

ABSTRACT

Michel Foucault locates the birthplace of *The Order of Things* in a text by Borges who quotes « a particular Chinese Encyclopedia » where it is written that « animals are divided into : those which a) belonged to the emperor, b) embalmed, c) tamed, d) suckling pig, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the current classification, i) shake themselves like crazy, j) countless k) drawn with a very fine paintbrush of camel hair, l) etcetera, m) just broke the jar, n) looks like flies from afar. It is our experience of « the naked impossibility to think the latter » that constitutes Foucault's point of departure for his « archeology of human science ». From the very beginning, Foucault concerns himself with the question of the possibility or the impossibility of thought.

Borges's particular Chinese Encyclopedia appears like a thoughtless taxonomy. This experience of language manifests the limits of our thinking. There is an apparent paradox regarding the experience of limits and of the impossibility of thought, which, according to Foucault inspired his study of the possibility of man to give himself representations, to think and to know. Foucault's archeological enterprise thus presents itself as the study of the conditions of possibility of modern knowledge. It will be necessary then to understand this curious turn of thought as being one in which thought is no longer envisioned qua the positive space of its constitution but also qua its negative conditions—such as exclusion, ruin, crumbling, non-signification—, which constitute its limits. Borges' heterotopia, or even the linguistic experience of certain aphasics, are for Foucault experiences that characterize such impossibility, ruin, insignificance etc. Death and dead corpses constitute, in Foucault's eyes, the negative conditions, the limits from which he was able to constitute his archeology of the medical regard in *The Birth of the Clinic*. These experiences of limit have a heuristic bearing, since they have the potential to push a philosopher to radically rethink the transcendental question of the conditions of possibility of order, thought, discourse, and historical discontinuity.

Key words: places; other places; language; space; Foucault