



Close Reading Michel Foucault's and Yves Lacoste's Concepts of Space Through Spatial Metaphors

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RESEARCH


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ABSTRACT

Based on a close reading of the interview that Michel Foucault gave *Hérodote*, the geography journal newly established and managed by Yves Lacoste in 1976, this article—through the study of spatial metaphors—unfolds the concepts and functions of space used by the philosopher and by geographers. The article proposes an archaeological approach—inspired by Foucault's thinking—in writing the history of the spatial turn and understanding the role played by geography and geographers in this "reassertion of space in critical social theory."

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hérodote, the French journal of "strategies, geographies, and ideologies," first appeared in 1976. It was founded and managed by the geographer Yves Lacoste, together with a small group of students at the University of Vincennes.² Through this journal, Lacoste—a maverick in the realm of geography in France³—sought to promote a form of geography that is critical and committed. He laid the foundations for this in an earlier article, satirical in nature, *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* [The Primary Use of Geography is to Wage War].⁴ The inaugural issue of *Hérodote*, published by the activist publisher François Maspero,⁵ set an agenda not only for the journal but also for geography as a subject. As such, its contents were skilfully put together: in addition to the leading article which would cause a furor,⁶ the three main articles set out to explain and detail the said agenda. The first (collectively signed but written, in the main, by Lacoste)—*Pourquoi Hérodote? Crise de la géographie et géographie de la crise* [Why Hérodote? The Crisis of Geography and the Geography of Crisis]⁷—continued the argument previously developed in Lacoste's satirical article. It gave geography—henceforth defined as geopolitics—a theoretical project, namely the study of power rivalries in a territory. The method underpinning this theoretical project was itself defined using an account of an act of war penned by Lacoste: it was based on his research into American bombing in Vietnam.⁸ This substantial work—*Enquête sur le bombardement des digues du Fleuve Rouge* (Vietnam, été 1972) *Méthode d'analyse et réflexions d'ensemble*⁹ [A Study of the Bombing of the Red River Dykes (Vietnam, Summer 1972): Method of Analysis and General Discussion]—demonstrated both the relevance and the usefulness of the geopolitical approach. With a theory and a methodology, completion of this ambitious intellectual project required it to be based on some fresh epistemological thinking. Indeed, this was precisely the point of the interview granted by Foucault to this budding journal:¹⁰ the geographers¹¹ asked the philosopher questions about his archaeological methodology¹² and asked him about the role that geography can play in that.

Power—as Foucault discusses it in *Discipline and Punish*, which had just been published in French¹³—is exerted in a space. As such, Foucault uses many space-related terms—whose status is ambiguous—borrowed from geography. Viewed as spatial metaphors—that is, metaphors in which "space is inscribed as a signifying resource, as a set of realities with

1 Michel Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault sur la géographie," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 1 (1976): 78.

2 Béatrice Giblin. "Vincennes, 50 ans déjà... Ce qu'Hérodote doit à Vincennes," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 168 (2018): 151–56; Yves Lacoste, "Vincennes et le département de géographie," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 168 (2018): 157–63.

3 Yves Lacoste, *La géopolitique et le géographe. Entretiens avec Pascal Lorot* (Paris: Choiseul, 2010); Lacoste, "Vincennes"; Claude Bataillon, "Six géographes en quête d'engagement: du communisme à l'aménagement du territoire. Essai sur une génération," *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography*, document 341 (27 June 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeo.1739>.

4 Yves Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (Paris: Maspero, 1976).

5 Julien Hage, "François Maspero, éditeur (p)artisan," *Contretemps* 13 (2005): 100–8.

6 Yves Lacoste, "Attention géographie!" *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 1 (1976): 3–7.

7 "Pourquoi Hérodote? Crise de la géographie et géographie de la crise," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 1 (1976): 8–70.

8 Gavin P. Bowd and Daniel W. Clayton, "Geographical Warfare in the Tropics: Yves Lacoste and the Vietnam War," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no. 3 (2013): 627–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.653729>.

9 Yves Lacoste, "Enquête sur le bombardement des digues du fleuve Rouge (Vietnam, été 1972). Méthode d'analyse et réflexions d'ensemble," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 1 (1976): 86–117.

10 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault."

11 In the published transcription, the questions are asked by Hérodote, but the interview was in fact conducted by Maurice Ronai, a student in geography at the University of Vincennes and member of the founding group of the journal led by Lacoste (Gaïdz Minassian, "La révolution géographique inachevée," *Le Monde*, August 2, 2010).

12 Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

13 Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir : naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

which the referent can be compared"¹⁴—they call for the question of space to be further problematised, as the geographers of *Hérodote* were calling for. The interview concludes not only in consensus regarding the need to articulate power and space more clearly, but it is also marked by a change in Foucault's position. At the end of the interview, he says: "I've enjoyed this interview with you, because I've changed opinion between the beginning and the end. (...) I've realised that the problems you raise regarding geography are crucial for me."¹⁵ The last line of the article neatly summarises Foucault's interest in space, even if it sheds no light on the difference—as he sees it—between a problem (space) and a discipline (geography): "Geography must be at the heart of what I look into."¹⁶ With the aim of offering a close—and fresh—reading, this article will therefore logically examine this interview with Foucault.

The interview in question is typically analysed from two radically different perspectives. On the one hand, those studying Foucault's œuvre¹⁷ have seen this interview as a link between Foucault's thinking as it moves from investigating knowledge (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966 [The Order of Things, 1970]; *L'archéologie du savoir*, 1969 [Archaeology of Knowledge, 2002]) to investigating power (*Surveiller et punir*, 1975 [Discipline and Punish, 1977])—and this indeed is defined in terms of the power relations at play in space—as well as a link in his thinking about space. However, one of the paradoxes of Foucault's thinking, arguably, is that whilst space is given a significant role in his philosophy—to the extent that some see him, retrospectively, as a precursor of the spatial turn¹⁸—he devoted very little of his writing to the subject. Besides *Discipline and Punish*—and interviews accompanying its publication, such as *L'œil du pouvoir* [The Eye of Power]¹⁹ and *Espace, savoir et pouvoir* [Space, Knowledge, and Power],²⁰ an interview with the anthropologist Paul Rabinow²¹—and the interview with *Hérodote*, only a few sparse writings develop his thinking on space. In his 1964 article *Le langage de l'espace* [The Language of Space], published in the journal *Critique*, he highlighted how contemporary literature's interest in space (in particular, in the work of writers such as Laporte, Ollier, Le Clézio, and Butor) was in opposition to realist narrative.²² However, it was in his 1976 lecture, entitled *Des espaces autres* [Of Other Spaces], in which he developed his thinking on heterotopias, that he arguably went furthest in his thinking about space. In this light, the interview with *Hérodote*—the only interview that Foucault accorded to geographers—can be seen as central to his theoretical preoccupations and as occurring at their highpoint, that is, at the time when *Discipline and Punish* was first published in French. It was in this interview that Foucault set out the theoretical and methodological assumptions of his thinking.

On the other hand, geographers with an eye on the history of their discipline, have seen this interview (to little avail) as the first pointer to the benefits that geographers have been able to derive from the tools and approaches provided by Foucault.²³ Both perspectives are partial

14 Yveline Lévy-Piarroux, "Métaphore spatiale," in *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, eds. Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault (Paris: Belin, 2013), 657.

15 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 84.

16 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 85.

17 For example, Judith Revel, "Espace," in Judith Revel, *Dictionnaire Foucault* (Paris: Ellipses, 2008), 47–9.

18 Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989); Russell West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

19 Michel Foucault, "L'œil du pouvoir. Entretien avec Jean-Pierre Barou et Michelle Perrot," in Jeremy Bentham, *Panoptique*, edited by Jean-Pierre Barou (Paris: Belfond, 1977), 9–31. <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault122.html>.

20 Michel Foucault, "Espace, savoir et pouvoir," in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 4 : 1980–1988, eds. Daniel Defert and Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 270–85.

21 Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power: Interview with P. Rabinow," *Skyline* (March 1982): 16–20 (following the English translation in 1977).

22 Michel Foucault, "Le langage de l'espace," in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 1 : 1954–1969, eds. Daniel Defert and Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 407–12.

23 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*; Claude Raffestin, *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (Paris: LITEC, 1980); Claude Raffestin, "Foucault aurait-il pu révolutionner la géographie?" in *Au risque de Foucault*, ed. Roger Rotmann (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997), 141–9; Claude Raffestin, "L'actualité et Michel Foucault," *EspacesTemps.net*. Published March 8, 2005. <https://www.espacestemp.net/en/articles/lrsquoactualite-et-michel-foucault-en/>; Juliet Fall, "Michel Foucault and Francophone geography," *EspacesTemps.net*. Published September 15, 2005. <https://www.espacestemp.net/articles/foucault-francophone-geography/Fall>, 2005; Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden, eds., *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Marc Dumont, "Aux origines d'une géopolitique de l'action spatiale : Michel Foucault dans les géographies françaises," *L'Espace Politique. Revue en ligne de géographie politique et de géopolitique* 12, no. 3 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.4000/espacepolitique.1744>; Chris Philo, "Michel Foucault," in *Key Thinkers on Place and Space*, eds. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 162–70; Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, "Préface," in Claude Raffestin, *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2019), 7–38.

(incomplete) because they are partial (biased). In assuming given disciplinary perspectives, they hide precisely what is at stake in this exchange: namely, a meeting, an encounter. Moreover, in seeking to place this text in a single history (of either Foucault's thinking or of geography), the exchange is impoverished through being deprived of its discursive depth. In contrast to such genealogical readings, this article aims not only to analyse the text in its very singularity and to understand its workings, but also to examine it 'in equal parts,'²⁴ that is, from the point of view of philosophers and geographers alike.

As a consequence, this article is based on three hypotheses which make up the methodological, theoretical, and epistemological architecture of this reading:

- 1) Analysis of this interview is indebted to the *archaeological method* put forward by Foucault himself.²⁵ The principle of symmetry suggests that a work written by Foucault should be analysed using the methods that he used himself. Therefore, it is necessary to gather an *archive* which facilitates analysis of the text and allows its workings to be uncovered. Part one of this article is devoted to this end.
- 2) The exchanges of this interview foreground a major *theoretical problem*, as much for Foucault, the philosopher, as for geographers—namely, the spatial metaphor. In this way, their discussion oscillates between space, spatial metaphor, and geographical metaphor, but the terms used are never really clarified. This article aims to examine the concept of spatial metaphor head-on by viewing it as providing a cross-section of the archive and so revealing the discursivities at work. This is how spatial metaphor will be conceived throughout this article.
- 3) Used in this way, the spatial metaphor reveals a number of discontinuities, uncovering what is ultimately at stake in the interview—namely, the *epistemological* question of how space is described. The aforementioned discontinuities will be examined in parts two, three, and four of this article.

2. BUILDING THE ARCHIVE

In analysing this interview, the aim is to document the thinking of geography as much as the thinking of philosophy: in addition to exposing two different projects—different intellectually (in terms of subject area), theoretically, and, ultimately, different in terms of politics, the text of this interview records a discursive event that needs elucidating. On the model of the method laid out in his introduction to *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault's work suggests that existing series (such as previous issues of the journal *Hérodote*, or Foucault's own different contributions) be abandoned in favour of building an *archive* which will enable "units, sets, series, and relationships to be defined in the documentary fabric itself."²⁶ It is, therefore, necessary to build an archive that serves to document as much as it serves to analyse this interview. As such, it is necessary to examine this interview in conjunction with any documents liable to shed light on its complexity. This article will focus on two lines of enquiry. Firstly, it will highlight the role of this interview in biographical trajectories that can be seen as separate and singular. Secondly, it will provide an understanding of how this interview sits at the crossroads of two intellectual projects, different in nature and unfairly matched in terms of the stage they have reached.

Whilst Foucault and Lacoste belonged to the same generation—Foucault was born in 1926, Lacoste in 1929—and met when the University of Vincennes was founded,²⁷ they did not enjoy the same institutional role or the same level of recognition at the time of this interview, in the mid-70s. In 1976, Foucault was at the height of his intellectual trajectory: he had, by this time, published most of his major works, and it was the year which saw the appearance of his

²⁴ This term is borrowed from the historian Romain Bertrand. In *L'histoire à parts égales. Récits d'une rencontre Orient-Occident (XVI^e-XVII^e siècles)* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), Bertrand makes a case for re-thinking the writing of the history of colonisation by writing both from the point of view of the colonisers and that of the colonised.

²⁵ Foucault, *L'archéologie*.

²⁶ Foucault, *L'archéologie*, 14.

²⁷ Jean-Michel Djian, ed., *Vincennes : une aventure de la pensée critique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009); Christelle Dormoy-Rajramanan, "Sociogénèse d'une invention institutionnelle. Le Centre Universitaire Expérimental de Vincennes" (PhD diss., Université Paris Nanterre, 2014).

Histoire de la sexualité [History of Sexuality]. Foucault was also at the height of his institutional trajectory. Having graduated from the prestigious *École normale supérieure*, he passed the highly competitive *agrégation* exam in philosophy, and was awarded his Ph.D. in 1961. He had been teaching at the University of Clermont-Ferrand since 1960, but left for a post at the University of Tunis in 1966. In 1968, he helped set up the Vincennes University Centre, where he ran the philosophy department. In 1969, after only a few months in that role, he would be promoted to the *Collège de France*: there, he held the chair in the "History of Systems of Thought" until his untimely death in 1984.²⁸ Besides being recognized as one of the most brilliant philosophers of his generation, Foucault was an *intellectuel engagé*—not confined to any ivory tower—in the pure spirit of the French tradition.²⁹

Lacoste's story was completely different. The son of a geologist working in the oil industry in Morocco, Lacoste experienced the colonial system first-hand. When his father died, he began studying geography in Paris, whilst also becoming an active member of the French Communist Party. After obtaining his *agrégation* in geography (awarded major), he taught at the *Lycée d'Alger* (1952–55) and sympathised with Algerian nationalist circles. In 1955, he returned to Paris and became a teaching fellow at the Paris Geography Institute. In 1968, he became a lecturer at the newly founded Experimental University Centre of Vincennes and helped organising teaching and research there. Close to the Communist Party (despite having left Paris in 1956) and anti-colonialist intellectuals, he developed his research into the Third World, and consolidated a change in approach by shifting focus away from analysis of tropicality (i.e. constraints in the natural environment) to that of under-development (i.e. the economic consequences of the colonial system). In so doing, he opened geography up to analysis of political factors. This was the subject of his PhD, awarded in 1979.³⁰ His approach clashed with the established geography at that time in France, which was apolitical and based on the relationships between humans and their environment.³¹ The founding of *Hérodote*—in the wake of Lacoste's 1976 article, 'The Primary Use of Geography is to Wage War'—thus had an aim both scientific and political: "This is epistemological guerilla warfare: ideological skirmishes and theoretical ambushes would be derisory unless they resulted in an alternative, combative geography."³²

In short, Foucault was at the heart of the institutional system, whilst Lacoste was in the margins. Foucault was a professor, Lacoste a teaching fellow. Foucault attracted crowds at his lectures and seminars at the prestigious *Collège de France*, whereas Lacoste taught a small group of students at a marginal university. Above all, Foucault had already established a major philosophical work, recognised all over the world, whilst Lacoste's was still to come. Lacoste hoped to achieve his intellectual project by organising a group (which was the aim of the journal) and by further enhancing its epistemological formulation (which was served by the interview with Foucault).

Given the lack of precise information regarding the question of why this interview took place, it is only possible to make hypotheses. For *Hérodote*, the reason is obvious: as well as serving to benefit from Foucault's prestige, it served to situate the group's theoretical work in the wake of Foucault's project. The primary focus of *Hérodote*—"knowing how to think about space in order to know how to think about power"³³—owes a lot to Foucault's thinking, as much in terms of knowledge(s) as of mechanisms for the exercise of power. This indeed is the main reason given by the geographers at the very start of the interview: "The work that you have undertaken significantly intersects (and feeds into) the thinking that we have begun in geography, as well—more generally—as ideologies and strategies of space."³⁴ The direction taken by the interview suggests that the geographers wished to draw Foucault's attention to at least two other points. On the one hand, they wanted some form of recognition (and so legitimisation) for geography: for them, geography's specific position (in particular, as a link between natural and human

28 Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011).

29 Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France. De l'Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).

30 Yves Lacoste, *Unité et diversité du Tiers-Monde. Une analyse géographique* (Paris: Maspero, 1979).

31 Anne Buttimer, *Society and Milieu in the French Geographic Tradition* (Chicago: AAG, 1971).

32 Yves Lacoste, "Attention géographie!" *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 1 (1976): 7.

33 Lacoste, "Attention," 5.

34 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 71.

sciences, and in view of its political dimension) should be enough to warrant the philosopher's interest in this discipline. On the other hand, they sought to clarify how Foucault used space in his work: as far as they were concerned, his work makes use of a metaphor of space more than it refers to space itself.

With this interview, the geographers embarked on a journey to re-define the focus and methods of geography and turn the subject towards action. Furthermore, the geographers wanted their discipline to be added to the raft of human sciences, despite the fact that geography had traditionally eschewed epistemological debate.³⁵ Indeed, this point is the subject of a major text by Lacoste, in which he considers the epistemology of geography. In reality, it is this text—much more than the satirical article—that constitutes a precursor to the interview in question. Written at the request of the philosopher François Châtelet (a friend and colleague at Vincennes) for inclusion in volume 7 of his 'History of Philosophy'. Under the auspices of that tome, entitled 'Philosophy of Social Sciences from 1860 to the present,'³⁶ Lacoste's article at once invited philosophers to take an interest in geography, and called on geographers to develop an epistemological project.

For Foucault, the reasons for agreeing to this interview are not so obvious. Whilst his interest in space was quite real, he paid little heed to geography (understood, here, as a discipline), and—apart from this interview—he would devote no writing to this subject area. It can be supposed that Foucault equated geography with that of Paul Vidal de La Blache, which had served as a vehicle for the nationalist ideology of the Third Republic, and which he had been taught as a young student. More than this, Foucault had spent little time at Vincennes, and his relationship with Lacoste had not been as friendly as it might have been. In accepting the interview, he perhaps wished to support a former colleague or a new journal. Perhaps he wanted to please Châtelet, who knew both Foucault and Lacoste. Anyway, Foucault accepted, and he could see the value of the thinking undertaken by the young journal. Indeed, following the interview itself—quite exceptionally—Foucault would send a number of questions to the geographers behind *Hérodote* to enhance his own thinking: "These queries are not based on any particular knowledge I might have. They are questions that I have put to myself, and which I now put to you because I think that you have probably travelled further down this path than I."³⁷ Foucault's questions were published in the third issue of *Hérodote* and initiated a debate published in the sixth issue (*Des réponses aux questions de Michel Foucault* [Answers to Michel Foucault's Questions], 1977).

The overlapping portraits and chronologies described above serve to highlight how 1976—for Foucault and Lacoste alike—represented a break with the past. For Foucault, it coincided with the end of one cycle with *Discipline and Punish* and the beginning of a new cycle announced by *La volonté de savoir* [The Will to Knowledge], the first tome of his *Histoire de la sexualité* [History of Sexuality]. For Lacoste, it was the year he gained recognition—both among the wider public and the geography community, thanks to *Hérodote*.

In this light, the archive to be built must allow analysis of Foucault's use of the notion of space as well as the metaphor of space, all the while highlighting the singularity of the positions expressed in the interview. Just as Foucault did in *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma sœur et mon frère* [I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered my Mother, Sister, and Brother],³⁸ it is necessary to collect the documents relating to the singular discursive event that was this interview. This also includes the texts issuing from the debate which appeared in *Hérodote*: namely, the questions that Foucault put to the geographers³⁹ and the answers that they gave

35 François Dosse, "L'invitée de la dernière heure : la géographie s'éveille à l'épistémologie," *Espaces Temps* 49–50 (1992): 162–73. <https://doi.org/10.3406/espat.1992.3842>.

36 Yves Lacoste, "La géographie," in *La philosophie des sciences sociales. De 1860 à nos jours*, ed. André Hakoun et al. (Paris: Hachette, 1973), 242–302. This article was the result of a workshop on the subject of the epistemology of geography, co-presented by François Châtelet and Yves Lacoste (Lacoste, *La géopolitique*) at Vincennes. François Dosse highlights the important role that this article played in the rise of epistemological thinking in geography; François Dosse, *L'histoire en miettes. Des "Annales" à la "nouvelle histoire"* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987).

37 Michel Foucault, "Des questions de Michel Foucault à Hérodote," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 3 (1976): 9.

38 Michel Foucault, ed., *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma sœur et mon frère: un cas de parricide au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1973).

39 Foucault, "Des questions de Michel Foucault."

him.⁴⁰ All of Foucault's articles dealing with space (mentioned above) should also be added to the archive for analysis in light of this interview,⁴¹ as well as those of his works in which he develops the question of space and which can be seen as hypotexts of the interview.⁴² For Lacoste, it is necessary to include his article 'The Primary Use of Geography is to Wage War'⁴³ and—in particular—his chapter on geography for Châtelet's 'History of Philosophy.'⁴⁴ Further texts complete the archive: Louis Althusser's *Lire le Capital* [Reading Capital]⁴⁵—quoted in the interview—and the chapter on structuralism by Gilles Deleuze⁴⁶ (which sheds light on Foucault's method), which also appeared in Châtelet's 'History of Philosophy.'⁴⁷

Whilst discontinuity is a procedure used consciously by historians in the building of their documentary corpus, it is also the result of analysis itself: "What really matters is the splitting-off; what matters is the exclusion—and not what is excluded or split off."⁴⁸ The archive thus built to reveal the discontinuity of 1976 as well as the differences in outlook between Foucault and the geographers of *Hérodote* in turn uncovers three more discontinuities (or splits). Each of these will be examined successively in the following parts of this article, as this archive is examined, gradually—that is to say, as it is sliced throughout—with a focus on spatial metaphors and their use. Three issues hove into view:

- 1) A *methodological issue relating to discipline(s)*, based on what philosophy and geography—and, more generally, the different fields of knowledge—share or split off.
- 2) A *theoretical, conceptual issue*, resulting from a split in two descriptions of space—one abstract, one concrete.
- 3) A *heuristic, epistemological issue*, deriving from a split between that which owes to science and that which is excluded from it.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL METAPHOR OR SPATIAL METAPHOR?

Before we discuss how metaphors work, it is necessary to discuss how metaphors should be described here. Are we dealing with a *spatial* metaphor, that is, one relating to space? Or are we dealing with a *geographical* metaphor, that is, one relating to a discipline (geography), which—as a subject, and during the same period—was beginning to formulate the question of space?⁴⁹ In other words, does the split concern a subject matter (space) or a subject understood as a discipline with its own methods (geography)? It were the geographers who made this distinction: "This vague spatialisation stands in contrast to the profusion of spatial metaphors (involving position, displacement, place, and field) and even, occasionally, geographical metaphors (embracing territory, domain, ground, horizon, archipelago, geopolitics, region, and landscape)."⁵⁰ Foucault seemed not to give credence to this distinction. He adopted just one category, which thereby assumed an overarching value in his thinking: "So, let's go through

40 "Des réponses aux questions de Michel Foucault," *Hérodote : revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 6 (1977): 5–30.

41 Foucault, "L'oeil du pouvoir"; Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967)," *AMC. Architecture, mouvement, continuité* 5 (October 1984): 46–9. <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html>; Foucault, "Espace".

42 Foucault, *Les mots*; Foucault, *L'archéologie*; Foucault, *Surveiller*.

43 Lacoste, *La géographie*.

44 Lacoste, "La géographie."

45 Étienne Balibar and Louis Althusser, *Lire "le Capital"... Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1968).

46 Gilles Deleuze taught philosophy at the University of Vincennes from its inception to his retirement. A great friend of Châtelet's, he was also a great friend of Foucault's, whose work he wrote about; Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2004).

47 Gilles Deleuze, "À quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme?" in *Histoire de la philosophie. Vol. 8 : Le XX^e siècle*, ed. François Châtelet (Paris: Hachette, 1973), 299–335.

48 Maurice Blanchot, *Michel Foucault tel que je l'imagine* (Fontfroide-le-Haut: Fata Morgana, 1986), 12.

49 Olivier Dollfus, *L'espace géographique* (Paris: PUF, 1970); Matis Stock, Anne Volvey and Yann Calbérac, "Ce que le tournant fait à la géographie," in *Géographies en mouvement*, eds. Vincent Clément, Matis Stock and Anne Volvey (Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming).

50 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76.

these *geographical* metaphors again."⁵¹ He then proceeds to gloss the long list of terms raised by the geographers, without ever making the slightest distinction between the spatial or the geographical. It feels as if the terms, for him, were equivalent. Moreover, in ending the interview with his famous words—"Geography must be at the heart of what I look into"⁵²—Foucault arguably saw the terms *space* and *geography* as synonymous.

In order to understand the relevance of equating—or confusing—the subject (matter) with the subject (as discipline), we must look again at the list of terms and its structure. In his preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault does the same in his analysis of Borges. The distinction must be a meaningful one for the geographers, but how do they proceed? With the exception of the terms *position* and *displacement*, all of the terms used—whether classified as spatial or geographical—can be found in Pierre George's *Dictionnaire de la géographie* [Dictionary of Geography].⁵³ This tome—published in 1970—was an authoritative text in this community.⁵⁴ Given that all of the terms used come from geography, what is the point in specifying that some pertain to space? It is all the more valid to ask this question given that geography as a subject⁵⁵—and that of Lacoste, in particular⁵⁶—had, at that time, begun to appropriate this concept. Therefore, the distinction is meaningful for the geographers. For philosophers, on the other hand, are the terms *space* and *geography* interchangeable? Foucault's answer can be seen as partially removing this ambiguity: in glossing each term in turn, he determines the subject or discipline from which it derived.⁵⁷ In this way, *territory* is "firstly, a legal-political notion," *displacement* hails from the art of war, *domain* is "a legal-political notion," *ground* (*sol* in French) is a "historico-geological notion," *region* is a "fiscal, administrative, and military notion," and *horizon* is a "notion at once pictorial and strategic." For Foucault, only the term *archipelago* comes from geography, which he thereby reduces to the physical dimension alone. The genealogical approach to the concepts calls for at least three observations.

Firstly, it must be remembered that the human and social sciences necessarily work with a pre-existing lexicon: conceptualisation involves a process of metaphorization which uses existing words.⁵⁸ More than a mere aporia, what this brief genealogy highlights is how relatively young geographical science is. In France, its structuring at university level began in 1870: as such, it cannot compete with law, geology, or economics, from which it logically borrows some of its vocabulary.

Secondly, as the geographers explain in the interview, "geographical discourse produces few concepts, and takes them from all over."⁵⁹ In this way, the interview highlights the conceptual weakness of geography, in relation to other disciplines, such as philosophy, which is itself defined—at this time—as being the producer of concepts.⁶⁰ Lacoste makes this point in his epistemological article laying out his programme.⁶¹ Conceptually, geography is in deficit and is forced to borrow from different disciplines. For all this, it produces no meta-theory to ensure that the whole formed by these borrowings is epistemologically coherent: "For the geographer, the study of the interactions between phenomena analysed by widely varying sciences involves constant attention to the epistemological specificities of each of those sciences. And yet geographers adopt precisely the opposite approach. For the time being, therefore, they can but juxtapose the diverse aspects extracted from different discourses."⁶²

51 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76; author's emphasis.

52 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 85.

53 Pierre George, *Dictionnaire de la géographie* (Paris: PUF, 1970).

54 Philippe Pinchemel, "Dictionnaire de la géographie publié sous la direction de Pierre George." *Annales de géographie* 86, no. 476 (1977), 439–41.

55 Dollfus, *L'espace*.

56 Lacoste, "La géographie."

57 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76.

58 François Ascher, "La métaphore est un transport," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 118 (2007), 37–54.

59 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 77.

60 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define philosophy as 'the art of forming, inventing, and making concepts;' Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2005), 8.

61 Lacoste, "La géographie."

62 Lacoste, "La géographie," 249.

Thirdly, a final observation—itself expressed by Lacoste in 1973: "Geography is not being discussed, but the language of geography is being used more and more."⁶³ Thus, the vocabulary that geography had already borrowed, was itself being borrowed. This is a complex circulation of concepts, rather than a simple exchange of communicating vessels: the terms travel widely among the social sciences and are characterised by their nomadism.⁶⁴ At a time when the (intense) circulation of concepts was sustaining projects aiming to transcend disciplinary divides—like structuralism⁶⁵—, what motivated geographers to stake out a *place* for geography, as indeed they sought to do? Against this backdrop of the idea of a scientific world without boundaries, what was the motive in seeking to maintain disciplinary boundaries and keep bastions solidly guarded? This metaphor is used intentionally—Foucault himself suggested that the spatial metaphor be used to *map* the field of social sciences: "When knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, and transfer, we can understand the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power."⁶⁶

If the term was not so ambiguous, each science could therefore be given its own 'place.' But the term *place* is itself polysemic and gives rise to misunderstandings which can be discerned throughout the interview. It might thus become a question of giving geography a place in a system—"Finding a place for geography would mean that the project of the archaeology of knowledge seeks total and exhaustive cover, which is not at all what I have in mind"⁶⁷—even if this system is defined more as an approach and not as a picture that needs drawing. It might also become a question of giving geography a place in a curriculum (and thereby in the institution): "It is true that, initially, I thought you were staking out a place for geography, much as teachers who protest when faced with education reform."⁶⁸

This detour through "place struggle"⁶⁹ (on the model of 'class struggle') enlightens our understanding of the geographers' claim: in affirming a difference between spatial metaphors and geographical metaphors, and thus between subject (matter) and method, the geographers seek to have geography recognised as a science (by not confusing it with its subject matter) and to have it positioned in the field of human sciences. As Foucault explains, the use of this metaphor leads directly to 'combat': establishing a position—and defending it—is to instigate combat. In Foucault's work, space is conceived—as it is by the geographers of *Hérodote*—as the projection of power rivalries (which is the core of Lacoste's re-definition of geography): "There is every indication (...) that spatial metaphors (...) are rather the symptoms of a 'strategic' and 'combatant' thinking which posits the space of discourse as a terrain and subject involving political practice."⁷⁰ In this light, the line of inquiry shifts: the aim is no longer to oppose space to geography, but to connect space with strategy, as Foucault does: "Metaphorizing the transformations of discourse through use of a temporal vocabulary leads necessarily to use of the model of individual consciousness, with its own temporality. Trying to decipher it, on the other hand, through *spatial* and *strategic* metaphors allows for a precise understanding of those points via which discourses are transformed in, through, and from relationships of power."⁷¹ In this reply, does Foucault put space and strategy on an equal footing, or is *strategy* a gloss for *space*? As a matter of fact, space appears as being at the heart of power—as the object on which it is exerted, as well as the reason for practising it—and geography appears as a way of studying power (now understood as that which is exerted on space). As the geographers of *Hérodote* claim in the first line of the interview, they have constructed their subject matter according to perspectives that Foucault had opened up: "The work that you have undertaken significantly intersects (and feeds into) the thinking that we have begun in geography, as

63 Lacoste, "La géographie," 252.

64 Olivier Christin, ed., *Dictionnaire des concepts nomades en sciences humaines* (Paris: Métailié, 2010).

65 François Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome 1 : Le champ du signe (1945-1966)* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991).

66 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 77.

67 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 74.

68 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 84.

69 This expression has been borrowed from Michel Lussault, *De la lutte des classes à la lutte des places* (Paris: Grasset, 2009).

70 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 78.

71 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 78; the author's emphases.

4. A TOPOLOGICAL SPACE OR A CONCRETE SPACE?

Having sought to describe the metaphor—as geographical or spatial?—it is now necessary to clarify how metaphor functions and to understand the role it plays in the exchange opposing Foucault and the geographers of *Hérodote*. What is a metaphor? It is the "use of a word in a similar—and yet different—sense to its usual meaning";⁷³ it rests on the analogous relationship of two terms, one of which is knowingly implied.⁷⁴ Metaphors function on the principle of a comparison, where the subject of the comparison is implicit: the image is thus born from the divergence between the given word and the word it replaces. It is one of the most widely used tropes in literature, as it allows images to be formed and enables the poetic function of language. More than this, it is a figure of speech as central to everyday speech⁷⁵ as it is in the scientific world.⁷⁶ Indeed, all conceptualisation derives from a process of metaphorization.⁷⁷ Framed in this way, the issue opposing geographers and Foucault can thus be seen on a theoretical and conceptual level, because metaphor allows two different conceptions of space on two different levels (seen in the discrepancy produced by metaphor) to be shared/split. On the one hand, there is space constructed as a concept, and so it becomes a legitimate subject for scientific study. On the other hand, we have space stuck in the role of metaphor: it is a simple analogy that sheds lights on a way of thinking, but does not itself achieve the status of subject for study. Therefore, examining the nature of spatial metaphors and how they function requires, firstly, some characterisation of space: geographers describe it in terms of its materiality, whereas Foucault describes it in abstract terms. Secondly, it involves examining the role played by space (and, therefore, how it is used as metaphor) in ways of thinking. Is the space described by the geographers of *Hérodote* on the same level as the space described by Foucault? Are we dealing with a subject for study or with a simple heuristic tool indebted to metaphor? Do the two parties manage to have a discussion, or does the interview merely become a "dialogue de sourds,"⁷⁸ a 'dialogue of the deaf', because they do not share the same view of space?

Foucault's use of space is described as a *metaphor* by the geographers:⁷⁹ "This uncertain spatialisation contrasts with the profusion of *spatial metaphors*."⁸⁰ This assertion brings a close to the first part of the interview, during which the geographers have highlighted the opportunities to engage with geography that Foucault has missed. Firstly, they point to the complete absence of geography in his work on how the human sciences are arranged—for the geographers, it is not "really a disappointment... just a surprise."⁸¹ They also point out the fact that despite Foucault's interest in historians with links to geography (such as Lucien Febvre,⁸²

72 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 71.

73 Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 354.

74 Jean-Yves Pouilloux, "Métaphore," in *Dictionnaire des genres et notions littéraires* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), 467–77.

75 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

76 Marie-Jeanne Borel, "Métaphores et analogies dans le discours des sciences de l'homme et de la société. Une introduction," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales. European Journal of Social Sciences* 38, no. 117 (2000): 5–11; Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, "Métaphore, poétique et pensée scientifique," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales. European Journal of Social Sciences* 38, no. 117 (2000), 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ress.707>.

77 Ascher, "La métaphore."

78 I have borrowed this expression from Pierre Bayard, *Enquête sur Hamlet. Le dialogue de sourds* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 2002), and use it with all of the meanings that he ascribes to it.

79 Certain philosophers analysing Foucault's work have previously made the same observation. See: Balibar and Althusser, *Lire*; Deleuze, "À quoi"; Deleuze, *Foucault* (cf. infra).

80 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76.

81 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 74.

82 Lucien Febvre (1878–1956), historian, founded the *Annales* School with, among others, Marc Bloch. As a student under Paul Vidal de La Blache, he developed Vidal's notion of *genre de vie* into an approach to history based on material civilisation rather than events (Dosse, *L'Histoire*). Furthermore, in Lucien Febvre, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine. Introduction géographique à l'histoire* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1922), he theorised Vidal's geography and proposed a joint programme for a geography broadly dominated by history.

Fernand Braudel,⁸³ and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie⁸⁴), he did not follow them and turn towards geographers. What they are underlining, thereby, is the opposition between a rigorous historical work, attentive to temporalities (the archaeological approach and outlining discontinuity reinforce the methods of the historian) which is at odds with paying little attention to space: "So what we can detect is the rigorous desire for periodisation which stands in contrast with the blurred, the relative indeterminacy of your localisations. Your spaces of reference are—vaguely – Christendom, the Western world, Northern Europe, and France, and yet these spaces of reference are never really explained or even made explicit."⁸⁵ Thus, the geographers highlight the contrast between affording little importance to space and yet space being at the heart of Foucault's language: "This vague spatialisation contrasts with the profusion of spatial metaphors."⁸⁶ Using the term *metaphor*⁸⁷ thus serves to disqualify such a use of space, by rejecting any claim that space is a subject. In this way, the controversy is theoretical in nature and involves two opposing positions: that of the geographers, who want to make space the subject of their science (which is being completely overhauled), and that of Foucault, who uses space as a tool with which to analyse power and the ways in which it is exercised.

For the *Hérodote* geographers, space is indeed key to the construction site of theory, as Lacoste explains in the outline of his programme.⁸⁸ The 'crisis'⁸⁹ endured by geography throughout the 1960s and 1970s had left a void to be filled: abandoning the man/environment paradigm had led to the creation of this void. Whilst geography had—by this point—turned its attention to "the problem of Space,"⁹⁰ thinking was "still—in the main—more at the stage of methodology than epistemology."⁹¹ This can be seen in the emergence of quantitative geography then described as *new geography*:⁹² this nascent branch of geography proposed new methods (based on data processing) but did not seek to question the primary subjects of study in geography. Lacoste supported his thinking through the ideas of Gaston Bachelard: "We must think in order to measure and not measure in order to think."⁹³ With this background, it is possible to understand what is singular in Lacoste's plan to redefine geography. Lacoste does not deny—as do the (anglophone) tenants of *new geography* and their (francophone) counterparts studying spatial analysis—the specificity of geography, as a science at the intersection of sciences concerned with the earth, life, and society.⁹⁴ Rather, Lacoste uses the physical dimension of space to make geography a "methodical description of spaces in terms of their 'physical' and 'human' [or 'social'] aspects (...) in the framework of those functions exercised by the state apparatus,

83 Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) was among the second generation of *Annales* School historians: his work contributed to the construction of a shared space for the social sciences. In his work, history and geography were intertwined, as they were in his doctoral thesis: Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949); for him, geography (essentially physical) deals with time immutable, over long period: Christian Grataloup, "Braudel, Fernand," in *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, eds. Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), 1034.

84 Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (b. 1929) was influenced by Fernand Braudel, a tenant of *la Nouvelle histoire*, and worked in the field of historical anthropology. He wrote *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967).

85 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 75.

86 Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76.

87 Foucault uncovered and highlighted the importance of this spatial metaphor in contemporary literature. "In the language of today, the most haunting of metaphors is space," he wrote regarding certain writers of the time (Foucault, "Le langage").

88 Lacoste, "La géographie," 264–67.

89 In the historiography of the discipline, the "crisis of geography" refers to the period of intense re-evaluation of the framework—epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and political—that geography underwent in France in the 1960s and 1970s. It led to the Vidalian paradigm—focussing on the study of relationships between people and their environment based on a regional level—being abandoned, see: Yann Calbérac, "Terrains de géographes, géographes de terrain. Communauté et imaginaire disciplinaires au miroir des pratiques de terrain des géographes français du XX^e siècle" (PhD diss., Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2010). Lacoste was one of the most prominent players in this crisis.

90 Lacoste, "La géographie," 264.

91 Lacoste, "La géographie," 265.

92 Paul Claval, *La nouvelle géographie* (Paris: PUF, 1977).

93 Gaston Bachelard, *La formation de l'esprit scientifique: contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1938).

94 Lacoste, "La géographie," 245.

firstly in controlling and organising the people on its territory, and secondly for war."⁹⁵ Lacoste therefore makes the distinction between Space and space. Space refers to the category of philosophy (and so serves as the counterpart to Time)—and this should be of particular interest to philosophers. On the other hand, space—of interest to geographers—is envisaged in all its materiality: that is, in terms of its physical and social components.⁹⁶ In this light, the tribute that the geographers are paying to Foucault is clear: he no more studies Time but history (which is a way of grasping the archive in all its depth), than he studies Space—rather, he studies space insofar as it allows for the exercise of power (cf. supra).

However, the geographers' 'space' has nothing in common with Foucault's 'space'. Indeed, Foucault entirely abandons its materiality (the geographers refer to "the relative indeterminacy of [his] localisations") in favour of an abstract 'space.' How then can 'space' as he uses it—and incorporates it into his thinking—be described? One of the best analyses of space in Foucault's work was provided by Deleuze in his article on structuralism, written for Châtelet's 'History of Philosophy.'⁹⁷ Deleuze sought to define structuralism through those texts—including Foucault's 'The Order of Things'—using such a structuralist approach: as such, his definition derives from analysis of the different intellectual approaches applied under the label of 'structuralism.' For Deleuze, "the scientific ambition of structuralism is not quantitative, but topological and relational. (...) When Foucault defines terms such as death, desire, work, and play, he does not consider them as dimensions of empirical human existence—rather, these terms describe places or positions which will see as mortal/dying, desirous, working, or playing, those people who fill them: their role is secondary, for the role they play derives from an order of adjacency, which is that of the structure itself. (...) Structuralism is necessarily a new transcendental philosophy, in which places take precedence over what fills them."⁹⁸ The space that interests Foucault is thus that of the structure and the system: it is the position—that is, the location—that carries out the function. In this way, he neglects the material dimension of space in favour of the political arrangement that space allows. Despite this, he does not seek to work on Space envisaged as a category: space only interests Foucault insofar as it concretises the projection of relationships of power. The abstraction of the system thus allows an understanding of how power functions and how it is exercised—in this context, it is not necessary to call on the material dimension (that is, the social or natural components) of space, as geographers do. The geographers and Foucault thus find themselves with a practice in common: cartography.

However, once more, this comes at the expense of a metaphor. Lacoste raises the map, as an "instrument of power," to the level of a "formalisation of space for the domination of space,"⁹⁹ and Deleuze describes Foucault as a "new cartographer."¹⁰⁰ For geographers, a map is both a technique and an artifact which allows space to be formalised (and so rendered intelligible) in its material and social dimensions, in order that science (namely, the geographical reasoning shared by all users of maps, whether geographers or those in the military, for example) may be applied to it and which, therefore, allows power to be held. From this perspective, a map is defined as "a set of signs, in the abstract which has been extracted from the concrete."¹⁰¹ In contrast, in Foucault's work, cartography is an abstract operation, related to the topological conception of space that he uses: this involves describing and analysing how power—always localised—functions. Deleuze summarises what is at stake: "As a premise of localisation, power is assumed to be State power, and is itself localised in a State apparatus."¹⁰² Whereas geographers emphasise the artifact (the map), Foucault deploys a practice in order to establish such locations and relative positions: cartography. This conception of space (and thus of cartography) is explained by Claude Raffestin: whilst geographers—expert in topographical

95 Lacoste, "La géographie," 267.

96 Lacoste, "La géographie," 244–6.

97 Deleuze, "À quoi."

98 Lacoste, "La géographie," 305–6.

99 Lacoste, "La géographie," 267.

100 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 31–51.

101 Lacoste, "La géographie," 267.

102 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 33.

maps—are interested in morphology, Foucault's thinking focuses on the *relative*.¹⁰³ The operation of cartography thus allows these relationships to be represented.¹⁰⁴

Lacoste further developed his thinking on maps and cartography by suggesting that they be used as an epistemological tool in geography. He placed cartography under the auspices of both Gaston Bachelard—"Making representation geometrical means drawing phenomena and ordering the decisive events of experience into series; such is the primary task in which the scientific mind asserts itself"¹⁰⁵—and Georges Gusdorf—"Cartographical formalisation is thus the site of a privileged epistemological experience."¹⁰⁶ In so doing, Lacoste underlined the extent to which the question of representation raises the "primordial epistemological problem of geography:"¹⁰⁷ namely, scale (which is the ratio of reduction between the real and its representation) and—more broadly—the question of the most appropriate perspective in analysing a geographical problem. The phenomena studied by geographers exist only in relation to scales, that is, according to the perspectives they adopt. The approach in geography is therefore primarily scalar (this is central to Lacoste's thinking), and aims to establish the best perspective in analysing a problem: "Reality appears different depending on the level of analysis."¹⁰⁸ Following this, geographers set about multiplying maps, on different scales, of different types (topographical and thematic alike), in order to embrace the phenomenon studied (in all its complexity), by calling on different spaces of conceptualisation and reference.¹⁰⁹

In this way, Lacoste gives greater depth to the notion of *découpage* (cutting), intrinsic to the geographical approach, by suggesting (thanks to scale) a rich alternative to the regional approach—inherited from Vidal¹¹⁰—which paid no heed to scale.¹¹¹ In developing his theory of scales and orders of magnitude, Lacoste understandably turns to the academic debates of the times, be they in physical geography (what Jean Tricart calls geomorphology, or what François Durand-Dastès calls climatology) or in human geography (Olivier Dollfus, Pierre George, Henri Enjalbert). More than this, he enriches them by importing Foucauldian discontinuity¹¹² into geography, as can be seen in the interview: "One can—and indeed must—conceive and construct a methodology of discontinuity with regard to space and spatial scales."¹¹³ The *Hérodote* geographers will draw a parallel between Foucault's work with discontinuity¹¹⁴ in the field of history, and the work that they are doing with scale in their discipline: it is central to their theoretical project—admittedly still only a sketch in the interview, but it can be articulated. Just as Foucault seeks to cut up (*découpage*) the archive (that is, to cut up time) in order to reveal the discourses at play, so the geographers seek to cut up space (that is, to establish the best space for conceptualisation, and so the most appropriate scale) in order to reveal the

¹⁰³ Raffestin, "Foucault," 141.

¹⁰⁴ This cartographical method—as Foucault conceives of it—prioritises the relative and led to an approach popularised by the name of mapping.

¹⁰⁵ *La formation de l'esprit scientifique*, quoted Lacoste, "La géographie," 267.

¹⁰⁶ *La révolution galiléenne*, quoted Lacoste, "La géographie," 267.

¹⁰⁷ Lacoste, "La géographie," 278.

¹⁰⁸ Lacoste, "La géographie," 278.

¹⁰⁹ Lacoste suggests the concept of the *diatope* as a way of updating the method of the *dossier* conceptualised by Vidal (Marie-Claire Robic, "La stratégie épistémologique du mixte. Le dossier vidalien," *Espaces-Temps* 47–48 (1991) 53–66) and characterised by its regional scale. Lacoste abandons this feature of the *dossier* (Marie-Claire Robic, "Un système multi-scalaire, ses espaces de référence et ses mondes. L'Atlas Vidal-La Blache," *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography*, document 265 (March 24, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeo.3670>) in favour of a gamut of scales. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict—owing to a multi-scalar analysis, from a world scale to the local scale of the Old City of Jerusalem—is the prime example of his approach (Yves Lacoste, "La géographie, la géopolitique et le raisonnement géographique," *Hérodote: revue de géographie et de géopolitique* 146–147 (2012/3): 14–44).

¹¹⁰ Paul Vidal de La Blache, "Leçon d'ouverture du cours de géographie," *Annales de géographie* 8 (1899): 97–109.

¹¹¹ Roger Chartier, "Science sociale et découpage régional. Note sur deux débats: 1820–1920," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (1980): 27–36.

¹¹² Roger Brunet, a geographer working at the same time as Lacoste, also came up with a geographical approach of discontinuity; Roger Brunet, *Les phénomènes de discontinuité en géographie* (Paris: CNRS, 1968): in the main, he developed his approach using physical geography and sociology. At the time, Brunet did not mention Foucault, even though *The Order of Things* had already been published.

¹¹³ Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 75.

¹¹⁴ This method is explained in detail in the opening pages of *L'archéologie du savoir* (Foucault, *L'archéologie*, 92–8).

complexity of the problem being analysed, namely: power rivalries. Discontinuity and scale come both at the beginning of analysis (*découpage* is a pre-requisite for analysis) and at its end: the archaeological approach (and so, symmetrically, the cartographic approach) reveals the complexity of discontinuities (and so, symmetrically, of scales) at work in the problem studied. A subtle system of similarities can then be seen, between Time and Space (two categories rejected by Foucault and the geographers alike, as they abandon grand concepts in favour of that time and space produced and transformed by the exercise of power); history and geography (time and space made accessible for the study of problems for analysis); discourses and rivalries (what historians and geographers actually study); archives and maps¹¹⁵ (two methods of organisation in grasping the dimensions and complexity of time and space). And, finally, between discontinuity and scale (two forms of *découpage*, at once a pre-requisite for a given approach and at its conclusion). And just as the archive and discontinuity aim to reveal the discourses at work, so the map and scale shed light on power rivalries exerted on a territory.

The difference between two radically opposed concepts of space (which the spatial metaphor puts under tension) is therefore overcome:¹¹⁶ the dynamics of the exchange between Foucault and the *Hérodote* geographers no longer involve describing space through the digging of trenches (to borrow from the lexical field of military strategy). Rather, they involve considering a flow between different fields of knowledge, and—in so doing—encouraging both the development of theory and methodological thinking. Herein lies the appeal of metaphor: rather than being content to put two different concepts (the topological approach vs. the material approach) on the same level (space), metaphor allows different fields of knowledge to connect—and this is its performative function¹¹⁷—by allowing one reference (here, space) to flow or circulate between these fields. The geographers raise this point: "Between the discourse of geography and the discourse of military strategy, one can observe a flow of notions: the 'region' for geographers is the same as the 'region' conceived by the military, and 'province' equates to conquered territory."¹¹⁸ Foucault pursues this idea: "When it becomes possible to analyse knowledge in terms of region, domain, settlement, displacement, or transfer, it is possible to understand the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and accompanies its effects."¹¹⁹ In this way, the use of metaphor not only allows exchange between different fields of knowledge which were previously hermetic, it also—and above all—enables new thinking about conditions for the production and circulation of knowledge. The result is that science—and the way in which it functions—is questioned further: the horizon, thereby, is epistemological in nature.

5. "THE USE OF METAPHORS BORROWED FROM NON-SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE"

Whilst the use of metaphor is heuristically effective, by enabling both references and different subject areas to circulate to theoretical ends, Foucault's particular use of spatial metaphors also questions the very workings of science. Even though Foucault is at the height of his fame in 1976, the interview recalls the difficulties he encountered when first establishing his position: when the *Hérodote* geographers ask him about his penchant for these tropes, Foucault refers to them as his "spatial obsessions" for which he has been "reproached enough."¹²⁰ The term *obsession* is surprising, for it does not fit in with the science-based context—it is synonymous with the faddish and whimsical, which should have no place (either as a subject of study or as a method) in a rigorous scientific approach. In this light, spatial metaphors can be examined

¹¹⁵ Just as an archive is made up of several documents, so a map is made up of several maps—of different types and on different scales—which complement each other and shed light on the problem being analysed. We remember Vidal's method of the *dossier* (Robic, "La stratégie") but Lacoste never uses this term; he prefers the term *carte* ('map') and, later, the term *diatope* (Lacoste, "La géographie, la géopolitique").

¹¹⁶ This distinction has sustained the relational approach developed by some francophone geographers—such as Claude Raffestin (*Pour une géographie*)—and by many in the anglophone world of postmodernist geography, characterised by the advances of the cultural turn (François Dosse, "Vers une géophilosophie. Les apports de Foucault et de Deleuze-Guattari pour penser avec l'espace," *Géographie et cultures* 100 (2016): 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.4000/gc.4641>; Laura Péaud, "Les apports de la philosophie à la pensée géographique de l'espace," *Géographie et cultures* 100 (2016), 81–96).

¹¹⁷ Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

¹¹⁸ Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 77.

¹¹⁹ Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 77.

¹²⁰ Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 77.

from another angle—with epistemological implications—by questioning what separates science and non-science, or—in other words—the discontinuity between science and what is external to science. This calls for an analysis of the framework that Foucault provides for his thinking. Yet again, spatial metaphors are relevant. The first reason for this is that this critique is directed precisely at Foucault's use of spatial metaphors. The second reason is that—in order to justify his approach (and thus reply to his critics)—Foucault positions himself in a spatial framework (metaphorically). Therefore, space appears as both a subject of study as well as an approach method, and makes it possible to question what separates science and non-science.

By whom was Foucault reproached for his "spatial obsessions?" The interview suggests only one source—but a big one: Louis Althusser, philosopher, Foucault's teacher at the *École normale supérieure*, leading light of Marxism (the foundations of which he sought to rebuild through a rigorous reading of *Capital*),¹²¹ and guru of the intellectual Left that rose during the revolution of May '68.¹²² In the interview, the *Hérodote* geographers make reference to a passage from Volume 1 of Althusser's *Lire le Capital* [Reading Capital],¹²³ in which Foucault's use of spatial metaphors is discussed: "The use of spatial metaphors (field, terrain, space, place, situation, position, etc.)¹²⁴ in this text poses a theoretical problem: that of their right to be found in a supposedly scientific discourse. The problem can be expressed thus: *why* does a certain form of scientific discourse necessarily require the use of metaphors borrowed from non-scientific discourse?"¹²⁵ This footnote accompanies Althusser's commentary¹²⁶ on the original preface to *L'histoire de la folie*¹²⁷ [The History of Madness],¹²⁸ wherein he rejects the Foucauldian approach which he sees as non-scientific.

In order to understand this critique, it is useful to remember how Foucault expressed his project in the aforementioned preface. He defines a subject of study (madness), a chronological framework (the advent of modernity at the beginning of the eighteenth century), a method (archaeology), and—not least—a (non-normative) approach, which opens new horizons that the work intends to explore. Indeed, the challenge that Foucault sets himself is to examine what madness and reason have in common at the very time when reason is put to work, and without recourse to any vocabulary rooted in psychiatry: he is interested in the thinking that establishes commonality, and not in the science that imposes distance between reason and madness. Rather than studying the inauguration of the medical perspective,¹²⁹ he prefers to explore the "uncomfortable region"¹³⁰ created by this commonality, even though any normativity is refused. This commonality opens onto new *horizons* rather than some notional *afterwards*. Were the latter the case, then the perspective of psychiatry would have taken over, automatically: the scope would have been that of the dialectic of reason and madness, at the time when medical science can clearly establish the boundary between madness and non-madness. Yet Foucault refuses this normative approach through science: he concentrates, rather, on the time of this

121 Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme*. Tome 1.

122 Stéphane Legrand, "Louis Althusser : mai 1968 et les fluctuations de l'idéologie," *Actuel Marx* 45, no. 1 (2009): 128–36.

123 There were two editions of this work by Althusser. The first was published in 1965; the second was re-edited in 1968. The author does not know which edition is referenced in the interview. This article refers to the second edition.

124 The terms listed, here, are extracted from the interview. They were all previously used—almost in the same order—in the interview (Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 76), such that *Reading Capital* appears to have been a hypertext for the interview. Whilst the meaning is not changed, it should also be noted that the quotation is not quite accurate: in the interview, the verb *exposer* is used instead of the verb *énoncer* (with no detriment to the meaning).

125 Balibar and Althusser, *Lire*, 27, quoted in Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 78; emphasis added by Althusser.

126 Balibar and Althusser, *Lire*, 26–28.

127 The preface to the first edition of *L'histoire de la folie* was replaced by a shorter version in later editions. The original preface, on which Althusser comments, was redacted in the anthology *Dits et écrits* (Michel Foucault, "Préface," in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 1: 1954–1975, eds. Daniel Defert and Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 187–95.

128 Foucault, "Préface."

129 Foucault examined this in *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: PUF, 1963), and yet—surprisingly—there was no equivalent in geography, despite the fact that this subject can be characterised as a 'scopic' system (Raffestin, "Foucault").

130 Foucault, "Préface," 187.

silence, and seeks to perform the archaeology of this time. In so doing, he removes himself from any dialectical approach and abandons time by taking refuge in space:

Towards which *region* should we go, which is neither the history of knowledge nor history full stop, which is controlled by neither the teleology of truth nor the rational linking of causes, both of which only have value and meaning outside the notion of commonality? Doubtless, towards a *region* more concerned with the *limits* [or boundaries] of a culture than with its identity. (...) Examining the *limits* of a culture's experiences is the same as analysing that culture—on the *fringes* of history—in terms of a rift which can be seen as the very birth of its history. In this light, there is a clash—the tension of which unravels constantly—between the temporal continuity of a dialectical analysis and the updating (*on the brink of time*) of a tragic structure.¹³¹

Foucault is thus proposing an original line of inquiry. Whilst it is true that it unfolds in relation to history, it does so in space and not in time (which is the case for the dominant Marxism of the time).¹³² He develops this further in his 1966 essay regarding Maurice Blanchot, the title of which neatly summarises this approach: *La pensée du dehors* [Thinking of/from the Outside].¹³³ Here, Foucault develops the idea that Blanchot's literature (just like his own approach in *L'histoire de la folie*) was born of a void caused by the disappearance of the subject—"the breakthrough towards language from which the subject is excluded"¹³⁴—which can be said to be specific to the structuralist approach.¹³⁵ It is "thinking of/from the outside"—thought that has escaped from discourse, or from the subject—which allows Foucault's interest in space to be conceptualised:¹³⁶ "Fiction consists therefore not in revealing the invisible, but in revealing the extent to which the invisibility of the visible is invisible. Hence its fundamental relationship with space, which—in this sense—is to fiction what the negative is to contemplation (whereas dialectical negation is related to the fable of Time)."¹³⁷

Foucault's twofold interest in space and in metaphor is thus related. In rejecting the "fable of Time," he seeks to deploy this thinking of/from the outside, no longer in order to make it the origin of his thinking (which would give credence to the fable), but to make it the site in which this thinking unfurls. It is an invisible site, only the boundary of which can be laid down, outside the systems of thought (like Marxism) that he analysed.¹³⁸ It is in this framework that metaphor can operate and reveal this space (and therefore reveal the invisibility of the visible). In rejecting any normative perspective at the same time as comprehending the constituent commonality of the site that he is exploring, he can use no metadiscourse to formulate a truth that is impossible to establish: "There is no common language; rather, there is no longer a common language."¹³⁹ The archaeological approach—which draws on several sites—nonetheless forces him to articulate different discourses. Indeed, "producing the history of madness will thus mean the following: producing a structural study of the historic whole—notions, institutions, legal/police measures, and scientific concepts—which imprisons madness, the wild state of which can never be reproduced per se."¹⁴⁰ Metaphor is the only possible way to articulate these domains and to circulate this reference among them, without ever naming it and without ever reducing the specificity of these discourses. Furthermore,

¹³¹ Foucault, "Préface," 189; the author's emphases.

¹³² At this time, Foucault's relationship with Marxism (as with Structuralism) was complex; see Isabelle Garo, *Foucault, Deleuze, Althusser & Marx: la politique dans la philosophie* (Paris: Demopolis, 2011); Eribon, Michel; Christian Laval, Luca Paltrinieri and Ferhat Taylan, eds. *Marx & Foucault: Lectures, usages, confrontations* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2015). This goes some way to explain why Foucault is used to critique historicism as a plan for critical social theory (Soja, *Postmodern*).

¹³³ Michel Foucault, "La pensée du dehors," in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, vol. 1 : 1954–1975*, eds. Daniel Defert and Jacques Lagrange (Paris, Quarto Gallimard, 2001) 546–67.

¹³⁴ Foucault, "La pensée," 548.

¹³⁵ Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome 1*.

¹³⁶ That which he develops in philosophy by invoking literature—that is, a discourse outside philosophy—is thus thinking of/from outside.

¹³⁷ Foucault, "La pensée," 552.

¹³⁸ Foucault's professorship at the *Collège de France* from 1970 up to his death in 1984 was in the History of Systems of Thought.

¹³⁹ Foucault, "Préface," 188.

¹⁴⁰ Foucault, "Préface," 192.

metaphor brings this outside into existence as a site: by ruling out syllogism (thus by ruling out the linearity of causality, which is a question of time), metaphor privileges reasoning that is analogical, operates in/as a network, and which—performatively—produces the reference space that it describes. For Foucault, metaphor is the only way to build thought as an outside in which it can find its origins.

From this derives the epistemological aspect of the debate, and Althusser's critique becomes clear. His philosophical work effectively seeks to establish a strict separation between that which pertains to ideology and that which pertains to science. For Althusser, science can be understood in the context of the Marxist project, the foundations of which he intends to examine: his reading¹⁴¹ of Marxism rests on the intelligibility of the concept and, consequently, the rejection of all metaphor.¹⁴² And this is where the sticking points arise between Althusser's thinking and that of Foucault. Where Althusser develops concepts, Foucault deploys metaphors. Where Althusser embeds his approach in dialectics (and thus in the context of time), Foucault rejects such a fable and takes refuge in space. Where Althusser conducts a scientific study, Foucault—necessarily indulging in humanism by virtue of his archaeological work in the human/social sciences—belongs to the realm of ideology. And when—in a footnote—Althusser writes, "Why does a certain form of scientific discourse necessarily require the use of metaphors borrowed from non-scientific discourse?,"¹⁴³ he is at once denouncing the use of metaphors with no place in science, and—even more—the spatial reference that they circulate, because they lie outside the framework of dialectics and his underlying perspective that is historicist in nature.¹⁴⁴

Spatial metaphors can thus be used to measure how radically innovative Foucault's proposal is in terms of philosophy itself. He succeeds in conceiving an exteriority to his subject, which is precisely what allows him to build bridges with other subjects, and to position philosophy in the centre of intellectual debate at that time.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, the interview showed that a meeting between Foucault and the geographers was not only possible (the interview did take place) but productive as well: the geographers attempted to theorise their subject using the thinking of Foucault. As for Foucault, he discovered a new science and ultimately acknowledged its relevance. More than this, he opened up the possibility of exchange in both directions: "If you can use one or two of the 'things' (an approach or a method, for example) that I've seen fit to use in psychiatry, punishment, and natural history, then I'm delighted by that. If you have to adopt others, or transform my tools, please show me, because I too can benefit from that."¹⁴⁶ The condition that renders this exchange possible lies precisely in the use of metaphors: it is because space functions as a metaphor that such a meeting could take place. The point is thus not so much to reduce this metaphor by transforming it into a concept, but to understand its performativity and effectiveness.

6. CONCLUSION

The archaeological approach has shown how productive it can be: building and analysing an archive reveal the richness of what is at play in this encounter between Foucault's philosophy and Lacoste's geography. And this transcends the 'partial' readings of the meeting that are typically offered. The metaphor of space allows the archive to be cross-sectioned, heuristically, and discursivities at work in both theories—mutually put to the test—to be deconstructed: discontinuity appears as a heuristic tool for understanding philosophy and geography simultaneously.

The interview has also allowed us to touch on another important issue in the history of ideas in the second half of the twentieth century: the circulation of knowledge(s) in the era

¹⁴¹ Reading *Capital* begins with the definition of a symmetrical method: Althusser applies the same reading to *Capital* that Marx applied to the treatises of economics that he himself studied.

¹⁴² Saül Karsz, "Althusser Louis (1918–1990)," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

¹⁴³ Balibar and Althusser, *Lire*, 27.

¹⁴⁴ Soja, *Postmodern*.

¹⁴⁵ François Cusset, *French theory. Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les mutations de la vie intellectuelle aux États-Unis* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Foucault, "Questions à Michel Foucault," 73. As previously mentioned, following the interview, Foucault sent a list of questions to the journal *Hérodote* regarding geography, and this gave rise to debate.

of structuralism and when the human sciences were being built.¹⁴⁷ It is remembered that geography generally kept its distance from such inter-disciplinary exchanges, preferring instead to focus its thinking on its own evolution¹⁴⁸—and this withdrawal can be seen as paradoxical, given that space was central to the renewal of the human sciences at the time.¹⁴⁹ Despite all this, the interview shows that bridges were built—early on—between geography in France and philosophy, and that geography did not completely ignore the debates of that time. Now that the spatial turn has established itself as a narrative aiming to put the human sciences' approach to space in perspective,¹⁵⁰ further study of the relationship between philosophy and geography is required, in such a way as to test Edward Soja's hypothesis that the "spatial turn begins in Paris"¹⁵¹—since developed by Russell West-Pavlov¹⁵²—which is to say that it began in French theory and in the post-structuralism of France.¹⁵³ Foucault's thinking can be used to theorise the relative, at a time when the paradigm of history is being disputed.¹⁵⁴ Henceforth, the archaeological approach thus calls for a genealogical approach—inspired by Foucault's thinking—in writing the history of this spatial turn¹⁵⁵ and understanding the role played by geography and geographers in this "reassertion of space in critical social theory."¹⁵⁶ In this, the metaphor of space can continue to be used as a tool.¹⁵⁷

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¹⁴⁷ Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome 1*; François Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome 2 : Le chant du cygne (1967 à nos jours)* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ Dosse, "L'invitée."

¹⁴⁹ Péaud, 2016; Péaud, "Les apports"; Stock, Volvey and Calbérac, "Ce que le tournant."

¹⁵⁰ Christian Jacob, *Qu'est-ce qu'un lieu de savoir ?* (Marseille: OpenEdition, 2014). <http://books.openedition.org/oepl/423>.

¹⁵¹ Edward W. Soja, "Taking space personally," in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Barney Warf and Santa Arias (London: Routledge, 2009), 17.

¹⁵² West-Pavlov, *Space*.

¹⁵³ Cusset, *French*; Johannes Angermuller, "Qu'est-ce que le poststructuralisme français ?" *Langage et société* 120, no. 2 (2007): 17–34.

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Marc Besse, Pascal Clerc, Marie-Claire Robic, Wolf Feuerhahn, et al. "Qu'est-ce que le 'spatial turn' ?" *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 30 (2017): 207–38.

¹⁵⁵ Stock, Volvey and Calbérac, "Ce que le tournant."

¹⁵⁶ Soja, *Postmodern*.

¹⁵⁷ Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan James, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Neil Smith and Cindi Katz. "Grounding Metaphor. Towards a Spatialized Politics," in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Michael Keith and Steve Pile (New York: Routledge, 1993) 67–83.

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