Can and should war be considered to be the primary in relation to other relations (relations of inequality, imbalance, work distribution, exploitation relations, etc.)? Can the phenomena of antagonism, rivalry, conflict, struggle between individuals, groups or classes be included in this

[41] Foucault Department in CF—formed on 30 November 1969, it was called the History of Systems of Thought (in place of the Department of Philosophical Thought run by Jean Hyppolite), entrusted to Foucault on 12 April 1970, he delivered the inaugural lecture on 2 December 1970 which was later published as L'ordre du discours, Polish translation by M. Kozłowski as: *Porządek dyskursu*. The inaugural lecture delivered at the Collège de France on 2 December 1970, słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2002.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 54.

> general mechanism, in this general form that war is? Should they? And also: can the concepts of what the 18th and even the 19th century called the art of war (strategy, tactics, *etc*.) in themselves be sufficient and appropriate tools for the analysis of power relations?[43]

The questions put this way aim to contemplate the hypothesis that under the surface of what we consider to be the social reality, seen as the complexity of various power relations, permanent war happens, a constant struggle: "Should we, under the veil of peace, order, wealth, power authority, under the guise of the peaceful order of subordination, state, state apparatuses, laws, etc., assume and discover something along the lines of primary and permanent war?" To answer this question, we need to determine the following:

> …how, when and why war started to be seen or imagined to maintain power relations and takes place within them? Since when, how and why has peace been conceived as backed with a kind of constant struggle and that ultimately the state order—in its foundation, essence, essential mechanisms—is the battle order?…Who spotted war between the lines of peace; who sought a principle allowing to understand order, state, its institutions and history in the chaos, confusion of war, in the filth of battle?[44]

The question posed by Foucault can thus be understood as follows. To develop the tools for the analysis of the social world whose elements are produced/created by the relations of domination, ways to study these relations need to be identified. In order to do this we need to ask how far it is possible to see them through the prism of their extreme case—war. It should be noted that the question concerns historical matter, rather than abstract considerations, of the possibility to think in one way or another. The case that is of interest to us is about determining when such ways of thinking about the social order emerged; the order being also a cover/veil on continually on-going struggle, the chaos of war. Therefore, Foucault makes Clausewitz's famous statement the starting point makes: "All in all, war is just politics conducted with other means." It is, however, quite a subversive perverse starting point because what Foucault is interested in is a statement reversed by Clausewitz. He acknowledges and proves that:

> …the principle according to which politics is war conducted with other means is much older than Clausewitz's principles, who simply reversed this kind of thesis, both cloudy and precise, circulating since the 17th and 18th century.[45]

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[43] *Ibid*.

[44] *Ibid*., p. 55.

[45] *Ibid*.

Foucault seeks a historical paradox in the emergence of this thesis at that time. It consists in the fact that the creation of discourse which brought the thesis of politics being war conducted with other means somewhat coincided with (or occurred slightly later than the) transformation involving the statisation of war, i.e. displacement of war relations, or "private war," from the social entity to the outer limits of the state: "war somehow became practice which operates only at the outer borders of the state, it started to be a professional and technical privilege of the carefully allocated and controlled military apparatus."[46] We are therefore faced with a situation in which two contradictory historical events almost simultaneously occur approximately at the same time: the removal of war relations from social relations (together with a story justifying such removal) and the emergence of the discourse describing war as a constant social relation and the foundation to the institution of power. Foucault called this discourse historical-political and placed it in opposition to philosophical-legal discourse that had been practised till then. It should be noted that the two discourses do not replace each other (simple sequence—this has been proclaimed so far, henceforth another thing is proclaimed), but they oppose each other in the plan of their parallel occurrence and of presenting opposing visions of the world. Where the philosophical-legal theory talks about political power that begins when war ends, historical-political discourse proclaims the war is still ongoing, of which the state and law are emanations. Where the philosophical-legal theory sees society as consisting of (harmoniously) complementary elements, historical-political discourse perceives them as consisting of two groups, two opposing armies. This vision of society has at least two important implications. The first one relates to perception of the effect of imposing laws by one social group in the dominating social order (winners) onto another (the defeated), and not a compromise, "social contract," between different groups. Because historical-political discourse is a story of continuous war, it brings a "promise" of change in the situation as long as the defeated rise up one day against their oppressors, defeat them and they become winners. The second consequence concerns the place of the subject is speaking, and that of the truth:

> …the subject that speaks in this discourse and who says "I" or "we" cannot, and indeed does not attempt to, occupy the position of lawyer or philosopher, i.e. the position of the universal, totalising or neutral subject. In this general struggle referred to above, the one who says, who tells the truth, who tells the story, who refreshes the memory and defeats oblivion, belongs to either one or the other camp: leads the battle, has adversaries,

[46] *Ibid*., p. 56.

> works for a particular victory.…There is no doubt that this discourse about universal war, the discourse that attempts to discover war behind peace, intends to speak about the whole struggles and act out the global course of the war. But for this reason it is not the discourse of the whole or neutrality; it always remains a perspectivist discourse. It only perceives the whole sideways, cutting and piercing through it with its point of view. That means that the truth is the truth which can only be revealed through its fighting position, in the light of the desired victory, as if on the speaking subject's verge of survival.
>
> This discourse establishes the fundamental bond between power relations and truth relations.…The truth can be expressed in this discourse only because one belongs to a certain camp. Indeed, the fact of belonging to the camp—a place beyond the centre—will allow to decipher the truth, reject illusions and errors that make us believe—through which the enemy wants us to believe—that we are in an orderly and peaceful world.…if power relations liberate the truth; the truth in turn will emerge only to the extent to which it can become a true weapon in power relations, and only to this extent. The truth either provides strength, or destroys balance, highlights the lack of symmetry, and ultimately causes the victory to lean to one side rather than the other: the truth is an additional force that unveils only on the soil of power relations. A substantial link between the truth and power relations is inscribed into this kind of discourse, together with imbalance, the abandonment of the centre, struggle, war. Since the Greek philosophy, the philosophical-legal discourse can assume universality, but it is either profoundly challenged here or simply cynically ignored.[47]

This is why, according to Foucault, this discourse is historically rooted and politically decentralized: it attempts to reach the truth and "be in law," taking power relations as its starting point, aiming at its own development, and excluding the subject who speaks the truth and who dismisses law from the legal-philosophical universality. The speaker does not occur from the position above the parties, is neither between nor above, nor beside. He/she does not seek to establish law and order to reconcile the parties. He/she speaks the weapon-truth and the law of his/her group, thus being involved in the power relations and taking part in the on-going battle.

The perspectives of historical-political and philosophical-legal discourses are mutually-exclusive. Understanding between them cannot be established, they cannot be reconciled if we look from either side. Historical-political discourse exposes philosophical-legal discourse as falsely universalist—its universality is merely a way to make the defeated believe that the existing laws are not the laws imposed on the conquered by the winners. Philosophical-

[47] *Ibid*., pp. 60-61; cf. also: J. Kmita, *Prawda zwycięża nie bez oręża*, "Nurt" 1978, No. 2, pp. 14-15.

legal discourse overlooks the existence of conflict and its parties, referring to the statements which call upon the rules external to the world which they concern. We should note, however, that if we imagine what will happen when the defeated, who speak in historical-political discourse, will rise up victorious over their existing oppressors, we can come to the conclusion that the former defeated, the new winners, will inevitably develop their story in philosophical-legal discourse—they will not talk about conflict and struggle, but the agreement and compromise, universal laws that are universal just because they are theirs. Those who used to be winners against whom the defeated rose up, will themselves be oppressed and will start to speak in historical-political discourse exposing the universality of the winners' laws and social order established by them. Imagination tells us of such a vision. However, the history of historical-political discourse presented by Foucault went completely differently. It was not those preaching the discourse of opposition, having risen up and won over their oppressors, that took their language, but the dominant discourse absorbed and neutralized rebellion.

Foucault points out that historical-political discourse, which began between the end of the 16th and mid-17th century, in connection with a double contestation (folk and aristocratic) of royal power, from the 17th century took on a particular form:

> …the war which continues under the guise of public order and peace, the war that drives our society and divides it into two parts, is in fact a war of races. We very early find the basic elements that constitute the possibility of war and allow it to survive and develop further: ethnic differences, differences in the degree of savagery and barbarism; conquest and enslavement of one race by another. The social entity consists basically of two races. To begin in the 17th century, a thought is formulated according to which the conflict of races runs through the whole of the society, acting like a matrix of all the forms that will later adopt the mechanisms of civil war.[48]

It should be stressed that the term "race" in the discourse of race struggle was used neutrally simply as a means to define a group, and not in its negatively connoted meaning widespread by the racist theory.[49] This transformation of

[48] M. Foucault, *op. cit*., p. 68.

[49] The term 'race' means here "some historical-political crack, significantly broad but relatively stable. We can say, and so it is said in this discourse, that there are two races when it is possible to write the story of two groups which at least initially do not speak the same language and often do not share the same religion; two groups which formed political unity and totality only at the expense of war, invasions, conquests, battles, victories and defeats, in short, but at the cost of violence. The bond between them was created only as a result of war violence. Finally, we can say that there are two races when there are two groups which, although they live in one area, did not mix with each other because of the differences, lack of

the understanding of "race" and the transition from talking about races in the plural to the singular race constitutes one of the two transcriptions of the theory of the war of races indicated by Foucault. The first one is purely biologistic—it was made long before Darwin and took its discourse (the concept and lexis) from the materialistic anatomical physiology. It also found assistance in philology, thanks to which the theory of races was developed in the historical-biological sense. This theory occurred to be as ambiguous as its 17th century version—in fact it accompanied national movements in Europe and battles of nations against extensive state apparatuses, but it was also connected with the European colonization politics. The second transcript came from a big topic and the theory of social struggle, developing since the early 19th century and sought to replace the signs of racial conflict with class struggle. A closer look at the biological transcription enables Foucault to show the development of the biological-social racism connected with the idea, new and bringing a new function to war of races discourse, which states that

> ...a different race is not a race that came from somewhere else, won and prevailed for some time, but is a race that is continuously and without interruption reborn in (and through) the fabric of the society. In other words: what we perceive as a bias, as a binary crack in society, is not a clash of two races that are external against each other, but a split in one and the same race into a super race and sub-race. Or: it is the revealing of the past of the race. In short, showing the lining and hidden surface of the race.[50]

In other words, talking about the struggle of races in the plural was replaced by a race in the singular. This approach caused that the discourse, which had emerged in the 17th century and functioned as a weapon of war between the off-centre camps, re-centralised and became the discourse of power—central, centralised and centralising power; the discourse of struggle "which must take place not between two races, but on behalf of one particular race that is only true, that wields power and sets the norm, against those who deviate from the norm and are a threat to the biological heritage." In this way, the discourse of rebellion, opposition, was absorbed by the dominant discourse. It was neutralised as a tool of opposition, rather than abandoned due to the change in the position of the dominated. The tool of opposition was used in this way to enhance against what it was addressed. The dominant discourse was used by the dominating for their own use instead of suppressing it. The most important moment of this transformation is the

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symmetry, barriers connected with privileges, customs and laws, with the division of wealth and the way of exercising power" (*ibid*., p. 82).

[50] *Ibid*., p. 69.

emergence of biological-racist discourses of the degeneration of the society and the institutions that cause the discourse of race struggle to function within the society as a rule of elimination, segregation, and eventually normalisation of the society. This is also the moment for this discourse to abandon the basic initial thesis: "We have to defend ourselves against our enemies because, in reality, the state apparatus, law, authorities will not only fail to protect us from them, but are also instruments that our enemies persecute us with and make us their subjects." This thesis, which can be referred to in a nutshell "We have to defend ourselves from the society," has been replaced by something contrary: "We have to defend the society from all biological threats posed by this other race, this sub-race, this anti-race that we establish against ourselves." In this way, the struggle of races ceased to be a tool for fighting by one group against another and began to serve the global strategy of all social conservatism. In addition, state racism emerged, i.e. the racism practised by the society towards itself, its own elements and constructs—internal racism, constantly purifying, one of the fundamental dimensions of social normalisation.[51] I the biological transcription of struggle of races discourse presented by Foucault we can see an interesting and "clever" mechanism to disarm opposition. In this mechanism what was opposed has become what must be defended. The transition from "defending against" to the "defence" of what used to be perceived as a threat is in fact imposing the worldview of the dominant group. They claim they are not a threat, it is them who privileged at the expense of the dominated group, but that the "real threat" lies elsewhere. In this way the dominated or are caught up in the reinforcement of domination in the name of the "real threat," let alone the inability to undermine it. (A similar mechanism can be found in the concept of consent of the dominated to domination.[52])

Anti-History

In his analysis, Foucault devotes much space to the role of history within the dominant discourse and the discourse of opposition. He notes that by the end of the 19th century (since the conversion into racist discourse) the discourse of struggle functioned as anti-history. To demonstrate the function of anti-history, first we need to characterise historical discourse

[51] *Ibid*., pp. 69-70.

[52] N.-C. Mathieu, *Quand Céder n'est pas consentir. Des déterminants matériels et psychiques de la conscience dominée des femmes et de quelques-unes de leurs interprétations en ethnologie*, in: *idem*, L'anatomie politique. Catégorisations et idéologies du sexe, côté-femmes, Paris 1991, pp. 131-225.

(the discourse of historians, work which consists in telling stories). Foucault proposes to perceive it as a kind of "oral or written ceremony which should simultaneously produce justification for authority and its strengthening in reality." The traditional function of history (since the first Roman chroniclers—annualists—until at least the late Middle Ages, or even until the 17th century and later) consisted in expressing the laws of power and intensifying its splendour. It, therefore, had a dual role:

> ...on the one hand, when we tell history, the history of kings, nobles, sovereigns and their victims (or, alternatively, their temporary failures), the idea is to provide a lawful connection between people and authority through the continuity of law which constitutes within it and its operation; so it is about providing a lawful connection between people and the continuity of authority through the continuity of authority. On the other hand, the idea is also to fascinate them with glory whose intensity is hardly possible to stand—these are, to my mind, the two aspects of historical discourse which enable it to achieve a certain effect of authority reinforcement. History, like rituals, anointment, ceremonial funerals, ceremonies and legends, is the operator and intensifier of authority.[53]

Strengthening and illuminating, harnessing through presenting the power commitment and enhancing the splendour of power are the two features of history that can be found in the forms of history practised by the Roman civilisation and medieval societies. These two functions correspond with, according to Foucault, the two aspects of authority presented in Indo-European religions, rituals, myths, legends:

> On the one hand, the legal aspect: authority binds through commitment, oath, law. On the other hand, authority has the magical function, role and effectiveness: power is blinding and turns objects to stone. … I think, therefore, that history, even the one that is in operation in the Middle Ages, while searching for ancient roots, together with its annals recorded day after day, with its collection of circulated examples, assumes yet and still the same representation of authority which is not simply its image, but also a procedure to strengthen it. History is the discourse of power, discourse of commitment, through which authority subordinates; it is also the discourse of splendour with which authority fascinates, terrifies, immobilises. In short, while binding and immobilising, authority is the foundation and guarantor of order, and history is precisely the discourse through which these two functions, ensuring order, can be reinforced and made more effective. It can, therefore, be generally stated that for a very long time history was the

[53] *Ibid*., p. 72.

> history of sovereignty in our society, the history which develops within the dimension and power function of the sovereign.[54]

History characterized in this way is the background on which Foucault notes the emergence of a new form of discourse in the late Middle Ages, or rather at the turn of the 16th and 17th century. This new historical discourse is not "the discourse of sovereign power, or even a race, but the discourse of races, clash of races, struggle of races taking place throughout nations and law." Similarly to historical-political discourse which is in to opposition to philosophical-legal discourse, history is antithetical to the history of sovereignty hitherto, it is anti-Roman, it is anti-history:

> First of all, because in the history of races and permanent clash of races under the veil of law and through the law there emerges, or rather fades, the silent process of identification between the monarch and his/her people, between the nation and their sovereign, which the history of sovereign power presented, the history of sovereigns. Since then, in this new form of discourse and historical practice, sovereignty will no longer bind all into unity that was precisely the unity of the society, nation, state. Sovereign power takes on another special feature: it does not bind, but enslaves. Furthermore, the assertion according to which the history of the great covers, a fortiori, the history of the weak, the history of the great involves the history of the little ones, is replaced by the principle of heterogeneity: the history of some is not the history of others. … What is a law or obligation, if you look at it from the perspective of authority, the new discourse, if looking from another perspective, will present it as abuse, violence, extortion. All in all, land ownership of great feudal lords and all charges levied by them will be exposed and condemned as acts of violence, confiscation, looting, forced tributes downloaded extorted from the conquered population. As a result, the great form of general obligation whose power was strengthened by history, hailing the sovereign's reputation, collapses and law turns out to be two-faced: the triumph of some, serfdom of others.[55]

The narrative of anti-history is thus radically in opposition to the traditional historical discourse—rather than strengthen the sovereign's power it questions it exposes its injustice, destroys its unity according to which the victories of some were not failures of others, but contributions to the glory of the sovereign. The history of the struggle of races, anti-history shows that this splendour of power is blinding and does not allow the subjects to become aware of their serfdom, and that the sphere of shadow exists beyond the sphere of splendour, which is the place for those who will never enjoy fame and glory, and those who have them lost. Anti-history

[54] *Ibid*., p. 74.

[55] *Ibid*., pp. 75-76.

is a history told from the depths of this shadow. It is the story of defeat, injustice of the present and enslavement and future victory that will restore the old laws and lost glory.[56] We can call this story revolutionary according to the original meaning of "revolution" mentioned by Arendt as an attempt to overthrow the current authority in order to restore the previous order.

The function of memory also undergoes a complete transformation in this new type of history. While in the traditional Roman history memory had a role to prevent forgetting, the idea of anti-history is to:

> …find what has been hidden, and hidden not because it was simply forgotten, but because it was carefully, deliberately, maliciously misrepresented and concealed. In fact, the new history attempts to show that authority, nobles, kings, laws obscure the fact that they were born by chance and out of injustice.[57]

The history of the struggle of races is therefore anti-history not only because it is a ritual of exercising and strengthening authority, but also its criticism, attacker and reclaimer: "Authority is unjust not because it fell lower than its finest examples, but simply because it is not ours." Historical discourse, which Foucault describes as Roman, "pacifies society, justifies authority, reinforces orderliness—or the order of the three orders—which in turn establishes the social entity." However, the new discourse, described by him as biblical, which emerges in the late 16th century, "tears society apart and deals with the right law in as far as it declares war upon the laws."[58]

"What if Rome won the revolution again?"

The emergence of the new historical discourse and vision of the world borne by it opened the way for the emergence of the revolution idea and inscribing it into the historical narrative.[59] The figure of speech into which Foucault

[56] *Ibid*., p. 76.

[57] *Ibid*., pp. 77-78.

[58] *Ibid*., p. 78.

[59] "I think the idea of revolution which has been pervading the entire political operation and the entire history of the West for more than two centuries and which is, in its early days and its content ultimately very enigmatic, cannot be separated from the birth and existence of the practice of anti-history. What could revolutionary idea and projects mean then, what would they be without the prior decoding of the lack of symmetry, imbalance, injustice and violence in operation despite the law, under the law, through this order and thanks to it? What would revolutionary idea, practice, project be without the will to bring to light the actual war that had taken place and which is still on-going, but which is being subdued and concealed by the silent order of authority, according to its function and interests? What would

inscribes historical discourse change opens with the words of Petrarch, who asked amidst the Middle Ages: "Does history contain anything that would not hail the glory of Rome?" They characterise the history practised not only in ancient Rome, but also in the Middle Ages where Petrarch spoke. They refer to historical discourse, whose primary task was to legitimise and reinforce the prevailing order. The new form of history, anti-history discourse breaks with previous historicity, continuity in references to antiquity, and introduces a completely different way of telling and perceiving history.[60] The emergence of the discourse of struggle of races and its operation as anti-history coincided with a change of thinking about the world. It is a historic event as breaking with the established way of perceiving the world and narrating it. It is worth remembering that this emergence does not mean, however, replacing one vision of the world with another, but the emergence of otherness in the order hitherto. Between these two visions we deal with the relationship of oppositions and power relations—the dominant discourse, that of the authority towards the opposition, objection.[61]

Foucault describes history (the Roman history of sovereign power) and anti-history (the biblical story of slavery and exile) which are the two major

revolutionary practice, project and discourse be without the will to reactivate the war on-going through specific historical knowledge and without the use of that knowledge as a tool in the war and as a tactical element in the actual war which is being lead? What would revolutionary project and discourse mean without the vision of an ultimate reversal of the power relations and ultimate displacement in the exercise of power?" (*Ibid*., pp. 83-84.)

[60] "In the European consciousness events will emerge that until now have only been vague incidents and which in fact did not undermine the great unity, the great legitimacy, the great dazzling power of Rome. Events emerge that will be seen as the true beginnings of Europe—bloody and conquering beginnings: the invasions of the Franks, Norman invasions. There will appear something that will be individualised as the 'Middle Ages' (but you will have to wait until the beginning of the 18th century for the historical consciousness to develop a phenomenon known as feudalism). New characters will emerge: Franks, Gauls, Celts; also more general characters will appear, e.g. the people of the North and the people of the South; there will be masters and subjects, winners and the defeated. It is the latter that are now entering the stage of historical discourse and constitute its main point of reference. Europe is being filled with memories and ancestors whose genealogy had never been studied. Above all, however, she is cracking and splitting into two parts, which she had never known. Through the discourse of race war and through the call to resurrect a completely different historical consciousness is being shaped and expressed. In this respect, the emergence of discourses of the war of races can be identified with a completely different organisation of time in the European consciousness, practice and politics itself" (*ibid*., p. 81).

[61] It should be noted that the discourse of the war of races rightfully and exclusively belongs to the oppressed, that in its essence is the discourse of the enslaved, the discourse of the people. For a long time it was the discourse of opposition—different opposition groups. It was a tool of criticism and struggle with some form of power, but a tool that was split between the various enemies and various forms of opposition against the authority.

morphologies, two political functions of historical discourse. Although revolutionary discourse, practised in Europe since the late 18th century, cannot be reduced to the mere lack of symmetry understood as the story of the on-going war in society and exposed by anti-history, this is its major theme. Therefore, according to Foucault, one cannot separate the history of revolutionary project and practice from anti-history:

> In short, we can say that in the late Middle Ages, in the 16th and 17th century, the society ended, or began to end, whose historical consciousness was still Roman, i.e. it focused on the rituals and myths of sovereign authority, and, say, the modern society began to shape …—the society whose historical consciousness is no longer centred around the issue of sovereignty and its consolidation, but on revolution, its promises and prophecies promising future liberation.[62]

However, as the discourse of struggle of races translated into revolutionary discourse in the middle of the 19th century, where the struggle of races was replaced with class struggle, another transformation of the discourse gained shape. It is anti-history in a another sense—the elimination of the historical dimension of the discourse of race struggle and the adoption of the biological-medical perspective.[63] This way anti-history transformed into biological and state racism. It became thus the discourse of power, reversed revolutionary discourse:

> …if the discourse of races, race struggle, was the weapon used against historical-political discourse of the Roman sovereignty of power, the discourse of race (race in the singular) was a way to reverse the weapon and

[62] *Ibid*., p. 85.

[63] "That is when something that is, in its proper sense, racism emerges. While adopting anew, transforming, but also distorting the form, vision and operation of the discourse of struggle of races itself, racism will be characterized by the fact that it will replace the topic of historical war—with its battles, invasions, looting, with its victories and defeats—with the biological post-evolutionist topic of survival struggle. It is no longer a battle in the sense of war, but a biological struggle: the differentiation of species, the selection of the strongest, the survival of the fittest races, *etc*. Similarly, the topic of the binary society, divided into two races, two groups which are alien to each other in terms of language, law, etc., will be replaced by the theme of a society that shall biologically be uniform. Only certain heterogeneous elements would jeopardize it, which do not belong to its essence and do not divide the social entity, a living social entity, into two parts, but which are, in a sense, arbitrary. It will be the idea of the aliens who sneaked in among us, it will be the theme of perverts who are a waste product of the society. Finally, the subject of state that anti-history of races was necessarily unjust will transform into the contrary: a state is not a tool of one race against another, but is and should be the defender of unity, superiority and purity of race. It is exactly the idea of racial purity, with everything monistic, statist and biological, will replace the idea of struggle of races" (*ibid*., pp. 85-86).

> use its blade to preserve state sovereignty, the sovereignty whose splendour and power is not ensured through magical and legal rituals, but medical and normalisation techniques. The sovereign state adopted the discourse of race struggle for its own use and applied it in its own strategy at the expense of law becoming norm, at the expense of transforming the biological language into legal, at the expense of the transition from races in the plural to a single race, at the expense of the transformation of liberation prospect into preoccupation with cleanliness. The sovereignty of state converted the discourse into an imperative of race protection, created as if an alternative and firewall against revolutionary call, which had also come from the old discourse of struggle, exposed injustice, reclaim and promise.[64]

It should be noted that Foucault pointed to the conversion of authority system in which magical and legal constructs were replaced with medical and normalisation techniques. Replacement of law with norm, two races whose struggle permeates society with one race whose purity should be maintained by any means, transformed revolutionary discourse into anti-revolutionary barrier.[65]

The discourse of race struggle, according to Foucault, freed us from the historical-legal awareness and caused that "we entered into the form of history, into the form of time which was both dream and realised, dream and cognised, the time in which the question of power is inseparable from the question of slavery and liberation." That is why „Petrarch asked:

[64] *Ibid*., pp. 86-87.

[65] State racism in the 20th century underwent, according to Foucault, two transformations: "On the one hand, a Nazi transformation, which adopts the late 19th century state racism whose task it is to biologically protect race. But this theme is here adopted and transformed as if in the regressive fashion, i.e. in a way that it is implanted in and made to function within prophetic discourse, that is one in which there once appeared the idea of struggle of races. In this way, Nazism will use all the folk and predominantly medieval mythology, enabling state racism to function in a ideological and mythical landscape that is close to folk battles. The battles which at some point could support and allow the creation of the theme of struggle of races. … In opposition to this Nazi-style transformation we have Soviet-style transformation, which in a way achieves something opposite: not a dramatic and theatrical, but a surreptitious transformation, without the drama typical of legends, but vaguely 'scientific.' It involves the adoption and transfer of the revolutionary discourse of social struggles—the discourse whose many elements emerged from the old discourse of struggle of races—onto police management, which provides quiet hygiene of an orderly society. What revolutionary discourse called class enemy, Soviet state racism will treat it as a kind of biological threat. Who is the class enemy? Well, this is a sick pervert, madman. As a result, the weapon that was used to fight the class enemy (the weapon in the form of war or dialectics) can now become simply medical police which eliminates the class enemy like an enemy of race. …In this way, the hoarse song of races that clash with each other through the lies of the laws and kings, the song that produced the first form of revolutionary discourse, has become state administrative prose that safeguards itself in the name of the purity of social heritage" (*ibid*., pp. 87-88).

'Is there anything about history that would not proclaim the glory of Rome?' And we—and this is something that undoubtedly characterises our historical consciousness and is associated with the emergence of this anti-history—ask: 'Is there anything about history that would not constitute a revolutionary call or fear of revolution?' We simply add this question: 'What if Rome triumphed in revolution again?'"[66] Anti-history discourse provided room for the emergence of the idea of revolution, starting with the vision of a society filled with war and calling for rebellion against what was represented as the established order of authority. Exposing the fact that authority was imposed, revealing that it was not a „natural order," but power relations which shapes the parties as winners (the dominating) and the defeated (the dominated), it provided an opportunity to rebel, object to the existing social system. The history of the discourse of race struggle shows how the rebellion, call for change, call for revolution, was neutralized and used to reinforce the dominant system. Rome won this time. We do not have to perceive this victory, however, as the final settlement. Anti-history retained its potential—it remained a tool for thinking about the possibility of changing the existing situation, perceiving it as non-obvious and unnatural. It remained to be the call to object to the unjust reality.

Histoire en tant qu'une possibilite d'une revolte

pour Maria Solarska

Résumé

L'affi rmation que l'histoire est un produit de la société (la culture) en cadre de laquelle elle est écrite — voila le point de départ de la pensée proposée dans le texte présent. Pour la contemporanéité (le présent) — a quoi sert la déscription de ce qui est passé? On peut dire tout simplement que la connaissance du passé est nécessaire, pour les sociétés dont la pensée est encadrée dans la triade: le passé — le présent — l'avenir, a la possibilité de comprendre ce qui nous entoure et de regarder dans l'avenir. Cet approche est resumé dans les questions banalisées: „d'ou vennons-nous?" et „ou dirigeons-nous?". Les réponses a ces questions, dans le sens commun, doivent essquiser le point ou nous nous trouvons et la direction vers laquelle nous nous dirigeons ou encore le but que nous visons. L'essentiel est justement de cerner la situation a l'entour de nous, ce point ou nous nous trouvons a résent. Une détermination de ce „ou nous dirigeons?" peut se réaliser par l'essais de capturer les signes de ce qui est en train de venir. Mais une démarche de tel type signifi e l'attente d'un inévitable et non pas une réfl exion sur la direction d'un

[66] *Ibid*., p. 88.

changement éventuel. Cette derniere paraît cruciale pour penser le monde humain en tant que monde changeable par les forces humaines. Pour rendre ce possibile il faut garder une distance critique a ce qui se passe devant nos yeux. L'histoire (le discours historique) fait le possible — elle rend possibile de voir nos évidences (aussi ce que nous parrait naturel) comme non évidentes parce qu'elle montre des mondes qui ont disposé les autres ensembles des évidences (des naturalités) existantes. Le chagement qui est au centre de l'intéret de l'histoire montre la contingence d'ordre des choses contemporain et son non nécessité dans l'avenir. Ainsi il est possible de diagnoser l'état présent et de prendre la décision d'etre en accord ou en desaccord avec lui.

Si nous admettons que l'histoire peut avoir une dimension révoltante, c'est-a-dire rendre possible une critique de l'état existant, un désaccord avec lui et/ou une révolte contre lui, il faut regarder de plus proche de quelle révolte s'agit-il ? Comprenant une révolution comme la forme extreme de la révolte, on réfl échit sur des liens entre l'histoire (le discours historique) et la révolution. Il ne s'agit pas pourtant de suivre l'histoire de la révolution, mais il s'agit de la réfl exion sur la question a laquelle révolution puisse faire l'appel l'histoire ou laquelle elle puisse réaliser. Les points principaux de réference de la pensée présentée sont les textes de Hannah Arendt Essai sur la revolution et les deux cours de Michel Foucault publiés dans le tome « Il faut defendre la societe ». L'analyse eff ectuée par Arendt sur la révolution et ses conséquences pour la façon de penser de monde et l'action politique dans son cadre, constitue notre point d'intéret central. L'élément important de cet approche concerne la distinction de la libération et de la liberté, aussi que l'instauration de la Révolution française en tant que modele de la révolution en général, meme si, de point de vue d'Arendt, c'est plutôt la Révolution américaine qui aurait satisfée les attentes liées a l'établissement de la liberté. Par contre Foucault en analysant le discours de la lutte des races et en interrogeant la possibilité de la révolution montre le mécanisme de la neutralisation du discours de résistance par le discours dominant. Il indique aussi deux types du discours historique — le discours de l'histoire et celui de contre-histoire — qui remplissent deux fonctions diff érentes dans la société. Tant que le premier est le discours de pouvoir — le récit qui sert a sa légitimination et a son renforcement — le deuxieme est la contestation de ce pouvoir. C'est justement le discours de contre-histoire ouvrait le champ pour l'apparition de l'idée de la révolution par départ de la vision de la société imprégnée par la guerre et de l'appel a la révolte contre ce qui se montre comme ordre de pouvoir établi. Ainsi la contrehistoire rend possible la révolte, le désaccord avec la confi guration sociale présente en démasquant le fait que ce pouvoir a été imposé et qu'il n'est pas « l'état naturel ».