


# The Humanities and Intellectual Agency: Grounding Dissonance between Michel Foucault and Edward Said

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## Abstract

In 2005, Karlis Racevkis, a Foucaultian scholar, published an article entitled "Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Affinities and Dissonances." He argues that the dissonances between the two started when Said discovered Michel Foucault's pro-Zionist politics after a meeting between the two in 1979. After that Said grew disenchanted with Foucault, and this disenchantment for Racevkis accounts for the divergence of the scholarly project of the two. This article seeks to correct this allegation. The differences between the two figures, I argue, had earlier precedents than this date. The differences originate in the beginning theoretical maxims of each. While Foucault rejects humanism, subjective will and agency, favoring instead a historiography that valorizes system over agency, history over individual will and discourse over intention and method, the latter items in the comparison were Said's theoretical prerogatives as his intellectual project stands on the firmer grounds of premeditated design on the part of meaning-producers to initiate oppositional meaning to the dominant discourse/power.

**Keywords:** Edward Said, Michel Foucault, Subjectivity, System, History

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## Introduction

Diverse disciplines of scholarship have grappled with the question: are humans shapers of the world, or are they shaped by the world? While other fields such as psychology and sociology cite raise and social condition as shaped and/ or shaping conditions of man, contemporary philosophy and criticism grappled with the question in the following form: how the modern subject came to be what s/he is? Among the thinkers addressing the question were the French philosopher/ historian Michel Foucault and the Palestinian/ American critic Edward Said. While abundant literature on the differences between the two attests, as admitted by Edward Said at least, to a developing disillusionment with Michel Foucault based on personal political attitudes, a no less abundant and more serious evidence in the scholarship of both points to more fundamental differences on the level of the approach each developed to their scholarly interests.

### 1- Broad and initial differences between Michel Foucault and Edward Said.

While the two share an interest in history, power and discourse, evident differences between them exist, which can be grounded in the autobiographical givens of both first, the preferred individual each saw in their scholarship as either the site of a constituting knowledge/ power or the will initiating subversive attitudes to power, second, the site from which each of them speaks. Foucault was a French national coming of age in post WWII-France. He was involved with the scandalized French left as the blows of the Stalinist Gulag revelations dealt the killing shot to left aspirations in the West, the disillusionment with the 1968 rebellion against the republic, but somehow managed strangely enough to show no interest in the historical developments offshore as the French Empire was giving way to the pressure of resistance.

The crux of Foucault's works is that the modern subject was a myth that the pervasive and growing dominance of the modern Western states in league with the human sciences demonstrate amply enough. What modern philosophy inaugurated as the thinking subject performing duties and claiming political rights was none other than the product of a coercive power developing for its ends conditions of possibility for the birth of the humanities, which reciprocate power's creation and sponsorship of its growth with tools to penetrate further the spirit of its citizens, making of them in the process unreflective automatons incapable of, and lacking the will to, resist its encroachment.

On the other hand, Edward Said Was a Palestinian exile who grew up in imperial Cairo, Egypt, witnessed firsthand the oppressive atmosphere of British imperial racism in colonial schools and their segregationist policies in the city. As a teenager he led a rebellion against the colonial staff and teachers of the Gezira Preparatory School and was in consequence expelled from the school, pursued his studies in the US and from there graduated to the profile of the public intellectual with which he is known today. He

witnessed the liberation of Egypt and most of the rest of the colonized world, the rise of Nasserism and spared to his dying day a substantial part of his scholarship to the question of the liberation of Palestine.

The second fundamental, rather commonsensical point on which the scholarship of the two developed was their intended individual subject. For Foucault, the preferred subject which his scholarship designates is the modern citizen, regardless of which guild he belongs to as a citizen. Power shapes individuals through cooperation with knowledge through institutions. Individuals like prison inmates, patients, students, soldiers, factory workers; examples that are meant to stand for every citizen as long as it is inescapable for him/ her to not be a member of a society. Society here stands for people functioning collectively under the guardianship of rules superintended by a given institution as it organizes life and work in modern society through the convention of human communication.

Edward Said's preferred subject, on the other hand, is a group of privileged individuals to whom, he incessantly reiterates, societal duties hand, in the modern schemes of labor division, the responsibility of guarding ethical ideals of checking power's transgression, supplying the language with which to articulate the immoral nature of the transgression and participating in the dismantling of the offending power in the service of universal humane collective living under the guiding light of these ideals like justice. The privileged individuals mentioned above are the intellectuals. Said's starting point in this project is the intellectual and as he authors an intention and a design to write. Authors nurturing a beginning intention to write from the onset of modernism onward came, due to spiritual and sociological reasons, to stand for initiating meaning opposed to tradition. Until this time criticism for example was restricted to praise of tradition for the role it served as the pride of what the great ancestors of a given nation thought and wrote best.

Therefore, it is fitting that the givens outlined above have a say in the outlook of the scholarship of both. While Foucault covered a smaller geographical area in his works, the modern West, Said boasted of a cosmopolitanism that resuscitated common outstanding turning points in the experiences of the colonized world as they relate to a more comprehensive universal unfolding of history as the modern world subject experienced them, either as a colonizer or a colonized. The one-sided and highly detailed narrower scope of Foucault's scholarly focus extends in Said's view to the world as a stage, with an added dose of highly needed optimism that Foucault's grim and dystopian works attest to among other Western intellectuals and artists like George Orwell. In what is left of the paper, I will expand the comparison to encompass pivotal concepts and theoretical precepts of both to delineate in the end how and in what way they differed, and grounding in the process these differences as the items that defined the trajectory of each, refuting meanwhile the claim advocated by a Foucaultian scholar that the differences stem from Said's dissatisfaction with Foucault's Zionism.

Unlike the sentiments-driven disenchantment Edward Said developed towards Michel Foucault's works after *Orientalism* (1978) that Racevskis paints in his essay (Racevskis 2005, 84), the differences between each figure's theoretical insights into their subjects had an earlier precedent in their respective works. While both developed a healthy hermeneutics of suspicion towards the history of the present, in that both worked on how things as we know them have come to be, they differed in the point of departure of the intellectual project of each. In what follows we will draw out the points of divergence of both figures' scholarly project. Our aim is to address the starting point of the project of each and how each figure's has determined their differing trajectories.

I think that Racevskis's attribution of Said's growing disenchantment with Foucault to the latter stance *vis a vis* the question of Palestine; that Said became aware of Foucault's pro-Zionist attitude only after a meeting about the issue of peace in the Middle East took place in the latter's apartment in 1979 that included Said, Sartre and de Beauvoir (Racevskis 2005, 84). Racevskis in fact spares the rest of his essay to quoting statements from mainly some of Said's published interviews to commit in scholarly form rather Said's sentimental disenchantment with Foucault, which in no way explains the deeper discordance between the two's approach to their subjects of choice.

I will briefly outline below Foucault and Said's beginning stance towards the humanities as determining the constitution of modern subjectivities and the opposite perspective of how agency as a resistant subjectivity opposes the imperial encroachment of the humanities. Said earlier theoretical maxims, I am convinced, explains better the divergence between the two figures' approaches to their topic as they have formulated them, and which evidently have grander roles in the divergence the scholarship of both knew.

## 2- Impersonal orders constituting subjectivities

A word first about Foucault's histories is necessary here. In methodological terms, Foucault's saw his archaeologies as harbingers of a new period in historiography that turn attention away from traditional historians' "vast unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomena of 'rupture' of 'discontinuity.'" (Foucault 1972, 4). The traditional historians' "outdated" historiography of ideas for Foucault, work with "an uncertain object, badly-drawn frontiers, methods borrowed from here and there, and an approach lacking in rigor and stability." (136). This form of historiography posits continuity and human consciousness as "the origin of historical development and all actions [which] are the two sides of the same system of thought" (12). For Foucault, this form of historiography has to be eschewed.

To start with, Foucault's first work was *Madness and Civilization* (1961). Among the many issues Foucault addresses in this work, and does so in other works, is the refutation of the modern subject as it was formulated by modern philosophers like Descartes; subject being a thinking and "an active agent, an individual "rational being...that thinks about and

acts upon the world (...object) and is a bearer of political rights and moral responsibilities.” (Taylor 6). Instead, what asserted first the ‘rationality’ of this being, his agency, and his moral status are rather discursive statements that foregrounds these discursively constructed attributes and shadowed other negative and negating facets of the same claims. It should be noted that Foucault’s work had been influenced by the structuralist theoretical insight into the operative work of language: that it means only by virtue of what it does not articulate.

Madness, argues Foucault, was the golden word that inflated the aura of the classic period’s discursive obsession with reason and the romances associated with it: “during the classical period, madness was shown, but on the other side of the bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it and would not compromise itself by too close a resemblance.” (Foucault 70). In this process of backgrounding to the shade ‘madness and the mad,’ reason established itself as the guardian of the new episteme banishing insanity into relative oblivion, yet simultaneously keeping it close for signifying reasons. In doing this, reason developed confining spaces and developed experimental procedures of ‘curing’ the mad that culminated in the subsequent development of therapeutic practices that gave the Western world “scientific psychiatry” (Foucault 158).

In this work, Foucault is writing a history of the changing designations of madness and the roles it has been assigned in this history from period to period. His interest, he states, is not to write the history of the ungrammatical and unsignifying words of the mad, but the archaeology of the silence of the mad as it is documented in “the monologue of reason about madness.” (Foucault X). From the veneration it has had during the Middle Ages as an angelic or Godly possession uttering sanctified truths through the vehicle/body of the mad, insanity became a sign of the mad’s arrest in a state of animality in the classical period (Foucault 70), then a biological aberration in the brain during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Foucault 274- 75). From administering blood transfusion to immersing the mad in cold water, to forcing him to ingest bitters, to later ‘curing’ techniques like electric shock therapy and the use of drugs in modern times (Mills 100), insanity became ever the wilderness from which reason and civilization fortified themselves.

Among the many archaeologies that puts Foucault’s theoretical propositions to the test there is *Discipline and Punish*. The work is a piece of experimental historiography that brilliantly describes the point in history in France in which penal procedures changed course from the public spectacle of offence punishment to a ‘gentler’ one; incarceration. Though the change was hailed as a victory of and for modern humanism, what went unnoticed was the arsenal of new domains of knowledge about the offence and the offender and the law that have secured a hand in punishment. (Foucault 1975, 19) These domains included psychology, anthropology, natural history, criminal jurisprudence and physiology. These domains provided authority with Archimedean instruments that took over investigating crime, providing evidence, aiding and facilitating the work of judges.



What's more, other domains accompanied punishment once the verdict was issued in courts further into the process of rehabilitating the prisoner. Domains like "clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology and educational psychology." (224).

This took place in Europe during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; a time when reformers and founders of domains of knowledge were busy devising the best penal means modern rational humanism could aspire to. Concomitant with the fields that intervened in investigating crime from its premeditation to commitment and sentencing, reformers were proposing the most efficient architectural figures and penal procedures to aid in the creation of what Foucault calls 'docile bodies'. Foucault presents the British reformer Jeremy Bentham's panopticon; a multi-layered circular building consisting of lined cells; all are visible from a minaret positioned at the centre. Guards in the minaret can see the barred inmates, observe and record their behavior and report to the concerned authorities whose work is to insure and develop the 'means of correct training'. (250).

While physiologists proposed penal labor for prisoners to subdue their aggressive impulses, the purpose of surveillance was to gradually inculcate in the inmates a sense of being monitored, so that they develop a personal mechanism of self-monitoring that insures the automatic work of this surveillance. (201). The ultimate aim of these penal procedures and the spaces designed for their enactment was the creation of 'docile bodies;' "a body," Foucault explains, "is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved." (136).

Foucault's work is an account of how the new forms of knowledge effected a change in the object of punishment from the body to the soul; "the heart, the soul, the will, the inclinations" (16) of the offender. Though Foucault admits that he does not believe that the human sciences emerged from prison, he argues that their appearance on the scene and the changes they have introduced were possible by virtue of being handy tools for the modern new modality of power (305) and its ends of further domination, efficiency and control.

Like the two previous archaeological works summarized above, Foucault wrote a three-volume work he titled *the History of Sexuality* (1976). In this work Foucault describes the changing perceptions of sexuality and how Western notions of the sexual as they are known in the contemporary era came to be. His interest was to describe the changing moral judgment of the public discourse on sexuality from the classical age when public discussion of sex between married male and female couples was unhindered to the drastic change during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the discourse. This, argues Foucault, was a period in which perversity came to dominate the discursive scene (Mills 86). Until this period, moral judgment of sex was centered on the value of abstention as opposed to gratification. Later discursive articulations about and for socially marginal figures like the mad, children and homosexuals shaped the sexual identity of individuals and formed their sexual preferences and practices. (Foucault 1986, 322).

In sum, These institutions, prisons, schools, army bases, factories, clinics and others are the means by which power achieves its ends; creating subdued and docile individuals in the service of its ends: efficiency in economic production and internalization of the domineering panoptic power. Despite the pernicious effects of power and these institutions, Foucault argues that it is wrong on our part to abide by the rather outmoded belief that power is hierarchically-welded from above upon those powerless beneath; rather, power for Foucault is not anyone's property. It permeates all social relations shaping everyone involved in these. Moreover, power is productive of domains of knowledge of man and its development. (Foucault 1975, 194).

## 2- Restoring subjective agency

While Foucault sees subjectivity as a permanently-constituted and re-constituted entity by power as it permeates and is articulated through discourse; an impersonal order grounded in modern institutions of 'gentle' coercion, Edward Said starts from the subject's active design/ intention to produce meaning in arts, philosophy, literature and other meaning-producing genres as the definitive determinant of opposition to systems of coercion both cultural and historical. Said's theoretical proposition here stems from an interest he developed in beginnings in three genres: narrative prose, criticism and philosophy. In the book with the same title *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975), Said focuses his critical study on modernism and modernist criticism and philosophy. In an extensive appraisal of the rationale that sparked his interest in the phenomenon of modernism, Said argues that this was a time in which radical changes in both the social scene and social relations.

With the usual changes referred to in most books on the modern period in the West like industrialization, domestic displacement of populations,...etc. social relations were dramatically affected. Modernist times were times in which *filial* relations; relations that are justified by "a linear, biologically grounded [bond], that which ties children to their parents" (Said xiii) was receding, giving way meanwhile to a crisis, the solution to which was *affiliation* (Said 1975, xiii); a mode of relationships that is not dictated by natural necessity, but by the conscious choice to belong to a group; a political party, an artistic movement, an academic specialization, a workers' union...etc. These changes in relations also affected the values attached to them. Wherein relations in the old order were grounded in values of sanctity, blood and veneration stemming from often divinely-revealed ordinations, relations in the latter were contractual, consciously chosen and committed to on the basis of the modern morality of duty and right. (Wooldridge 2021).

Within the sphere of meaning production there occurred what Said would characterize as a spatialization of inter-generation relations within a culture that brushed aside inheritance of tradition and with that the effort on the part of meaning-producers to mimic inherited and habitual ways of presenting narrative, critically appraising works of art, or producing meaning within a philosophical tradition. The task for the critic, for example,

was no more the refinement of artistic tastes through consolidation of a formidable tradition that define “us” versus “them”, but the non-eclectic crossing of boundaries of genres and disciplines in search for suitable subject and the betterment of method. The claw and fang humanities in Foucault’s work turn out to be only an inert, lifeless tradition, in Said’s work, that suffocates critical thinking and enhances segregationist attitudes from one group towards others.

Nothing explains better the change inside the western culture from viewing tradition as a vertical, temporally-handed content from generation to generation to a horizontal, and equally spatialized content that is critically regrouped, more often criticized, amended, or eschewed than consolidated; meanwhile opening new pathways for critical thought and initiative, than Said concept of the intellectual as a *wanderer*. (Said 8). The modern intellectual, he argues, crosses and re-crosses boundaries of traditions and disciplines searching for his material, but remaining home only in an in-betweenness. He transposes materials from their initial place, which he deforms by placing elsewhere. By borrowing and reciprocity therefore, intellectual material serves in many realms, getting transformed, transposed and reshaped in the process to fit the individual purposes of the intellectual. In Said’s work thus, one sees the intellectual/ agent/ subject violating predominant roles and confusing realms of established and formerly-venerated traditions: the modern intellectual, Said argues, “can no longer easily accept – for many reasons, spiritual or sociological – a place in a continuity that formerly stretched forward and backward in time.” (Said 1975, 9).

In order to clarify what he means by the concept of beginning, Said contrasts it with the word ‘origin’. (5). The latter, he argues is a theological concept, knowledge of which is beyond man’s capacity. ‘Origin’ is the word used to designate a nostalgic point in time when an all-powerful being created the world. It is a privileged word that has strong religious connotations, while ‘beginning’ is secular, and is, in essence, an act on the part of a man or a woman to interfere, change, amend, destroy or consolidate an argument, an artistic trend...etc. It is the intellectual’s worldly intentional act of creating meaning. (5). What distinguishes the two concepts, furthermore, is the fact that ‘origin’ is ungraspable, mysterious and unknown, while ‘beginning’, by virtue of being man-initiated is subject to constant revision, amendment, modification or consolidation as the process of meaning-making dictates. ‘Beginning’ is the act by design on the part of a human subject to complete a world that is secular and lacking in this individual subjective contribution. ‘Beginning’ is Said’s act of restoring agency and initiative to the post World War II period in which most philosophies were advocating the dystopian narratives of the end of the subject, of society and of the potential for resistance.

By implication there are two kinds of criticism for Said. The first is what he calls ‘religious criticism’: a form of criticism in which the individual intellectual is a supine subject to the dictates of a discourse, which works by “shutting off human investigation, criticism, and effort in difference to the authority of the more-than-human, the



supernatural, the other-worldly.” (Said 1983, 290). Therefore, cultures organized in the form of revered canons are often mimetic in relation to religion. They are the doping substance behind collective passions that are irrational. The ambition of cultures is to gratify their adherents “need for certainty, group solidarity, and a sense of communal belonging.” (290). These creeds, which govern religious discourse, often seep into cultural criticism in the form of “varieties of unthinkability, undecidability, and paradox together with a remarkable consistency of appeals to magic, divine ordinance or sacred texts.” (291).

On the other hand, there is secular criticism; a worldly form of criticism which is aware of history and is constantly cultivating a healthy sense of skepticism in front of collective symbols of blind and unquestioning solidarity, absolute certainty and consensus. Secular criticism is amateurish, wherein expertise in a given field comes to stand for conformity to a given tradition. Moreover, amateurism stands opposite to all forms of professional expertise, which is often deployed in the service of authority: “the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession.” (Said 1994, 76). What’s more, secular criticism is worldly as opposed to forms of criticism that are textual. Even texts for a secular critic are worldly in the sense that they come to the world as events in at a specific time and in a specific place, and this besides their content, which is shaped by forces both conscious and unconscious. Moreover, they spring from a human self under conditions both subjective and objective that form a web of necessity that shapes their contents. (Said, 1983, 4).

### 3- Tradition; active and inert

How does power operates for Foucault? It is through discourse, or articulated consensual tradition that power operates. Discourse is Foucault’s elegant measure of accounting for epistemic changes. It is the linguistic and artistic alchemy that shapes subjects, define their ethical judgments and determines who belongs as well as who doesn’t. It includes and excludes through prohibition, it separates the acceptable from the unacceptable, and it determines what is true and what is false. (Foucault 1981, 52). What’s more, discourse deploys other mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion which include commentary; the parasitic, interpretive redistribution of emphases. More than this, discourse deploys two other items in its magician’s basket which are the role of an author as a category that groups dispersed statements in a given discourse under a discursively functional banner/name. The second is discipline, which refers to a domain with established truths and definitions, rules and methods, techniques and instruments by which every member abides. (59). Belonging to a discipline requires the mandatory passage through schooling/ rites of initiation and passage.

Foucault has thus developed a group of nightmarish impersonal orders of power as they operate through institutions and discourses, all added to their internal working mechanisms, which are inescapable for any social human being. In his works, he is ever the detached describer with impeccable verbal wit and an exceptionally gifted way of perceiving and delivering histories and methods. It was perhaps Foucault's disillusionment with the left in his younger days that encouraged in him his suspension of ethical judgment of power and its effects and his avowed consideration of it as a creative alchemy. You will never find in his dystopian works the least of leaning to didacticism or moralizing. Another factor, which might have had a hand in his eccentric stance towards power is his academic work in an academic environment (the French philosophical tradition), which boasts a lasting and substantial measure of objectivity, that, though liable to criticism, but claim a formidable history of rigor and erudition.

Normalizing however with the same power as it has operated outside French national borders during Foucault's favorite periods; the Classical age, the Enlightenment and after, is a serious ethical shortcoming. The loss of life involved in the expansion of the French empire and its aftermath, the continents-scale theft of resources and the destruction of entire societies, their cultures and the subsequent exploitation to which most former French colonies are still subject cannot be excused by claims of rigor, coherence and erudition. It was the turn of perhaps one of Foucault's most notorious critics in the West to shed light on the latter's shortcomings in this regard. I mean here Edward Said.

Despite the fact that many intellectuals in the West have voiced the same critical remarks I briefly referred to above, among them Charles Taylor (1986, 69) Edward Said stands out as one of the most vocal of critics of Foucault, but not in the habitual manner of critical attack. We agree that Said was fascinated with Foucault experimental histories and the elegance and efficiency of his method of discourse analysis, but it was, in our opinion, the only two traits that attracted Said to Foucault's work. The differences between the two are deeper in that Foucault's histories are devoted to tracing the meticulous work of the discourse of power, while Said extends his scholarly interest to resistant discourses and describes how both grapple, constituting subjects both agents fighting for emancipation and the others legitimating aggression.

Thus far, the discrepancies between the departure of each; Foucault's and Said's stands starker. While Foucault repudiates humanism and subjectivity as starting points/beginnings of his historicist project, Said, on the other hand, begins from the subject alleviating to his horizon humanism based on telling truth to power and the ethical condemnation of injustice. (Said 1994, 93) Again while Foucault sees the humanities as a form of knowledge arising out of, and in league with the practices of the coercive institutions and their continuous, reciprocal expansion in modern society, Said agrees to that, but blames it further on the collective conscience of civil society and its sloppy, supine guardians; the intellectuals. (93). In other words, Foucault's works presents a philosopher/historian preoccupied with demonstrating the most subtle forms of power as it

permeates relationships to, and within society and stops there, Said ventures further in accounting for and advocating the intellectual/ meaning producer as the perfect candidate for initiating meaning, which, due to modern conditions, necessitates regrouping ideas, reversing courses and intentionally designing meaning to be opposed to the both of both tradition and power. (Said 1975, 8).

To extend the comparison further, tradition in Said's words (the humanities in Foucault's terminology) is not the monolithic constituting influence for the oppositional intellectual. It is the object of his criticism. Both his tradition and those of others along with national belonging are impediments to healthy critical thought and practice. Said's ideal intellectual is an exile, whether actual or metaphorical. A critic, for him, cannot achieve the requisite independence from the monolithic historical forces that seek to dominate and subject him for their own ends without choosing exile. An intellectual needs a stable dose of courage and risk-taking to stay faithful to the sufferings of disenfranchised and not succumb to the allure of being a member of yea-saying experts, who do not hesitate to put themselves in the service of the establishment. The public intellectual deserving of the name, for Said, is someone whose work is amateurish, he is always willing to learn, question, adjust or rebel against the establishment, if necessary, guided in all this by the ideals of truth and justice on a human scale. What's more, while Foucault's historiography exposes the working mechanisms of modern humanism in league with power, within the national domain, as it came to penetrate and ultimately dominate modern Western subjects' consciousness, Said unfolds the narrative, especially in his work *Culture and Imperialism* (2003), to account for common points in resistant cultures and nations and their histories, giving meanwhile a fresher dose of optimism for the possibility of resistance to negate and ultimately overthrow this dominance. Said's aforementioned work presents the hopeful alternative of anti-imperial resistance as it showcases the rather grim dystopian view of history Foucault's works present.

#### **4- The author; a function of discourse or an active agent intending oppositional meaning**

The author, a concept to which Foucault devoted an essay becomes a locus designating several things a given discourse made possible. Apart from an author's name, which designates his person and several physiological and perhaps mannersitic gestures with which he is known, the name of an author stands for several intellectual or artistic traces that stylistically and substantially designates a function the name performs in the discourse of a given discipline. (Foucault 1998, 210). It is a designation which separates groups of texts from others and makes known their form and mode of existence and grants certain status to a corpus within a given cultural milieu: "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society." (211). Within this realm of authors' functions there exists a hierarchy whereby certain names stand out more. Foucault cites Marx and Freud as examples, founders of

discursivity. They are so because they established rules for “endless possibility of discourse.” (217).

Unlike Foucault, Said does not stop at demonstrating the mechanisms of work of power/knowledge, discourse, but goes on to complete the narrative, which ends in individual agents/ authors intending emancipation. Foucault for Said provides in his works “a prodigiously detailed set of possible descriptions whose main aim is . . . to overwhelm the individual subject or will and replace it instead with minutely responsive rules of discursive formation, rules that no one individual can either alter or circumvent.” (Said 1983, 186). For Said, Foucault’s works must have looked like a brilliant part of an incomplete piece of human historical narration. The grave ethical shortcoming of the Poststructuralists for Said is that “they take culture for what it rationally appears to be instead of rebelling against it.” (Said 1975, 323). No exhaustive account exists today, I think, of Said’s idea of the subject as the ultimate shaper of history; an idea which he developed after the work of the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico, influenced largely by his work *The New Science* (1725), than the Indian comparative literature specialist Prasad Pannian. Pannian published an interesting account of Said’s conception of the historical subject in a work he titled *Edward Said and the Question of Subjectivity* (2016).

In this work Pannian argues that Said’s lifelong project need to be read as an *oeuvre*, part of which only reveal a piece of the puzzle of humankind in modern history. While Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) accounts for the Western discourse on the Orient as it Orientalizes and shapes Orientals, this account fails to deliver the other side of the narrative, the side of resistance to empire. However, the articulated presence of the narrator/ critic in *Orientalism* i.e. Said himself demonstrates the intention of critically dismantling tradition in the process. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1983) Said amended *Orientalism*’s shortcoming in this regard comparing and contrasting the literatures of both the metropole and the empire as it writes back. His main focus here was the contested realms of imperial space over which the two, the colonizer and the colonized, meet and grapple for the minds and hearts of both peoples, creating in the process subjectivities of what he calls overlapping territories and intertwined histories. Venturing further Said, in a drastic attempt to decolonize the minds of both argues for a humanist conception of criticism that initiates opposing power and screaming truth, calling for justice in its face.

## Conclusion

Foucault was able to present in his works several examples from modern institution’s use and / or creation of the humanities in the service of their imperial ends; endless expansion upon citizens and the realm through the deployment of highly regulated discourses that eventually shadow the big picture from anyone with ambition to combat the system; discourses with newly-invented taboos and let-dos. Foucault’s forsaking of subjectivity and humanism led him to believe that the modern citizen/ subject is a lenient

cog in the machine of power/ discourse over which no one has any control and which constantly shapes and reshapes him/her for ends of domination, efficiency and productivity. Edward Said, on the other hand, begins from will/ intention of the author as he thinks about, and starts composing meaningful work. By virtue of this premeditated design and method, an author is acting out of a will to produce meaning that is often critical of a tradition and power. Tradition here being the national heritage traditional criticism sought to consolidate through praise, instead of critical appraisal, reaching meanwhile for the aim of taste refinement. Obviously, Racivskis's account of the differences between the two; Edward Said and Michel Foucault, focus – wrongly, I think and wish this article has demonstrated – on the sentimental disenchantment of Said with Foucault's attitude to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

True, some of Edward Said's statements in interviews reveal a man who grew dissatisfied with a former idol of his, Michel Foucault, however, construing the dissatisfaction as a sentimental reaction to Foucault's support of Zionism is a grave shortcoming that cannot be excused. It has become the custom that most critics or admirers of Edward Said refer mainly to his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*, in which he is mostly in tandem with Foucault's theory of discourse, which he credits in the introduction to the work, but they often overlook his more theoretical and initial work *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, which, I think, is the work that propounds Said's governing theoretical maxims that show here and there in all of his other works. These were the maxims that he developed mostly after the work of Giambattista Vico and with the help of a keen critical eye for the changes in modernist literature, criticism and culture in general.

The maxims are, I am unabashedly being reductive here of course, as follow: 1) that by virtue of setting pen to paper, an author, a critic, or a philosopher for that matter willfully intends meaning that came, in modern times and due to changes in societal relations, rather to change, amend or wholeheartedly refute a predecessor's, instead of consolidating a tradition. 2) That criticism, by implication cannot be deserving of the name criticism without being worldly; that is without considering works under criticism as events in themselves, which are shaped by subjective, textual and extra-textual forces as well. 3) that the worldly nature of critical work necessitates projecting ideals proportionate to the amateur critic's brave intervention in public space on behalf of a cause; ideals like telling truth to power and defending justice.

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