

**SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY BETWEEN REVISIONISM
AND EXPANSIONISM: ON THE USES OF
“CONTINENTAL” PHILOSOPHY AND NENAD
MIŠČEVIĆ'S “DISAPPOINTMENT”***

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to analyze a recent text by Nenad Mišćević dealing with social epistemology in the context of Foucault's theory of knowledge. In the first part, we briefly note Mišćević's thoughts on the difference between analytic and continental philosophy and his thoughts on the latter. In the second part, we analyze both Mišćević's thesis about Foucault's dual understanding of knowledge and his placement of social epistemology as a proper framework for Foucault's concept of “new” knowledge. In opposition to Mišćević's dualistic view, we are more inclined to accept Goldman's characterization of Foucault's position as a revisionist project in the context of standard analytical epistemology that legitimately embraces even very serious expansions of epistemological themes. Finally, we propose that Mišćević's dualistic interpretation reflects his general dualistic position concerning the previously described distinction between “continental” and “analytic” philosophy.

Keywords: *analytic and continental philosophy, social epistemology, knowledge, revisionism, expansionism*

Part I

Our intention is to analyze a recent text by Nenad Mišćević, dealing with social epistemology in the context of Foucault's theory of knowledge. Mišćević's text is an example of a problematic, albeit entirely distinctive “use” of continental philosophy for “analytic ends.” In addition, our brief introduction to the analysis of Mišćević's text is an attempt to explain the author's take on what is colloquially and ever imprecisely known as

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continental philosophy,¹ as well as his thematization of the difference between analytic and continental philosophy. These two moves, (1) the introduction to the analysis of the text and (2) the analysis itself of the text, ought to show the place continental philosophy comprises in Mišćević's philosophical endeavors. For him, continental philosophy is an introduction, leading into real analysis, that is, analytical realism (*le réalisme analytique*)² (what does this mean for the "introduction?"). Further, for Mišćević, continental philosophy, ultimately, leads to disappointment and should be rejected (is it possible to reject it entirely?). In the present article we take Mišćević's position or his use and application of an author usually included among continental philosophers (Michel Foucault), for the purposes of social epistemology. We then differentiate it from two other positions on the possible contemporary significance of Foucault's theories of power and knowledge for social epistemology or social ontology. The first of the two is John Searle's position as expressed in his book *Making the Social World*, which takes into account Foucault's theory of power and bio-power without significant revision.³ The second position is that of Alvin Goldman, who thinks that "continental thinkers," such as Latour or Foucault, do not significantly enrich or advance theories of social epistemology, and should therefore, for all intents and purposes, be ignored.⁴

Mišćević reaches the same conclusion of the insufficiency of continental philosophy, but, just like in the later writings of Searle and in contrast to

¹ Timothy Williamson (2004, 106-107) writes about the ambiguity of who does and does not belong to continental philosophy, who is and is not a continental or analytic philosopher. It seems to us that it was Williamson himself who, in a private conversation, suggested that due to problems such as this, Mišćević ought to write a book about the difference between continental and analytic philosophy. We second Williamson's suggestion, and would like to submit this text as our contribution to Mišćević's potential future project.

² Russell 1911.

³ Searle 2010, 152-155.

⁴ "People outside of philosophy tend to think of epistemology as abstract, impractical, and remote from the real world. But this need not be so. There are problems of real social institutions that cannot be responsibly tackled without an infusion of ideas from social epistemology. Many scholars within the humanities assume that only 'continental' thinkers like Foucault or Latour approach epistemology in a manner that interfaces with real institutional problems. But that impression need not persist if the project of social epistemology as described here is actively pursued. This project preserves continuity with traditional epistemology in retaining such classical concepts such as truth, justification, and knowledge but also opens the door to a broad range of practical and theoretical problems that confront us daily in society and stare us in the face as academic humanists or social scientist." Goldman 2004, 205. In neither of the two lectures about power Goldman delivered at the Collège de France in Paris, in March 2012 ("Troubles for Collective Epistemology" and "Democracy, Knowledge and Power"), did he use Foucault's texts.

Goldman, he retains some faith in certain continental thinkers. Ultimately, his rejection of continental philosophy is tinged with disappointment. We insist on ascribing Mišćević’s move—“using,” reading and then ignoring continental thinkers’ texts—to his philosophical beginnings and the first phase of his theoretical work. At the same time, we draw special attention to the fact that his “disappointment” in continental philosophy and certain continental thinkers, as averred by Mišćević, is a recurring feature of his philosophical engagement, and always accompanies Mišćević’s thematization of the difference between analytic and continental philosophy. Our argument does not refer to the examination of Mišćević’s trust and the game between trust and disappointment with continental philosophy, nor is it our intention to offer proof of a latent presence or inextricability of continental philosophy in the texts and books by Nenad Mišćević. It is also not our intention to invoke a call for his works to be “measured” and evaluated or “deconstructed” through comparison with his earlier texts and books. We are exclusively interested in the fruitfulness and justification of his perusal of continental thinkers as a necessary preamble to his analytical work. Mišćević’s readings could in that case be paradigmatic, even promising.

1. Introduction

In the introduction of *Real Materialism and Other Essays*, Strawson discusses his stay in Paris back in 1978, just before beginning his doctoral studies at Oxford with Derek Parfit: “I attended the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* as an *auditeur libre* and French government scholar, joining Jacques Derrida’s Groupe de Recherche pour l’Enseignement de la Philosophie and his seminar for Yale students in Paris – trying (without success) to understand what he was talking about.” (Strawson 2008, 9)

The same year, 1978, when Derrida spent the entire semester teaching Freud and Heidegger’s understanding of the thing (*Ding*), Nenad Mišćević also happens to be among the students (doctoral candidates) attending the seminar. But unlike Strawson, Mišćević is there for the second time (the first time around, in 1973, he also studies with Derrida, among others). We now have sufficient information to say that he probably left this seminar and his second spell of studies in France with the same impressions as Strawson.⁵ Really, such games of unfulfilled expectations and various misunderstandings ought to be put aside, since, conversely, Derrida could make his own counter-claims. Namely, Derrida spent time in Harvard in 1957, as a so-called *special auditor*, or a recipient of a year long, “Augustus Clifford Tower Fellowship.” Still, in

⁵ In October of 2004 in Novi list, just after Derrida’s death, Mišćević scrutinized his memories of seminars in France, saying that he wrote under Derrida’s influence for two years, and he spoke of his unpleasant surprise during the 1978 seminar.

contrast to Strawson—without underestimating his months of effort to wade through Heidegger and Freud – Derrida's and Mišćević's situation is quite different.⁶ Even prior to his first stay in Paris, the young Mišćević had already published texts about Deleuze, Schelling and Althusser. He would continue such work during his second sojourn in Paris—with Ricoeur and Derrida this time—publishing translations of Lacan, texts on Žižek, Benjamin, Nietzsche. All of this work helped develop his very own interesting, and ambitious project about ideology and ideological speech.⁷ It seems to us, in light of Mišćević's subsequent work in the field of analytic philosophy, that it would be quite simple to define (in three easy steps) Mišćević's engagement in continental philosophy, which lasted some ten years (until 1982–1983), and is still very valuable for students of this philosophical tradition (for those who are able to read south Slavic languages).

First, Mišćević reads and quotes various “analytic thinkers” in his texts from 1977 (Searle, Grice), 1978 (Dummett, Frege, Austin), 1980 (Davidson, Von Wright, Anscombe). Since he had been working on language and theories of discourse from the beginning of his philosophical work, and since he is attempting to “mix” directions and the sources of his own inspiration, it is rather unfair to characterize his early work as strictly “continental,” as it could certainly be equally described as “reticently analytical.” In his most original work from this period, “Six Functions of Philosophical Discourse,” he is attempting to shuffle his cards: he insists that “the analytics of philosophical text could learn a lot from poetics, linguistics, even analytical theory of law” (Mišćević 1978, 173). Regardless of Mišćević already being aware that there is something in his doctoral dissertation that he terms (names) “principle of immanence of exposition” (“In our work, we have endeavored to avoid broad reference to philosophers outside the analytic tradition, so as not to run afoul of the principle of immanence of exposition,” Mišćević 1981a, 306),⁸ he not only does not follow this rule, but also justifies his inconsistency thusly: “However, moments we have

⁶ For example, Jacques Derrida, along with Roger Martin, translates the English manuscript of the Quine's (1964) “Les frontières de la théorie logique.” This text is preceded by a text by Nagel (who had just obtained his doctorate at Harvard), also translated from the English manuscript, by Derrida's wife, Marguerite Derrida.

⁷ He speaks about this project in an interview with Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić, entitled “Kućni filozof, ideologija, tehnika i ozbiljenje...” [House Philosopher, Ideology, Technology and Realization], published January, 1981 in Polja (Novi Sad). Mišćević (1981b, 21-23).

⁸ This position was transformed many years later in the following way: “Why a text of this sort in an issue of Istraživanja dedicated to analytic philosophy? Because we hold that analytic philosophy is continuous with classical philosophy, and is even its legitimate inheritor. The realist tradition in particular is close to analytic philosophy, with Brentano and Meinong playing a decisive role. Mišćević (1999, 445).

cited, which characterize some of the positive contributions by theories of communicational attempts in analytic philosophy, are not without certain equivalents in non-analytic philosophizing about language” (Mišćević 1981a, 306).

The second and third steps in defining Mišćević's continental engagement are complementary and could describe rather straightforwardly the limits and scope of his use of the adjective “continental.” Namely, each disappointment in continental philosophy⁹ is also at the same time a reconstruction of the analytic approach and a sobering through analytic philosophy (Mišćević 1990a, 301-309). Indeed, the disappointment and rejection of continental philosophy always implies Mišćević's detailed thematization of the difference between the analytic and continental traditions. Each one of Mišćević's disappointments in continental philosophy, to the last, results in an identical operation repeated over and over, in which he tests his standpoint. (Do we dare claim that Mišćević's detailed reading of Foucault, analyzed in this paper, along with his disappointment, always produces new and unfinished papers/projects such as “Philosophizing Without an Argument,” or “The Continental-Analytic Rift: a Guide for Travellers and Bridge-Builders?”) It seems to us that this incessant thematization of the analytic and non-analytic approach (in which Mišćević is certainly one of Putnam's most faithful followers),¹⁰ and his ultimate resistance to the latter approach, makes Mišćević's analysis always more detailed and justified.

⁹ On the other hand, though, Mišćević's disappointments are often multiple: “At the time when I was studying in France (when post-structuralism was at its height), I wrote for a while as a faithful follower of post-structuralism. However, I became disenchanted with it and started doing analytic philosophy.” Or “In the meantime, a discussion developed around Praxis, and is now unfolding in several magazines in parallel. I must say that I am deeply disappointed by the course of events.” Mišćević (1989, 12-13). In an interview with Elvio Baccarini, Mišćević repeats these lines. Mišćević (1990b, 8-9).

¹⁰ Hilary Putnam, author of several exceptional texts about Levinas and Franz Rosenzweig, quite often unravelled the nature of continental philosophy and continental thinkers in his books and texts. Two of his most successful characterizations, not to be found in Mišćević, are the following: that French philosophy was at one time certainly hypnotized (although no longer) by the connection between texts (“How do texts connect with other texts?” Putnam 1999: 61), and that continental “philosophy is conducted above all through careful reading of the text”. Putnam (1992, 47).

Part II

2. The Duality of Foucault's Position on Knowledge

In the article “After Foucault: the Reckoning of Social Epistemology with New and Old Knowledges” Nenad Mišćević analyzes Foucault's dual understanding knowledge.¹¹ Building on the analysis, he poses the question of social epistemology's stance towards “old” and “new” knowledge. On the one hand, says Mišćević, Foucault is tied to a traditional epistemological position, according to which the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge are epistemological virtues, along with curiosity, understanding, research and collection of new data on myriad topics. Mišćević shows a fascinating grasp of Foucault when he illustrates to what extent Foucault leans towards the ideal of the scholar who fosters a positive passion for knowledge as accumulation of data. He describes Foucault's works *Folie et déraison* and *Surveiller et punir* as “monumental reconstructions of contemporary histories of power,” emphasizing that the way in which Foucault meticulously documents historical data testifies to the author's search for important hidden truths with the aim of accumulating and extracting knowledge. Further, he convincingly shows the extent to which Foucault is occupied with the importance of gathering evidence and careful argumentation, aware of the need to offer the reader rigorous clarity. All this, says Mišćević, is evidence of Foucault's belief that the epistemic goal is knowledge in the so-called “old” sense, and that objective truth is attainable.

On the other hand, Mišćević admits that Foucault often points out that knowledge is necessarily a social construction, such that any belief cannot at any given time have objective value, whether in the form of truth or justified belief. Truth is not sought, researched or uncovered, but rather constructed in accordance with multifarious forms of limitations and controls of economic and political means. According to Mišćević, what is also starkly clear in Foucault is a negative passion for a deconstruction of knowledge,¹² and for a subversive attitude towards the idea of objective truth. The neutrality of a viewer or reader is a myth for Foucault, since everyone has a “regime” of truth. Given this, all knowledge should be deconstructed, and the relations and elements of power that underpin its construction shown up. Mišćević observes that knowledge understood in this “new” sense is in clear contradiction to the ideal of scientific truth as understood by its practitioners, which is why one can speak of a certain subversion of the scientific position in Foucault.

¹¹ Mišćević 2011.

¹² In his text, Mišćević systematically uses the word 'deconstruction', which does not appear in Foucault's work, but can be found in Derrida and the early Lyotard. We are following his use, with reservations not addressed here.

However, for Mišćević, such a position regarding “new” knowledge, although it sounds radical and revolutionary, is also very interesting from a cultural perspective. In that sense, Mišćević sets up an opposition between the scientific and cultural perspectives on knowledge and epistemic values.¹³

The main thesis of Mišćević's article is to show this duality, ignored by most of Foucault's readers, to the advantage of emphasizing his subversive relationship towards knowledge. Further, he shows that Foucault is himself to a certain extent aware of this duality, and is attempting to bridge these two passions and ideas in his concept of good knowledge of the oppressed. In it, Foucault conceives of knowledge/truth as a construct that is determined by relations of power in society, yet is not necessarily opposed to the idea of objective truth. Mišćević elaborates that his perspective as a scholar allows him to see a broader historical context and is a good basis for the critique of power and its truths. In this way, one can remain subversive towards the bad knowledge emerging from power, while at the same time accumulating good knowledge of the oppressed. In other words, the morally superior position of the marginalized or oppressed allows them to attain a truth about the delusions of power, which, coupled with the erudite intellectual, enables proper insight into injustice and makes criticism possible.¹⁴ Finally, Mišćević points out that such an understanding of duality and suggested reconciliation in Foucault could shed light on ways in which we understand knowledge: the concept of “new” knowledge could be a useful perspective for a renewed consideration of “old” knowledge. Along the way, Mišćević places the question and its understanding into the space of social epistemology that includes the question of influence of society on the process of belief formation (in both the descriptive and normative sense).

However, nowhere in the article does Mišćević offer an argument or elaborate ways in which social epistemology can and ought to absorb the question of “old” and “new” knowledge. On the contrary, he leaves it to

¹³ Although this topic is beyond the task set in this paper, we consider it important to note that we find this topic about two different perspectives on the nature of knowledge particularly interesting: the first is based on the modern (natural) science paradigm, whereas the other rests on cultural theories, the sociology of knowledge, social constructivism, that is, the postmodern paradigm. Prijčić-Samaržija 2011.

¹⁴ While Foucault holds a version of “standpoint theory” here, Mišćević correctly notices that not all “oppressed” knowledge is good just because it is the knowledge of a group marginalized by the given configuration of power. Such knowledge too can be characterized by stereotypes and prejudices, while others are certainly morally neutral. We suppose that the role of the scholar is to assess when the perspective of the oppressed shows up the limitations placed by power, and when it is unable to do so due to prejudice. If the scholars are indeed the arbiters, the question becomes who actually has a privileged position, and can the good knowledge of the oppressed then not be reduced to the scholarly (“old”) knowledge?

the reader to choose between three (or possibly even four) approaches: (i) retain the position of “old” knowledge as the only correct approach to knowledge, (ii) accept “new” knowledge and abandon the “old” approach, (iii) develop a compromised position based on the “good knowledge of the oppressed” or advance the concept of old-and-new knowledge, and (iv) use a back-and-forth or zig-zag model of alternating choice of one position and then the other, taking into consideration the goal or context.¹⁵ Ultimately, Mišćević appears to choose a side by ending the article with the sentence: “The model of accumulation of knowledge could, in the end, be the most reasonable model.” Since this is all, it is clear that Mišćević estimates that further elaboration of reasons for choosing the “old” knowledge goes beyond the aims of his article.

Judging by the way in which he debates with Foucault's readers, who would present him as a radical advocate of “new” knowledge, there is little doubt that Mišćević shares Foucault's passion for scholarship and the idea of “old” knowledge. However, he finds the idea of “good knowledge of the oppressed” also attractive in a certain way. Still, it is difficult to judge from the article what Mišćević thinks about how consistent and undeviating Foucault's theory is as a whole. He restrains himself to two theses: (i) the duality of Foucault's positions on knowledge, and (ii) that Foucault's positions regarding “new” knowledge, which really belong to social epistemology, could be inspiring for debates about the nature of epistemology in general.

In this article we will endeavor to take up “legitimate” topics and positions within social epistemology and question whether Foucault's subversive theses about knowledge really belong in both epistemology and social epistemology. Further, we will attempt to examine the possibility of reconciling Foucault's passions within social epistemology, and offer evidence for the following contentions: (i) it is possible to absorb Foucault's theses about the influence of the elements of power in the acquisition and retention of knowledge within the paradigm of “old” knowledge, (ii) the thesis of subverting knowledge or the non-existence of objective knowledge/truth/justification is a legitimate position in epistemology and outside it to the same extent that any nihilistic position is legitimate, and (iii) that the thesis regarding the subversion of knowledge cannot be incorporated into “old” knowledge, without lapsing into contradiction. Therefore, in opposition to Mišćević's dualistic view, we are more inclined to characterize Foucault's position about old-and-new knowledge as contradictory and theoretically unacceptable.

¹⁵ N. Mišćević says that the last approach was suggested to him by Rada Iveković, but he is of two minds about the theoretical viability of this option.

Moreover, we find that Mišćević’s dualist stance reflects his general ambivalence concerning “continental” and “analytic” philosophy as we briefly elaborated in the introduction.

3. Purism: Social Epistemology is Not Real Epistemology

The “old” school of 20th century Anglo-American epistemology bound the debates in epistemology chiefly to questions of knowledge, necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, theories of truth and justification, etc. While certain members of the “old” school, such as William Alston, even admit that, contrary to widespread *belief*, justification does not correspond to any objective property of belief, this traditional approach was most often tied to the assumption of objectivity of truth and knowledge. For example, Alston claims that there is no “objective property of belief that corresponds to the term ‘justified’” (Alston 2005, 21), since there is no theoretically neutral way to define the term ‘justification’ that would resolve existing debates between opposing theories (Alston 2005, 23-25), nor a robust set of paradigmatic cases of justified beliefs that could be applied in resolving said debates (Alston 2005: 25-26). This, however, is not the case for truth: “the acquisition, retention and use of true beliefs about matters that are of interest and/or importance is the most basic and the most central goal of knowledge” (Alston 2005, 30).¹⁶ Only those epistemological features of belief that promote the goal of truth can be epistemic *desiderata*, examples of which are: having adequate evidence and grounding belief in adequate evidence, formation of belief through a reliable process or generating belief through the proper functioning of the epistemological chain, forming beliefs in accordance with intellectual virtues, having evidence of having adequate evidence, ability to defend a belief, a reliable acquisition and retention of belief, coherence and order, etc. (Alston 2005, 93). We can see that Alston’s positions unequivocally correlate with Foucault the historian with a passion for acquiring and accumulating knowledge.

However, when it comes to new topics, Alston is still a representative of the “old,” conservative school. Questions of influence of social relations of power on the formation/construction of belief, and in particular questions of deconstructing belief through examining the social influence of power, are not topics of “real” epistemology. Because social epistemology includes questions regarding the influence of society on the formation and acquisition of beliefs, it is not “real” epistemology: questions similar to this, according to Alston, ought to be left to sociology, social psychology or other sciences (Alston 2005, 5).

¹⁶ See the review by Feldman 2005.

Representative of the purist tradition within “old” epistemology, Alston is only one of many who would, without a second glance, reject not only Foucault's “new” knowledge, but also any discussion about the influence of society on knowledge. Topics in social epistemology in general are not epistemological topics, since they are far beyond the normative questions of nature and conditions of epistemological success/error. In other words, from the purist perspective of those who today defend an accumulation of knowledge (objective truth and knowledge), the thesis of Foucault's epistemological duality is unacceptable simply because there is no epistemological duality. It is simply a question of two different fields: the one about the accumulation of knowledge belongs to the domain of epistemology, while theories about the subversion of knowledge belong to other fields (such as social theory and political action). Consequently, from Alston's point of view, Mišćević's position about the fecundity of Foucault's epistemic duality is on thin ice.

4. Social Epistemology Between “Real” Epistemology and Revisionism

In opposition to Alston's purism about (social) epistemology, most contemporary philosophers still think that researching epistemic aspects of belief of individuals that occur in relation with others, as well as studying epistemic aspects of groups and social systems (interpersonal epistemic relations), are indeed part of “real” epistemology. Alvin Goldman differentiates three possible approaches to topics of influence of society on knowledge: 1. *revisionism*, which does not belong to “real” epistemology, 2. *preservationism*, which is “real” epistemology, and 3. *expansionism*, expanded but also “real” epistemology.¹⁷

Naturally, the foremost question is what makes a given approach (a topic) “real” epistemology? The central aspects of “real” epistemology, according to Goldman, are the following: (i) the epistemological subject is individual, (ii) epistemology is focused on epistemic evaluation and the normative aspect of knowledge, key terms being knowledge, truth, rationality, justification etc., (iii) the normative standard of rationality and justification is not only conventional and relativistic, but possesses some form of objective validity, (iv) knowledge presupposes truth (or is in some way connected to truth), which is objective (such that it refers to the world independent of ourselves), (v) the central task of epistemology is the critical examination of doxastic processes of making decisions (acquiring knowledge, retention of knowledge, reevaluation of beliefs and other doxastic states).

¹⁷ Goldman (2010) has a vital role in lending credibility to social epistemology in contemporary epistemological debates.

Clearly Goldman is attempting to define a social epistemology that includes a social dimension to knowledge in “old” knowledge terms. Therefore it is unsurprising that Goldman characterizes Foucault's position on “new” knowledge as revisionist, claiming that it is in fact not “real” epistemology. According to Goldman, postmodernism, deconstruction, social constructivism, sociology of knowledge (“strong programme”) and similar theoretical initiatives reject many if not all the aforementioned basic premises of epistemology. Foucault, thinks Goldman, is a revisionist because the thesis about the subversion of knowledge is contrary to the central premises of “real” epistemology, based on the supposition of existence of objective truth, knowledge, rationality, neutrality etc. Goldman mentions Rorty who, putting forth theses similar to Foucault's, breathed life into his own positions by declaring the death of “old” epistemology and suggesting certain changes in the form of studying rules of conversation (*conversational mankind*).¹⁸ As opposed to the premises of “old” epistemology, the revisionist nature of the “new” approach can be clearly seen in claims that truth and facts are not in/of the world, but are mere social creations and constructions. Knowledge is simply “institutionalized” belief and objective rationality is a myth, given that there are no rationalities not influenced by context or transcultural norms. In this way, knowledge, as the natural space of reason and rationality, is stripped of its epistemic authority.

It is important to mention that Goldman does not think that relativism is the decisive quality that differentiates the “new” approach from the “old.” On the contrary, a certain relativism, so-called *New Age* relativism,¹⁹ is popular among analytic philosophers who claim that epistemic justification is relative depending on the form of assessment, that is, relative to the standards that determine what is relevant for assessment (contextualism).²⁰ Revisionism is not simply a “stronger” or “stricter” relativism, but a qualitatively different position. More precisely, it is a kind of epistemological nihilism, such that it claims that there are no facts or states of affairs in light of which any position could be judged to be better than any other.

In contrast to revisionism, the other two approaches, preservationism and expansionism not only include a social aspect of knowledge, but do so in a way that keeps them within “real” epistemology. The preservationist approach refers to the already existing topics and debates in (social) epistemology, such as the ones involved in doxastic decisions grounded in social evidence, processes of acquisition of social evidence, and spoken acts and communication. These are legitimate epistemological

¹⁸ Rorty 1979.

¹⁹ The phrase was put into use by C. Wright, see in Goldman 2010.

²⁰ Williams 2001.

topics by virtue of having all the relevant markers of “real” epistemology, among which there is particular emphasis on themes connected to the epistemology of testimony, (dis)agreement among experts (*peer disagreement*), attaining rational consensus, the relation of epistemic and practical interests in epistemic evaluation, epistemic norms of conversational practices and debates (dialectical justification, interpersonal justification), etc. Goldman would like to see further expansion of the topic of social epistemology and its broadening onto topics hitherto considered not part of traditional epistemology. As an example, he offers topics such as research of epistemic characteristics of groups (collective doxastic agents) and influence of social systems and their politics on epistemic results (the legal system, democracy, politics of the media, education, etc.). This approach was therefore labeled expansionist.

Generally speaking, “social epistemology” is Goldman's term usually designating the social aspect of knowledge within the “old” approach to knowledge or within the framework of traditional epistemology. From this point of view, much like the previously mentioned purist perspective, Foucault's theses about the subversion of knowledge do not belong to the domain of epistemology, or even to social epistemology. Foucault's position on “new” knowledge is not expansionist, that is, cannot be considered as developing old topics through new ones, because the proper framework (of “real” epistemology), within which the expansion would be legitimate, has been abandoned.

Foucault's “new” knowledge is new precisely because it does not accept the founding premises of “old” epistemology. Which, once again, brings us back to the following question: to what extent is Mišćević correct in his diagnosis of dualism in Foucault's position, and to what extent is there simply an irreconcilable epistemological contradiction in Foucault's understanding of knowledge. It is also important to note that this understanding of a contradiction inherent in Foucault's view of knowledge does not depend on the acceptance of either Alston's or Goldman's assessment of Foucault's topics as illegitimate. This is a contradiction (that objective truth is both possible and not) that cannot be reconciled in any coherent epistemology.

5. Expansion of Social Epistemology Onto Foucault's Topics

In this section we will try to show how topics of social epistemology can be expanded even beyond what Goldman details in his expansionist position, and onto so-called Foucault's topics. However, we will show that even those cases do not imply epistemological nihilism—the defining mark of Foucault's revisionism and his “new” knowledge.

In contemporary discussions about social epistemology, certain new voices have appeared, that are not only ready not to consider Foucault's

theses seriously (such as a certain methodological nihilism that encourages the reexamination of existing “old” positions), but also to suggest the broadening of given debates onto Foucault’s topics. For example, Miranda Fricker underscores the philosophical benefits of expanding traditional (individual) epistemological topics onto the field of social epistemology.²¹ Studying ethical-epistemological topics of trust and testimony and defining social conditions for the establishment of a credible/virtuous knower, Fricker develops a rich conceptual system to think about new topics, either not considered or considered only marginally within traditional Anglo-American epistemology. Just like Foucault, she is interested in how social power is reflected in beliefs. She defines social power as *possibility* held by social agents (individuals, groups, institutions), in relation to other social agents, of influencing social affairs.²² In accordance with the concept of social power, Miranda Fricker is particularly interested in the question of power based on identity (*identity power*), that is, the question of practicing social power determined by a collective conception of social identity. For example, the collective imagination contains a series of prejudices and stereotypes regarding gender identity, which are then reflected in a certain mistrust of testimonies and positions held by women. Fricker carefully considers the question of epistemic injustice thus committed against women (as well as Blacks, the poor or other marginalized groups) in situations in which their testimonies are not considered credible/relevant to the extent they would be if the system of social power were not what it was. It is an epistemological question how social power (tied most intimately with collective stereotypes about identity) can produce an epistemic injustice in the process of communication, thus missing the goal of the epistemological process – acquisition of knowledge.²³

²¹ Fricker 2007.

²² Social power is practically socially situated possibility of control of action of others, whether used actively or passively by individual agents, or else practiced purely structurally. Fricker understands the justification of the position according to which social power is/ought to be a concept of protest, and she especially emphasizes the need for a critical modulation of the question of power, but she does tend to use the term power mostly in a neutral sense (practicing power/control is not necessarily against any person’s interest). This makes for a significant difference between Fricker’s consistently epistemological approach and that of Foucault, whose epistemological perspective is mixed with political activism.

²³ In the case of testimonies, the hearer uses social stereotypes in assessing the credibility and reliability of the informant, thus always perceiving the informant as a member of some social group (whether educational, gender, age, class, racial, religious, regional, etc.). The trustworthiness ascribed depends on this identification (in which as a rule, prejudices increase or decrease the credibility of the speaker). Epistemic injustice committed against the “oppressed” has two principle modalities: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*. In both cases we are dealing with a source of epistemological and ethical damage for the knowing subject.

Social power can be seen in communicational practice because it produces differing forms of dysfunction. As an example, just as it is possible to assign to a speaker less credibility than she deserves (*credibility deficit*) – most often suffered by Foucault's “oppressed” – it is also possible to assign more credibility to a speaker than is due (*credibility excess*), most often in the case of persons who belong to the elite, that is, persons with a privileged education, etc.²⁴ Fricker claims that only credibility deficit is a case of epistemic injustice because the damage of credibility excess for the privileged elite is not ethically serious enough. Although Fricker thinks that epistemic injustices do not remain only on an epistemic level, but spread to ethical, economic and political injustices committed against the “oppressed,” she quite clearly recognizes and separates the intellectual from the ethical virtues in the concept of hybrid virtue. As we can see, nothing in the given analysis implies epistemic nihilism or conclusions about subversion of knowledge. On the contrary, Fricker explicitly locates her position within the perspective of epistemic virtue, basing herself on “old” terms for the justification of truth and rationality through which she considers epistemic practices.

Analogous to Fricker, if perhaps a bit more radical in expanding social epistemology onto Foucault's topics, is Lorraine Code.²⁵ Differentiating between “general” and “real” knowledge, she claims that 20th century Anglo-American epistemology or so-called old epistemology focused wrongly only on *a priori* necessary and sufficient conditions for *knowledge in general*. Code points out that social epistemology ought to include into its field of research all the chaos and incoherence of *real epistemic relations*, consider them critically, descriptively and normatively. Code also approaches Foucault's position in the thesis that questions of knowledge generate a slew of new questions, many of which blur the sharp borders between traditional epistemology and ethical-political debates. In contrast to purist philosophers such as Alston, Code thinks that the object of study of “real” (social) epistemology is less the proposition itself, and more the relations and processes of formation of belief.²⁶

Just like Fricker, Code locates the main topics of social epistemology in problems such as questions of trust, power, representation and negotiation

²⁴ Both kinds of dysfunctions can lead to further epistemic deformations (and interference with successful acquisition of knowledge). For example, when members of the elite are given more attention and unjustly assigned more credibility, developing epistemic arrogance (dogma, insensitivity, hypersensitivity to criticism, closed-mindedness, etc.), the very opposite of epistemic virtue, thus further narrowing the possibility of acquiring knowledge.

²⁵ Code 2010.

²⁶ Moran 2006.

in epistemic communities, in seeking models of epistemic dependence, epistemic vulnerability and epistemic risks, etc. In a further consonance with Fricker who emphasizes the real dimension of the “situated” knower, Code is very critical of the “principle of neutrality” that prohibits the consideration of particularity. As opposed to the reductionist abstraction and formal analysis of orthodox Anglo-American epistemology, Code displaces the focus of study onto the sphere of real knowledge, and promotes the need for advocacy, inclusion of marginalized/silenced sources of evidence (e.g. in examining the success of the scientific methods of health care in Tanzania, one should seek the opinions of the Tanzanians). There is no doubt that these theses bring Code, much more than other participants in social epistemology, to Foucault’s “good knowledge of the oppressed,” and the idea of epistemic relevance of their perspective.

Social epistemology in the form of ecological naturalism, as Code calls her position, examines the structures and implications of political, economic and social systems in a way that does not assume neutrality, facelessness or an identity-less knower (stripped of race, class, ethnicity or other particularities). She emphasizes the relevance of place and situation in which knowledge is produced and circulated, demands disclosure of details from which knowledge originates or which limit knowledge acquisition. In this comparison, it is difficult to see a difference between Foucault and Lorraine Code. However, in contrast to Foucault yet similar to Miranda Fricker, Code remains within the realm of “real” epistemology. Code clearly establishes her standpoint with the claim that knowledge is possible and that we should examine and assess the natural and real-world conditions for knowledge. Nor does she think that “real knowledge” is not knowledge or that beliefs should not be evaluated in terms of justification, rationality or truth.

Fricker and Code show us that it is possible to further broaden the expansionist framework set by Goldman, thus approaching Foucault’s ideas about knowledge of the oppressed. However, they also show that no reconciliation is possible with Foucault’s nihilism or subversion of knowledge. Both Code and Fricker demonstrate that the possibility of expanding topics of social epistemology is considerable, and that drawing a scientific and cultural perspective is possible to a greater extent than hitherto thought. They also show, on the other hand, that there is a point past which one must declare one’s opinion and take sides. It is in fact Foucault’s epistemic nihilism and rejection of the notion of knowledge and truth that precludes any kind of reconciliation of “old” and “new” knowledge.

Let us summarize what has been said. With his scientific approach to cultural topics and attempts to “build bridges,” Mišćević does both sides

a lot of good.²⁷ We think Mišćević is right when he suggests an examination of traditional approaches and possible expansions of (social) epistemology onto new topics. He is undoubtedly correct when he reveals the potentiality of topics opened up by Foucault with the idea of “good knowledge of the oppressed;” yet, he can also be reproached for leading the reader on and then stopping short of showing how such and “epistemological provocation can be useful.

However, the crucial question is how correct Mišćević is in his diagnosis of Foucault's dual understanding of knowledge. As we have seen, it would be more correct to claim one of the following possibilities: (i) there is no epistemological dualism – Foucault's nihilist thesis and thesis about the “good knowledge of the oppressed,” when he is looking to establish a privileged epistemic position for the oppressed, are not at all epistemological, but rather belong to other disciplines (e.g. political activism and protest, raising awareness and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups), (ii) if the theses regarding “new” knowledge, as an attempt to reconcile new-and-old knowledge are in fact epistemological theses, then there is still no epistemological dualism in Foucault, but rather a contradiction, (iii) there is no epistemological dualism because Foucault is purportedly an epistemological revisionist and nihilist who, however, does not think that epistemic theory and a particular life practice are in any way connected.

Even if Mišćević was trying to be gentle in his characterization of Foucault by focusing on seeking to build bridges between the “old” and “new,” it is still possible to criticize him for uncritically accepting the possibility of reconciliation as legitimate. It turns out that reconciliation is not possible even when social epistemology incorporates nearly all of so-called Foucault's topics, simply because the reconciliation of contradictory positions – where objective knowledge at once both exists and does not – is not possible.²⁸ Moreover, we are inclined to make an even stronger claim, according to which it would be necessary to develop a far more critical position towards epistemic consequences issuing from the “new” and “new-and-old” knowledge theses. Devaluing epistemic standards of knowledge, rationality and justification as mere convention without objective value leads to neglect of “old” virtues of epistemic responsibility, intellectual virtue and other epistemic desiderata. The “counter-knowledge” movement deconstructs all epistemic values under the guise of radical critique.

The new-old dilemma Mišćević places before social epistemology is a

²⁷ Mišćević 2011a.

²⁸ In that sense we would even be willing to consider the zig-zag strategy. However theoretically unelaborated, in the end, it is merely a pragmatic solution: sometimes it is good to apply the criteria of old knowledge, and sometimes the new, without any elaboration of contextual reconciliation.

dilemma between revision/negation of epistemology and “real” social epistemology, a dilemma between counter-knowledge and knowledge. It is our contention that Mišćević has truly detected and presented what is a very complicated predicament for many. In our opinion, for social epistemology it would be far more fruitful to show new shades within the options of preservationism and expansionism, where we certainly side with expansionism (without destruction).

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