

"The Subject and Power"

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I. Why Study Power?

- A. Neither a theory nor a methodology, but a history of "subjectification" [*subjectivation*], of the "objectification" [*objectivation*] that transforms human beings into subjects
 - 1) Sciences [OT]
 - a) Objectification of speaking subject in linguistics
 - b) Objectification of productive subject in economics
 - c) Objectification of living being in biology
 - 2) Dividing practices [MC / BC / DP]
 - a) Divided within himself or divided from others
 - b) Examples: mad and sane / sick and healthy / criminals and good
 - 3) "Reflexive" subjectification [HS]
 - a) how to turn yourself into a subject
 - b) e.g., sexuality as your truth
- B. Conclusion: it is not power, but the subject with is theme of F's research
 - 1) However, we are lacking a good analytics of power
 - 2) What we need is a critical conceptualization of power
 - a) Historical awareness of our present: what motivates our research
 - b) What type of reality are we dealing with?
- C. An abstract investigation of "reason" is not useful
 - 1) The Nazis and the Stalinists used our own political rationality
 - 2) We'll just end up with the old rationalist vs irrationalist debate
 - 3) Following the Frankfurt School and investigating a general reason of the Enlightenment won't work either
- D. Rather, we should look at rationalities in specific fields in terms of strategies
 - 1) Madness, illness, death, crime, sexuality, and so on
 - 2) Use resistance as "chemical catalyst" to reveal power relations
- E. Characteristics of oppositional struggles
 - 1) Examples: women – men / children – parents / psychiatrists – mentally ill / medical establishment – population / administration – life styles
 - 2) Common points:
 - a) Transversality: not limited to one country or form of government
 - b) Targeting "power effects as such"
 - c) Immediacy:
 - (1) closest instances, not the ultimate source;
 - (2) will not be put off by a revolutionary eschatology
 - 3) "Original" and "specific" points:
 - a) against the "government of individualization"
 - (1) right to be different and unique
 - (2) but also attack on isolation and confinement to self
 - b) against the "regime of knowledge [*savoir*]"
 - (1) against the privileges of knowledge

- (2) but also against mystification
 - c) question of identity: "who we are"
 - (1) against abstractions (class, nation) which ignore our individuality
 - (2) but also against being determined in an identity by science or admin
 - 4) summary: it's an attack on subjectification as technique or form of power
 - a) categorization of individual in immediate everyday life as possessor of a truth that must be recognized by yourself and others
 - b) two sense of being a "subject"
 - (1) subjected to someone else's control [being subjugated]
 - (2) tied to your own identity by conscience or self-knowledge
- F. Three types of struggles: against domination, exploitation, subjectification
 - 1) Historically, one might be said to prevail, although all occur at same time
 - a) Medieval: struggles against domination
 - b) 19th C: struggles against exploitation [Old Left]
 - c) contemporary: struggles against subjectification [New Left]
 - (1) Reformation period was also site of subjectification struggles
 - 2) Economistic objection is always possible: subjectification is derivative
 - a) Certainly we can't simply divorce exploitation from subjectification
 - b) But we have to look at the "complex and circular" relations here
 - c) [In other words, F is NOT claiming that exploitation is unimportant and that New Left can ignore it. He IS claiming that Old Left economism is inadequate and needs to be supplemented by New Left.]
- G. Why subjectification struggles today?
 - 1) State as new form of *pastoral power*
 - 2) State power is both individualizing and totalizing
- H. Remarks on pastoral power
 - 1) Objective: salvation in next world
 - 2) Potentially sacrificial
 - 3) Individualizing and life-long
 - 4) Produces truth of the individual via conscience
- I. New form of pastoral power spreads throughout social field, regulated by state
 - 1) Change in objective: salvation in this world
 - a) Health
 - b) Well-being
 - c) Security
 - d) Protection against accidents
 - 2) Increase in the agents of pastoral power
 - a) The state and state apparatuses like the police (originally responsible for public health, hygiene, etc. as well as "law and order")
 - b) Private ventures: philanthropists, social welfare volunteers
 - c) Family was re-organized to provide pastoral functions
 - d) Private-public fields such as medicine
 - 3) Knowledge of man on two levels
 - a) The population: globalizing and quantitative
 - b) The individual: "analytical" knowledge

- J. Kant's "What is Enlightenment" paper is a key: we must learn to ask, philosophically, not only universal questions, but also historically singular questions: what is our world here, now, today? How does it work?
 - 1) Our task: to refuse what we are (individuals with a truth produced by power)
 - a) Not to free the individual from the state
 - b) But to free ourselves from both the state and its form of individuality
 - 2) To promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing state-veridical individuality

II. How is Power Exercised?

- A. Asking the "how" question brackets questions of power's substantial existence
- B. We must distinguish power relations (between [free] individuals) from
 - 1) Material "capacity" exercised on bodies
 - 2) Systems of communication that transmits information via signs
 - a) Signs can have power effects, but these need to be analyzed as such; they are not simply aspects of communication
 - b) [Background here includes Speech Act Theory, F's AK, DG's ATP, etc.]
- C. Power, capacity, and communication are all inter-related
 - 1) these relations vary from society to society and also within societies
 - 2) but there are "blocks" or "regulated and concerted systems" of power relations
 - 3) we can call these "disciplines" [cf. F's "dispositif" and DG's "assemblages"]
- D. "disciplining" of Europe
 - 1) does NOT mean we're simply more obedient
 - 2) but that an attempt has been made to have power relations [power "as such," capacity, communication] be more "controlled, rational and economical"

III. What Constitutes the Specificity of Power Relations?

- A. Power is specifically the action on the field of (possible) action of others;
 - 1) It does not preclude, but is not reducible to:
 - a) Consenting to transfer of rights
 - b) Violence directed to bodies
 - 2) Two suggestions for terms: conduct and government
 - a) "conduct"
 - (1) To lead others [e.g., a "conductor" of a train, or orchestra]
 - (2) To behave [to conduct yourself, to exhibit good or bad conduct]
 - b) "government"
 - (1) not just political structures
 - (2) but also direction of conduct of others: action on possibilities of action
- B. Power can only be exercised in relation to free subjects
 - 1) Thus we don't face the Spinozist question of voluntary servitude [cf. DG]
 - 2) Instead we see "agonism" or "mutual incitement and struggle"

IV. How is One to Analyze the Power Relationship?

- A. We can focus on institutions but we have to understand that
 - 1) This analysis poses a number of problems
 - a) Many institutional mechanisms are designed to reproduce power relations rather than exercise power
 - b) We are tempted to explain institutional power in terms of institutions

- c) We might overly focus on the regulations or the apparatus of the institution and hence see the institution as only a mode of law [regulations] or coercion [apparatus]
 - 2) We must see "point of anchorage" of institutional power outside institution
 - a) Power relations are "rooted deep in the social nexus"
 - b) So that a society "without" power relations is only an abstraction
 - B. Five factors in power relations:
 - 1) System of differentiations: status, wealth, social differences, expertise, etc.
 - 2) Types of objectives pursued by those acting on others' actions
 - 3) Instrumental modes of that action
 - 4) Forms of institutionalization
 - 5) Degrees of rationalization
 - C. In contemporary society, power relations have been "governmentalized"
 - 1) It's not that all societies are totalitarian [F hated it when the left would conflate the Western democracies and the Soviet bloc]
 - 2) But all *dispositifs* or ensembles of power relations refer to the state; they are, directly or indirectly, regulated by the state [e.g., you can't practice medicine without a license; you can home-school, but you have to meet government standards; employers have to meet minimum government regulations; etc]
- V. Relations of Power and Relations of Strategy
- A. Three uses of term "strategy" all revolve around "choice of winning solutions"
 - 1) Instrumental [means-end] rationality
 - 2) Game strategies: to gain an advantage
 - 3) Confrontational strategies to procure victory
 - B. But we can also talk about strategies in power relations: how to use and maintain power as ability to act on the field of possible actions of others
 - 1) Two end points in which power relations vanish:
 - a) "Stable mechanisms" of domination [too little freedom]
 - b) Reacting to moves of an equal adversary [too much freedom]
 - 2) Thus each confrontation of equals "dreams" of becoming a power relation just as each power relation tends to become a winning strategy [of domination]
 - 3) Thus we can [and even must] historically analyze same events as
 - a) Struggle of adversaries
 - b) Or as workings of a power relationship
 - C. Relation between domination and struggle is making manifest at level of whole society of the locking together of power relations and strategy relations