

## The Poverty of Political Struggle: Transformation through Critique<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*In this paper I argue that Foucault's archaeological and genealogical analysis of the formation of discourses contest the Marxist popular argument that the political movement can bring about substantial change in society. By political movement I mean a particular form of political struggle which is based upon the ideals of universal justice, truth and freedom. These movements aim to shape the political will of masses to bring change. The intellectuals and leaders of such movements find masses in so deprived situation that the struggle on their part appears no viable option. Masses are either conceived in a state of ignorance or incapable of organizing the movement by themselves. They need shepherds, prophets, intellectuals or leaders. I find three fundamental presumptions upon which these political movements ground their struggle. First, the idea of universal justice and freedom give impetus to these struggles. Second, they believe in change through mass movement. Third, they believe that the taking control of state would bring about a genuine change. Foucault contests all these presumptions on genealogical and archaeological basis.*

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### The Basis of Universal Truth/Justice/Freedom

The idea of 'universal' associated with truth, justice and freedom springs from a particular perspective. This perspective gives birth to other important ideas too such as the idea of causality, continuity, and progress. Foucault names this perspective as 'history of ideas'. By the perspective of the 'history of ideas' the development of history is depicted in terms of progress and liberation. Foucault argues that the 'history of ideas' is imbued with notions like cause and effect, progress and absolute truth. These notions confer unity to heterogeneous statements like economics, philosophy and psychology. It schematizes what cannot be. The schematization resorts to false themes like spirit, reason, conflict, struggle. By consequence, it gives false continuity to radical breaks and ruptures in history. It masks discontinuity, chaos and accidents. To Foucault, "the history of ideas sets out to cross the boundaries of existing disciplines, to deal with them from the outside, and to interpret them".<sup>2</sup> With standpoint of the history of ideas one understands historical developments not from within but from outside. In this regard Foucault states that "it becomes therefore the discipline of *interferences*, the description of the concentric circles that surround works, underline them, relate them to one another, to insert them into whatever they are not".<sup>3</sup>

Foucault lays down a few principles that further explain and characterize the history of ideas as the discipline of *interferences*. First, the history of ideas treats discourse as *document*. The document is something that hides or carries hidden meanings within it. The surface is supposed to be a sign of something else that lies in the depth of the discourse. By consequence, the history of ideas always tries to see and pierce through what is given on the surface. This belief turns the history of ideas into the discipline of interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Second, the history of ideas seeks to rediscover continuous, insensible transition that relates discourses on a gentle and progressive slope. It sees the development of history as the expression of reason or class struggle. Under these conditions the history seems to be a march towards the absolute truth and justice. Foucault calls this approach as *doxology*. Third, the history of ideas treats discourse as the representation of creative subject. The subject expresses himself in the discourse and history. The notion of subject provides unity to all historical discourses irrespective of time and space. Finally, the history of ideas attempts "to restore what has been thought, wished, aimed, experienced, desired by the men in the very moment at which they expressed it in the discourse".<sup>5</sup> In sum, treating discourse as a document, doxology, and the expression of subject signifies anti-historical approach to the intellectual history.

### Correct Approach to the Formation of Discourse

In the account of Foucault the discourse must be approached in a way to avoid interferences. To Foucault, the interferences, biases and prejudices can only be put aside

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, (United States: Pantheon Books, 1972), p.173.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.137.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, p.139.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

as long as one thinks beyond the perspective of history of ideas. He strongly advises that we must call all the notions associated with the history of ideas into question since they are all believed without scrutiny and critical examination.<sup>6</sup> With the suspension of influence, tradition, spirit, teleology, author, work, theme and hidden meanings Foucault argues that the entire field of discourse would *set free*.<sup>7</sup> The discursive field would be free of interferences. Foucault writes “once these immediate forms of continuity are suspended, an entire field is set free, but one that can be defined nonetheless: this field is made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrences that is proper to them... One is led therefore to the project of *pure description of discursive events* as the horizon for the search for the unities that form within it”.<sup>8</sup>

Foucault suspends these concepts and notions to revisit the formation of discourse. The suspension enables him “to work on it from *within* and to develop it”.<sup>9</sup> Foucault never considers discourse as an inert material through which one previously attempts to reconstitute what men have done or said.<sup>10</sup> He tries to see and define, being within the documentary material, unities, totalities, relations and series of discourse. Foucault introduces *archaeology* in opposition to the ‘history of ideas’. He states “I (Foucault) cannot be satisfied until I have cut myself off from ‘the history of ideas’, until I have shown in what way archaeological analysis differs from the description of ‘the history of ideas’”.<sup>11</sup> The archaeological analysis is an attempt to abandon the history of ideas.<sup>12</sup> It is not exactly a discipline but the field that forms human thought from within.<sup>13</sup> Archaeology is a domain or site making certain forms of thought rise or fall in the given period. Foucault tries to explore those archaeological sites that, in reality, premises the Western thought.

### Formation of Discourses

Discursive formation involves the formation of object, enunciative modality, concepts and strategies. Let us take the formation of object first. *The archaeology of knowledge* gives a detailed account of the formation of object in relation to the discourse of psychopathology.<sup>14</sup> Foucault identifies three interdependent stages through which the discourse forms. These are ‘surfaces of emergence’, ‘authorities of delimitation’ and ‘grids of specification’.<sup>15</sup> Surfaces of emergence signify the cultural world where human actions or behavior are initially characterized as normal and abnormal.<sup>16</sup> By the notion of ‘the surfaces of emergence’ Foucault wants to establish that the formation of the object does

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.21-30.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, 27

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.138.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Methodology*, (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp.261-262.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, pp.40-49

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

not merely take place at the conceptual level. Foucault argues that conceptual, social and institutional conditions play a formative role in the development of discourse.<sup>17</sup> In the account of Foucault the authorities of delimitation are the established institutions like medicine in the nineteenth century. Medicine “had ‘major authority in society that delimited, designated, named and established madness as an object’”<sup>18</sup> and the grids of specification “are the systems according to which the different ‘kinds of madness’ are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of psychiatric discourse”.<sup>19</sup> However Foucault makes it clear that the planes of emergence, authorities of delimitation and forms of specification on their own cannot form the objects. For the formation of object there has to be a certain form of relationship among emergence, delimitation and specification. Without it “families with their norms, their prohibitions, and their sensitivity threshold cannot decide who is mad, and present the patient to the psychiatrist for analysis and judgment”.<sup>20</sup> The complex group of relations among emergence, delimitation and specification forms the object of discourse.<sup>21</sup> He calls this group of relations as ‘discursive’. The object therefore never, pre-exists itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light.<sup>22</sup> Instead, the object forms within discourse.

By “enunciative modality” Foucault signifies ‘the law which is operating behind all the diverse statements and the place from which they (statements) come.’<sup>23</sup> The enunciative modality is known through determining the status, site and the position of the subject. The interwoven relations among the status, position and the sites constitute the essential groundwork for the subject to pronounce statements.<sup>24</sup> The subject *apart* from it cannot occupy any position, status and site. For example, “medical statements cannot come from anybody? their value, *efficacy*, even their therapeutic powers, and, generally speaking, their existence as medical statements cannot be disassociated from the statutorily defined person...”.<sup>25</sup> The statement is possible because a whole group of relations are involved.<sup>26</sup> There is no synthesizing, or the unifying function of a subject through which various statements are possible. He writes that “discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity may be determined... it must now be recognized that it is neither by recourse to a transcendental subject nor by recourse to a psychological subjectivity that the regulation of its enunciations should be defined”.<sup>27</sup> The subject, either psychological or transcendental, cannot confer unity to the discourse. Rather the discourse, by itself, provides unity. Unlike Kant Foucault does not give credit to the subject for the unity of discourse. Discursive relation existing prior to

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<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3: Power*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 255.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.43-44.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

the intention and consciousness of the subject constitutes a space through which subject affirms or denies truths.<sup>28</sup> The formation, succession, coexistence and intervention of concepts and strategies are grounded upon this space. However, this space is formally organized by the group of relations. Foucault writes, “these groups of relations operate not only in the mind or consciousness of the individuals, but in discourse itself; they operate therefore, according to a sort of uniform anonymity, on all individuals who undertake to speak in this discursive field”.<sup>29</sup>

### Discursive Formation Guided by Unconsciousness

To Foucault, these groups of relations *function as a rule*. For, discursive relations “lays down what must be related, in particular discursive practice, for such and such an enunciation to be made, for such and such a concept to be used, for such and such a strategy to be organized”.<sup>30</sup> The discursive relations function as a rule since they in advance, implicitly hold what should be operative in discourse to say something. They identify the boundaries and limits of discourse. That is why they are characterized as rule. Foucault stresses the fact that these rules must not be conceived either as a web or obstacles to be eliminated in the way of knowledge.<sup>31</sup> These rules are the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. They constitute knowledge. Without the operation of these rules knowledge is not possible.

These rules are neither external nor internal to the discourse since these rules do not exist apart from the discourse.<sup>32</sup> “They are not by nature foreign to discourse. They can certainly be qualified as ‘prediscursive’ but only if one admits that this prediscursive is still discursive, that is, that they do not specify a thought or a consciousness, or a group of representation which, *a. posteriori*, and... but they characterize certain levels of discourse”.<sup>33</sup> In order to explore rules one is *not* required to move from text to thought, from exterior to interior, from superficiality to profoundness but one has to remain within the dimension of discourse.<sup>34</sup>

The notion of rules does not give rise to the most popular Kantian distinction between *things as they are* and *things as they appear*. Like the Kantian forms of sensibility and the categories of understanding rules are not imposed on things. They are neither external nor internal to the things. These rules are not “imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect, and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them and transformed with them into decisive thresholds”.<sup>35</sup> In the Foucauldian perspective things as they *appear* are in fact things as they *are*.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.72.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.76.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.76.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.12.

We find radical breaks and ruptures when we inquiry into the historical formation of discourses. These ruptures indicate that the discourses never remain the same across different periods of history. From Foucault's standpoint the change of discourse is only possible when the change takes place at the level of rules. The rules are not ahistorical and atemporal.<sup>36</sup> They are within the history and time. Rules cannot be universally valid for every one and for every where. At a given historical period there is no more than one specific rule that conditions the formation of discourse.<sup>37</sup> These rules can neither be reduced to spirit/reason/mind or to experience / matter / desire.<sup>38</sup> Foucault rejects the exposition of Kant, Hegel and Marx. He argues that discourse or thought cannot be understood on the Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist lines. These thinkers provide an over simplified exposition of the development of human thought.

To Foucault, the left Hegelian traces the growth of thought to "a causal analysis that would try to discover to what extent political changes, or economical process could determine the consciousness of scientists- the horizon and the direction of their interest, their system of values, their way of perceiving things, the style of their rationality". To Foucault the rules do not lie in the material forces. Rather, they constitute the 'positive unconsciousness' of Western thought. They are positive since they never destroy the epistemic worth of thought. However they stay unknown to the period to which they govern. Foucault states "what I would like to do, however, is to reveal *positive unconsciousness*: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientists and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature". Western thought is always subject to these rules. Thinkers cannot bring them into surface as long as their thought and perception rests upon them. "It is not possible, for us, to describe the archive (specific rules) of the contemporary discursive practice, since from within these rules we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say- and to itself, the object of our discourse-its modes of appearances, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity and disappearance".<sup>39</sup> It is therefore not possible to think and act beyond the rules that ground thought. We cannot separate ourselves from those rules through which we say and act.

### **No Universal Truth/Justice/Freedom**

I have argued that, to Foucault, the formation of discourse rests upon rules. Rules are neither subjective nor cultural. The individual or the cultural change cannot bring about transformation in the rules. We cannot change the rules of the past for simple reason that the past is no longer with us. We cannot change the rules of the present either. For, from the rules of the present we think and perceive. There is no doubt that individuals always have a number of options when they want to act against or say something. Foucault would never deny it. To Foucault, the autonomy of individual does not establish that individual lies outside the rules. Foucault challenges the idea of autonomy associated

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>37</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (United States, Vintage Books, 1994), p.168.

<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, p.74.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.130.

with subject/individual. He agrees that enunciations are apparently made by the subject or individual. It is the subject who gives statements. In the Foucauldian perspective the subject may be the cause of making statement. However, the epistemological cause is not the subject but the rules. He argues that “the subject of the statement should not be confused with the author of the formulation either in substance, or in function. He is not in fact the cause, origin, or starting point of the phenomena of the written or spoken articulation of a sentence... If a position, a sentence, or a group of signs can be called 'statement', it is not therefore because, one day, someone happened to speak them or put them into sonic-concrete form of the writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned. To describe a formulation qua statement does not consist in analyzing the relations between the author and what he says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it”.<sup>40</sup>

Foucault takes a different route to understand the relationship between the author and the statement. The important thing, for Foucault, is not *who* makes a statement but how it becomes possible for the individual to make this, *not* that statement. This shows that it is not the *author* as a source of the statement but the author has to be in that position in order to say this. “Everything cannot be said from everywhere. Things are said in the totality of relations”.<sup>41</sup> Upon the totality of relations the subject rests.

When discursive rules are said to form discourse, the discourse cannot be conceived in terms of correspondence to external reality.<sup>42</sup> The truth of statement does not lie in correspondence. For, the referential of the statement is lying outside the statement. It is the statement that forms the place, condition and objects. The correlates of the statement are formed by the statement itself. There is no truth beyond the discursive relations. As soon as truth loses its traditional linkage to the independent and objective reality it, by definition, gives away universality. Truth, in the philosophy of Foucault, turns into the property of statement.

The 1968 events in France drew Foucault's attention towards previously overlooked role of power in the formation of discourse. Hubert Dreyfus, Rabinow<sup>43</sup> and [Béatrice Han](#) argue that Foucault's shift from formal discursive rules (archaeology) to power (genealogy), in fact, indicates the realization on the part of Foucault that archaeological investigation fails to give an adequate account of the formation of discourses.<sup>44</sup> However, Foucault thinks that genealogy supplements archaeology. Unfortunately Foucault is silent regarding the relationship between archaeology and genealogy. To Béatrice, the fundamental flaw of archaeology is its deep orientation towards formalism, transcendentalism and abstraction. To Béatrice's reading of Foucault, archaeology disconnects discourses from its contingent roots such as power and economy. That is why

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp.95-96.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>43</sup> [Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow](#) (1983) Michel Foucault, beyond structuralism and hermeneutics, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> Beatrice Hans-Pile., Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical, (United States: Stanford University, 2002).

Foucault turns to power. The controversy surrounding the archaeology and genealogy is of no relevance to my argument. In the context of my argument archaeological and genealogical investigation do not favor the formation of political struggle for the substantial transformation of society.

### Useless to Control Political State

According to Foucault, modern power must be analyzed and understood *not primarily* with reference to *who* exercises it but *why* and *how* decisions are made and accepted by everyone.<sup>45</sup> This is the route through which one can by-pass the *juridical power* and hopefully would indicate the mechanisms through which decisions are made and accepted. By the notion of 'juridical power' Foucault wants to disclose the form of power which is predominantly seen in terms of repressive law in the Western civilization.<sup>46</sup> When power is conceived from the perspective of law, it emerges as a *property* held by the subject/class/institution. Foucault always stresses the need of transcending this perspective bound with juridical power. To Foucault, juridical perspective blinds us from the real site of modern power from which it springs and controls.<sup>47</sup>

There is no doubt that the individuals make decisions by themselves. Foucault does not deny it. Foucault argues that the decisions the individuals make are carried out through and within a set of power and knowledge networks. Through these networks or strategies the decisions are made and accepted.<sup>48</sup> The individuals wield power by virtue of being in network of power and knowledge. Power does not result from the choice or the decision of individual.<sup>49</sup> Because of these networks of knowledge and power modern power, according to Foucault, can neither be equated with the political state nor with individuals. Foucault does not define power in terms of property but a "domain in which some try to control the conduct of others, who in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct to be controlled or try to control the conduct of others".<sup>50</sup> Modern power stands for the control of the conduct of others.

Although Foucault acknowledges that in every society we find different techniques such as the technique of slavery, service, vassalage and asceticism through which the conduct of individuals is controlled, modern power is a unique technique in the history of the government of the people. It is the only one of its kind because of three factors.<sup>51</sup> First, modern power is unique with respect to the scale of the control. It never treats a body as unity. It conceives it as a composition of different parts. Every part has its own individual

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<sup>45</sup> Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*, (Great Briton: Routledge, 1988), p.103.

<sup>46</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3: Power*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), p.120. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol.2: The Use of Pleasure*, (United States: Vintage Books, 1990), p.82.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Op.cit., pp.82-90.

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*, (Great Briton: Routledge, 1988), p.104.

<sup>49</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Op.cit., p.95.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xvii

<sup>51</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (Great Briton: Penguin Books, 1977), pp.136-7.



worth. Second, the aim of modern power is the attainment and the maximization of utility. Finally, uninterrupted surveillance and constant examination make it different from the previous techniques of control. Previous techniques were only result oriented. The previous techniques were not much concerned about the processes but the results always drew their attention. These factors orient modern power towards discipline. That is why Foucault characterizes modern power as disciplinary power.<sup>52</sup>

So far disciplinary power has developed a few techniques through which it attains and maximizes utility. Foucault classifies these techniques into four categories. First, it always supports enclosure.<sup>53</sup> Second, discipline develops the technique of '*the control of activity*'.<sup>54</sup> The control of activity signifies the *strict and exact* time-table for what is to be done after the fulfillment of what is going on.<sup>55</sup> Third, the discipline takes control of the individuals by taking complete charge of the time of individuals. "(Discipline) divides duration into successive or parallel segments, each of which must end at a specific time" so as to get the maximum utility at the lowest possible cost in terms of time.<sup>56</sup> Finally discipline arranges each part to form composition in order to put all parts in overall strategy.<sup>57</sup>

Foucault argues that the success of disciplinary power lies in the '*examination*' which is the combination of *hierarchical observation* and *normalizing judgment*.<sup>58</sup> Due to hierarchical observation disciplinary power keeps itself divided and penetrable to every part of the individual who is working within it. "The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly".<sup>59</sup> There is nothing within the enclosed space that could remain unobservable. More importantly, hierarchical, continuous and functional surveillance was organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power. Although this surveillance no doubt rests on individuals the surveillance per se never depends upon individuals since from top to bottom and vice versa every one is under surveillance, Surveillance power is not something that is 'possessed as a thing or transferred as a property'.<sup>60</sup> "This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the tasks of supervising; and absolutely 'discreet', for it functions permanently and largely in silence".<sup>61</sup>

Normalizing judgment is the heart of all disciplinary powers since each and every disciplinary mechanism functions as a small penal institute. Foucault claims that all institutions based upon discipline must have a certain juridical structure that normalizes the individuals by the imposition of micro-penalty and rewards. These structures are

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.141.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.162.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.163.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.173.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.177.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

working where state laws are almost silent or have no functioning. He states that “the workshop, the school, the army were subject to a whole micro-penalty of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency)”.<sup>62</sup> We see therefore, everywhere judges of normality. We find ourselves in a society where almost everyone is entitled to normalizing power, the society of the teacher-judge, educator-judge, social worker-judge, family-judge, doctor-judge, and psychologist-judge and even to the minute parts of the body we find ourselves in the carceral network.<sup>63</sup>

Modern power as we have seen can neither be equated with the state nor with the individual. It *anonymously* functions through both the state and the individuals.<sup>64</sup> It seems to me (Foucault) that power must be understood in the first instances as the multiplicity of relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitutes their own organization'.<sup>65</sup> Power as a set of strategic mechanism that is imminent in the social relations makes power omnipresent not because disciplinary power imposes its rule but because disciplinary power comes from every where.<sup>66</sup> We cannot specifically identify the location of power, since power is diffused in the social relations. “One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it certain strength we are endowed with; it is a name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society’.<sup>67</sup> These complex strategical relations are *not* external to the economic forces, political process, social association and academic relations of a given society. Power relations are immanent and exercised through all of those connections.<sup>68</sup> Power relations are at the same time a condition of the possibility of and the immediate effects of the division, inequalities and the disequilibrium of the economic political, knowledge and social process.<sup>69</sup> These power relations are working from below. In order to locate the functioning of disciplinary power one is not required looking to the state as the representative of power. Foucault never intended to claim 'that the state is not important'.<sup>70</sup> Foucault wants to establish that the state in itself cannot occupy the whole field of actual power relations and secondly, but more importantly 'the state can only operate on the basis of other, already-existing power relations'.<sup>71</sup> The functioning of the state and its institutions are dependent upon the power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.304.

<sup>64</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.2: *The Use of Pleasure*, (United States: Vintage Books, 1990), p.95.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.92.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.94.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault*, Vol. 3: *Power*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 122.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.123.

Power can neither be located in the state nor in the hands of the individuals. Disciplinary power is a set of the strategic relations that at the same time makes possible and emerges as a result of social, economical, political and knowledge processes. It functions through uninterrupted and constant examination since every individual is the subject and object of the examination.

The objective of the political struggles, that is to control the state centre so as to promote changes in the society, would not be very effective since the modern state itself functions through those micro-power relations. The manifesto and the struggle of the political party so far as power relations are concerned will have no effect on them.

### **Knowledge and power: Formation of Human Sciences**

In account of Foucault the birth and the development of human sciences cannot be understood without taking into account the disciplinary power since the development of human sciences like medicine, psychology, psychiatry, criminology, or sociology “can in no way be dissociated from the exercise of power”.<sup>72</sup> Human sciences cannot be separated from certain mechanisms of power because for human sciences society or an individual become the object of study only with respect to a certain perspective that is essentially bound with the mechanism of power.<sup>73</sup>

As we have seen modern power is unprecedented with respect to the degree, strategy and aim; the disciplinary power uninterruptedly observes through examination and normalizes the abnormality. The examination which is deeply penetrated into the social body forms the groundwork for human sciences. The examination which is the heart of disciplinary technique gives rise to the branches of knowledge. “At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it (examination) manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected”.<sup>74</sup> By the introduction of the concept of ‘examination’ Foucault wants to establish that disciplinary power subjectifies and objectifies individual at the same time. The subjectification and objectification are interdependent. Foucault elaborates that there are two meanings of the term ‘subject’. Firstly, the individual becomes subject when someone else controls the conduct of the individual and secondly when self-consciousness or self-knowledge determines the conduct of the individual. “Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subjects to”.<sup>75</sup> Foucault defines the objectification as when the individual appears to be the object of knowledge to another individual. When modern power controls the individuals, it, at the same time, objectifies that individual. Modern power controls and extracts knowledge for further control. “A constant supervision of individuals by someone who exercised a power over them -school teacher, foreman, physician, psychiatrist, prison warden — and who so long as lie exercised power, had the

<sup>72</sup> Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*, (Great Britain: Routledge, 1988), p.106.

<sup>73</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Methodology*, (New York: The New Press, 1998), p.106.

<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, op.cit., pp.184-185.

<sup>75</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault*, op.cit., p.331.

possibility of both supervising and constituting a knowledge concerning those he supervised.<sup>76</sup>

The examination, at the first stage, constitutes knowledge by turning each and every individual into the field of documentation. Files are maintained for each and every living and nonliving being. Every school, college, industry, camp, prison, hospital and clinic has a record book where everything from their arrival to their departure has been documented and strictly registered. "The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in the network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them".<sup>77</sup> By virtue of this very reason the individuals appear to be describable and analyzable and therefore eventually further controllable.<sup>78</sup> Foucault writes that today the control is less severe and more refined, but it is no less terrifying for that. For the whole course of our life, we are totally held within different authoritarian systems; first at school, then in our work and even in our pastimes. *Each individual, considered separately, is normalized and transformed in a file controlled by an IBM*.<sup>79</sup> This file maintaining system constitutes the formation of human sciences. "These small techniques of notation, of registration, of constituting files, of arranging facts in columns and tables... were of decisive importance in the epistemological thaw of the sciences of the individual".<sup>80</sup> The knowledge that examination extracts during subjecting is not merely about to determine whether or not something had occurred or the individual is performing and working in accordance with the given rules and requirements. The examination also collects data "in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do".<sup>81</sup> The extraction of knowledge, according to Foucault, occurs at two different platforms. First, the supervision extracts the technical knowledge. In a factory the supervision makes possible the accumulation of knowledge of labor of the worker and his knowledge about how to manufacture the product. The immediate recording of this knowledge gradually develops the discipline of technical knowledge.<sup>82</sup> Second, the examination from fields like schools, prisons, hospitals etc. develops the observational knowledge. The observational knowledge stems from observation and classification of individuals, from the recording and analyses of their actions, (and) from their comparison.<sup>83</sup> The observational knowledge ultimately turns into discourses like sociology, psychology, criminology and psychiatry.

### Political Struggle: A Bleak Possibility of Change

From the perspective of Foucault the birth and rise of the Marxism establishes the argument that the political movements are ontological incapable to bring about

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<sup>76</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault*, op.cit., p.59.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, op.cit., p.189.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>79</sup> Beatrice, Hans-Pile, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, United States, Stanford University, p.122.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.191.

<sup>81</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault*, op.cit., p.59.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

substantial transformation. We already have seen that there are discursive rules that are at work in the formation of discursive practices. At a given historical period there is no more than one specific rule that constitutes the formation of discourse.<sup>84</sup> The nature and the constitution of knowledge from one historical period to another have therefore varied because of the shift at the level of those rules.

It is a well known fact that Marxism or Marx calls for the formation of political revolutionary movement. The call for the revolutionary party is premised upon the belief that political struggle can only overthrow capitalism by taking control of state. Foucault traces the root of Marxism and its belief in the role of political struggle to the underlying discursive rules. Foucault argues that Marxism itself rests upon the modern epistemological conditions. It is the product of the failure of the classical epistemological condition.<sup>85</sup> In Foucault's view the break with classical *a priori* occurred with Ricardo. For Ricardo, labor not only measures the value of a commodity but labor in itself is the sole source of value. Commodities have value not because they can be exchanged. They are valuable even if there is nothing in the market because people have worked to produce them. Under these conditions value has ceased to be a sign; it has become a project.<sup>86</sup>

Foucault claims that the labor theory of value has consequences for economics.<sup>87</sup> First, it developed the linear view of economic development; second it gave birth to a new conception of man as an economic agent<sup>88</sup> and finally the relationship has been seen between economic agent and linear view of economic development.<sup>89</sup> Marx's thought, according to Foucault, is the result of final development.

Marx tries to shape the political will of masses in order to organize a movement against capitalism.<sup>90</sup> To Marx, capitalism is a transitory phase in the development of the mode and relations of production.<sup>91</sup> To Elster's reading of Marx, the growth of capitalism depends upon the augmentation of capital, so, the capitalist is bound to exploit<sup>92</sup>, manipulate the ideology of society<sup>93</sup> which would inevitably alienate labor.<sup>94</sup> In these conditions the intellectual has to unmask the capitalist values in order to expose exploitation, injustice and determinism.

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<sup>84</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (United States: Vintage Books, 1994).

<sup>85</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, United States, Vintage Books pp.253-263.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.254.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.253-254.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>90</sup> John Elster, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 302.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.56-59.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.136-62.

<sup>93</sup> John Elster, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 302-305.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-35.

The communist state, the final stage of human development, will build up a society on the basis of true freedom and justice.<sup>95</sup> True freedom and justice cannot be guaranteed as long as we promote private means of ownership which is the root cause of evils.

In Foucault's reading, Marx's idea of political movement is derived from the conception of labor inaugurated by Ricardo. According to Marx, labor is human practice through which man expresses himself into production.<sup>96</sup> The products are the manifestation of self. However, in capitalism labor is conceived in terms of commodity that is a negation of the true character of labor.<sup>97</sup> The true character of labor must be revived and it can only be revived in communitarian basis of the relation of productions.

To Foucault, Marx's conception of labor is premised upon modern conditions of knowledge. The political movement cannot call into question these rules because of two reasons. Firstly, but more importantly, the intellectuals cannot bring discursive rules to surface to challenge them. For, the said attempt would itself be grounded upon these rules. Second the political movements have to gather and shape the political will of the masses. This could only be possible if the political movement works within the given society. The change can only be brought about by political struggle if it works from within the society. However, a true change is not possible unless one suspends and calls the foundation of society into question. The change from within would be nothing more than a surface transformation. The political struggles can only bring surface changes. Marx writes 'a transformation would remain within the same mode of thought, a transformation that would be a certain way of better adjusting the same thought to the reality of things, would only be a *superficial transformation*'.<sup>98</sup> Trying to find out change within the society, in fact, blocks the real transformation.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 171-80.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-35.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-47.

<sup>98</sup> Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3: Power*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), p.457.

## Conclusion

There are either discursive rules or knowledge and power networks from where the notions of truth and knowledge spring. There is not truth, justice and freedom outside discourse or power. These ideals are the properties of discourse and power. Political movement can work upon them however they cannot call them into question *per se*.

Modern disciplinary power autonomously and anonymously controls the contemporary society. The government cannot affect the operation of modern power since the operation of state itself is conditioned by those power networks. The objective of political struggle in the government to promote or sustain change would ultimately generate no fruits regarding change in power relations.

Political movements are essentially incapable of promoting real change. The real change lies either at the level of epistemological conditions or at the networks of knowledge and power. The site of real change is inaccessible to political struggle. Second, political movements have to gather and shape the will of public. The organization of the people is only possible within fundamental parameters of society. However, the political struggle cannot challenge the foundation of society.