

PUZZLE OF POWER

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Abstract : This study has been undertaken to investigate what is Power and what we understand about power in history. In the history we can find the study of power have two dimensions. The mainstream power concept is the so called vertical model of power. After Foucault, the study of power takes a deep rooted deviation from the traditional concept. So It is necessary to explore, What Foucault did regarding power.

IndexTerms - Interpellation, repressive apparatuses, ideological apparatuses, repressive power, repressive hypothesis.

The problem of power has great importance in the modern world. What is power ? What is the general system of power ? how is power exercising? What are the main characteristics of power relations in our society today ? How did they appear? There are many thinkers who focuses on study of power. How men get the conception of power is actually a question of some difficulty.

The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics(Russel, Power a new social analysis, p. 10). The principles of general sociology should be concluded with the proposition: all social relations are relations of power (Touraine, 1981: 33). A man's power is measured by what he/she can do if he/she will. this is the measure of power when we speak of power in any intelligent or animated being (Thomas Reid). Power relations involve the possibility of conflict, but only the exercise of power need involve actual conflict, however minimal. These considerations show how important it is to distinguish between exercising power and holding power (Dahl 1968). Power still rules society; it still shapes dominates, us (Castells, 1997: 359). In its most general sense, power is the production of causal effects. It is 'the bringing about of consequences' (Lukes 1978: 634, Lukes 1986). The power of a river, for example, is manifest in its causal effects: it erodes a bed, transports rock material from one place to another, and produces a delta or a flood plain. Similarly, the power of electricity is manifest in the illumination of light bulbs, the heating of cooker elements, and the operation of underground railways. Power is not an object either of sense or of consciousness. Locke rashly determined that we get this idea in both these ways. Hume showed that it can be got in neither of them and thence rashly concluded that there is no such conception in the human mind.

From Ancient philosophy to modern philosophers and thinkers dealt with made deliberations regarding the end of the state. They thought that the political power of the state would be used as a means to achieve further end. All political thinkers from Plato, Aristotle to the Middle age had concerned itself with the central question of the end of the state and had considered state-power as a means to a higher end conceived in moral terms. But Machiavelli adopted a quite different line. To him the power of the state is the end of the state. i.e. Every state must aim at maximizing its power. The failure of the state it this enterprise will throw it into great turmoil. Consequently he confined his attention to the means best suited to the acquisition, retention and expansion of power.

Debates on the nature of power in sociological discourses usually turn initially to the work of Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-1704) and Machiavelli (1469-1527) as precursors to the modern period. Later writers have emphasized one or other of these early theoreticians: Clegg (1989) uses the differences between Hobbes and Machiavelli to trace distinctively different accounts of power, whereas Hindess(1996) uses Hobbes and Locke in relation to a more Parsonian account of power as capacities. Importantly, the exercise of power constantly invokes the relational and implies agency, and the ability of one person to impose their will or authority on another. This is, of course, the Weberian model of power and power relations that has been very influential in sociology, and continues to underpin much of the empirical work carried out by social and political scientists(Sallie Westwood, Power and the social, p.2).

Two Streams of Power

The core idea of power has been developed in two broad directions. The mainstream tradition has been principally concerned with the episodically exercised power that one agent has over another. Even the revolutionary thoughts of Marx also carried out the traditional concept of this power. Basically Hegel and Marx are contradictory in many ways. But it the area of power, both are in same root. Which was the traditional horizontal concept of power.

According to Gramsci(the Italian Marxist scholar who studied exclusively on ideology) through the cultural formation of individuals in schools, churches, factories, and other agencies of socialization, a dominant class can secure a more stable position for itself than it could possibly enjoy simply through exercising the repressive powers of a state. Louis Althusser employed this idea, arguing that the 'repressive apparatuses' of a state work alongside its 'ideological apparatuses' to sustain social control. It is through ideology, he argued, that individuals are 'interpellated' – called out- as subjects with the specific characteristics and desires that commit them to the very actions that are required of them by their class position. The term *interpellation* was an idea introduced by Louis Althusser (1918-1990) to explain the way in which ideas get into our heads and have an effect on our lives, so much so that cultural ideas have such a hold on us that we believe they are our own and real. Interpellation expresses the idea that an idea is not simply yours alone but rather an idea that has been presented to you for you to accept. Althusser attempted to prove the materiality of ideology and the way it functions.

Louis Althusser who focuses his analysis of power more on what he terms ideological state Apparatuses (that is , the family , the church , the educational system) rather than the Repressive state apparatuses, (that is, the legal system, the army and the police) (Althusser 1984). Althusser studied mainly how people are oppressed by the state institutions and how they build themselves as individuals through the mystifying action of the ideology.

According to Marxist theory's presuppositions it appears that an order of power based in the economic authority of a social class is maintained by the instrumental interventions and manipulative procedures of the state apparatus. Social power relations are guaranteed through the centrally controlled employment of administrative means of compulsion or thought control.

Foucault and Power

The second stream of power research focuses on the dispositional capacity to do something. It is the ability that actors have to facilitate certain things that lies at the centre of attention. Foucault is one of the few writers on power who recognize that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and force in society. Power is seen by Foucault not as something which is imposed on another but as a network or web of relations which circulates through society. Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do. Power is also often seen as a possession-something which is held onto by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control. Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. According to Foucault Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application'.

Nietzsche had influenced Foucault in his mapping of truth, knowledge and power. Indeed the approach developed by Foucault had imbibed the spirit of Nietzschean methodology. Foucault thinks that the study of human beings took a decisive turn at the end of the 18th century when human beings came to be interpreted as knowing subjects, and at the same time, objects of their own knowledge. Many analysis of power have focused on the role of institutions, whereas Foucault's analysis focus on the operation of power largely outside the realm of institutions. State is not the only important, rather in analyzing the relations of power, it is necessary to extend that analysis beyond the limits of the state. Foucault writes: I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations.

Foucault develops the essential features of a theory of social power, as is indicated in these sentences, in the form of an exchange with two competing theoretical traditions. It is his conviction that both classical political science and Marxist social theory fail in the project of adequately understanding the predominant mechanisms of social integration in developed societies because both are to an equal extent bound to the theoretical prejudices of a conception of power suited to pre modern forms of power. According to this conception, power is represented as a contractually regulated or forcibly acquired possession that justifies or authorizes the political sovereign in the exercise of repressive power. In both cases it is supposed that an actor who is in possession of power utilizes apparently suitable means to carry out those prohibitions and instructions that allow the objectives of rule to be realized. Following the model of the legal contract, classical political science thinks of the possession of power as a transference of rights.

The Marxist theory of power, following a statist model of thinking, understands the possession of power as an acquisition of the state apparatus. In opposition to both theoretical traditions, Foucault proposes a strategic model of power whose uniqueness results from the attempt to translate the naturalistically informed ideas of Nietzsche's theory of power into the framework of a theory of society. Foucault's view of power is directly counter to the conventional Marxist or early feminist model of power which sees power simply as a form of oppression or repression, what Foucault terms the "repressive hypothesis". Foucault states that 'where there is power there is resistance'. Power as not simply reducible to a master-slave relation, or an oppressor-victim relationship.

Usually, power is understood as the capacity of an agent to impose his will over the will of the powerless, or the ability to force them to do things they do not wish to do. In this sense, power is understood as possession, as something that can be owned. Therefore, Foucaultian definition of power is drawn in opposition with the « repressive hypothesis » (Foucault, 1971) which holds that there is a transcendental reason which can be exercised independently of any power relationship. Foucault never attempts any (impossible) definition of power. At best, he gives a definition of power relations in an essay published in 1982: 'The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, that something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist'. Basically, how human beings are made subjects is the fundamental question of Foucault.

Foucault objects to both of the central components of the traditional conception of power, i.e., to the ideas concerning the subject and the means of social power. Regarding the assumption of a social actor to whom power is ascribed as a contractually arranged or forcibly acquired possession, Foucault proposes the hypothesis that becomes for the time being the decisive assumption of his own conception of power: that power should be thought of not as a fixable property, as the enduring characteristic of an individual subject of a social group, but rather as the in principle fragile and open-ended product of strategic conflicts between subjects. The acquisition and maintenance of social power thus takes place not in the form of a one-sided appropriation and exercise of rights of decree or instruments of compulsion but rather in the shape of a continuous struggle of social actors among themselves. Foucault clothes this central objection in the formula (borrowed from Nietzsche) of the "diversity of power relations," which seems to start out from a multiplicity of competing subjects rather than from one subject holding power, and thereby would unexpectedly have already gone beyond the structuralist starting point: It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which through

ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which the force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another. . . .(M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, tr. R. Hurley (Vintage, 1980), p. 92) . Power is the invisible architecture of the social. Foucault brings a unique interpretation of power, which breaks all the traditional concepts. He opened a new door for power analysis. Undoubtedly we can say Foucault was beyond his forerunners.

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