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Radical Reflection and Archaeology:
Recasting the Subjectivity Dispute in Merleau-Ponty and Foucault

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I

“Every philosopher has dreamed of a discourse which would supersede all others.”¹ Merleau-Ponty wrote these words in 1945, in the context of a phenomenology of expression. Yet within two short decades, the archaeological method would undermine the accuracy of this assertion. The architect of this method, Michel Foucault, defined it neither as a type of analysis that seeks foundations in an originating subject, nor one that conceives history as a totality or continuous succession of events.² Foucault instead understood archaeology as a method of historical description that demonstrates how specific discursive practices make subjectivity possible, and that uncovers historical interruptions from within the very processes it describes.³ Yet Foucault also proposed the archaeological method as a means of allowing multiple discourses to coexist, without being synthesized under the reflective capacities of transcendental subjectivity. And while this method may not analyze tranquilly – a point that Deleuze has raised in an engagement with Foucault and against phenomenology – no singular discourse may entirely supplant all others.⁴ Given that no discourse can assert itself under a principle of supersession, this point therefore would seemingly invalidate Merleau-Ponty’s assertion.

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 190.

² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 12; 16.

³ Ibid. 16.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London: Continuum, 1999), 93.

This paper will analyze this alleged binary opposition within contemporary continental philosophy as it stands between phenomenological and archaeological discourses, and will inquire as to whether in fact we can entirely oppose the notion of reflection in Merleau-Ponty over and against the method of historical description that Foucault posited, despite the adamant criticisms Foucault maintained toward phenomenology. It will challenge this alleged opposition first by calling attention to those passages where Foucault's criticisms of phenomenology are most evident, to understand what is at stake philosophically within them. Second, it will approach these criticisms from the standpoint of immanent phenomenology, demonstrating the extent to which Foucault sought to distance himself from a particular conception of this philosophical movement – a conception that Merleau-Ponty has espoused. Lastly, it will attempt to theorize a way out of this dichotomy. It will do so by establishing connections between archaeology and immanent phenomenology, arguing that the revisions Merleau-Ponty devised regarding phenomenological reduction are quite similar to what Foucault posits as the fundamentals of archaeological description. Through these concepts one can recast what are illusorily proposed to be exclusively distinct conceptions of philosophical reflection. This in turn would demonstrate the extent to which we can situate the archaeological method of Foucault within the phenomenological tradition of the twentieth century.

II

Discourses that stress the centrality of this originating subject attempt entirely to supplant others by abolishing this aforementioned conflict in the passage from Deleuze to which I have called attention. Foucault similarly asserted that certain movements in contemporary continental philosophy overemphasize these discourses concerning the subject, and fail to recognize their existence as discourses. What Foucault meant requires some clarification. All discourses

manifest from historical conditions of reality, and Foucault proposed the existence of these conditions under the juxtaposed concept of an historical *a priori*.⁵ These conditions exist before any subjective, personal experience, but nonetheless remain completely immersed within an understanding of history as pre-personal, fundamentally discordant, and wrought with ruptures. These conditions also dictate when and where discourses and their specific sets of statements may emerge. Foucault elaborates upon the nature of this concept in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, stating of it that:

Juxtaposed these two words produce a rather startling effect; what I mean by the term is an *a priori* that is not a condition of validity for judgments, but a condition of reality for statements. It is not a question of rediscovering what might legitimize an assertion, but of freeing the conditions of emergence of statements, the law of their coexistence with others, the specific form of their mode of being, the principles according to which they survive, become transformed, and disappear. An *a priori* not of truths that might never be said, or really given to experience; but the *a priori* of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said.⁶

Since these conditions make any and all discourses possible, they also constitute discourses concerning the subject, and it is from within the concept of an historical *a priori* that the notion of transcendental subjectivity becomes replaced with a vacant conception of subjectivity.⁷

However from the standpoint of immanent phenomenology, the subject does not conceive of herself as a construction of discordant, historical forces, but rather as the perceptual ground that is the origin and possibility of all reflection, a thesis that Merleau-Ponty refers to as the primacy of perception.⁸ While various discourses within the history of philosophy have stressed the importance of the reflective capacities of an originating subject, Foucault considered that one discourse in particular had given the subject excessive attention: phenomenology.

⁵ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 127.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Charles Scott, "Foucault's Practice of Thinking," *Research in Phenomenology* 14 (1984), 82.

⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences," in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 13.

Phenomenology always analyzes from within the perspective of a subject. It seeks to firmly establish subjectivity as an originating entity with whom inquiry commences, what L. Shiner refers to as “the primacy of the subject.”⁹ Not only did Foucault criticize phenomenology for attempting to justify this position. He also argued that the opposite was true. His analysis did not ground all reflection in the subject. Instead, it dispersed subjectivity throughout discursive practices, defining its status and place.¹⁰ Thus we encounter in Foucault the idea that his method of archaeological description does not refer back to any subject as its origin, but instead demonstrates the extent to which discursive practices proffer to the individual various dispersed positions, various ‘subjects’ that she can occupy and inhabit.¹¹ Rather than referring back to a constitution latent within subjectivity itself that would synthesize these diverse historical elements, “thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined.”¹²

It is undoubtedly passages such as this one that Ann Murphy has in mind when she writes of the vacant nature of the subject in Foucault’s archaeological writings.¹³ According to her, subjectivity in the archaeological period is not the originating entity that phenomenological description would prefer subjectivity to be. It is a particular, yet vacant space that individuals might permeate, granted that the discursive practice which constitutes its particular inception

⁹ Larry Shiner, “Foucault, Phenomenology, and the Question of Origins,” *Philosophy Today* 26 (Winter 1982), 312.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 54.

¹² *Ibid.*, 55. In passing, it at least deserves mention that for Merleau-Ponty, the subject has a similar discontinuity with itself, wherein its relations to what is exterior to itself do not allow it to be stable or intact. Cf. *Phenomenology of Perception*, 347. I am in debt to the article my Ann Murphy cited below for allowing me to give clearer expression to these ideas.

¹³ Ann V. Murphy, “Strange Company: Foucault and Merleau-Ponty on Phenomenology and its Ethics,” *Chiasmi International* 3 (2002), 277-8.

allows such permeation.¹⁴ This conception of subjectivity, she writes, “is thus far removed from the corporeal situated-ness of Merleau-Ponty’s subject, saturated as it is with meaningful intention.”¹⁵ According to Foucault then, phenomenology has failed to acknowledge the historical conditions that permit the existence of subjectivity, but instead falsely thought that all reflection originates with a subject. He posits that, in the words of philosopher Stephane Legrand, “phenomenology is nothing but the theory of this appearance” of subjectivity, thus promoting centered subjectivity, which reaches outward and sustains what the world that it reaches toward. As such, it is “ignorant of its fundamental falsity.”¹⁶ Foucault therefore deviates from this position, that all reflection originates with a subject, by demonstrating that the subject is a historical construct. The subject, according to Foucault is not an originating or stable entity. It is a derived function that exists only within localized times and places.

Merleau-Ponty himself acquiesces with this position that Foucault criticizes, wherein reflection originates with embodiment as a centered and unified locus of experience that is a necessary precondition for our very capacities to reflect. Indeed, in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*, he does not consider embodiment as derived from series of anonymous anterior forces within history. Along these lines, he states that:

I am the absolute source. My existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it reaches out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished – since that distance is not one of its properties – if I were not there to scan it with my gaze.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid. Interestingly enough, Gilles Deleuze also takes note of this vacant nature of subjectivity in the archaeological period. Cf. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 87.

¹⁵ Murphy, *Strange Company*, 277-8.

¹⁶ Stephane Legrand, “As Close as Possible to the Unlivable: (Michel Foucault and Phenomenology),” *Sophia* 47 (2008), 282.

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, ix.

Thus the philosophical enterprise known as phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty conceived it, always describes from within the subject's own perspective, and from within that perspective the subject does not consider herself a construction of anonymous historical forces, but the origin and possibility of all speculation. Claire Colebrook describes this position, which Foucault refers to as an anthropological one, as the idea that a subject grounds all truth and decision.¹⁸ Given the above passage, Foucault would then accurately categorize Merleau-Ponty under this illusion of the centrality of transcendental subjectivity. Foucault reiterates this point when, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he writes that with respect to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the meanings of the perceived world found in his particular conception of phenomenology consist of a form of transcendental consciousness as horizon, and one that attempts to order history, rather than more accurately admitting that this consciousness is in fact dispersed by it.¹⁹ Thus what Foucault refers to as this anthropological thought is one he thought Merleau-Ponty in fact advocated, as the above passage would suggest.²⁰ This position places an excessive and illusory importance on the subject as a stable and originating entity. Foucault questioned it for this reason.

We find the most explicit expression of these Foucauldian criticisms in the foreword to his text *The Order of Things*. When outlining his project of this text in the Foreword, he disavows the phenomenological method, stating why that method is problematic, and instead supplants his own archaeological method where it remains once lay:

I should not like the effort I have made in one direction to be taken as a rejection of any other approach. Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different methods. If there is one approach that I do reject,

¹⁸Claire Colebrook, "Foucault: Anti-Representationalism and Logophobia," in *Philosophy and Poststructuralist Theory: From Kant to Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 172.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 203.

²⁰ Richard A. Cohen, "Merleau-Ponty, the Flesh, and Foucault," *Philosophy Today* 28 (1994): 329.

however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity – which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice.²¹

Instead then of a transcendental subjectivity for which history exists as ordered through its constitution, Foucault wished to keep the pluralistic and chaotic nature of discourse intact, by theorizing history and thought outside of this subjectivity and its ordering principle.²² Toward the end of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault we have seen reiterates this point with respect to Merleau-Ponty. And as Legrand comments (no doubt echoing these reiterations by Foucault), “the object and the world are not constituted by a transcendental subject – a pure consciousness or an incarnated body (it does not make any real difference, Foucault would say) – conveying to them meaning and structure; on the contrary, the subject is shaped through an external process, by its surroundings, by the material practices investing on the surfaces of the body.”²³ Here we encounter justification for the notion that, whether the subject is deemed a transcendent consciousness or an immanent embodiment, bears little relevance to these criticisms. Referring to the moment of finitude and transience with respect to phenomenological discourse, Murphy writes of Merleau-Ponty that:

It is precisely this moment in which Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy lives: the moment of ambiguity, the particular moment of simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity enabled by our being as flesh. Despite his attempt to elaborate this ambiguity, in Foucault’s eyes, Merleau-Ponty failed to break with the strain of Husserlian subjectivism that ultimately bound him to the cogito.²⁴

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xiv.

²² I have in mind here Foucault’s penetrating analysis of French novelist Maurice Blanchot wherein he espouses this reflection that is wholly exterior to any subject. Cf. Michel Foucault, “Maurice Blanchot: Thought from the Outside,” in *Foucault/Blanchot* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 7-59.

²³ Legrand, “As Close as Possible to the Unlivable,” 282.

²⁴ Ann V. Murphy, “Strange Company,” 280.

Yet as Legrand also states, the peculiar understanding of a pre-personal consciousness that Foucault advocates here is one that can quite easily be identified from within the tradition of phenomenological philosophy.²⁵ And alternatively, Murphy asserts that the reconfiguration of the cogito in Merleau-Ponty ruptures with Kantian and Cartesian figurations of subjectivity, by way of interrogating the rigid dichotomy between internal and external with respect to the subject.²⁶ Thus while both Merleau-Ponty and Foucault seemingly disagree as regards their conceptions of subjectivity, there are ways in which their approaches potentially offer meaningful capacity for interaction between their ideas. Therefore let us turn to an examination of the philosophical approaches in both Merleau-Ponty and Foucault, so that we may determine where precisely this meaningful interaction lies, as the touchstone for establishing a firm point of agreement between these seemingly disparate thinkers.

III

In a section of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* entitled “Change and Transformations” the reader encounters some elements that are fundamental to archaeological description. Therein, Foucault’s intention is to give an archaeological description of change, and he begins doing so by interrogating his own methodological presuppositions. It is these presuppositions that he here wishes to eliminate from his method, that pose to his ideas a challenge from phenomenological discourse, a challenge that he, in my view, does not successfully overcome. Archaeological description, according to Foucault:

Seems to treat history only to freeze it. On the one hand, by describing discursive formations, it ignores the temporal relations that may be manifest in them; it seeks general rules that will be uniformly valid in the same way, and at every point in time: does it not, therefore, impose the constricting figure of a synchrony on a development that may be slow and imperceptible? In this ‘world of ideas’ which

²⁵ Legrand, “As Close as Possible to the Unlivable,” 283-4

²⁶ Murphy, “Strange Company,” 280. Cf. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 324 for this crucial distinction that we find in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology.

is in itself so untrustworthy, in which apparently the most stable figures disappear so quickly, but in which so many irregularities occur that are later accorded definitive status, in which the future always anticipates itself, whereas the past is constantly shifting, is not archaeology valid as a sort of motionless thought?²⁷

Foucault here thus begins to address the status of the archaeologist with respect to the discordant understanding of historical events that she or he might analyze. In her attempt to describe these historical relations (which Foucault terms ruptures), is not the archaeologist situating herself on the margins of experience and history in order to describe them, as the transcendental phenomenologist does? If this were so, then archaeological description would fall victim to the transcendent standpoint from which Foucault sought to separate his own descriptive method, a standpoint which Merleau-Ponty himself does not accept, and refers to as high altitude thinking and a soaring over (*survol*).²⁸

Foucault was not unaware that this poses an obstacle to his attempts to distance his method from anything remotely phenomenological. The archaeologist's task to describe and analyze historical events without treating them as a succession, and indeed outside of the ordering constitution that transcendental subjectivity imposes onto history that safeguards that succession, becomes open to such methodological tendencies. For if the archaeologist suspends history and stands at the margins of that history to better describe and analyze it, does she then explicitly take up what Husserl in his phenomenological philosophy describes as the transcendental attitude, and does not Foucault then situate his method of description within phenomenology itself? Rudi Visker illustrated this transcendental stance in Foucault, which followed reflection "way up into the sky, to those austere heights from which the archaeologist could detect, instead of a single continuous philosophical tradition, the cracks and fissures which

²⁷ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 166.

²⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 88, 127.

explode it from within.”²⁹ Indeed Foucault realized the problematic nature of his method at this point in his archaeological period, and attempted to resolve it, thus leaving the individuality of his archaeological method intact. However as I will argue shortly, his attempt to do so leaves him, by making important qualifications regarding the archaeological method, caught within the snare of the method of immanent phenomenology, despite his best attempt to distance his ideas from this philosophical approach, which he refers to in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as historical phenomenology, and which he sought to liberate history from.³⁰ In this way, Foucault transgressed this “conception of history in order to be historical.”³¹

With his attempt to liberate his method from any phenomenological notions, Foucault states precisely why his archaeological method evades the problem of transcendental subjectivity that he no doubt realized was necessary for his method to overcome. He characterizes the precise ontological status of the archaeologist in the midst of her descriptions, when he writes:

Archaeology does not set out to treat as simultaneous what is given as successive; it does not try to freeze time and to substitute for its flux of events correlations that outline a motionless figure. What it suspends is the theme that succession is an absolute: a primary, indissociable sequence which discourse is subjected to by the law of its finitude.³²

Whereas in the prior passage, Foucault recognized the challenge phenomenology poses to his methodological approach, in this one he sought to recover archaeological description from phenomenology, such that the two discourses and methods could still remain entirely distinct. What Foucault means here is that an archaeological analysis of discourse does not place the archaeologist outside of those formations and transformations being described. The archaeologist remains fully immersed within their finitude, and does not describe from any

²⁹ Rudi Visker, *Truth and Singularity: Taking Foucault into Phenomenology*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers (1999), 92.

³⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 203.

³¹ John W. Murphy, “Foucault’s Ground of History,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1994): 191.

³² Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 169.

transcendent standpoint on the margins of history or experience. She describes from within history as radically discordant. Charles Scott elucidates this peculiar stance of the archaeologist engaged in historical description:

Foucault's discourse emerges as a way of thinking that intrinsically knows itself as discursive in its difference from other discourses and as a practice, a set of power relations. It comes to understand itself by investigating how discourses and practices exist. His thinking is a discourse on discourses and its direction by its attention to the power of discursive differences and the anarchic variety of discourses.³³

It is in this sense that the stance of the archaeologist has her reflection and description entirely immersed within history, and one that has the possibility to offer these descriptions of changes, transformations, and ruptures within history because a series of anonymous impersonal historical forces allowed such statements to be made. And this is ultimately how Foucault effectively comes to distance himself from a transcendental form of reflection.

The understanding that Foucault then maintained of archaeological discourse is that the archaeological descriptions that emerge out of this discourse are ones that occur from within historicity, entirely subject to the series anonymous rules that govern all discourses. And Foucault asserts that because of this facet of his method, it escapes the centering of transcendental subjectivity that he sought to avoid. Archaeological discourse:

Far from determining the locus in which it speaks, is avoiding the ground on which it could find support. It is a discourse about discourses: but it is not trying to find in them a hidden law, a concealed origin that it only remains to free; nor is it trying to establish by itself, taking itself as a starting-point, the general theory of which they would be the concrete models. It is trying to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to a single system of differences, a scattering that is not related to absolute axes of reference: it is trying to operate a decentering that leaves no privilege to any center.³⁴

³³ Scott, "Foucault's Practice of Thinking," 75.

³⁴ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 205.

Foucault can thus justifiably assert that this discourse avoids recourse to any originating transcendental act.³⁵ We can then consider archaeological discourse, like the very discontinuity it attempts to grasp, “both an instrument and an object of research, because it divides up the field of which it is the effect.”³⁶ Stated differently, it “functions as it dislodges conceptual constraints, and then undergoes the very transformation which such dislodging effects.”³⁷

IV

I suspect that it is through this very effect – an effect that leaves the archaeologist decentered – where one can locate a relation of Foucault and phenomenological subjectivity. Given that Merleau-Ponty’s reconceptualization of phenomenological reduction also similarly dislodges the subject who performs it, we shall take this concept as our point of insertion into a synthesis of the ideas of these thinkers.

Merleau-Ponty’s most coherent presentation of this idea occurs in the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Equating this concept ultimately with the task of philosophy itself, as a type of radical reflection, he considers phenomenological reduction as originating from our embodiment – and that all reflection expresses our lived experience in terms of a higher intelligibility and a second order.³⁸ Merleau-Ponty continued this theme throughout his philosophical corpus, as evidenced when he later writes of reflection in *The Visible and the Invisible* that:

It is a question not of putting the perceptual faith in place of reflection, but on the contrary of taking into account the total situation, which involves reference from one to the other. What is given is not a massive and opaque world, or a universe of adequate thought; it is a reflection which turns back over the density of the

³⁵ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 205.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Between Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 81.

³⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xxi.

world in order to clarify it, but which, coming second, reflects back to it only its own light.³⁹

This radical reflection, which subsumes perceptual experience into this higher intelligibility, is in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, equated with phenomenological reduction itself. In the attempt to describe our lived experience through the performance of phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist does not distance herself from that experience entirely. I imagine that if so, one would be too isolated from what one attempts to describe that no accurate description could be given. Instead, and like the archaeologist, she remains immersed within the experience (that is to say, within the history) being described.

This reconceptualization of phenomenological reduction that Merleau-Ponty posits is one that he considers, by its very nature, incomplete.⁴⁰ The phenomenologist can never fully situate herself as fully distinct from her experiential ties to the world in order to describe them, but must to some extent remain immersed within the experience she describes. When Merleau-Ponty then clarifies this understanding of phenomenological reduction, he writes of it that:

Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it brings to mind that world as strange and paradoxical.⁴¹

Rather than being situated at the margins of experience, the ontology of subjectivity from this reflective standpoint is not entirely within experience, but not entirely situated outside of that experience either. Rather, it has recourse from one to the other wherein the phenomenologist, through reduction, is offered the necessary distance from her experience to offer her descriptions, without being placed completely outside of it. That is to say, given that “our existence is too

³⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 35.

⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xiv.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement,”⁴² the suspension of our lived experience of the world known as phenomenological reduction becomes necessary to comprehend that experience, however brief this suspension may be.

The notion of reduction then, in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s reconceptualization of this phenomenological term, is always partial, and locates the subject as torn between immanence and transcendence, without being fully located in either. According to Visker then, with this concept of reduction, Merleau-Ponty attempted:

To push Husserl out of idealism and to conceive of the reduction not in terms of a transcendental immanence, not as a reduction of the natural world, but as a reduction *to* it, as that successful failure which in its attempt to break away from it reveals our ineradicable attachment to it, in short, as a reduction which is necessary to reveal a tension, but which is uninhabitable as such.⁴³

Rather than this transcendental immanence, what Merleau-Ponty posits in terms of reduction could relate to (in terms of this tension that Visker evokes) the interplay of immanence and transcendence that Merleau-Ponty says belies all experience.⁴⁴ In terms of phenomenological reduction then, we can situate this term under what Merleau-Ponty presents as a more in depth description of this interplay, when he writes that: “no choice is offered between immanence and transcendence, since each of these terms when pronounced brings to mind its opposite.”⁴⁵

To bring these descriptions into contact with the thought of Foucault, the historical relations that the archaeologist describes distance her from them enough to be described with a greater clarity, yet as we have seen, does not place her in a transcendental status at the margins of them, a point on which Foucault insists. This is precisely what Merleau-Ponty had stated of the reflecting subject involved in phenomenological reduction in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.

⁴² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xv.

⁴³ Visker, *Truth and Singularity*, 105.

⁴⁴ Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 16.

⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 332.

Therefore in this curious relation, which Merleau-Ponty refers to as an interplay of immanence and transcendence, we can establish a firm point of contact between archaeological and phenomenological discourses which can allow us to reevaluate the relationship between both.

Thus, in the successful failure to escape the problem posed by transcendental subjectivity with respect to the archaeological method, Foucault places his method of archaeological description in quite close proximity to Merleau-Ponty's reconceptualization of phenomenological reduction. Thereby his method of archaeological description becomes subsumed under the title of phenomenology as a discourse from which he could not effectively distance these ideas., wherein obstinately intersects with phenomenology in what he considers that extensive space known as a discursive formation, over which no author is a master.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 126

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