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## POWER AND NORM: NOTES\*

*N.B. — This translation is of a series of notes taken at a lecture given by Michel Foucault. It therefore has a very summary character, and while it has been included for its range of suggestions and indications, it should be clearly understood that in no sense is this a text “by” Michel Foucault. In the original lecture, the analysis of power relations was embedded in a long and detailed historical analysis of specific institutions. [Eds].*

It has been necessary to free ourselves from four sorts of analysis of power:

1. from the theoretical schema of appropriation of power, that is, from the idea that power is something that is possessed — something that some definite people possess — something that others do not possess. And that there is in society a group of people, a class, which possesses power and which is supposed to be the bourgeoisie;
2. from the notion of the localisation of power, that is, the idea that political power is always localised in a definite number of elements and essentially in the state apparatuses. Thus from the notion of the correspondence between forms of power and political structures;
3. from the notion of subordination. Thus from the idea that power is a definite type of maintenance, continuation and reproduction or a mode of production; that is, that power is always subordinated to a mode of production, which is always prior, if not historically, then analytically;
4. from the notion according to which power, within the order of knowledge, produces nothing but ideological effects.

1. — The formula “They have the power” may have its value politically; it does not do for an historical analysis.

Power is not possessed, it acts in the very body and over the whole surface of the social field according to a system of relays, modes of connection, transmission, distribution, etc. Power acts through the smallest elements: the family, sexual relations, but also: residential relations, neighbourhoods, etc. As far as we go in the social network, we always find power as something which “runs through” it, that acts, that brings about effects. It becomes effective or not, that is, power is always a definite form of momentary and constantly reproduced



encounters among a definite number of individuals. Power is thus not possessed because it is "in play", because it risks itself. Power is won like a battle and lost in just the same way. At the heart of power is a war-like relation and not that of an appropriation.

Power is never totally on one side. Just as little as, on the one hand, there are those who "have" power, there are, on the other hand, those who in general do not have it. The relation to power is not contained in the schema of passivity-activity. Certainly, there is within the social field "a class" which, looked at strategically, takes up a privileged place and can assert itself, score up victories and can achieve an effect of superior power [*sur-pouvoir*] for its own benefit. But this effect does not belong to the order of extension of possessions [*sur-possession*] or of increased profit [*sur-profit*]. Power is never monolithic. It is never completely controlled from one point of view. At every moment power is in play in small individual parts.

Thus in the 19th century the problem of money-saving on the part of workers became the locus of a power struggle. On the part of the entrepreneurs such saving arose from the need to fix the working class spatially and temporally at a production-apparatus. But this saving on the part of the workers, carried through by the entrepreneurial strategy, led to the result that the worker henceforth had at his disposal a certain collection of means which enabled him to strike. Power and wealth cannot be equated: power is a permanent strategy which must be thought against the background of civil war. We must give up the schema according to which power is transferred to some by the will of all by means of contract.

2. — Power cannot be described as something localised in the state apparatuses. Perhaps it is even inadequate to say that the state apparatuses are the stake in an internal or external struggle. The state apparatus is a concentrated form — an auxiliary structure — the instrument of a system of powers, which goes far beyond it, so that, looked at in practical terms, neither the control nor the destruction of the state apparatus can suffice to bring about the disappearance or the change of a definite type of power.

The relation between the state apparatuses and the system of powers in the interior of which they are included and function is illuminated when we look at the police apparatus of the French monarchy. This state apparatus was deeply buried in the interior of a power system. It would only issue "*lettres de cachet*" and the police apparatus could function only to the extent that it intermeshed within a system of powers which was distributed over the paternal authority and the action of local and religious communities. Only because there was this fine net of powers in the society could the new police state apparatus function. It has been shown how the people who stood on top of such small pyramids of powers took over the

police apparatus in order to permit it to function. In a similar way the apparatus of punishment in the 19th century functioned in connection with the system of discipline that formed the condition of its possibility, a system whose agents were the entrepreneurs, the overseers in the factories, the technical employees, the officials, the preparatory workers, the lessors, the suppliers, those who gave the worker credit, etc. All these elements constituted so many sites of power, which permitted the apparatus of punishment to function. (It has been shown how through an accumulation of small punishments, alien to the state apparatus, individuals were pressed in the direction of the apparatus of punishment, in order to become its objects.) We must separate the systems of powers not only from the state apparatuses, but also from the political structures.

3. — To give the system of powers such an extension means to have the real functioning of power in view at the very deep level. At this point we can no longer comprehend power as the guarantee of a mode of production, in fact power is one of the constituent elements of the mode of production, it functions at the heart of the mode of production. We have seen that the functioning of the instruments of sequestration (factory, prison, bank, asylum, etc.) was not the guarantee of a mode of production, but precisely the constitution of a mode of production. In fact the primary aim of sequestration consisted in the subjection of time to this time of production.

- (i. Fixing of the individual into the course of the production mechanism;
- ii. subjection to the cycle of production — crises, unemployment, economy become a means to this subjection;
- iii. system of fining and of local controls through which the workers are bound to a place in the production apparatus until labour-power became profitable.)

Such a mechanism goes well beyond the mere guarantee of a mode of production. It is constitutive of it.

The problem of feudal society consisted in assuring the raising of rent through the exercise of sovereignty. The problem of industrial society consists in achieving the aim of integrating the time of individuals into the production-apparatus as different types of labour-power. That is, it is necessary that the time which is bought by the entrepreneur is not "pure" time, but clearly the time of a labour-power. Put otherwise, it is a question of constituting this time of the individual's life as labour-time. If it is agreed that it is specific for the economic structure which is characterised by the accumulation of capital to transform labour-power into productive-power, then it is the aim of the power structure, which takes on the form of sequestration, to transform the time of the individual's life into labour-power. Sequestration corresponds, with regard to power, to what on



the part of the economy is called the accumulation of capital.

It is false to say, "with that famous post-Hegelian", that the concrete existence of man is labour. For the life and the time of man are not by nature labour, but pleasure, restlessness, merry-making, rest, needs, accidents, desires, violent acts, robberies, etc. And this quite explosive, momentary and discontinuous energy must be transformed by capital into labour-power which is continuous and constantly offered in the market. Capital must synthesise life into labour-power, something which implies compulsion: that of the system of sequestration. The cunning of industrial society consisted in the taking up again, to exercise this compulsion, of the old obsolete technique of locking-up the poor.

The locking up of the poor in the 17th and 18th centuries was a way of tying down those who had, through idleness, escaped the demographic fixing down through which sovereignty was exercised. This old institution was generalised over the whole society, it was used in order to direct individuals to the social apparatuses and thus to make possible the sequestration which, for its part, was to be constitutive for the capitalist mode of production.

4. — Power is not caught in the alternative: force or ideology. In fact every point in the exercise of power is at the same time a site where knowledge is formed. And conversely every established piece of knowledge permits and assures the exercise of power. Put otherwise, there is no opposition between what is done and what is said.

Thus, for example, the administrative surveillance of population groups in the era of Classicism (formation of the centralised State). In the 17th and 18th centuries in France, this surveillance was one of the functions of power which gave rise to definite types of knowledge [*savoir*].

a) A knowledge of administration: those who administered the state apparatus developed a body of knowledge that they accumulated. They knew from revolts, observations, experiences, how taxes had to be imposed, how levies were to be calculated, who was inclined not to pay. Similarly, from which groups of the population soldiers could be recruited, etc. . . .

b) A knowledge arising from inquiry: about the demographic movement of a region, about artisanal techniques, about agricultural techniques, about the state of health of groups of the population. These inquiries occurred, to begin with, on private initiative; in the second half of the 18th century (1760-70) the State took them in hand. The Royal Society of Medicine codified and generalised the investigations into the health of groups of the population which earlier had been the responsibility of independent people. A similar thing happened with the investigations of industrial techniques, etc.

c) Knowledge pertaining to the Inquisition. The arrest of an individual

was always accompanied by a report on his behaviour.

From the 19th century onwards these techniques were once more taken up and indeed as a function of two great principles.

a) In future every bearer of power will be an agent of the constitution of knowledge. This means that every agent of power must furnish to those who have conferred power on him a definite body of knowledge corresponding to the power exercised. What that means is that to a given order there must answer a report on the manner in which the order was carried out, the conditions which made possible or obstructed its carrying out, on the effects of this order and possible rectifications which it might be appropriate to undertake. The prefects, the attorneys-general were committed to this duty of making a report.

b) The report as a form of the relations between power and knowledge. (If in earlier times the report existed, it was at most here and there, and on the basis of custom. The systematisation, the institutional character of this reciprocity between every agent of power and his superior is a phenomenon that has become just as important in the history of the relations between power and knowledge as double-entry bookkeeping in the medieval economy or the invention of feed-back in modern technology.) In connection with this report there came about the erection of a series of specific instruments of abstraction, of generalisation, of evaluation, and statistics. Statistics became a science relevant to the state, and was to give place to something like sociology. (The philosophical critique of abstraction has been carried out often enough, and just as often has the history of experimental method been written. We must write the history of the administrative extraction of knowledge.)

Certainly we did not need to wait till the 19th century in order for power to be illuminated by a definite number of pieces of advice and knowledge, in short by the discourses of individuals who were more or less qualified or assessed by power. That sovereigns surrounded themselves with pedagogues, that kings were advised by philosophers, scholars or wise men — all that did not stem from the 19th century. But from the 19th century on, knowledge as such became statutory, equipped with a definite power. Within the division of manual labour and intellectual labour the 19th century brought forth something new, something which consisted in the fact that knowledge, equipped with a definite quantity of power, must function in society. Precisely because it is knowledge it disposes of power, and it is not the good will of power or its curiosity that opens it to knowledge.

The way in which all levels of knowledge become measured, calculated and authenticated by the apparatus of the school (and in general by all the educational apparatuses) is an expression of the fact that in our society a piece of knowledge has the right to exercise power.



From the 19th century on, every scholar becomes a professor or director of a laboratory. That means that the power of the "free-floating" scholar (who exercises no function in the society other than that of saying the truth or dispensing advice) disappears in favour of the person whose knowledge is at the same time authenticated through the power which he exercises. In a similar way the doctor, who from the 19th century on, is the master of the normal and the pathological, exercises a definite power not only over his patients, but over groups, over the whole of society. Another example is psychiatry. The power of the psychiatrist was institutionalised in France through the law of 1838 which, in making the psychiatrist into an expert, who was to be consulted in the case of any proposed commitment to an institution, lent a definite quantity of power to psychiatric knowledge.

We lend a certain opacity to the social field if we look there at nothing more than production and desire, or at the economy and the unconscious. But in fact there is up for analysis a whole transparent intermediate stratum which is revealed if we investigate the strategies of power in which sociologists see only the mute system or the unconscious of rules, and epistemologists see only badly controlled ideological effects. But in reality we can see there the perfectly carried through and calculated strategies of power.

The penal system is an example of this. For in fact no analysis can give an account of the prison or of the groups which exist on its margin so long as the problem of the penal system is posed in the concepts of economics. If, on the contrary, we pose the problem on the level of power-knowledge, there is no longer a deceptive opacity to obstruct the analysis of the penal system. Instead of this penal system we must speak properly of the disciplinary system, that is, of a society equipped with an apparatus whose form is sequestration, whose aim is the constitution of labour-power and whose instrument is the acquisition of discipline and customs or habits [*habitudes*]. Since the 19th century, there has developed and passed into the shadows a series of apparatuses whose aim was the manufacture of discipline, the imposition of compulsions, the forming of habits. What happened in the train of this development was thus represented in the pre-history of the power apparatuses, which served as the base for the acquisition of habits as social norms.

The word "habit" had in the politics of the 18th century a critical use, which permitted the analysis of the institution, of the law, of authority. People used this concept to learn in what measure an institution, a law, or an authority could be justified. Hume's critique, which made use of the concept of "habit" as a reductive instrument, functioned in this way. If this concept was used in the 18th century, it was in order to "scrape away" and thus find what was the character of traditional duties, duties justified transcendentially, and to replace

them by the pure and simple duty of the contract. Thus the critique of tradition with "habit" in order to bring social bonds into the form of the contract.

In the 19th century, the word "habit" was used in a prescriptive way. Habit became that to which people had to subject themselves. In such a way there is a whole ethics, founded on habit, which becomes a positive datum. Habit no longer stands in the same relation to contract as in the 18th century: it is conceived as a complement of the contract. In the 19th century, the contract is the legal form according to which property owners bind themselves to one another. It is the form which guarantees the property of everyone. Contract is what lends to exchange a legal form. Contract is that through which individuals set up relations (marriages) taking their point of departure from their possessions. In other words, the contract is the individual's bond, either to their possessions, or of individuals to one another through their possessions. On the other hand, habit is that through which individuals must be bound to the production apparatus, habit is that through which those without possessions are bound to an apparatus which they do not possess. Habit is the complement of the contract for those who are not bound through possessions.

Thus the apparatus of sequestration fixes individuals to the production apparatus by producing habits by means of a play of compulsions, teachings and punishments. This apparatus must manufacture a behaviour that characterises individuals, it must create a nexus of habits through which the social "belongingness" of individuals to a society is defined, that is, it manufactures something like norms.

Whilst the classical committed to institutions casts certain individuals outside the norms, whilst through the simultaneous locking up of the sick, the mad, criminals, etc., this apparatus brought forth monsters, the modern sequestration manufactures norms. Constitution of labour-power, apparatus of sequestration: disciplinary society, permanent function of normalisation. That is the series that characterises our type of society.

If we wish to characterise the system of powers within which the prison functions (symbolically, in a concentrated way), we could say the following:

Until the 18th century we had a society in which power took the visible form of hierarchy and sovereignty. This power pursued its operation through a set of demarcations, of ceremonies. To this power corresponded a number of tales of heroes, whose function it was to pass down the life of the sovereign and his ancestors, that is, to make contemporary the past of sovereignty in order to strengthen power. Historiography as a marginal discourse of this power was one of the functions of power. And even in the case of Saint-Simon, Voltaire, etc., historiography still sought to imitate power, and



discourse constantly acted — although now conversely — in this domain.

That through which power worked in the 19th century were the habits imposed on definite groups. Power can give up its earlier display. It takes on the wildest, everyday form of the norm, it conceals itself as power and gives itself out as society.

The role of the memory of power in the 17th century is then again taken up by what people called social consciousness. It is precisely there that Durkheim will find the subject matter of sociology (cf. his theory of anomie) in which he says that what constitutes the social as such — in opposition to the political, that is, the level of decisions, and the economic, which is the level of determination — is nothing but the system of compulsion, of “discipline”, which means that it is the system of disciplinings, through which power works, but only insofar as it conceals itself and presents itself as the reality. This is now a knowledge that is to be gone through and described, and which presents society as the subject matter of sociology. Society as the subject matter of sociology is the system of disciplinings, as Durkheim has said. This system must be able to be analysed in the interior of the strategies characteristic of a system of powers.

The discourse that will now accompany the disciplinary power is that which grounds, analyses and specifies the norm in order to make it prescriptive. The discourse of the king can disappear and be replaced by the discourse of him who sets forth the norm, of him who engages in surveillance, who undertakes to distinguish the normal from the abnormal; that is, through the discourse of the teacher, the judge, the doctor, the psychiatrist, and finally and above all, the discourse of the psychoanalyst.

In the Assyrian kingdom the conditons for the renewal of power were assured by a definite mythical discourse which periodically related genealogy and the past. Today, in place of the discourse which is bound up with power, there has come forward a normalising discourse. That of the human sciences.

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