

A Foucauldian Analysis of Power, Culture and Politics

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Abstract

Michel Foucault, in his philosophical discourse, examined the changes in history and the ways in which power is used in society from a unique perspective. He clarifies the powers used in the traditional social order and how these powers subject people to the bio-power and bio-politics of the state and government. In the manner of idealistic thought, he explains how power functions in society and how its structure impacts many facets of society. The purpose of this article, in light of Michel Foucault's philosophy, is to analyze how power functions in culture, space, and history as well as how, from the interdependence of truth and power, a power system evolves over time to create a culture.

Introduction

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) places the greatest emphasis on experience in postmodern philosophy. Through the linguistic emergence of change he overemphasizes the meaning of the concept rather than the global impact of the concept. It is this historical foresight or archeology that Foucault is most interested in. His most important literary works are *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), *The History of Sexuality* (1976). The childhood of the boys and girls of any generation is formed in the light of the various historical events of the time. The horror of war formed the background of Michel Foucault's existence. Perhaps this is why, according to Foucault himself, he was more enthusiastic about history and the relationship between experience and events. In 1971 he and some of his friends formed a group called the Group d'information sur les Prisons. Since then he has been involved in politics for the rest of his life working on prison conditions refugee issues and gay rights. The fundamental goal of Foucault's work is to show to us what we believe to be knowledge and the consistent, changing, and historical concepts—such as "intelligence," "normality," and "sexuality"—that we believe to be our own. According to him, these concepts do not merely evolve 'in progress' or represent a sustainable development, but at the same time are regulated and

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modified by the needs of the behavior and management of those in power (Stokes 2005: 187). Underlying all of Foucault's work is the exploration of the relationship between power and knowledge and how this power is used to control and define knowledge. For Foucault, what the ruling class claimed to be 'scientific knowledge' was really nothing more than a means of social control (Stokes 2005a: 187). Foucault, for example, shows how in the eighteenth century the concept of madness was applied not only to the mentally ill but also to the poor, sick, homeless and indeed was also used by the ruling class to categorize and stigmatize disliked individuals (Foucault and Gordon, 1980: 243). It was not because of medical ignorance that the concept of 'madness' became opposed to reason but because of its function as a means of social control (Stokes 2005b: 187). Foucault in his, 'History of Sexuality', argues that this new emphasis on controlling the mind rather than the body as an effective strategy of domination continues in Freud's psychoanalytic approach. In the middle ages, where sexuality was purely a physical matter, Freud redefined it as a psychological feature of the mind. There is now an equal emphasis not only on people's sexual behavior, but also on their sexual motives (Foucault 1990: 95). Sexual behavior is regulated by focusing on people's attitudes towards sexuality which represents a fundamental aspect of their identity. Although individuals are encouraged to talk about their sexual orientation more freely than ever before, the freedom to talk freely about sex is tempered by the fear that something fundamental about their personality is being revealed through their passion for sex. Its effectiveness as a means of control is unparalleled (Foucault and Gordon 1980a, 243).

Research Questionnaires

The goal of the study is to find answers to the following questions:

- What does power mean?
- How power works in society?
- How the structure of power affects culture and politics?
- How power system becomes a culture?

Research Objectives

The following are the study's objectives:

- To analyze the concept of power in Foucault's philosophy;
- To study how power and knowledge are associated in society and culture through the lens of Foucault's philosophy;
- To investigate how the use of power makes people subject to the bio-politics and bio-power of the state;
- To discuss how power works in society and how society's allocation of power affects a variety of societal aspects;
- To understand how a power structure emerges in a society that eventually becomes a culture, in light of the Foucauldian philosophy.

Methodology and Materials

The author first started analyzing several studies on the Foucauldian concept of power, knowledge, subject, punishment, history, politics, and culture that he had gathered from a number of reliable data sources, including Google, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia, and

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Newspapers, in order to identify the research gap. The investigation was carried out using a theoretical research methodology. The available literature has been critically analyzed in the context of Foucauldian discourses on power, knowledge, culture, and politics. To understand the issue, relevant theories have been clarified and understood. Additionally, the effectiveness of the qualitative approach in this study is largely due to the successful use of secondary data in general. Secondary data is acquired from reliable media, books, journals, websites, and journal publications. To sum up, this is a qualitative study that heavily relies on secondary data.

Power

The ability to direct or control the present or future actions of an individual or a group of individuals is called power (Naím 2013: 25). In the sixteenth century, Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince* referred to power as synonymous with control. According to him, territorial occupation and political control are so common and natural that people do these when they get the chance.ⁱ According to Hobbes, the desire for power is a restless and eternal desire of all mankind, which ceases only after death.ⁱⁱ Friedrich Nietzsche, in 1883-85, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* said – Wherever I have seen a living being, I have noticed within it the will to power, and even in the slave I have found the will to be master.ⁱⁱⁱ

Michel Foucault, in his thought, explains power from different points of view. He saw power as multifaceted, combining history, archaeology, anthropology, and philosophy. He did not see power as 'force' but showed how power works in history, society, and political practice. In a state where power is exercised through institutionalized organizations, Foucault thought that thinking of power as such would not end the work. "Power is everywhere; not because it encompasses everything, but because it originates from everything," It is a relational activity involving effort and maneuver, a continuous flow of realignment of people, and practical calculation (Allen 2009: 227). All the governmental organizations that the state has, such as the police, army, and other military forces, are controlled by the state, and through them the state shows its power. In a capitalist society, educational institutions, the media, and family and religious institutions mainly belong to the ideological state apparatus. In an ideological state apparatus, ideology acts as the core and power as a secondary function, but in a repressive state apparatus, power acts as the primary function and ideology as a secondary function (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 8). But this interpretation of power alone does not satisfy Foucault. He does not want to confine power to the state, but rather he was interested in how power works outside the state apparatus. Foucault's analysis of society explains power as relational, not individual. Society is dominated by power. As much as individuals are constituted by power, they become the subject of power, i.e., the individual embodies power. Analysis of power can be done in different ways and at different levels, even interpersonal. Power is not only repressive but also manifests a multifaceted productive side (Foucault and Gordon 1980b, 245). In the life of the state, the people face power, the common people have a relationship with state institutions, and these state institutions did not come into their present form overnight. Foucault prefaces the book 'Discipline and Punishment' by explaining how people were publicly executed in ancient times but not now. Punishment as an exercise of power and the treatment of death-row convicts in prison as 'humane' today, such as the opportunity to pray, to ask for the last wishes of the accused, did not exist in

ancient times (Foucault 1977, 73-131). Either way, Foucault was interested in how it evolved. So it turns out that power doesn't just work in large cases. Power is exercised in every small area, where the state is a monster and this state-monster consists of many small organizations. We also find the concept of the state-monster in Hobbes's philosophy. But Foucault differs from Hobbes. Where Hobbes speaks of the ultimate sovereign, Foucault speaks of the subject under that sovereign. Foucault is also talking about micro power here, which he discusses through discourse or discursive methods. Foucault argues that many systems of power interact simultaneously but not always in consistent ways. He therefore avoids developing a single overarching approach to social and conceptual mobility himself, instead calling his project a "microphysics of power," or micropower (Sen 2019).

Subject and Power

In Foucault's view, power is not something that belongs to the state, the ruling class, or a sovereign; rather, it is a tool for achieving goals. Michel Foucault investigated the various master-making practices in Western culture from a philosophical standpoint. In doing so, he gives the problem of power a completely new perspective. Foucault asserts that the state emerged as a completely new form of political power in the sixteenth century. The majority of people view the system of government as an example of authoritarianism that puts the interests of one group above those of one set of citizens to the exclusion of personal concerns. However, Foucault underlines a distinct problem rather than calls this view incorrect. The state's authority, then, both personalizes and totalizes. Subjectivity was something Michel Foucault was really passionate about. On the basis of the connections between three questions, he classifies his thought-provoking books. First, how do people perceive themselves as knowledge-holders? Second, how does the individual become embedded in power relations? Thirdly, how can individuals establish themselves as moral agents? (Foucault 1982, 777-782). As opposed to Marxists, Foucault did not examine the effects of power at the level of ideology (Raaper and Olssen 2017). Since those who prioritize ideology in the analysis of power assume a person with an advanced master in line with the model of classical philosophy, who rides on him with consciousness and power, it is most logical, in his opinion, to ask the question about the body of the person and the question about how power works in the body (Mazhar 2017). From the 16th century, the main concern of the state became the supervision, nurturing, and improvement of the people. Foucault coined the term "bio-power" to describe a new system of state governance based on this idea. This bio-power recognizes the state's close observation of people's daily lives and activities as well as its use of knowledge and power (Foucault uses the terms synonymously) as agents of social change (Gutting 2005, 100). As a result, society becomes a political target. Parallel to this, disciplinary methods are used to subjugate, change, and develop the human body.

Power and Knowledge

Michel Foucault was fascinated by the way that power and knowledge affect an individual's existence and development throughout his entire career. Towards the end of his life, he became particularly interested not only in how the subject of knowledge is formed by this power, but also in how the individual constitutes himself morally. According to Foucault, our ideas about the world or ourselves do not always remain the same over time. However, a lot of people believe that

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certain universal truths, like the existence of matter, cannot be altered. In opposition to this view, Michel Foucault holds that there is nothing immutable between man and his body that can play a sufficient role as a basis for understanding oneself and other people (Windschuttle 1998, 5-35). Central to Foucault's thought is the analysis of the institutional form and source of everything from a historical and epistemological level. The rejection of self-evident truth and objectivity marks the beginning of postmodern philosophy's epistemology. According to the philosophers of that time, what we know is largely the result of individual action and communal consent. They also believe that all forms of knowing—knowing an entity, a society, etc.—are founded on the same equation. In his philosophy, Michel Foucault aims to link politics and epistemology. Instead of using different varieties of consciousness, perception, and ideologies to explain the development of a certain story or his genealogy of knowledge, he chose to do it using different power methods and strategies (Mazhar 2017a). Knowledge derived from science is usually seen as humanistic. As a result, the doctor has omnipotent power over the patient's body. Due to the doctor's specialized knowledge, this power exists. Foucault therefore refers to this knowledge as "power/knowledge," where power and knowledge are synonymous. In his analysis, Foucault places a strong emphasis on theory and practice, both of which shape the knowledge that is produced and exert influence on certain state organs and functions, including medical, mental and social welfare, charity, law, and gender formation (Weeks 2017, 6).

Power and Punishment

According to Foucault, the relatively low level of corporal punishment in torturing the criminal is a manifestation of the discretion of the state or ruling class, which is seen as a practical effect of profound change. Subtle but less painful pains that apparently have no material existence are considered by him as a special case. Foucault refers to knowledge as something used in the service of the ruling class. He believed that French prisons reflected the regime's thinking that controlling the mind was a more effective means of social control than punishing the body (Foucault 1977a, 104-107). Prolonged and inhumane punishment is a more terrifying act than a quick and brutal death by execution. Foucault considers the panopticon, from which prisoners can be monitored, as another practical example of the exercise of power. The main function of panopticons is to keep the prisoners alert and aware that they are constantly being watched. Although surveillance is not continuous, the arrangements are designed to ensure that the power is always maintained. The power becomes so perfect that it does not need to be realised. The very architecture of the prison becomes an instrument for the production and maintenance of power independent of the exerciser of power. That is, prison inmates are involved in a kind of power situation where they themselves become the bearers of power (Foucault 1977b, 201). Foucault challenges us to ask how we live in panopticons of our own making. He draws our attention to how credit cards, government and company records, phone logs, computers, security cameras, and various managerial techniques put us in fear of self-surveillance or constant surveillance and how this affects our thoughts, actions, and feelings.

History and Politics

From ancient Greek and Roman culture through sixteenth- to twentieth-century European civilization, Foucault studied a variety of historical eras. He was very concerned about how

events, which man himself is a part, relate to history and the subjective experiences of individuals, and he saw this as being at the center of his theoretical work (Foucault 1998). Michel Foucault questioned the linear flow of history in order to develop his philosophy. For him, the strong target a particular group of the ordinary people and use them as a conduit for their power rather than directly controlling the majority. This selection process employs the leveling method, whereby those who are hated are separated out by being labeled as lazy, insane, criminals, dissidents, destitute, deviants, etc. (Stokes 2005d).

Such leveling results in what Michel Foucault called divisive narrowing. Because, in his opinion, it is an effort to centralize control. The powerful select a small number of individuals from the whole population and use them for themselves, if necessary, to further their own goals. The strong attempt to legitimate their authority by fabricating their own narrative of truth, justice, or freedom by exploiting history to serve their own purposes. In the last chapter of "The History of Sexuality," Foucault makes the case that the fundamental tenets governing the state's exercise of power have changed significantly since the seventeenth century. He asserts that whereas earlier the sovereign power exercised power by taking the lives of its subjects, in the modern age this principle has been reversed and the exercise of power begins by managing the lives of the subjects. The integration of life into the 'Mechanism of Power' and the interrelationship of political strategies in the survival of mankind, according to Foucault, constitute the boundaries of modernity. Different historical periods have different ways of understanding and ordering their experiences. That is, an early twenty-first century reader cannot enter into the mindset and sense-making style of a person living in a different historical period. These historical periods and individuals are, in a sense, the invention of our own time, and we gradually reconstruct the past for the sake of the present (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, 82). Foucault's philosophy is not directed at understanding the conscious thoughts and feelings of individuals in different eras or at recreating the "truth" or essence of different historical periods. Rather than thinking of history as a single and fixed entity, Foucault encourages us to think of multiple, mixed, and contested histories (Danaher et al. 2000, 98). Foucault originally used the term "governmentality" in the context of the emergence of the concept of the state in modern European history to describe a particular way of governing the population. He later expanded its definition to include techniques and methods that are devised to regulate the behavior of both individuals and populations at every level of the state, not just at the administrative or political level. This includes the concept of self-control (Kritzman 1988, XXIV). Analyzing history, he sees the development of a new type of oral practice, namely self-confession. Through this confession, one's inner thoughts, wishes, dislikes, goals, objectives, etc. would be revealed. Later, these confessions became the data of social science and were used by the state to formulate strategies for exercising power in the social structure. According to Foucault, governmentality is as much a matter of 'body politics' as it is a matter of conventional politics-such as political parties, elections, etc. It structures society and determines the individual's way of functioning and the individual's relationship to his own and others' bodies (Danaher et al., 2000: 83). Foucault never tries to analyze anything from a political point of view, but instead asks what it (politics) has to say about the problems that politics always faces. He is neither for nor against Marxism, but asks what Marxism has to say about these

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emerging problems. Foucault was more enthusiastic about the principles of politics than about politics itself. He raised these questions in the political field in the same way he raised questions in the historical and philosophical fields. But his inquiries are in no way predetermined by political views or driven by any specific political project. If one raises political questions from an ethical-epistemological point of view, one will never become a chess piece, he thinks. In a 1971 debate with Noam Chomsky, he said: "It seems to me that the current function of politics in our society is to criticize the actions of the most apparently impartial and independent institutions, and to criticize and attack these institutions in such a way as to expose the political violence that is secretly carried out through these institutions and to fight against them (Tuite 1971). Foucault's contribution to the theory of governance is that he attempts to establish a connection between the level of state and world politics on the one hand and the individual and his (the individual's) behavior in every sphere of life on the other. Foucault aims to explore the possibilities of understanding and discussing the ideas and practices of governance.

Culture and Space

Foucault attempts to demonstrate how knowledge and culture affect discourses in the majority of his writings. He opposes the idea that a guy has control over his ideas (Burrell 1988, 221-235). "It is not the aim of my work to analyze the context of power or to lay the foundation for such an analysis," writes Michel Foucault in his essay "The Subject and Power (1982)" "Rather, it has been the aim of my work for the last thirty years to write a history of the ways in which human beings have been mastered in our culture." Because of this, every civilization has cultural similarities and differences. While discussing culture in various writings, Foucault first defined culture as a hierarchical association of values that is readily intelligible to everyone. However, Foucault (2001, 173) notes that this process is both excluded and contained. If we want to highlight the planet called Earth, then we have to start from a certain time and the discussion of history on various topics such as traditions, religion, science, cultural norms, etc., created with time will become relevant in various ways. At the time when Michel Foucault's philosophical thought was being developed, various philosophical discussions were taking place in continental philosophy, including existentialism, Marxism, phenomenology, and obscurantism. Foucault never wants to confine himself to a particular theory or argument. He is interested in the discourses. In his "Archeology of Knowledge," Foucault rejects the concept of traditional history. He claims that historians have long debated how to construct a stable or unchanging state that lasts for centuries and occasionally undergoes abrupt transition as well as how political events develop through time. As a result, conventional historical conceptions are still hidden (Foucault 2002). Western scholars hold the view that space itself is history, containing elements of social, cultural, and institutional development across time. Ancient history is concentrated on historical civilizations, as opposed to the Medieval Era, which are marked by a hierarchical flow of urban and rural life. Once more, the modern era is characterized by industrial concentration. The way Michel Foucault perceived space or place implies a shift in how we think about how the environment and people, as well as objects, interact. To illustrate how the heliocentric theory challenges pre-modern ideas of space, he cites Galileo's notion as an illustration. The earth was considered to be the center of the universe during the medieval period. But Galileo discovered that the sun is at the center of our solar system using a

telescope. This idea of place was referred to as "emplacement" by Foucault. According to Foucault, this "emplacement" is just a decision rather than the result of an endless or supreme force (Foucault 1967).

Heterotopia

In the discussion of culture, Michel Foucault uses a term called "heterotopia," by which Foucault refers to a place that exists outside of our everyday social and institutional space (Key Concepts 2018). In general, we know that "Utopia" means an unreal world. In contrast to "Utopia," Michel Foucault uses the term "heterotopia" to describe how a space or place can have a different meaning depending on its relationship to another place (Smart 2004). According to Foucault, these things can only be understood in the context of relationships. In contrast to utopia, Foucault's heterotopia is real and exists. Prisons and hospitals are two examples of places where it is real. As these prisons and hospitals refer to certain things. Using the mirror as an example, Foucault explains utopia and heterotopia. According to Foucault, when we look at ourselves in the mirror, the real image of us reflected in the mirror is Utopia. Because what the mirror, in this case, is reflecting inside is a placeless place. But again, this mirror itself is a heterotopia. Because the mirror is a real object. The heterotopia of the mirror is very real, but the space in relation to the real space that surrounds it creates a very unreal virtual image. Foucault explains the concept of heterotopia with a few principles. The first principle is that all cultures produce heterotopias (Foucault 2004a). In every human community, it is obvious. But rather than being of a single type everywhere, heterotopias come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There are two different sorts of heterotopia, according to Foucault. The Heterotopia of Crisis is the name he gave to the kind of heterotopia present in the so-called ancient society. For instance, different holy sites or locations reserved for particular groups or people might be noted. In ancient cultures, it was forbidden for impure persons, pregnant women, or women who were menstrual to access certain places. These are a form of the "state of crisis," in Foucault's opinion. These circumstances have significantly changed in modern times, giving rise to a new variety of heterotopia. Heterotopia of Deviation is what he called it. In this case, the issue of emplacement is important. Those whose behavior or activities deviate from the norms or ideals set by society are transferred to these places. For example, mental hospitals, prisons, insane asylums, etc. The second principle, heterotopia is changing over time. It is possible for heterotopias to function in a space in a variety of different ways over time (Foucault 2004b). For instance, there are variances between cemeteries in cities and villages. The third principle is that several heterotopias can coexist in the same location (Foucault 2004c). Theatres or flower gardens, for instance. We are simultaneously in two places while watching a movie. There are two places: the movie theater and the locations where the scenes were shot. The fourth principle of heterotopia is that it frequently exists in various periods of time, or "heterochronics," as Foucault put it. We need to get out of the conventional notion of time if we want to understand how it operates (Foucault 2004d). For instance, in the cemetery, we are familiar with both human death and the burial and subsequent disappearance of a body. The library and museum are similar instances. All the objects kept in the museum were once there, but now they are lost or obsolete. In other words, it might be argued that different places, such as cemeteries, libraries, and museums, collect time. The fifth principle of heterotopia is that

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heterotopia is not easily accessible. According to Foucault (2004e), heterotopia requires a system of open and closed spaces that both divide one another while still allowing access. Examples of such spaces include barracks and prisons. The sixth and final heterotopian principle is that there is an action mode in relation to the remaining spaces. This phenomenon, which Foucault refers to as a "heterotopia of compensation" (Foucault 2004f), produces either an illusionary space that reveals real space or a perfect real space that is entirely distinct from an imperfect real space. For instance, a costly city has higher levels of saturation than a cheaper city.

Truth and power transform into a culture

The order of power, according to Foucault, seeks to narrow the range of human possibilities by elevating particular beliefs and practices as "normal" in a variety of contexts. Therefore, through a variety of oppressive strategies where judges of normality are present everywhere, sexual practices, family structures, religions, and various speaking and working styles are dismissed as "deviant" from "normal." (Gutting 2005a: 84). Foucault asserts that since power is elusive, "power games" may be concealed here as well (Basumatary 2020, 5). In comparison to the historical or metaphysical definitions of truth, Foucault was more interested in the politics of truth. The way a statement is made in society as a truth, the manner in which it is disseminated in society, the ways in which society and politics control that fact, as well as what occurs and how it occurs in response to that truth in various parts of society, all of which Foucault interprets as a cyclical process as a whole (Mazhar 2017b). Truth and power are interrelated, creating a system of power that actually becomes culture over a period of time. The whole system is, therefore, for Foucault, nothing more than a regime of truth or a system of power, which in turn takes shape in culture.

Conclusion

It's critical to make an effort to comprehend Foucault's work as a philosophy of history because doing so will help us as philosophy readers evaluate the true significance of his contributions to both history and philosophy as well as address persistent and misguided criticisms of his philosophy. Despite the initial impression that Foucault's philosophy is pessimistic, there is still some room for hope. He reaffirms the value of philosophy as a tool for challenging the ruling class's hold over the individual by outlining the hierarchical power structures that they employ. What we need to do, in Foucault's opinion, is work to create social structures that lessen the possibility of hegemony. At the same time, it is one of our duties to reevaluate our beliefs in light of the implications of knowledge.

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