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Foucault and Shakespeare's pedants, dotards and drunks

Abstract

Foucault's claim that the Renaissance organised knowledge in terms of the *episteme* of resemblance can be challenged in principle and on empirical grounds. I argue that the empirical challenge can be delivered, first, by pointing to three Shakespeare scenes in which the use of analogy as a means of presenting knowledge is repudiated; and, second, by pointing to alternative ways of organising knowledge: classical authority, logic and rhetoric. The "theoretical" challenge must be delivered by questioning Foucault's presuppositions.

Foucault's suggestion that in the Renaissance human beings ordered their thoughts about the world in terms of relationships of resemblance would come as no surprise to anyone working in the field of English literature (Foucault, 1986).¹ Until quite recently, it was standard practice to send undergraduates reading Shakespeare's plays to E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1966). There they would be told that "the Elizabethans pictured the universal order under three main forms: a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance" (37) and that this "conception of order is so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages" (18). If Tillyard's views were seen as too simplistic, students could be directed to C.S. Lewis's *The Discarded Image*, or to Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*. In one way or another Tillyard, Lewis and Lovejoy would all agree with the view of Charles Taylor (1985,I:223) that

1. My remarks on Foucault are restricted to the ideas expressed in *The Order of Things* (1986).

the Renaissance accepted the notion that the world as we know it is a manifestation or expression of the thoughts of God.

This sets the framework for the theories of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, what one would call the semiological ontologies, which pictured the world as a meaningful order, or a text. This kind of view of the world is dominant right up to the seventeenth century, when it was pulverized by the scientific revolution.

It was a view of this kind which understood the universe in terms of a series of correspondences, linking for instance the lion in the kingdom of animals, the eagle among birds, and the king in his realm, or linking the stars in the heavens to the shape of the human frame, or linking certain beasts and plants to certain planets. In all these cases, what is at stake is an expressive relation. These terms are linked because they embody/manifest the same ideas. To view the universe as a meaningful order is to see the world as shaped in each of its domains and levels in order to embody the ideas.

The only challenge to these assumptions as to how the minds of human beings in the Renaissance worked, comes from the “cultural materialist” followers of Raymond Williams. For example, Jonathan Dollimore (1985: 5) objects specifically to Tillyard’s attempt “falsely to unify history and social process in the name of ‘the collective mind of the people’”. For Dollimore, “Tillyard’s world picture, to the extent that it did still exist, was not shared by all; it was an ideological legitimization of an existing social order, one rendered more necessary by the apparent instability, actual *and* imagined, of that order”. According to this view, those who invoked the “world picture” were not simply thinking analogically, but were attempting to impose a reactionary, authoritarian mindset on their contemporaries.

The legitimacy of Dollimore’s point cannot be challenged, but its implications are not as far-reaching as he perhaps would think. There can be little doubt that attempts to naturalise and so legitimise established authority in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England frequently relied on notions of a cosmic order. It would follow, therefore, that anyone challenging that authority would naturally question its ideological underpinnings, either implicitly or explicitly. This could be done tactically or strategically. If it were done tactically, all that would be done would be to reject the particular analogy offered as being inappropriate or false. This is as far as Dollimore’s argument and evidence can take him. He appears, however, to assume the benefits of having presented evidence for a strategic or radical challenge, one which questions and undermines the very legitimacy of analogy itself. In other words, the most he

has shown is that the particular use of certain analogies or correspondences were questioned, not that many people in Renaissance England did not organise their thoughts in terms of analogy. Fundamentally, Foucault's position remains intact.

The problem of whether or not his ideas should remain unquestioned nevertheless arises when certain consequences of his position are revealed. For example, if Foucault (1986: 39-40) is correct, then people in the Renaissance did not distinguish between legend and observation as forms of knowledge. Superficially at least, it seems unacceptable that people were incapable of attaching greater credibility to their own observations than to travellers' tales. Are we really to accept that they assimilated the book of creation (the world) to the book of learning (encyclopaedic scholarship) to such an extent that these were not regarded as different in kind, or was it that they had a less developed scepticism or cynicism, a greater trust of authority? Again, if Foucault is right, then the history of ideas is constituted by a series of totally unrelated cataclysms. According to Foucault there is a radical discontinuity between how knowledge is ordered in one era and another. On the face of it, this is contrary to all we seem to know about human experience.

Given the general plausibility of Foucault's ideas, however, one needs to ask what kind of procedure, if any, would falsify his claims. The most obvious, and finally necessary, challenge must be one of principle. If his claims are to be rejected conclusively, Foucault's methodological assumptions must be shown to be inadequate or incoherent. In other words, one needs to demonstrate, for example, that his notions of the *epistemes*, as a kind of structural principle, and of the archaeology of knowledge, are untenable; or that his whole enterprise presupposes a defective epistemology. There are good grounds, I believe, for thinking that effective arguments of this kind can be produced, but they will nevertheless be ineffectual against the very similar untheoretical claims of Tillyard and Lewis. Empirical rebuttal is therefore required. One needs, in the first place, to find evidence of the notions of analogy or correspondence as architectonical principles being questioned or undermined; and, in the second place, to show that there were ways of organising knowledge other than those of correspondence and analogy.

I

In Shakespeare's plays there are at least three instances where characters relying on analogy to convey knowledge are ridiculed.² The first of these characters is

2. All quotations from Shakespeare are from the Riverside edition, but American spellings are brought into line with British English.

Fluellen in *Henry V*. His pedantic nature is established when, at the siege of Harfleur, he is prepared to harangue the Irish engineer, Captain Macmorris, on the niceties of war conducted according to ancient precedent.³

Flue. Captain Macmorris, I beseech you now, will you voutsafe me, look you, a few disputations with you, as partly touching or concerning the disciplines of the war, the Roman wars, in the way of argument, look you, and friendly communication; partly to satisfy my opinion, and partly for the satisfaction, look you, of my mind: as touching the direction of the military discipline, that is the point. (III.ii.94-101)

A little later in the play Fluellen attempts, in his own endearing way, to sing the praises of his king by drawing parallels between him and Alexander the Great. Shakespeare's humour in this scene depends entirely on the fact that Fluellen organises his thinking not simply in terms of misplaced analogies, but in analogies which reduce distinctions to nonsense. As he says, "The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations", and a little later, "there is figures in all things", meaning there are analogies and correspondence between everything – exactly the terms in which Foucault would characterise the Renaissance *episteme*.

Flu. What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born?

Gow. Alexander the Great.

Flu. Why, I pray you, is not "pig" great? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations.

Gow. I think Alexander the Great was born in Macedon. His father was called Philip of Macedon, as I take it.

Flu. I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is born. I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the orld, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth. It is call'd Wye at Monmouth; but is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well, for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his

3. It is probable that Shakespeare has in mind a figure such as Sir John Smythe, who in *Certain Discourses Military* vociferously advocated the use of the long-bow in preference to ungentlemanly and cowardly firearms.

indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, kill his best friend, Clytus.

Gow. Our King is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends.

Flu. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it: as Alexander look you, kill'd his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet. He was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks – I have forgot his name.

Gow. Sir John Falstaff.

Flu. That is he. I'll tell you there is good men porn at Monmouth. (IV.vii.12-53).

Fluellen's absurdities are underlined by his insistence that the comparison of the two kings is valid because they were each born in a country with a river; differences and distinctions are irrelevant: " 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both". Here, the absurd elision of fingers and rivers adds a fine comic touch. Finally, Fluellen's "figures and comparisons" lead to the assertion of an analogy on the grounds that the elements compared are not analogous: "Alexander ... being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments ...". By means of such bizarre flights of illogicality Fluellen demonstrates his love of the king. In fact, his inability to organise this thinking or to convey coherent knowledge is exactly what makes his engaging adoration possible.

In *Hamlet*, the prince characterises Polonius as one of "these tedious old fools" (II.ii.219), but he is a pedant as well as a tiresome dotard, as is clear from the minutely discriminating list of dramatic categories and the parade of learning with which he attempts to gloss over Hamlet's mocking, intemperate rebuff of his assininity.

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome –

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Ham. Buzz, buzz!

Pol. Upon my honour –

Ham. "Then came each actor on his ass" –

Pol. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited; Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light, for the law of writ and the liberty: these are the only men. (II.ii.389-402).

Given that Gertrude has also earlier remonstrated with him to deliver, "more matter and less art" (II.ii.95), it is clear that he retreats from substance into the inanities of style, that he substitutes pedantic verbiage for knowledge, and that

he conducts himself in terms of vacuous rhetorical social graces rather than the truth. Small wonder, then, that Hamlet finds it so easy to pillory his lack of frank intellect by getting him to agree to the validity of a series of absurdly incompatible analogies.

- Pol.* My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.
Ham. Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?
Pol. By th'mass and 'tis, like a camel indeed.
Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.
Pol. It is back'd like a weasel.
Ham. Or like a whale.
Pol. Very like a whale.
Ham. Then I will come to my mother by and by.
[*Aside.*] They fool me to the top of my bent. (III.ii.375-384)

Hamlet's sardonic wit depends on Polonius's preparedness to abandon any commitment to the truth of his own immediate experience by retreating into the convenience of analogy. Implicit in this exchange, therefore, is a devastating critique of analogy and correspondence as modes of knowledge. In fact, what Shakespeare draws attention to is their insidious and compromising evasiveness.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Antony returns to Rome after his sojourn in the East his situation is not unlike that of the Elizabethan voyagers who return home with accounts of unfamiliar experience and exotic creatures. In one particular scene he is plied with questions by those of his countrymen who are anxious to hear about strange lands and to have the fabulous tales of other explorers confirmed or denied. We are thus presented with an opportunity for observing a Shakespearean representation of how knowledge about the unfamiliar is presented; in other words, of how knowledge is organised. When Antony speaks to the sober, serious-minded and practical Caesar, the subject-matter is appropriate: having (presumably) just informed Caesar how the Nile's annual flood is measured, he shows the practical relevance of such mensuration and its resultant knowledge. For the wine-befuddled Lepidus he reserves his high-spiritedness. Lepidus has the credulous wonder of a child, and quizzes Antony about the legendary spontaneous generation of snakes and crocodiles from the Nile mud.⁴ Antony's "They are so" in reply to Lepidus's initial comment may imply that he too subscribes to the belief, but the dramatic situation seems to demand more. Lepidus is clearly far from sober and so ripe for being led on by the conniving Antony. He also happens, in his credulity, to

4. The acceptance of the notion of abiogenesis also supported folk beliefs about generation of the barnacle goose; see F.D. and J.F.M. Hoeniger (1969:41, 47).

exemplify Foucault's notion of the characteristic Renaissance response to fabulous learning.

- Ant.* [To Caesar.] Thus do they, sir: they take the flow o' th' Nile
By certain scales i' th' pyramid; they know,
By th' height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth
Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells,
The more it promises; as it ebbs, the seedsman
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
And shortly comes to harvest.
- Lep.* Y' have strange serpents there?
- Ant.* Ay, Lepidus.
- Lep.* Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun.
So is your crocodile.
- Ant.* They are so.
- Pom.* Sit – and some wine! A health to Lepidus!
- Lep.* I am not so well as I should be; but I'll ne'er out.
- Eno.* Not till you have slept; I fear me you'll be in till then.
- Lep.* Nay certainly, I have heard the Ptolemies' pyramises are very goodly things;
without contradiction, I have heard that
- Pom.* This wine for Lepidus!
- Lep.* What manner o' thing is your crocodile?
- Ant.* It is shap'd, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as it hath breadth. It is just so
high as it is, and moves with its own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth
it, and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.
- Lep.* What colour is it of?
- Ant.* Of it own colour too.
- Lep.* 'Tis a strange serpent.
- Ant.* 'Tis so, and the tears of it are wet.
- Caes.* Will this description satisfy him?
- Ant.* With the health that Pompey gives him, else he is very epicure. (II.vii.17-52)

The wit of Antony's mock description of the exotic crocodile depends on two things: first, the total reliance on analogy; and second, the redundancy of the analogies. Lepidus is gulled because he unthinkingly accepts that description (that is, the provision of information) can be conducted entirely in terms of likenesses. He is thus taken in by the form of what he takes to be knowledge, but it should not therefore be assumed that it is simply the nullity of the analogies that Shakespeare is ridiculing. The status of analogy itself is brought in question. The joke of this exchange depends on the assumption that Antony provides Lepidus with neither the form nor the substance of knowledge. Hence Caesar's response.

II

If these scenes from Shakespeare provide evidence for contemporary scepticism

about the capacity of analogy to convey and order knowledge, two questions arise. First, what alternative ways, if any, of organising knowledge were there? (Such a question naturally assumes its own validity. It is more than likely that thinking in terms of organising or ordering knowledge according to Foucault's notion of intellectual archaeology is not appropriate.) Second, if Foucault is mistaken, why is it that his ideas are both so plausible and so easily assimilable to the thinking of scholars, critics and philosophers who appear not to assume his assumptions?

Temporarily setting aside the caveat as to the likely prejudicial nature of the first of these questions, there are at least two ways in which one can attempt to answer it. First, it must be accepted that the whole notion of a world conceived in terms of correspondence and analogies is primarily a learned one. None of the proponents of the notion that the Renaissance had a peculiar set of architectonical intellectual principles makes any attempt to argue that these principles are natural, in the sense that they are innate and not acquired.⁵ This being so, one can then legitimately enquire what the source of these ideas is.

Although there was a residual Medieval legacy of learning which provided the ground of Renaissance thought, the primary, informing, sources were derived from the new Humanistic interest in classical texts. As Allen G. Debus (1984: 4-6; 132-134) shows, the classical sources to which the scholars turned their attention were not all of a kind. On the one hand, there were the neo-Platonic and mystical texts of late antiquity, such as those of Plotinus and the works attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. These encouraged the interest in what was known as *natural magic*. Scholar-mystics, interested in anything from astrology, the cabala, alchemy, to Pythagorean numerology, sought to discover the secrets of the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. On the other hand, there were the texts of Aristotle, Galen and Ptolemy, works which were to be of interest to scholars such as Copernicus and the anatomists at Padua. If those who held with the notion of a correspondent universe derived their ways of thinking from the first kind of texts, those of a more sceptical, practical and empirical turn of mind sought the authority of the second kind. Even if, by hindsight, we can see that Renaissance scholars could not always distinguish between the two kinds of texts, the fact remains that we cannot now claim that there could only be one way in terms of which people in the Renaissance

5. Of course, in arguing that there is a single "world-view" or a single episteme, they are attempting, illegitimately, to gain the benefit of these ideas somehow being "natural". If they were to concede a complexity or the existence of syncretism their entire project would be undermined.

organised their thinking. The evidence shows that the situation was far too complex to allow for simplistic reduction. The most that can be said is that Renaissance thought frequently demonstrated an extraordinary respect for the authority of classical antiquity.

The second possible way in which Renaissance thought was ordered also derives from classical antiquity, but via rhetoric and logic, the disciplines to which all schoolchildren were subjected, and to which they were obliged to pay further attention if they later entered a university. As Rosamond Tuve (1947: 284-286) points out, almost any Renaissance handbook of standard logic is prefaced by a list of Aristotle's ten predicaments or categories: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, state, action, affection (*Categories*, IV). According to Thomas Wilson's popular *The Rule of Reason, Conteynyng the Arte of Logique* (1551), these categories "do name the verey nature of thynges, declaryng (and that substantially) what they are in very deede" (sig. C4^v).⁶

As for an example, if ye will knowe what a man is, ye must have recourse to the place [that is, category or predicament] of *Substantia*, and there ye shall learne by the same place that man is a living creature endued with reason . . . Therefore ye muste nedes have these Predicaments readye, that whan so ever ye wyll define any worde, or geve a natural name unto it, ye maye come to this store house, and take stuffe at wyll. (sig.C4^v)

This provides clear evidence for a mode of thinking and of organising knowledge completely independent of a world view constituted by correspondences and analogies.

The recognition of the fundamental role of rhetoric and logic in Renaissance education and thought provides further grounds for questioning the assumptions of Foucault and Tillyard. If Foucault is correct, the Renaissance did either not distinguish between, on the one hand, tropes such as simile, metaphor, symbol and metonymy, and, on the other, straightforward literal usage, or regarded tropes as fundamental. For Tillyard, tropical language is the default mode, and literal language is the exception. All the evidence of the discipline of rhetoric runs counter to such counter-intuitive claims. The practice of rhetoric, as evidenced in the skilful and subtly orchestrated interchanges of Shakespeare's plays, only serves to emphasise this. It is therefore not surprising, perhaps, that when Foucault refers to Renaissance discussions of language he makes no reference to rhetoric.

6. In quotations from earlier texts, I have brought the use of long "s", "i", "j", "u" and "v" into line with modern conventions; expanded contractions; and rendered differences between type-faces by means of roman and italic.

If any ground for the plausibility of Foucault's and Tillyard's views has to be found, it is this: a particular historical discourse has been elevated on its own unexamined terms, and any possibility of alternative discourses and contrary evidence has been ignored. In other words, they have not considered all the possible evidence, and the plausibility of their views depends on the existence of an uncritical readership. In all likelihood Tillyard did so because his concern was to explain the tropical language of imaginative literature in the Renaissance. Foucault, on the other hand, deliberately did so because he requires evidence of a certain kind to establish the credibility of his larger project of the archaeology of knowledge. Because of this, both side-step the centrality of rhetoric as the major mode of ordering knowledge in the Renaissance. They also both seem to ignore the implications of one of the major intellectual debates in the Renaissance: the central point of contention between Protestants and Catholics over the nature of the eucharistic elements. Underlying the Protestant rejection of the doctrine of Transubstantiation was a rejection of the fundamental assumptions underpinning belief in the correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm. Lutheran notions of Consubstantiation, Calvinistic ones of Virtualism, and Zwinglian ones of a memorial rite, all in their way question the notion which Foucault wishes to elevate into a structural principle.

The situation in the Renaissance was far more complex than the intentional or unintentional reductionism of Foucault or Tillyard will allow. One needs to take account, in the first place, of the evidence which gives credence to Foucault's notions, such as Edward Topsell's claim that "it was for that a man might gaine out of them [the creatures preserved in Noah's Ark] much devine knowledge, such as is imprinted in them by nature, as a tipe of spark of that great wisdom whereby they were created" (sig. A4). Hence, Topsell could claim that his work "sheweth that Chronicle which was made by God himselfe, every living beast being a word, every kind being a sentence, and al of them together a large history, containing admirable knowledge & learning, which was, which is, which shall continue, (if not for ever) yet to the worlds end" (sig. A5^v). At the same time, we cannot discount Topsell's awareness that

a good writer is to follow truth and not deceivable Fables. And in this kind I have passed the straightest passage, because the relation of most things in this Booke are taken out of Heathen writers, such as peradventure are many times superstitiously credulous, and have added of their owne verie many rash inventions, without reason, authority, or probability, as if they had beene hyred to sell such Fables. (sig. A5^v)

Because Topsell's declared intention is to present the accumulated learning about all the creatures in Scripture, he will not allow his natural scepticism to undermine what he takes to be the truth of Holy Writ. Nevertheless, we need

to be aware that he knew only too well that such restraint was not shared by some contemporaries.

Now I doe in a sort challenge [that is, claim or assert] a consent unto the probability of these things to wise and learned men, although no beleefe. For *Fides*, is *credere invisibilia*; but *consensus* is a cleaving or yeelding to a relation untill the manifestation of another truth; and when any man shall justly reprove any thing I have written for false and eroneous, I will not sticke to release the Readers the rude and vulgar sort (who being utterly ignorant of the operation of Learning, do presently condemne al strange things which are not ingraven in the palms of their own hands, or evident in their own heards and flocks): I care not, for my eares have heard some of them speake against the Historie of *Sampson*, where he tied fire-brands to the tailes of Foxes; and many of them against the myracles of Christ. I may remember you . . . of a Countrie tale of an old Masse-Priest in the daies of *Henry* the eight, who reading in English after the translation of the Bible, the miracle of the five loaves and two Fishes, and when hee came to the verse that reckoneth the number of the ghuests or eaters of the banquet, hee paused a little, and at last said, they were about five hundred: *The clarke*, that was a little wiser, whispered into the priests eares that it was five thousand, but the priest turned backe and replied with indignation, *Hold your peace sirrha, we shall never make them beleefe they were five hundred.* (sig. A5^v)

Because Foucault's procedure is fundamentally a deductive one, counter-examples will not be allowed to constitute a rebuttal of his position; his horizon-establishing assumptions would inevitably allow him to "save appearances" by reinterpreting the awkward evidence. For this reason, any attempt to answer questions on his terms is compromised. What is required, if counter-examples are to be accorded due regard, is an argument showing that Foucault's position, and so any question which it enables, entails certain inappropriate presuppositions.

As far as the Renaissance is concerned, Foucault makes three assumptions which need to be questioned. The first of these is that the Renaissance is a monolithic conception. All the evidence seems to indicate that rather than being a coherent, easily identifiable era with a markedly uniform intellectual temper, it manifested itself at various times between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries in various countries and was characterised by intellectual ferment and controversy.

Second, Foucault assumes that there is a single and sufficient structural principle in terms of which knowledge was organised. If one assumes that there is only one so-called *episteme*, that is what one will inevitably discover. Even if one were to grant the validity of the notion of an *episteme*, it does not necessarily follow that given the radical historical discontinuity posited by

Foucault there is only one active at any given time. Foucault appears to take for granted that temporal discontinuity involves ruptures in linear time, not a fragmentation of it. He believes in interrupted diachronicity, rather than fragmented temporal relativity or heterochronicity. He therefore cannot allow that individuals, or even groups, could think different things in different ways at the same time.

Third, in suggesting that the Renaissance organised knowledge in terms of resemblance, Foucault makes an assumption about the nature of knowledge, as well as a concomitant methodological assumption, which is not necessarily appropriate to the period before 1650 (or perhaps any period). He assumes the existence of knowledge as scientific knowledge primarily of the external, non-human world. Concomitantly he assumes such "objective" knowledge to have some kind of existence independent of the subjective knowers, and so analysable in terms of significant structures. This he does by proceeding as if discourse is entirely independent of discourses.⁷ Such a strategy may appear to be innocuous, but what happens if we deal with people who do not have the same assumption that there is a fundamental divide between the subjective and objective, people who have not been initiated into the post-Cartesian notion of knowledge as "the view from nowhere" (to use Thomas Nagel's (1986) expression), the compromising implications of which Foucault has not managed to liberate himself from? The Renaissance does not share the unstated epistemological assumptions which inform Foucault's project. By assuming that it does, he in effect assumes that any statement in the Renaissance can be treated as if it were answering the kinds of question which make sense to him. The truth of the matter is that these statements were attempts to answer questions which made sense to the Renaissance (or, more accurately, to particular persons in Early Modern Europe), and if we fail to enquire what these questions were we will not understand what was being said in response to them. It would almost be as if we insisted at looking at a three-dimensional

7. "I tried [in *The Order of Things*] to explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse ... If there is one approach that I do reject ... 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."
(xiv)

object only in terms of the two-dimensional shadow it casts. Under these circumstances, the recorded utterances of Renaissance people would naturally appear to us as if they were those of manically reiterating pedants, dotards and drunks.

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