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**SCIENTIA SEXUALIS:
A FOUCAULTIAN
ANALYSIS**

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Abstract: The present work aims to outline some considerations about the third part of the work *History of Sexuality I: The Will to Know*, entitled *Scientia Sexualis*. In this chapter, Foucault (1926-1984) performs an analysis by what he names as *Scientia Sexualis*, or the science of sex, and which would be explained as a science that aims to clarify this aspect of human life. The methodology taken as a starting point of this research was the listing of works by Michel Foucault, especially, the *History of Sexuality I: The Will to Know* and its commentators, seeking a greater insight into the topic. Therefore, based on the above, what had been stated by some who preached that until the 19th century, sex was hidden, repressed and withheld is not sustainable. Foucault addresses this issue by presenting another way of thinking about sex, a way that emphasizes its invention or construction. What Foucault does, above all, is to oppose the normalizing assertion that sex has a true or essential nature, the French philosopher clearly describes that there was formation of the idea of knowing everything about sex, search for all its aspects, all its particularities. During this period, an apparatus appeared which, by propagating discourses about sex, aimed to determine veracity about it.

Keywords: Foucault, analysis, scientia sexualis.

INTRODUCTION

Cultivating the purpose of researching how the very unique notion of sexuality was established in the modern west, the fierce and fruitful French thinker, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), realized the need to go back in time and consider the premises of this question not only in the Christian tradition, but with other societies, including the Greco-Roman, bringing the similarities, but above all, the differences to include sexuality as historical knowledge.

We will follow, so to speak, the third part of the work *History of Sexuality I: The Will to Know*. Here, Foucault exposes that this diversity of discourses and categorizations does not correspond to a desire to repress sexuality, but to explore, consolidate in bodies and, above all, control it. At the same time, the thinker demonstrates that this movement of development and control of sexuality has its origin in the Christian confession.

Foucault continues not to privilege repression, interdiction, prohibition, concealment¹, the withholding about sex. Note Foucault's evasions of the normalizing determination that sex has a true or essential nature. Let us quote:

The point in this story is not that they covered their eyes or ears, or deceived themselves; it is first, that an immense apparatus has been built around sex and about it, to produce the truth, even if to mask it at the last moment. The important thing is that sex has not been the object of sensation and pleasure, of law or prohibition, but also of truth and falsity, that the truth of sex has become something essential, useful or dangerous, precious or feared; in short, that sex has been constructed as an object of truth (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.64-65).

The French philosopher clearly shows that there was a development of the idea of knowing

¹ "It is necessary to distinguish oneself from para-Marxists like Marcuse, who give the notion of repression an exaggerated importance. For if power only had the function of repressing, if it acted only through censorship, exclusion, impediment, repression, in the manner of a great super-ego, if it were only exercised in a negative way, it would be very fragile. If it is strong, it is because it produces positive effects on the level of desire - as one begins to know - and also on the level of knowledge. Power, far from preventing knowledge, produces it. If it was possible to constitute a knowledge of the body, it was through a set of military and school disciplines. It is from a power over the body that physiological, organic knowledge was possible. The rooting of power, the difficulties faced in getting rid of it, come from all these ties. That is why the notion of repression, to which the mechanisms of power are generally reduced, seems to me to be very insufficient, and perhaps even dangerous." (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 148-149).

everything about this aspect of human life, that is, sex. At this moment, an apparatus appears which, by propagating discourses on sex, aims to determine its truths. And, in the 19th century, a decisive period, this understanding happens and ends up being integrated into the scientific encirclement, categorically intricate with evolutionism and official racism. The discursivity of medicine based on a neutral justification of science, so to speak, manufactures truths with regard to sex, however, all this connected to a sum of the morality of prophylaxis and the link between what is of the order of pathology as well as what it related to that of sin. Sex medicine establishes a strong relationship with the biological sciences of reproduction. This closing of the discourse on the sex element with the discourse of science gave it a significant degree of persuasive force. So, it is from this angle, the scientific one, that Foucault treats sexuality in modern Western societies.

DEVELOPMENT

Historically, according to Foucault, there are two major methods for producing the truth of sex. One of them, according to the author, are the procedures of extortion of the truth of sex used by some civilizations. On the one hand, says the philosopher, some civilizations seize an *ars erotica*. This would be typical of civilizations such as Ancient Rome, Ancient Greece, India, China and Muslim Arab nations. These civilizations sought in the knowledge about pleasure ways to expand it, it was a knowledge that came from within, from where the truth about pleasure is taken from knowledge itself. That is, in the *ars erotica*, the truth of sex is extracted from pleasure itself. Or rather, it is the pleasure itself that must be known, with its intensities and qualities, with its effects and duration on the body and soul. On this aspect of human life, there is no other way of realizing this knowledge, other than the sexual practice itself, it is only in it and through it and only in it that it intensifies and walks towards the mysteries of the human body and soul. The knowledge that comes from pleasure always remains, so to speak, secret, because this denotes efficiency and virtue.

In these societies, there is a very extensive, abundant, widespread discourse on sex, but it differs in purpose from modern Western societies, as they aim at an art. As the philosopher tells us, “an art that would aim to produce, through sexual intercourse or with the sexual organs, a type of pleasure that seeks to make the most intense, the strongest or the most lasting possible” (FOUCAULT, 2006)., p. 61). In this sense, let us quote the philosopher once again:

In erotic art, truth is extracted from pleasure itself, seen as practice and collected as experience; It is not by reference to an absolute law of the permitted and the prohibited, nor to a criterion of utility, that pleasure is taken into account, but, on the contrary, in relation to itself: it must be known as pleasure, and therefore, according to its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and soul. Better still: this knowledge must fall, proportionately, on the sexual practice itself, to work with it as if from within and amplify its effects. This way, knowledge is constituted that must remain secret, not because of a suspicion of infamy that marks its object, but because of the need to keep it in the greatest discretion, because according to tradition, it would lose its effectiveness and its virtue when disclosed. (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.65-66).

For us modern westerners, as seen at first glance, we do not have the *ars erotica*. In other words, you are not taught to make love, to obtain pleasure, to give pleasure to others, to maximize, to intensify your own pleasure for the pleasure of others. None of this is taught in the West and there is no other discourse or initiation to this erotic art than the clandestine and purely inter-individual one (FOUCAULT, 2006). On the other hand, the modern West is the only one to

practice a *scientia sexualis*.

Sexual science aims to know people's sexuality, and not about their pleasure, something that would not be how to make the pleasure as intense as possible, but rather the truth of this thing that, in the individual, is his sex or his sexuality: truth of sex, not intensity of pleasure. (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 61).

Or rather, our civilization has developed, over the centuries, to tell the "truth" of sex, methods that are ordered as to what is most essential, in terms of a form of power-knowledge that is harshly adverse to the art of initiations and to the masterful secret, which is the confession (FOUCAULT, 1988).

The *scientia sexualis* is delegated, where confession is central in the production of knowledge about sex, confession becomes a generalized mandatory practice, that is, a court with permanent existence where the faithful must constantly present themselves, or rather, the modern westerners are moved to declare everything, to show their pleasures, a commitment already introjected. The confession² places a semblance of power where the one who professes discovers himself, determines a speech about himself, while the listener decodes the speech, reproves, restrains, redeems. This means knowing the interior of each individual, it means that the one who listens will have means of analysis, reflection, detection of what is happening, however, the one who speaks has the obligation to reveal the details of his own soul. We follow the author:

The individual, for a long time, was authenticated by the reference of others and by the manifestation of his bond with others (family, loyalty, protection); later it came to be authenticated by the discourse of truth that he was able (or obliged to) have about himself. The confession of the truth was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power [...] in addition to the probationary rituals, the guarantees given by the authority of tradition, in addition to the testimonies, and also the scientific procedures of observation and demonstration, the confession became, in the West, one of the most highly valued techniques for producing truth. Since then we have become a uniquely confessing society (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.67).

The exhaustive and permanent confession will somehow produce a truth that not even the confessor, nor the listener, will be able to know. However, the truth obtained in this relationship, in this examination, is led, no less, to produce itself. The confessor is an instance that constitutes a domination and its power consists in its supposed lack of knowledge, in its ignorance, in its role of confessor that recognizes itself in fault.

The procedure of confession from the 19th century onwards goes beyond penance, it goes beyond the religious sphere. From now on, there will be an overload of discourses and interventions of both modalities of truth production, namely, the procedures of confession and scientific discursivity. Confession is an example of how the placement of sex in discourse reveals that truth is not free in essence, that the production of that truth is totally instilled by power relations: "it is the confession, in particular the confession that each one makes their own sexuality, one of the essential components of the technologies developed to control and discipline, on an ever-increasing scale, bodies, populations and society itself" (CHAVES, 1988, p. 116). What we notice is that sex becomes the element through which power was spread in the West at first when it used the procedures of confession to profess its truth. We can say that in a second moment this happens in a series of institutional relationships. According to Foucault:

Confession spread its effects widely: in justice, medicine, pedagogy, family relationships, love
2 "The word confession, which I use, is perhaps a little vague. But I think I have given you a very precise content in my book. By confession I understand all these procedures by which the subject is encouraged to produce a discourse of truth about his sexuality that is capable of having effects on the subject himself." (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 264).

relationships, in the most everyday sphere and in the most solemn rites; crimes, sins, thoughts and desires are confessed, past and dreams are confessed, childhood is confessed; they confess their own illnesses and miseries; the greatest exactitude is used to say what is most difficult to say; one confesses in public, in private, to parents, educators, the doctor, those whom one loves; they make to themselves, in pleasure and in pain, confessions impossible to entrust to others, with which books are produced. Confess - Or are forced to confess. When confession is not spontaneous or imposed by some inner imperative, it is extorted; they unearth it in the soul or pull it out of the body (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 67-68).

In ancient Greece, truth and sex were connected through the form of pedagogy, through the transfer of instruction via hand-to-hand. This was extremely important, it constituted, so to speak, the mainstay for the introduction of knowledge. Foucault tells us that in ancient thought the demands of severity were not instituted in an integrated, coherent, authoritarian and imposing morality for all in the same way.

In modern Western societies, in turn, this connection takes place in confession, when it is no longer tied to a single ritual, “but by the bond, by the mutual implication, essential to the speech, between the one who speaks and what he speaks of”. (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.71). This way, the modern West appears concerned with nurturing a record of pleasures, establishing specifications for these pleasures. Now, the most particular pleasures lend themselves willingly to the discourse of truth about itself, a discourse that is now “scientificized”, namely: “a science of looking, of observation, verification, a certain natural philosophy inseparable, no doubt, from the emergence of new political structures, also inseparable from religious ideology” (FOUCAULT, 1996, p. 62). What was of sin/salvation makes up at that moment of what is body/life, even though this scientific discourse is supported by the rituals of confession and its contents.

For Foucault, the broad scientific transformations can perhaps be read, at times, as implications of a finding, however, they can also be read as the appearance of new forms in the will to truth. According to him, there is, without suspicion, a will to truth in the 19th century that does not agree, either by the forms it brings into play, nor by the object commands to which it is led, nor by the techniques on which it is anchored, with the will to know. that distinguishes tradition. Let us quote:

Let's go back a little: around the 16th and 17th centuries (in England, above all), a desire to know appeared that, anticipating its current contents, drew plans of possible, observable, measurable, classifiable objects; a will to know that imposed on the knowing subject (and in a way before any experience) a certain position, a certain look and a certain function (seeing instead of reading, verifying instead of commenting); a desire to know that prescribed (and more generally than any specific instrument) the technical level at which knowledge must be invested in order to be verifiable and useful. Everything happens as if, starting from the great Platonic division, the will to truth had its own history, which is not that of the truths that constrain: the history of the planes of objects to be known, the history of the functions and positions of the knowing subject, the history of material and technical investments, instruments of knowledge (FOUCAULT, 1996, p. 16-17).

For the philosopher, this will to truth is anchored on a support of institutions that are simultaneously reinforced and renewed by a thick set of exercises such as pedagogy, for example, it is obvious that, as the rules of works, publications, libraries, like the collectivities of sages in the past, and today by laboratory techniques. This will to truth is reinforced more intensely, no doubt, by the way knowledge is superimposed on a society, how it is appreciated, disseminated, divided and, in a certain way, imposed.

But what Foucault does here is less to explain about this discourse on sex linked to moralistic

naivety than to turn to the demarcation of the methods by which this desire to know about sex, which characterizes the modern West, made the rituals of confession work. In the schemes of scientific regularity. This desire to know crosses history, forming elements, producing techniques, instigating lectures, a whole series of information involved in the enterprise of pronouncing the truth of sex. According to Ernani Chaves: “the sexual science that we saw emerging at the end of the 18th century and that was definitively established in the 19th century is one of the realizations, ours, the one we still experience, of this desire to know about sex” (CHAVES, 1988, p. 114).

Foucault enumerates the forms and tactics used to extract sexual truth in a scientific way: the first one takes place through a clinical codification of “making the confession speak”, since it is this way that this confession becomes circumscribed in the circuit of the scientifically outlined; the second takes place through the postulate of a general and diffuse causality: any abnormality has deadly effects, sex poses immense risks. Continuing, the author points out the third way: this one that occurs through the principle of latency intrinsic to sexuality: the truth revealed by sex is clandestine, its essence is obscure. According to Foucault: “the 19th century displaces the confession by integrating it into a project of scientific discourse; it no longer tends to deal only with what the subject would like to hide, but with what is hidden from the subject itself” (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 75). Therefore, the coercion of the confession is slightly articulated to the scientific methodology, configuring the fourth form that operates through the method of interpretation where the truth is produced through the interpretive discourses of the confession. says the author:

It is not just because the one who hears has the power to forgive, to console and to direct that it is necessary to confess. It is because the work of the truth to be produced, if one wants to validate it scientifically, must go through this relationship. The truth is not only in the subject, who would reveal it ready and finished when confessing it. It constitutes a double task: present, but incomplete and blind in relation to itself, in the one who speaks, and can only be completed in the one who collects. The latter has the task of telling the truth of this obscure truth: it is necessary to duplicate the revelation of the confession by deciphering what it says. The one who listens will not simply be the owner of forgiveness, the judge who condemns or exempts: he will be the owner of the truth. Its function is hermeneutic. Its power in relation to confession does not consist only in demanding it, before it is made, or in deciding after it has been made, but in constituting, through it and its decipherment, a discourse of truth. The 19th century made it possible to make confession procedures work in the regular formation of a scientific discourse, making it no longer a proof, but a sign and, of sexuality, something to be interpreted (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.76).

In this sense, the fifth form takes place through the medicalization of the effects of confession: the acquisition of confession and its results are recoded in the figure of therapeutic interventions. Confession is transposed into the field of normal and pathological. Doctors are the interpreters of the truth about sex par excellence. “Medicine as a form of expression, an agent of production for statements [...] unfolded its discursive regime” (DELEUZE, 2005, p.71). In this sense, in Foucault’s perspective, our society has produced, in relation to the traditions of the *ars erotica*, a rupture because Western society constitutes, so to speak, a *scientia sexualis*, “through this, sexuality is literally produced as something, by nature, subject to pathological processes, demanding, for this very reason, therapeutic, educational-corrective, in a word, normalizing interventions” (GADELHA, 2013, p. 78). These interventions, whose origin would derive from the confession, taking on the task of producing true speeches about this aspect of men’s life related to sex. It also happens that this happened and goes through the adjustment

of the old methods of confession to the practice of the discourse of the “scientifically proven”. This *scientia sexualis* that was developed in the West, paradoxically, retains as a particular cell the ritual of forced and tiring confession, such as in the Christian West, the guiding method of the truth about sex. Although, since the 16th century, this rite had gradually moved away from the sacrament of penance and, through intercession, from the guidance of souls and spiritual direction, there is an emigration from the *ars artium* to pedagogy, to the relationships between adults and children., for family relationships, medicine and psychiatry (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 67)³.

In any case, almost one hundred and fifty years ago, a complex device was established to produce true discourses about sex: a device that broadly encompasses history, as it links the old injunction of confession to the methods of clinical listening. And, through this device, something like ‘sexuality’ could appear as the truth of sex and its pleasures (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 77-78).

Scientia Sexualis constitutes the discursive practice that developed in correspondence to sexuality (analyzed in two axes that constitute it, namely: the formation of the knowledge that refers to it, and the systems of power that regulate its practice) that before any the functional requirements of the discourse that must produce its truth are linked.

In this genealogy, Foucault analyzes the practices through which individuals were led to pay attention to themselves, to decipher themselves, to recognize and confess themselves as subjects of desire, establishing a certain relationship between themselves and themselves that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of your being, whether natural or not. According to Foucault, the history of sexuality also needs to be done from the point of view of a history of discourses, this because power takes charge of sexuality that produces a double effect in an incitement to discourse, regulated and polymorphic (FOUCAULT, 1984), p.12). The author asks himself: “Censorship about sex?” None of that, what is actually composed is a gear for production from the perspective that is about producing more discourses about sex, more and more discourses, capable of functioning and being effects of their own economy (FOUCAULT, 1988, p. 29).

It is the ‘economy’ of discourses, that is, their intrinsic technology, the needs for their functioning, the tactics they establish, the effects of power they sustain and convey - it is this, and not a system of representations, that determines the fundamental characteristics of what they say (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.78).

CONCLUSION

In the course of this section, so to speak, we ended up portraying, via Foucault, how the production of knowledge discourses about sex was constituted, or rather, the idea that sex has been constituted as an object of truth. In the modern West, there is a rupture with what the philosopher calls the *ars erotica* practiced in other civilizations. In these, the truth of sex comes from their own knowledge. The fact is that this rupture with this method of producing the truth of sex occurs, whereas unlike that, the modern West is the only one to practice a sexual science. What makes everything related to this element deal with the form of power-knowledge. Sexual science has its center in confession for the production of knowledge about sex, where it becomes an element through which power was spread at first when it used the procedures of

³ “We must understand, therefore, reflective and voluntary practices through which men not only establish rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, change themselves in their singularity and make their lives a work that is the bearer of certain values. aesthetics and meet certain style criteria.” (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 17-18).

confession to profess its truth. While in a second moment, this production will deal with a series of institutional relationships, where scientific discourses will engender the scenario. This means that the modern West is essentially characterized by this desire to know about sex.

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_____ otherwise, along different lines, through new institutions and with effects that are by no means the same. And even if the doctor's role were only to listen to a word that was finally free, it is always in maintaining the caesura that listening is exercised. He listens to a speech that is investigated by desire, and that is believed, to his greater exaltation or greater anguish, loaded with terrible powers. If the silence of reason is necessary to cure the monsters, it is enough for the silence to be alert, and behold, the separation remains." (FOUCAULT, 1996, p. 12-13).

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