

The Archaeology of Autism and the Emergence of the Autistic Subject

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Abstract

This Thesis is a theoretical attempt to analyze the emergence of Autism as a discourse and, through it, the emergence of the Autistic Subjectivity. My primary aim is to create a kind of history of the different modes by which autistic persons become subjects. I am following a post-structuralist methodology, based on Michel Foucault's work on the birth of psychiatry and institutions, his analysis of power relations, his ideas on the objectification and subjectification of the individual, and finally his notions of *governmentality* and *bio-power*. More specifically, I am making use of the Foucauldian techniques of Archaeology and Genealogy in order to investigate the birth of Autism through, the psychiatric discipline, psychoses, classificatory systems and the Asylum of the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth century. Under the same methodological strand, I am treating the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), in relation to Autism, as a disciplinary tool and as a discursive event. I present the existing knowledge on Autism and more specifically on the 'impairment in social interaction' and 'in pragmatic language'. Finally, I attempt an analysis of Autism as a *apparatus*, through its *episteme*, mechanisms, and elements. I give an overview of the two main epistemologies on Autism, that of psychoanalysis and TOM (Theory of Mind) and I introduce the notions of *bio-power* and *governmentality* as drive mechanisms, which inform the elements of the apparatus and turn them into regulators of the autistic subjectivity. I am making an analysis of specific elements that I recognize as most important for the objectification and subjectification of the autistic individual; these are: autobiographies and educational institutions. Moreover, I discuss how through a continuum of *truth discourses*, *strategies of intervention*, and *modes of objectification*, the Autistic individual finds itself in a battle of modes of power, where it either consents to normalization or shields its 'pathology P' by disobedience and resistance. Finally, I argue that the deconstruction of existed discursive entities and their reconstruction upon a different epistemological basis leads to a rethink of Autism in terms of Education. What is needed is an emphasis to the notion of *παιδεία* (paideia), which aims to the creation of free and self-fulfilled human beings, rather than exclusively to the notion of *εκπαιδευσις* (ekpaideusis), that gives emphasis to the development of capabilities, and in the case of autistic children, to the creation of docile, marginalized bodies.

Key words: Autism, Subjectivity, Foucault, Archaeology, Genealogy, Bio-power, Governmentality, Apparatus.

