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Do classical texts have an enunciative function?

The discipline of Classical studies has explored many new methodologies over the past decades, following the advances in cognate fields such as linguistics, anthropology and sociology. However, the center of the discipline, as it manifests itself in university curricula, professional conferences and publishing, remains rooted in a nineteenth century approach to the text. Ancient texts are customarily treated as representing something else – they are either interpreted horizontally as signs of an anterior social world awaiting reconstruction, or vertically as signs of an author's intent or psyche.

In the former approach, the historicist reads ancient texts as points of entry into an ancient world now lost. Interpreted this way, the text is reduced to a footnote of a prior history. Alternatively, these texts can be read from a Romanticist perspective as an exteriorization of the thoughts, aspirations and psychological state of great minds of the past. With either method, the text is by-passed in a rush to apprehend something believed to lie beyond it.

With the advent of Structuralism, there arose a growing appreciation of the structured nature of language, society and human mind. Ancient texts were recognized to be modes of discourse that actually *constitute* the worlds they represent according to the profound structures of language, culture and psyche. The Structuralists went further to argue that even modern human sciences – including Classics – were trapped within their own modes of discourse, and not the creators of objective knowledge. Michel Foucault redirected the structuralist strategy upon the Structuralists themselves, arguing that not even the Structuralist disciplines (linguistics, ethnology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism) were objective sciences. These disciplines, like the disciplines that preceded them, were imprisoned within their own linguistic protocols.

Moreover, Foucault argued that both the 19th century and the Structuralist approaches to text have overlooked one primary aspect, namely the text's "enunciative" function. Foucault's assertion implies that the even classical texts have been pre-selected and formed as objects of study by the Western discipline of Classical studies. This paper will apply Foucault's Poststructural critique to Classical studies using, as a test case, Classical texts dealing with ancient religion, particularly those of the Cambridge ritualists.

This analysis will proceed within the terms of reference of Foucault's two-pronged "archaeological" and "genealogical" approaches. An "archeological" analysis examines the formation of the ancient texts within Classical studies in terms of a quasi-structuralist analysis of the unconscious "rules" ("*episteme*" / "archive" / "*dispositif*") of the discipline itself. A "genealogical" analysis examines the role of networks of institutional power and practices in constituting texts as classical texts as objects of knowledge. This paper will examine how archaeological and genealogical analyses of classical texts on Greek religion reveal their enunciative function.

Is the interpretation of Classical texts at once controlled, limited and organized according to the discursive "rules" and institutional practices of the discipline itself? If so, does recognition of the enunciative function of the text bring an end to the possibility of discussing the positivity of Greco-Roman "religion", "belief", "culture" and "history"? Indeed, are these concepts and their attendant theories really the mere abstractions of rules laid out by the language strategies of Classical studies?