

## ARTICLE

**THE CREATION OF THE NOTION OF NORMALITY AND ITS HISTORICAL MEANINGS<sup>1</sup>****CAMILA BOTTERO CORRÊA<sup>1</sup>**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1440-2812>

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is part of a broader study that analyzed the discourses of school inclusion in official documents and how they enact strategies of governmentality on so-called normal subjects. Therefore, it was crucial to question the normality concept. This text presents how the notion of normality was historically produced and, together with it, the practices of in/exclusion focusing on the subjects considered normal. Our theoretical support is the studies of Michel Foucault, Lilia Lobo, and Georges Canguilhem, who questioned the notions of abnormality and norm. As a result, we built three historical meanings to the notion of normality related to the knowledge produced throughout a specific period: the transcendental ideal - evidenced in the Middle Ages and constituted by religious and/or divine knowledge, linked to the body and conduct of subjects; the scientific normality – founded by scientific knowledge, between the 16th and 18th centuries, which seems connected to the subjects' behaviors and, by the end of the 18th century, also to their intimacy; and the differential normalities- associated to science of State, to statistical knowledge, and a flexible norm, which operates in the security society. Two contemporary movements established this notion related to the same phenomenon: the naturalization of differences. The first refers to the creation and proliferation of differential normalities, and the second to the acceptance, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

**Keywords:** normality, norm, inclusion.

**A PRODUÇÃO DA NOÇÃO DE NORMALIDADE E SEUS SENTIDOS HISTÓRICOS**

**RESUMO:** Este artigo é recorte de uma pesquisa mais ampla que analisou discursos da inclusão escolar, em documentos oficiais, e o modo como operam estratégias de governo sobre os sujeitos ditos

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<sup>1</sup> Article published with funding from the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* - CNPq/Brazil for editing, layout and XML conversion services.

normais. Para isso, tensionar o conceito de normalidade foi fundamental à pesquisa. No presente texto, temos por objetivo apresentar como a noção de normalidade foi sendo produzida historicamente e junto a ela práticas de in/exclusão com ênfase no sujeito dito normal. Tomamos como suporte teórico os estudos realizados por Michel Foucault, Lília Lobo e Georges Canguilhem, autores que, em suas investigações, tensionaram as noções de anormalidade e norma. Como resultados, construímos três sentidos históricos relacionados à noção de normalidade, que se encontram imbricados com os saberes produzidos ao longo de cada época: o ideal transcendental – evidenciado na Idade Média e constituído pelos saberes religiosos e/ou divinos, estando vinculado ao corpo e à conduta dos sujeitos; a normalidade científica – constituída pelos saberes científicos, entre os séculos XVI e XVIII, vinculada ao comportamento dos sujeitos e, no fim do século XVIII, também se mostrando relacionada à sua intimidade; e as normalidades diferenciais – associadas a uma ciência de Estado, aos saberes estatísticos e a uma norma flexível, que entra em operação na sociedade de seguridade. Essa noção constitui-se a partir de dois movimentos relacionados a um mesmo fenômeno: o da naturalização das diferenças. O primeiro movimento refere-se à criação e proliferação de normalidades diferenciais, e o segundo movimento concerne à aceitação, à tolerância e ao respeito à diversidade.

**Palavras-chave:** normalidade, norma, inclusão.

## LA PRODUCCIÓN DE LA NOCIÓN DE NORMALIDAD Y SUS SENTIDOS HISTÓRICOS

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo es el recorte de una investigación más amplia que analizó discursos sobre la inclusión escolar, en documentos oficiales, y el modo como operan estrategias de gobernanza sobre los sujetos llamados normales. Para ello, tensionar el concepto de normalidad fue fundamental para la investigación. El presente texto tiene como objetivo presentar cómo se produjo históricamente la noción de normalidad y junto a ella prácticas de in/exclusión con énfasis en el sujeto llamado normal. Tomamos como soporte teórico los estudios realizados por Michel Foucault, Lília Lobo y Georges Canguilhem, autores que en sus investigaciones tensionaron las nociones de anormalidad y norma. Como resultados, construimos tres significados históricos relacionados con la noción de normalidad que se encuentran yuxtapuestos con los saberes producidos a lo largo de cada época: el ideal transcendental - evidenciado en la Edad Media y constituido por los saberes religiosos y/o divinos, vinculado al cuerpo y a la conducta de los sujetos; la normalidad científica – constituída por el conocimiento científico, entre los siglos XVI y XVIII, vinculada al comportamiento de los sujetos y, a fines del siglo XVIII, también se muestra relacionada con su intimidad; y normalidades diferenciales – asociada a una ciencia del Estado, a los saberes estadísticos y a una norma flexible, que entra en operación en la sociedad de seguridad. Esta noción se constituye a partir de dos movimientos contemporáneos relacionados con un mismo fenómeno: la naturalización de las diferencias. El primer movimiento se refiere a la creación y proliferación de normalidades diferenciales, y el segundo movimiento se refiere a la aceptación, tolerancia y respeto a la diversidad.

**Palabras clave:** normalidad, norma, inclusión

## TENSION OF THE CONCEPT OF NORMALITY

In Brazil, since the 1990s, we have seen a strengthening of discourses about inclusion, which have proliferated throughout society in campaigns, political speeches, social programs, advertisements, and a series of inclusive policies. These speeches aimed to raise awareness and convene the population, making it necessary to seek the right to school inclusion for all individuals. This emphasis was present in our country, at least until 2017 when we then witnessed a reconfiguration of such discourses today. In this research, we will not discuss this process of reconfiguration and attack on some rights historically achieved by people with disabilities, but we will focus on the historical period between the 1990s and 2016. We understand that, in this period, we faced inclusion as a state imperative, which became unquestionable, occupying a space of truth that affected our ways of being and living in the world<sup>2</sup>.

To show some of these discursive practices disseminated during this period, we highlight below some speeches presented in a magazine with wide circulation in most schools and among education professionals:

There will never be an inclusive society if we do not have a transformative school. It is up to the school, together with the family, to plant the seeds of a more ethical citizen. Inclusion is, above all, a question of ethics. (NOVA ESCOLA, 1997, p. 57).

Preparing the inclusive school: the first step is to raise awareness and train all the institution's employees: teachers, counselors, and all the staff who work there. It is also extremely important to raise awareness among parents – especially those of non-disabled children. Everyone must play an active role in the inclusion process. (INCLUSÃO, 1999, p. 12).

Through the highlighted speeches, it is possible to highlight a call for everyone to commit to inclusion, a need for it to be accepted by everyone and put into operation by them. When we look at the speeches, we know that they were not always present in this way. If, for a long time, the abnormal<sup>3</sup> were the focus of inclusive discourses and practices, especially throughout the 2000s, we saw the emphasis fall on the so-called normal, who became responsible for making inclusion happen.

Based on Michel Foucault's contributions, when considering that discourses are not neutral, we understand that they are related to a broader discursive logic that determines a set of rules that will provide conditions for the functioning of discourse and that will control what can be said at a certain time, because:

[...] In every society, the production of discourse is at the same time controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose function is to conjure its powers and dangers, to dominate its random event, to avoid its heavy and fearful materiality. (FOUCAULT, 2013, p. 8-9).

Given this, we understand that inclusion has been constituted through some practices that convene and mobilize the population, expressing truths relating to something that belongs to a broader discursive logic, generating effects on all individuals, with emphasis on the so-called normal individual.

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<sup>2</sup> To understand the contemporary reconfiguration of the inclusion imperative, which we have witnessed in recent years, we recommend: LOCKMANN, Kamila. As reconfigurações do imperativo da inclusão no contexto de uma governamentalidade neoliberal conservadora. *Pedagogia y Saberes*, p. 67-75, 2019

<sup>3</sup> As Veiga-Neto (2011, p. 105), we borrowed this word from Foucault (2001), who uses it “[...] to designate these increasingly varied and numerous groups that modernity comes from, tirelessly and incessantly, inventing and multiplying: the syndromic, disabled, monsters and psychopaths (in all their varied typologies), the deaf, the blind, the crippled, the rebellious, the unintelligent, the strange, the GLSiii, the 'others', the miserable, the refuse at last.”

Based on these understandings, we began the investigation that sought to analyze “how the discourses of school inclusion, materialized in official documents, put into operation governance strategies that operate on the normal”.

As the so-called normal is the object of research, it became essential to stress the very concept of normality to understand how the emphasis on inclusive practices came to fall on these subjects. Thus, based on approaches to post-structuralist authors and the contributions of Michel Foucault on the concept of norm, in this article we propose to present how the notion of normality was produced historically and along with it how they were configured practices with an emphasis on the so-called normal subject that allow us to think and problematize inclusion.

For this purpose, it is important to emphasize that we do not seek to carry out historical research but rather to make a historical retreat composed of the selection of some fragments from different eras. This choice is based on some understandings regarding history, used by Michel Foucault and identified in his historical studies, as we will see below.

## **RETURN TO THE PAST TO PROBLEMATIZE THE PRESENT: QUESTIONS OF METHOD**

The historical retreat that we seek to employ is intended to select some historical fragments from different eras, in which it is possible to see how normality was produced and how inclusive practices came to have their emphasis on the normal. To do this, we rely on some questions of method that we identified as being used by Michel Foucault in his historical studies: the problematization of the truth status of history; the non-evolutionary and linear character attributed to historical events; and the non-existence of universals.

The first question of method that we would like to make explicit is the problematization of the status of truth that history has, “the illusions involved in this game of telling the past, as if it were direct contact with the dead, believing that it reveals what is fact' happened.” (RAGO, 2005, p. 258).

By turning to historical events, we understand that history is not neutral. Composed of a selection of events, it is produced in and by power relations that are woven in certain historical times, manifesting a type of rationality. History cannot be understood as a set of facts that, as great revealers of true essence, would be capable of showing what happened in past times, as it must be considered that each rationality puts into operation an order that will lead the gaze of the subject-historian, so that, at a given time, certain events will become more relevant to the point of composing it.

We understand that to construct a problematization of the present, not only to understand how certain discourses and specific ways of life were constituted but also to think about new ways of living, it is necessary to look at history, thus:

[...] be free from certain representations of the past, from procedures that lead to certain effects, power relations, in short, from authoritarian constructions of the past – especially those that are supposed to be the only true ones – and that, beyond the subjects excluded, suppress direct contact with the experiences of freedom, invented and enjoyed by our ancestors. (RAGO, 2005, p. 261)

Therefore, when taking a step back into the past, we do not intend to carry out a chronological description of glorious historical events in the search for an origin or a cause-effect relationship – to say what is understood today by normality and inclusion –, but to denaturalize the facts. Thus, it is about looking at history with the aim of “marking the singularity of events, far from any monotonous finality; to look for

them where they were least expected and in what is considered to have no history.” (FOUCAULT, 2014, p. 55). It is also about showing infamous practices, considered irrelevant to be discussed, to the point of gaining prestige or fame in history books.

The second question of method that Michel Foucault's studies provide, and which we would like to clarify, refers to the non-evolutionary and linear character attributed to historical events. It is understood as a set of complex events that occur at different times, seen in their discontinuities, their ruptures, their points of emergence, as well as the conditions of multiple possibilities in which other events arise, as it is recognized that “what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the still preserved identity of the origin – it is the discord between things, it is nonsense.” (FOUCAULT, 2014, p. 59). Looking at history from this perspective is recognizing that it is made up of events built amid complex networks of contingencies, permeated by power relations, where clashes of forces, disputes, and conflicts occur. As Foucault (2014, p. 83) points out:

History, genealogically directed, does not aim to rediscover the roots of our identity, but, on the contrary, to insist on dissipating it; it does not intend to demarcate the unique territory from which we came, that first homeland to which metaphysicians promise we will return; it intends to make all the discontinuities that cross us.

Finally, the last question of the method that we will explain refers to the non-existence of universals. In the course *Birth of Biopolitics*, in 1979, Michel Foucault gives an example of the way he analyzed historical events to investigate madness, making it clear that he did not look for its existence in history. On the contrary, his questions abandoned this concept and started from the assumption of its non-existence, to analyze the different events and different historical practices that were based on the idea of madness and that produced it in certain historical moments.

By proposing this historical retreat, we move away from any previous concept created about normality, precisely advocating the inversion of this logic that permeates several works on inclusion. Instead of problematizing abnormality, taking normality as natural, we propose to carry out the opposite movement: looking at the production of meanings given to abnormality to problematize the construction of the notion of normality. In this way, it is about denaturalizing it, abandoning the idea that it is something that is given, to show how it was produced in different historical moments.

This seems to be a powerful movement to be used in this historical retreat since there is a greater emphasis on research and discussions on the constitution of the notion of abnormality and the production of the abnormal subject. As an example of this, we highlight the work *Abnormal* by Michel Foucault, in which the author makes a historical study of the three figures that constitute the field of anomaly. We highlight this work because, from this study, it is observed that, in a correlated way with the appearance of certain meanings constructed about abnormality, notions of normality were also constituted; that is, the notions of abnormality and normality not only arise in the same historical period, but both are mutually constituted in a relationship of immanence, as each of them justifies the existence of the other.

To show how the notion of normality was constituted historically, it was necessary to explore the historical studies of Michel Foucault, Lilia Lobo, and Georges Canguilhem. The choice of these authors was due to their discussions on the notions of norm, normality, and abnormality. Based on these studies, it was possible to construct three categories that express historical notions and meanings related to normality, which we named: transcendental ideal, scientific normality, and differential normality. Each of these notions has particularities, as they are related to specific knowledge that began to be produced and scrutinized

throughout each era. Next, we explore each of them in their specificity, starting with the transcendental ideal.

## THE TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAL

In the Middle Ages, we perceive the existence of a transcendental ideal, constituted by religious knowledge and divine principles, which functioned as a system of rules understood as natural, which determined ideal ways of being for the individuals. These ideals were related, with more emphasis, to the recognition of physical forms linked to the subjects' bodies and, also, to their conduct, considering certain behaviors as natural to human beings.

Regarding the subjects' bodies, we can say that divine knowledge, was understood as a work of nature, since man was associated with the “image and likeness of God, therefore, being perfect” (FERNANDES; SCHLESENER; MOSQUERA, 2011, p. 135). The idea of divine perfection attributed to the body was based on a series of visible characteristics that were frequent – and for this reason were understood as natural – among subjects in terms of structure, such as the number of limbs. If it is possible to make such a statement, it is because we know that, in a correlated way with this body ideal, there is the existence of a rare phenomenon, the emergence of a deformed body that was understood as “not only a violation of the laws of society but a violation of the laws of nature.” (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 69).

Transgressions to divine principles appear with deformities that “were perceived through external signs of the body – crooked legs, extra fingers, misshapen feet.” (BENVENUTO, 2006, p. 231). However, the appearance of what Foucault (2001) calls the “human monster<sup>4</sup>” not only represented the disorder of differences that defined what species, gender, and kingdom would be, but also, above all, the terrible conditions of the soul. Their deformities were explained by divine knowledge as the manifestation of God's wrath, a divine punishment, due to man's transgressions of religious precepts, such as depravity and unnatural coitus, that is, sexual relations between a man and an animal (LOBO, 2008). According to Canguilhem's notes (2012, p. 190):

[...] The Middle Ages preserved the identification of the monstrous with the criminal but enriched it with a reference to the diabolical. The monster is at the same time the effect of an infraction of the specific sexual segregation rule and the indication of a desire to pervert the situation of creatures.

Given this, what we can say, firstly, is that everything that escaped the religious order, in physical terms of the body, was explained by religious knowledge as an aberration, divine punishment, action of the devil, or was related to impurity and sin (FRANCE, 2014). Secondly, from the divine explanations given to the transgressions of his orders, we can observe the existence of a transcendental ideal that was not only associated with the bodily characteristics of the subjects but also with how they conducted themselves.

What we name as a transcendental ideal is also related to conduct that was guided by divine principles, to subjects who showed themselves to be prudent because they could manage their wills, recognizing, in obedience to this knowledge, the path to their salvation and happiness (MACHADO, 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> From the Middle Ages to the 18th century, the monster was a mixture. He was “[...] the mix of two kingdoms, the animal kingdom and the human kingdom: the man with the head of an ox, the man with the feet of a bird [...] the mixture of two species [...]: the pig with the head of a ram [...] the mix of two individuals: the one with two heads and one body, the one with two bodies and one head [...] the mix of two sexes: who is at the same man and woman time. [...] In short, it is a mix of forms: anyone who has no arms or legs, like a snake, is a monster.” (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 79).



To guarantee their salvation in another world and the purification of the soul, subjects needed to strictly follow the rules of conduct imposed by divine principles. Among the common practices of that time were “fasting, abstinence, and self-flagellation, [...] whose main objective was the purification of the soul [...]” (CASSIMIRO; GALDINO; SÁ, 2012, p. 73), as well as “care for the naked, with excess food, 'gluttony', with bodily practices (sex, in particular) and sports (showing the body in public) [...]” (LE GOFF; TRUONG, 2010, p. 610), among others.

In this sense, we understand that to correspond to this ideal, it was not enough for individuals to have a body with characteristics understood as natural; it was still necessary to behave following religious principles that allowed the purification of the soul. This is evident since the so-called madmen and the deaf were also examples of divine transgressions and, therefore, of the existence of monstrosity in the Middle Ages. Although they did not present visible characteristics such as deformities, their behaviors were seen as a disorder of the spirit, of the soul, as they transgressed natural, moral, and divine principles. The way crazy and deaf people communicated and related to other subjects demonstrated the “counter-nature” of their actions. Compared to animals in the wild, these subjects did not present divine regularities such as language and reason (BENVENUTO, 2006).

We can say that, in the Middle Ages, the existence of a transcendental ideal was constructed based on religious or divine knowledge, both in terms of materialization in the body and its visibility and in the way in which subjects behaved.

From the end of the 16th century and throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, divine knowledge no longer constituted the main paradigm. They cease to be the main way in which subjects organize themselves, explain, and understand the world. The concept of disciplinary turn, is “a phenomenon that occurred in the 16th century in which a new regime of truth was established, creating new knowledge not only about the world but also — and here the biggest novelty — about how to put order in the world” (VEIGA-NETO, 1996, p. 151), helps to think about how in this context the existence of a transcendental ideal begins to gain a new meaning and to constitute itself as a notion of normality, as we will see below.

## **THE NOTION OF SCIENTIFIC NORMALITY**

With the expansion of disciplines in another axis, the knowledge, Science begins to constitute itself as another regime of truth. During the 17th and 18th centuries, we saw what Nietzsche (2004) points out as an exchange of idols: “On one side there is God, a superior being, bringing us the idea of transcendence; on the other is Science, marking legitimate knowledge.” (HENNING; CHASSOT, 2009, p. 420). Thus, during this period, the truth, previously allocated to God, now begins to be explained by Science and by Reason. As Pooli (2014, p. 2) points out, “God is giving way to reason as an explanatory and guiding principle of social life, where new technologies of control, discipline, guidance, and specific instrumentalization will be invented for the configuration of a new society.”.

The body and behavior of the subjects explained by divine knowledge and principles become the object of study of scientific knowledge, which seeks to produce detailed descriptions of the subjects. In this context, man becomes the one who needs to be separated from his “nature” and distanced from his animality. He “will have to convert to being ‘civilized’, to being increasingly individualized.” (VARELA, 2000, p. 80). As Veiga-Neto (1996, p. 113) points out,

In behavioral terms, then, civilized people come to be understood as those who disciplinedly

follow a detailed code that prescribes, in a very detailed way, what can and cannot be done and said publicly; is one that obeys, preferably automatically, an extensive set of practical permission and prohibition rules.

The transcendental ideal gains a “scientific status”. If, in the Middle Ages, the subjects' behaviors were associated with the disciplines that existed and operated on the corporal axis<sup>5</sup>, linked to religious knowledge, now they are explained by scientific knowledge associated with the disciplines, to constitute an order based on certain standards, such as moral and health, which serve to position the subjects. What was seen as an aberration, the work of the devil, or a transgression of nature, began to be explained by scientific knowledge and classified as a disease.

The emergence of this notion that we call scientific normality is associated with the disciplinaryization of knowledge, a disciplinary society, and the constitution of a fixed and prior norm that “[...] will designate at the same time a certain type of rules, a way of producing them and, above all, a principle of valorization.” (EWALD, 1993, p. 79). This new notion of normality appears, therefore, in the displacement of a society that starts to function not only through sovereignty and its laws but through disciplinary mechanisms and the establishment of norms produced from the techniques that describe and monitor “human bodies and subject them by making them objects of knowledge.” (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 31-32).

Scientific normality is constituted through the body in its physical form and, mainly, through the daily behaviors of everyone, which begin to be analyzed based on scientific knowledge, such as medicine and/or psychiatry. Therefore, it is important “at every moment to monitor each person’s behavior, appreciate it, sanction it, measure its qualities or merits.” (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 169). After all, this is what will be considered in social organization. It will not be so much a nature or a supposed essence of the individuals, as was possible to observe in the transcendental ideal – especially because the concern becomes with the social organization of this world, and not with the salvation of the soul in another. What becomes relevant for the definition of normality at this time will be a prior rule established based on this knowledge, which will define normal behavior, allowing the regulation of what is desired as acceptable for living in society.

The production of detailed knowledge about individuals will produce this valid and desirable measure, which is called the norm. It will be how subjects become comparable, a common measure that equalizes at the same time as it makes unequal; that is, it will allow subjects to come closer to a rule, while, in the same way, it makes it possible to make a distinction between those who do not come close. In this way, the norm makes each individual comparable to another and allows subjects to recognize themselves as different from each other, “acting either by provoking actions that homogenize people or by provoking actions that exalt differences based on community references.” (LOPES; FABRIS, 2013, p. 42).

In a disciplinary society, the norm is fixed, previously established as a kind of model. It has a prescriptive character. From there, “the determination and identification of normal and abnormal become possible.” (FOUCAULT, 2008b, p. 75). The notion of scientific normality is constituted in the practice of the disciplinary norm. In this practice, there is first a definition of the norm as a permanent condition, a model, and then an identification of the subjects in a dichotomous way. The process of disciplinary

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<sup>5</sup> As pointed out in the thesis *The Order of Disciplines, in the Middle Ages* “the uses of the word discipline leaned in favor of the corporal axis” (VEIGA-NETO, 1996, p. 112). In many European languages, disciplines were a term used to designate “an instrument with which friars and believers whipped themselves for penance or punishment.” (VEIGA-NETO, 1996, p. 112).



normalization “[...] consists of seeking to make people, gestures, acts conform to this model, with the normal being precisely those who are capable of conforming to this norm and the abnormal being those who are not capable.” (FOUCAULT, 2008b, p. 75).

In this sense, everyone becomes a case, being subject to a process of individualization. In this way, “normal and abnormal are recognized not as the antithesis of each other, but as elements that form counter sides of the same coin.” (FREITAS, 2012, p. 488). The practices of the disciplinary norm do not consider something external to it, normal and abnormal; both are considered by the norm, it “integrates everything that would exceed it – nothing, nor anyone, whatever the difference they may exhibit, can ever claim to be exterior, claim an alterity such that it makes them another.” (EWALD, 1993, p. 87).

Given this, we can say that the notion of scientific normality will be constituted as a condition, a state of adequacy to a rule imposed on subjects through a disciplinary norm that will present a model considered ideal to individuals. The effects of this standardization that come to constitute this notion of normality can be seen in historical events, firstly, within the family, in their educational investments, and in the pedagogical techniques that were slowly developed in the 18th century (FOUCAULT, 2001). Based on this model, observable mainly in these two contexts, family and school, subjects will be positioned as normal or abnormal, and, for the latter, those who escape the notion of normality, other actions will be considered, as we can observe from the case of the incorrigible.

The model of the transgression of scientific normality will not be so much the human monster, as was possible to observe in the transcendental ideal, but what Michel Foucault called the “individual to be corrected”. Correlated to this constitution of scientific normality, a variety of disciplinary mechanisms of correction and normalization are put into operation to act on subjects who escape this notion of normality. The individual to be corrected is an example of these subjects. It becomes that difficult to determine. Its definition will be because it does not adapt to certain social rules, the failure of family techniques, and educational investments. The incorrigible through their behavior will transgress an entire apparatus that tends to discipline subjects, that is, a whole series of behavioral rules for living in society. He is a subject who constitutes himself in this game of correctable and incorrigible, demanding a new technology with other knowledge, procedures, and interventions that, in the 19th century, began to develop to bring them closer to this notion of normality.

With the refinement and proliferation of different fields of knowledge, such as medicine, biology, and psi knowledge, at the end of the 18th century, the search for explanations for behaviors that transgressed and/or threatened the social order. However, in this context, the notion of scientific normality not only appears associated with knowledge about the scrutinized body and the subjects' disciplined behaviors but also starts to consider the relationships that the individual establishes with himself. This is an unfolding of this scientific normality. If from the 16th century onwards, as we have shown previously, normality and the normal subject were defined with more emphasis based on behavioral and/or social norms produced by scientific knowledge, at the end of the 18th century, the refinement of this knowledge and the search for explanations about deviant behaviors invades the human psyche and moves to another pole of this scientific normality. This pole starts to consider what is not visible in the individual, that is, the thoughts, emotions, desires, and experiences, in short, everything that constitutes the subject's intimacy and, therefore, can be considered as their truth. It is the exposed intimacy of the subject that will be captured by scientific knowledge.

In this way, the notion of normality suffers an important shift. What was understood by

religious and/or divine knowledge as “things of the soul” starts to be ordered, classified, and categorized by knowledge in the field of psi and medicine. In modernity, it is observed that the “things of the soul” will then be elements

“[...] in which the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of knowledge are articulated, the mechanism through which power relations give way to possible knowledge, and knowledge redirects and reinforces the effects of power. On this reference reality, several concepts were constructed, and fields of analysis were demarcated: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc.; scientific techniques and discourses were built upon it; [...] (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 33).

Based on this knowledge, what was understood by religious knowledge as the soul comes to be considered as the subjectivity, personality, and/or consciousness of the subject. Such instances will be strictly related to how each person acts, lives, and conducts in society and, therefore, seen as important elements to be studied. We observe that the subjectivity of subjects begins to be consulted, interrogated, and understood as the truth they carry about themselves, to the point of being legitimized and gaining scientific status to explain their conduct and frame them in a state of normality or abnormality.

If this occurs, it is because, in the search for explanations about transgressive conduct, it was believed that behavioral and/or social norms should “have their origin investigated, discovered, revealed.” (MAGALHÃES, 2012, p. 34). Therefore, scientific knowledge – among which psi and medical knowledge stand out – invested and put into operation strategies that did not function only as healing or correction techniques, but as understanding and prevention techniques. Scientific knowledge begins to capture and frame transgressive conduct into medical-psychiatric categories, so that subjects are treated and/or cured of their addictions, that is, to bring them as close to this notion of scientific normality.

The model of transgression of this normality can be observed through the example of the masturbating child, analyzed by Michel Foucault. In this example, it is possible to visualize a series of practices that are put into operation from the doctor-family relationship to contain children's masturbation. Families become part of medical rationality and are instructed to monitor their children, to prevent the practice of masturbation from occurring, since it will be the cause of “all possible illnesses.” (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 302). If this practice is discovered by parents, the doctor will have to intervene. As Foucault (2001, p. 317) shows us,

Parents must, therefore, watch, spy, tiptoe around, lift covers, and sleep next to their child; but, once the illness is discovered, they must make the doctor intervene immediately to cure it. Now, this cure will only be true and effective if the patient accepts it and participates. The patient must recognize his illness; he must understand its consequences; he has to accept the treatment. In short, he must confess. Now, it is very well said, in all the texts of this crusade, that the child cannot and should not make this revelation to their parents. You can only ask the doctor: “Of all the evidence – says Deslandes –, the most important thing to acquire is a confession.” Because confession eliminates “every kind of doubt”. It makes the doctor's action “more frank” and “more effective”. It prevents the subject from refusing treatment. It puts the doctor and “all people in authority [...] in a position that allows them to get straight to the point, and therefore to be successful.”.

We can say that, based on these practices, knowledge can transform what makes up the subject's intimacy into a precise act, into an affirmation, into a kind of “proof”, allowing the transgressive conduct to be psychiatrized. The masturbating child appears as a universal subject in a context where sexuality and masturbation are recognized as a discourse and practice that must remain prohibited due to the harm they can cause. The practice of masturbation and the manifestation of sexuality, initially seen by religious knowledge as the sin of a man committed against the flesh, his body, and soul, will be captured in modernity by the field of medicine, being linked by doctors as the root of many ailments, such as bodily and

psychological illnesses. In this sense, they will be understood:

as the possible root, or even the real root, of almost all possible evils. [...] it is the kind of polyvalent causality to which one can link, and to which the doctors of the 18th century will immediately link all the paraphernalia, the entire arsenal of bodily illnesses, nervous illnesses, and psychic illnesses. In the end, there was practically no disease in the pathology of the late 18th century that, in one way or another, did not arise from this etiology, that is, from sexual etiology. (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 75).

Using the example of this figure, masturbation, and sexuality can be observed not only as conduct that transgresses the social norms imposed and seen as desirable in society but also, based on them, an entire process of pathologization of certain forms of life. As Canguilhem (2009, p. 56) points out, “a living being is normal in a given environment to the extent that it is the morphological and functional solution found by life to respond to all the demands of the environment.”

In this way, the notion of normality will be constituted as a normative activity, since “normative is understood to be any judgment that assesses or qualifies a fact about a norm, but this form of judgment is subordinated, in essence, in which establishes the standards. In the full sense of the word, normative is what establishes norms.” (CANGUILHEM, 2009, p. 48). Therefore, we understand that normality will be manufactured by norms that will be invented by those who at this time have the authority to institute them. Therefore, “there is no fact that is normal or pathological. Anomaly and mutation are not pathological. They express other possible norms of life. [...] The pathological is not the absence of a biological norm, it is a different norm.” (CANGUILHEM, 2009, p. 59).

Given the above, we understand that the notion of normality will be attributed to subjects who can incorporate the behavioral and/or social, moral, and health standards imposed by society as a way of life. It will not be only obedience to these norms that will allow the attribution of normality to subjects. It is necessary not only to obey them, “[...] but also to produce and make public the truth about oneself [...]” (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 156). Show your inner self, recognize yourself in balance with these norms, and incorporate them as your truth.

This is scientific normality. As we showed previously, this notion of normality appeared, initially, between the 16th and 18th centuries, linked to the behaviors of subjects that are following the social norms imposed by scientific knowledge. In a second moment, at the end of the 18th century, this notion of normality also appears linked to the intimacy of the subjects, which starts to be captured by scientific knowledge and following the norms imposed by this knowledge. The behavior and intimacy of the subjects are elements that make up these two moments that characterize the notion of scientific normality. Although they show different ways of defining the normality of subjects, both characterize scientific normality due to the immanent relationship they establish between them. In this way, we understand that the normal subject will not be the one who only obeys the moral and social norms of conduct, but the one who incorporates them, making them his way of life. It will be scientifically recognized as having a healthy biological origin and, at the same time, a psychic balance that makes them capable of self-management, accepting these regulations as their truth.

The forms of scientific normality that developed until the 18th century had an individual emphasis, seeking explanations in scientific knowledge about individual phenomena expressed in the subject's body, behavior, and intimacy. From the 18th century onwards, in the transition from a disciplinary society to a security or control society, such phenomena became part of a new field of problematization and became associated with the whole, the group, the collective, and not just the individual. This was

possible due to the emergence of a new type of body, “a body with multiple heads”, that is, the notion of the population as a set of people with their phenomena and regularities about which new knowledge became necessary. We began to consider not only the individual at the level of detail, as is possible to see with the disciplines, but also the biological processes of this body species.

As this notion of population is constituted, it becomes increasingly necessary to produce knowledge and strategies that deal with the biological processes of this body-species, “the relationships between these heads, their approximations, their differences, their regularities.” (VEIGA-NETO, 2011, p. 114). Thus, a whole concern arises around the phenomena that are characteristic of life, and tools such as statistical knowledge and social medicine emerge to explain, name, understand, and control this multiple body and the actions of subjects based on risk calculations, estimates, and probabilities. Given this context, the notion of normality becomes more complex, becoming plural, as we will see below.

## **THE NOTION OF DIFFERENTIAL NORMALITIES**

From the 18th century onwards, the notion of normality became associated with a state science, consisting of statistical knowledge and a flexible norm, which came into operation in the security society. In this context, this other notion of normality is constituted by two important contemporary movements that appear related to the same phenomenon: the naturalization of differences. The first movement refers to the creation and proliferation of differential normality and the second movement concerns acceptance, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

In this first movement, related to the phenomenon of naturalization of differences, the notion of normality begins to be constituted in the field of economic and State sciences, through the production of statistical knowledge about the population, and to be deduced from them. Through statistical studies, knowledge is created about the population that will map regularities present in groups or communities, producing a kind of “normal average” for each of these groups. The notion of normality will be linked to the normal average of each group, which allows the development of a process of creation and proliferation of norms that aim not at a distinction and/or demarcation between normal and abnormal, as we see with the disciplines, but much more an identification between the two. Therefore, we understand that the norm in the security society will act “in the pluralization of models that must be a reference so that everyone can position themselves within local limits, and about each other.” (LOPES; FABRIS, 2013, p. 42).

In the security society, the norm will then be established “within differential normality. The normal is what comes first, and the norm is deduced from it, or it is from this study of normality that the norm is fixed and plays its operative role.” (FOUCAULT, 2008b, p. 83). We cannot, therefore, speak about normality, considering the existence of a norm a priori, but about “normalities”, since it is from the indication of normal in each context and group that there is a determination, construction, and proliferation of norms. Everyone will be captured and included according to certain criteria constructed within social groups. We understand, therefore, that the standard will be produced according to group variations. Each of them can and does create new “normalities” to meet certain social demands and rules, allowing individuals to be able to circulate, be part of, and act in different social spaces.

In this case, we observe that the action of the security standard not only enables a proliferation of standards, but also, and we can say much more, an expansion of the standard since in the normalization processes “the movement does not start from the standard, but, on the contrary, it makes it a 'gradient', or rather, a possibility of expanding the norm and making it flexible for other frameworks that escape the

'normal/abnormal' dichotomy.” (RECH, 2010, p. 75). Each subject, regardless of all differences, therefore, becomes included in a different position or situation, to occupy a place in the normality zone. *Normals* and *abnormals* are, in this way, included in “different levels of participation or gradients of inclusion.” (LOPES et al., 2010, p. 5).

In a security society, the practices that are put into operation falling on the normalization processes of abnormal subjects continue to exist, as we can see in the disciplinary society. However, what is new is that the emphasis of these practices does not fall solely on these abnormal subjects. For the abnormal to occupy and remain in this zone of normality, it is necessary to “normalize the flows that can hinder their development and internal and external articulation.” (LOPES et al., 2010, p. 12). With this, perhaps we can say that the emphasis of practices in a security society falls on the processes and strategies of subjectivation, acting on normal subjects to promote and effect acceptance of the presence of the other. As Rech (2010, p. 75) points out,

[...] The objective is to ensure that the individual is normalized through the naturalization of their presence and fits into one of the distributions allowed by the normality curve. In other words, it is necessary for the “abnormal” to occupy a place on this curve to allow its recognition in society. For this recognition to happen in a “natural” way, the population needs to be educated to recognize this so-called “abnormal” and live with it without being surprised. The objective is to make it able to accept its presence.

The production of these differential “normalities” will not occur only by normalizing the abnormal, or better yet, by placing them within a zone of normality. In addition to a demarcation of subjects, as occurs in disciplinary society, for the abnormal subject to be included in different levels of participation and/or gradients of inclusion, they must be recognized by society, for their presence to be accepted. Therefore, other interventions on the subjects become necessary, especially those aimed at normal people. We have the second movement related to the phenomenon of naturalization of differences, which consists of the acceptance of all differences. It is no longer a question of correcting, but of accepting. The notion of normality in contemporary times is constituted by processes and strategies that are not restricted to positioning normal and abnormal, but that focus on normals to subjectify them to accept the presence of the other. An example of this is slogans such as “being different is normal”, present in most of the discourses that proliferate throughout society, and which come to constitute normality in contact with others.

By this, we do not mean that normality is no longer an adaptation to a rule. It will continue to be determined by actions that are imposed on people. However, in contemporary times, this is not the only thing that will constitute this new notion of normality, which we name here as differential “normalities”. What will also determine it, and we can say with more emphasis, will be the strategies put into operation, which allow normal people to develop actions on themselves. Given this, the notion of normality in contemporary times does not appear to be a permanent condition, as is possible to observe in disciplinary society. It is no longer imposed, “its power is based on the seduction of the individual with promises of health, happiness, longevity and beauty.” (MISKOLCI, 2003, p. 124).

If it is possible to think about the construction of this notion of contemporary plural normality based on the actions that subjects develop on themselves, it is due to the existence of an economic government that is strictly related to neoliberal principles. In the neoliberal context, we understand that there is a radicalization of the economic field, that is, the social body becomes part of this field. It is “not an economic government, like the one the physiocrats dreamed of, that is, the government only has to



recognize economic laws; It is not an economic government, it is a government of society.” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 199).

Based on the understanding of Foucault (2008a), we understand that neoliberalism is not just a simple economic theory. Neoliberal principles will be incorporated into subjects, also constituting a way of life, as the “science of human behavior.” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 306). This knowledge is applied in an analysis of behaviors, and conduct, in short, in all social and affective aspects of individuals in a society. Each subject becomes an important piece for the functioning of neoliberalism. Everyone needs to be economically active so that they know how to manage themselves to produce useful tools for the State – in other words, everyone needs to occupy a level of participation, a gradient of inclusion, in society.

Given this, we observe that inclusive strategies and discourses extend to an entire social body, also operating on normal subjects to make them sensitive and tolerant to live in a society where “subjects become responsible, not only for the management of their lives but also for the community [...]”. (HATTIGE, 2007, p. 198). In this context, all subjects become, in this way, an extension of the State, developing governance actions, and conducting behaviors towards others and themselves.

Differential “normalities” are, in this sense, constituted in “a space of fragile, malleable and negotiable borders according to the desires of the subjects and the groups they integrate.” (LOPES; FABRIS, 2013, p. 45). Based on the determinations of each group, new notions of normality can emerge and be recognized as such. We realize that the notion of normality, linked to disciplinary society, broadens, and encompasses a variety of types and forms, building the notion of differential “normalities”.

From this expansion of the notion of normality, the notion of differential “normalities” appears, differences become naturalized and the processes of acceptance and respect for differences become necessary for the functioning of the security society. Therefore, normal subjects must accept, respect, and become aware of the presence of others, of difference, of the multiple ways of being that now make up this notion of multiple and expanded normality. With this in mind, we see in contemporary times a series of inclusive strategies producing what Menezes (2010) calls inclusive subjectivities, which are characterized by “behaviors, principles, and ways of life responsible for the need to return to oneself and others, in search of conditions for participation (in social practices, in social groups, in social spaces) [...]” (MENEZES, 2010, p. 7).

Therefore, we observe the non-fixity of the processes that begin to constitute the expansion of the notion of normality, giving rise to the notion of differential “normalities”, as well as a series of inclusive discourses and practices that put into operation the phenomenon of the naturalization of differences, having as targets so-called normal subjects.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the discussions and analyses presented in this article, we seek to show how normality was produced and inclusive discourses and practices began to emphasize normal subjects. From the historical retreat in which some historical fragments from different eras were selected, it was possible to identify three historical meanings related to normality, which are related to the knowledge produced throughout each era, which are: the transcendental ideal, scientific normality, and differential normalities.

As it was possible to observe, the transcendental ideal was evident in the Middle Ages and is constituted by religious and/or divine knowledge, being linked to the body, and conduct of the subjects.



Those who had a body with common physical characteristics, understood by religious knowledge as the natural body, and who managed their conduct following religious principles, guaranteeing the purification of the soul in the other world, were those who corresponded to the transcendental ideal. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, we observed that the transcendental ideal gained a “scientific status”, which enabled the emergence of the notion of scientific normality. This appears linked to the behavior of the subjects and, at the end of the 18th century, it also appears to be related to their intimacy. The place of normality occupied those who presented behaviors following moral and social norms and who incorporated them, making them their way of life.

In the analyses, we saw that, if it was possible to highlight such notions, it is because, in the historical studies analyzed, deviations and the figure of abnormality were identified. Given the above, we understand that normality and abnormality are social and historical constructions that were constituted in a correlated way so that one justifies the existence of the other. Furthermore, from the studies analyzed, it was possible to identify, when the transcendental ideal and the notion of scientific normality were presented, an emphasis on discourses that explained deviations and abnormality, as well as the existence of in/exclusion practices, which had the purpose of focus, therefore, on abnormal subjects.

From the 18th century onwards, the notion of normality began to become more complex. Associated with a State science, statistical knowledge, and a flexible norm, which comes into operation in the security society, this other notion of normality, named differential “normalities”, is constituted from two contemporary movements related to the same phenomenon: that of naturalizing differences. The first movement refers to the creation and proliferation of differential “normalities”, and the second movement concerns acceptance, tolerance, and respect for diversity. In this notion there is a broadening of the concept of normality, normal does not occupy a permanent condition. Everyone moves between the normality zone, occupying inclusion gradients. We thus see a series of discourses and practices that seek to recognize all subjects and their differences, with the emphasis on sensitizing everyone – especially those considered normal, those closest to the zone of normality – to the recognition of plural normality.

Finally, we highlight that with this article it was possible to show how the concept of (a)normality is socially and historically constituted. If we take the notion of normality by itself in this way, it will be nothing more than an empty meaning. As a condition, normality has no meaning or meaning if it is not in conjunction with a norm and the society in which it operates. The same goes for normal. What is normal? Or who is a normal guy? There is no essence or nature in these concepts; normality, as well as the normal, are abstractions, constructions, and dated inventions, which change in space and time. Normality cannot be understood as a pre-defined concept, but as a notion in which meanings are attributed – provisional and changeable – by the knowledge/power relations produced in each historical period and following such relations.

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**Submitted:** 08/04/2023

**Approved:** 04/01/2024

**Preprint:** 05/20/2022

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

Author 1 – Production and analysis of data and writing of the text.

Author 2 – Research guidance, participation in data analysis, writing and final review.

## **DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.