

5- Is violence the most effective way to control people?

This was how monarchical power operated. [...] A great expenditure of violence is made which ultimately only had the force of an example. It even becomes necessary to multiply violence, but precisely by doing so one multiplies revolts...

In contrast to that you have the system of surveillance, which on the contrary involves very little expense. There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze, an inspecting gaze, and gaze who's each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost. When Bentham realizes what he has discovered, he calls it the Columbus's egg of political thought, a formula exactly the opposite of monarchical power. It is indeed the case that the gaze has had great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era, but, as I have said, it is far from being the only or even the principal system employed.

FOUCAULT Michel (1926-1984)

Biography

Paul-Michel (known as Michel) Foucault is a French philosopher. He is generally known for his criticisms of social institutions, mainly psychiatry, medicine, the prison system, and for his ideas and developments about the history of sexuality, his general theories about power, and the complex relationships between power and knowledge. .

Associated with the beginnings of the Experimental University Center of Vincennes, he was then, from 1970 to 1984, holder of a chair at the Collège de France which he entitled "History of Systems of Thought". A political activist in the 1970s, he took part in the first support movements for immigrant workers and founded the Prison Information Group to give prisoners a voice on their living conditions.

First associated with structuralism, Foucault produced a work today related to post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy. Flagship figure of the French theory, his work remains relatively fruitful in the academic world especially Anglo-Saxon, beyond the disciplinary specializations. The Times Higher Education Guide describes him in 2009 as the world's most cited social science writer.

He is one of the first people to die of AIDS in France. His companion Daniel Defert founded the association AIDES in his honor.

Problematic

How is the Power exercised? By what means does he obtain an obedience, which can sometimes go as far as the acceptance of his own death? How to understand the enigma of domination by which one man becomes the master of another? Where does the desire to seize power and dominate come from, if domination is the core and center of power? The question of power thus sends us back to the nature of domination. Is not power finally a mechanism of creation, of balance, of life, at the same time as a strategy of death sometimes? Why, ultimately, is power needed for groups and societies?

Position of the author

The word power has had different meanings through past cultures since the age of the Greeks.

At present, when we hear of government, we mean the exercise of political power in a State, the body of organs or bodies by which the authority in one State is exercised (legislative, executive powers, judicial). Even in the political and restricted definition of the term "government", we find this idea of control and domination: the government directs, indeed, the public affairs of a State within which it holds and exercises the power; it serves him as a sort of rudder, guides him, controls him, impresses him with a certain form of conduct by his laws, by his power of coercion, by the respect of his authority.

This is the sense that Foucault retains in the text. To govern is to have someone do something, to have a particular behavior adopted by a person or group who can choose from a set of possible behaviors. To speak of the arrangement of the probability means that among the set of behaviors, actions which could spontaneously adopt the one or those on which one exerts a power, some are more probable than others.

To govern is to arrange, that is to say, to modify, to influence, to redistribute this probability, to ensure, by various means, to render more probable another conduct: the conduct chosen by the person or persons who exercise power. But, to speak of probability implies that this exercise is always more or less risky. To structure the field of action is precisely to adopt one course rather than another among the set of possible behaviors, in the field of possible behaviors.

Text comment

Michel Foucault has been influenced by many contemporary, modern, and Greek philosophers, philosophie hellénistique. He claims Marx, Bachelard, Canguilhem and Guérault. The major influence is that of Nietzsche. There is

also an influence of Heidegger. And that's why we find various concepts in Foucault's philosophy.

Foucault rejects the idea that there would be a single power, state power, political power. Exist also everywhere in society, what Foucault calls micro-powers. They are at different levels: powers of certain individuals over others (parents, teachers, doctors, etc.), certain institutions (asylums, prisons), and certain speeches.

While political power is repressive, micro-powers are productive. When the political power tries to silence by reserving the right to the word, to keep in ignorance, to repress pleasures and desires and exercises the threat of death, the micro-powers, on the other hand, produce speeches, incite to the confession (we must confess to the priest, the doctor, etc.), which makes it possible to control who is or is not in the norm. They produce knowledge (the human sciences, for example, state the knowledge of norms necessary to define who deviates from it), they individualize (in a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient that the healthy man, the madman that the normal man etc.), they want to manage the life and seek to be desired, to love (the boss is etymologically the father, one speaks about mother country, God the father etc.) . "If you do not obey me, I do not love you anymore," is the more or less implicit formula of the micro-power that uses the game of seduction to better enslave. When the political power imposes its laws, the micro-powers impose norms, normalize.

Power and knowledge are linked. The exercise of these powers is based on knowledge.