

## "The Subject and Power"

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[protevi@lsu.edu](mailto:protevi@lsu.edu) / <http://www.protevi.com/john/Foucault/SubjectPower.pdf>

### 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) 19<sup>th</sup> 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