

POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND SURVEILLANCE: INSIGHTS FROM NIETZSCHE AND FOUCAULT

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, focusing on their profound insights into power, knowledge, and surveillance within modern society. Rejecting traditional notions of a fixed self, both Nietzsche and Foucault emphasize the role of power in shaping subjectivity. Nietzsche's concept of the will to power aligns with Foucault's idea that subjectivity is a product of power relations. Drawing from Nietzsche's genealogical method, Foucault traces the development of subjectivity through power mechanisms such as disciplinary techniques and surveillance. Both philosophers observe a reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge, illustrating how power produces knowledge and vice versa, influencing societal norms and values. Surveillance emerges as a central management technique of power in their works, reinforcing societal norms and disciplining individuals within modern institutions. This article underscores the inseparable link between power, knowledge, and surveillance in shaping social order and subjectivity, drawing on the rich insights provided by Nietzsche and Foucault.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Foucault; power; knowledge; subjectivity; surveillance; genealogy; disciplinary mechanisms; social order

In contemporary society, the complex interplay between power, knowledge, and surveillance profoundly shapes our existence. Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, eminent figures in philosophy and social theory, provide profound insights into these dynamics. Their works delve into the intricate webs of power relations, knowledge construction, and surveillance mechanisms, revealing their intertwined influence on our subjectivity and societal organization.

Nietzsche's philosophy centers on the concept of the "will to power," asserting that power saturates every aspect of human life and constantly molds our identities. He challenges the notion of a fixed self, arguing that subjectivity is fluid and shaped by the power dynamics inherent in society. Foucault extends Nietzsche's ideas by examining how power operates in the creation and regulation of knowledge. Through his genealogical approach, Foucault traces the historical evolution of power/knowledge dynamics, elucidating their impact on truth, morality, and social norms. Surveillance emerges as a pivotal theme in both Nietzsche and Foucault's analyses, serving as a tool for exerting and maintaining power. Nietzsche reveals how surveillance reinforces

societal values, while Foucault exposes its role in disciplining individuals within institutional frameworks like the panopticon.

Nietzsche and Foucault both challenge traditional notions of the self, rejecting the idea of a fixed, transcendental subject. Nietzsche argues that the subject is not inherent but rather constructed through interpretation. He emphasizes the subjective nature of reality, suggesting that facts are interpretations rather than objective truths. Nietzsche's rejection of the "thing in itself" underscores his belief in the primacy of appearances in human experience. Furthermore, he suggests that the concept of substance arises from the concept of the subject, rather than the other way around, implying that the self is a product of interpretation rather than a fundamental entity. In essence, both Nietzsche and Foucault assert that the self is not a given but rather a dynamic construct shaped by interpretation and discourse.

Basic to Foucault's work is the idea that subjectivity is a complex product rather than a pre-existing condition. The subject is not something given and not a necessary condition. The human subject is added or it should be produced by the intervention of power relations through its techniques. Foucault carried his intellectual project throughout his entire life to show how the subject is constituted in the history. His crucial concern was in developing an account of subjectivity by answering some questions regarding the emergence of the subject in history. Daniel Nica states that "a brief answer, that covers all the stages of Foucault's work, would be that the subject emerges at the intersection of truth, power and self-techniques" (Nica35).

For Foucault, modern societies are identified by three modes of objectification to produce human as subjects. Firstly, power produces subjectivity through the 'status of the sciences'. It is the technique of scientific classifications to objectify human as subjects. Secondly, power produces the subjectivity or objectivising the subject by the 'dividing practices'. Finally, self-technique, which is the production of the interaction between power and body at very micro level, called bio-power, in which individual turns himself into a subject in the bio-political domain.

In the third stage of Foucault's work, he turns up to Greek Antiquity and observed that ethics was not only a matter of measuring activities in terms of right and wrong, but also a matter of self-fashioning. As a result of this observation, Foucault enlarges his previous analysis regarding the emergence of the subject. Whereas in his early stages, he portrays a subject in a pervasive system of power relations, in his later period, he articulates the possibility of a self-constituting subject. The self is not only produced in the exercise of power relations, but it has resources of resistance (Foucault, History95). In order to create themselves, the individuals do not need to go back to Antiquity, but they have to invent new forms of subjectivity according to contemporary and future challenges (Kritzman 50). Even though, these interpretations do not mean that the individuals are an absolute free agent within the game of modern power relations and its techniques under the bio-political context.

The similarities between Nietzsche and Foucault in the formation of self or subject and its modification are significant in the postmodern age. For them, there is no self of something as given or outside from our surroundings, but it is added or produced through the experience based on modern technology. Nietzsche's will to power and Foucault's self-constitutes subject of resistance could be seen a similarity in psychological point of view.

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

For Nietzsche and Foucault, power and knowledge are different forces and at the same time, intertwined with each other. The interaction of power and knowledge create the relations, dominations and rules for control and regulations in the modern world. Both Nietzsche and Foucault observe that when people acquire knowledge they get power and the knowing process is nothing other than the exercise of power. So the attempt 'to know' is the exercise of power. Power produces knowledge and at the same time, knowledge is a means to attain power. In Nietzsche and Foucault, one can see a reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge though they are separate entities.

Nietzsche applies the genealogical method in the enquiry of origin and development of social moral prejudices. In the genealogical analysis, Nietzsche explores how to differentiate the terms, good/bad and good/evil in the moral life of human beings. Nietzsche argues, "Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself, slave morality says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other' non-self: and this 'no' is its creative deed" (Genealogy,20). He argues that master morality is a noble feeling in themselves as life affirming and prideful. The master morality leads them to the idea of good morality that high and honourable feeling in themselves.

The bad who are not considered as a part of this noble and high culture are the developers of slave morality. It develops from the powerless and hence it is called slave morality. According to Nietzsche, people who follow slave morality leads a life of hatred and undermined culture. For Nietzsche, through subordination and subjection to the noble races, the oppressed begin to develop a feeling of bitterness and hostility which is called resentment (means resentment). Moreover, the slave considers the powerful noble people or the master group as not only bad but also evil. Therefore, the slave reacts to their oppression and move against the oppressors. This leads to the development of their idea of evil and their negative mind-set which is life-denying rather than life-affirming. The evidence of genealogical and philological supports for Nietzsche's argument is that "the strong and noble invented the idea of good through self-celebration and acknowledgement: the judgement good does not emanate from those to whom goodness is shown! Instead it has been the good themselves, meaning the noble, the mighty, the high-place and high-minded who saw and judged themselves and their actions as good"(Genealogy 11).

Nietzsche states that these noble's will to power establish the domination over other races and they claim their right to create values. The results of these activities create the social categories like good/bad which originate from their will to power. In other words, it is a process of power exercise through the reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge. Power can be used to produce knowledge and knowledge can be used to acquire power. Therefore, for Nietzsche, knowledge does not exist without the help of power, at the same time; power does not exist without the help of knowledge.

Like Nietzsche, Foucault also depends on the genealogical method to trace the origin and development of the systems of punishment in the history. He genealogically examines the various systems of punishment from the 'scaffold' (public execution) of sovereign domination to the 'gentle way' (reformative punishment) like the exercise of power in jail system. According to Foucault, these two methods of punishment existed in a different socio-political context, but both systems needed an audience in order to satisfy the disciplinary and regulatory functions of society. It is the process of power exercises in which the public (audience) attain knowledge through the activities and demonstration of power.

Public execution or 'scaffold' was an open celebration of power that resulted in the production of knowledge of fear and terror in the entire society. When the king was questioned or a citizen disobeyed the rules, it ended in public execution. Similar to this, reformative punishment which includes observation of the authority, exercise of power causes the knowledge of self-regulation or self-discipline in the offensive personalities as well as in the members of the society. These two kinds of punishments discipline human beings, that depict a mutual relationship between power and knowledge. This relationship of power and knowledge works out at different stages to produce the desired effect and discipline through the techniques and tactics of subjection by the exercise of power (public execution) or to reconstruct or design a good subject (reformative punish) of the state.

In comparison, the prison incorporates both power and knowledge at the same stage, causing power and knowledge to be mutually dependent to create the desired effect. It is called as self-induced discipline. The prison system of punishment follows the observational kind of practice instead of display of something in front of an audience in public execution of sovereign power. The prison is a private and hidden place away from the society and the inmates of it are always under surveillance. Foucault calls this kind of observational practice of power over body as panopticon. He says that "all that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery...he is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication"(Discipline 200).

The Foucauldian analysis of the panoptic power establishes the control and discipline over human body through the interaction between power and knowledge. The exercise of panoptic power is based on the knowledge which is obtained through the process of continuous observation of human body. The prisoners never know that they are being watched, because if they come to know about this observation then, they probably would not reveal themselves. The functioning of power depends on the conscious and permanent visibility of people who are being controlled. On the basis of the constant observation, the authority trains people to control themselves.

Power and knowledge work together to control the behaviour and actions of people. Controlling functions (Power exercise) depend on knowledge and knowing. In other words, one should have a basic knowledge about a law or about things to obey the same. Foucault argues that “power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”(Discipline 27).

Both Nietzsche and Foucault argue that power and knowledge exist within a deep mutual relation in the power structure of a society. Nietzsche advocates the theory that “life is perpetuated as a constant struggle between social categories through different means of the acquisition of power and knowledge; he uses the Jews as an example of slave morality; that it was the Jews who brought about this reversal of the life-affirming mind-set of master morality; they asserted, through hatred of their oppressors, that only those who suffer are good, only the poor, the powerless, the lowly are good...whereas you rich, the noble and powerful, you are eternally wicked”(Nietzsche 17).

Nietzsche argues that Christianity became the ‘heir’ to this revaluation, and therefore the slave’s revolt in morality begins with the Jews and ends with Christian morals, a long term ‘victory’ for the slave morality. The ‘slaves’, or the powerless, gained power by imposing their system of categories on society. Therefore, the imposition of categories is part of an acquisition of power. The slave’s radical reaction to master morality is a prime example of how power and knowledge are used together in the contest for social hegemony and control.

Foucault advocates that “knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised” (Discipline 200). The interaction between power and knowledge produces the truth, moreover, the power can make itself as true. The application of knowledge will produce the normal effects of truth by which one can control, regulate and discipline the bodies in the society. For example, managing students in the school or the examination of patients in the hospital is a modern technique of control by the judgement/effect derived from the knowledge of observation.

The examination of patients is a process of discipline which reduces human body in to two kinds, as the scientific example and the object of care. Human science, caring, helping and all human needs such as health, education, and housing become a medium of power and always an

opportunity for discipline. The application of power/knowledge objectifies the human subject as an observing thing and, at the same time, the interaction of those two produces or modifies the human subject. Foucault explores that “it is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance”(Discipline185).

Foucault genealogically traces further cases to explore the categorisation and manipulation of human subjects by the technique of power/knowledge in the society. In Nietzschean works, one can trace a struggle between social categories as a result of the interaction between Power and knowledge. For Foucault, there is a homogeneous social body created and functioned by the intervention of power/knowledge. In his famous book, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault presents a term ‘delinquency’ and a sentence of two years in a reformatory case as examples to show how people are objectified and how people create their subject in themselves by the exercise of power/knowledge. Delinquency is a way to categorize human bodies into criminal which is defined by the ruling class on behalf of the prison system.

A child of thirteen, who lived without home, was charged with ‘vagabondage’ and was sentenced two years in a reformatory. According to Foucault, the reason of the sentence of this child is the disobedience to the social norms of the bourgeoisie. The judge did not accept child’s replies and sentenced him to a reformatory for correction and reformation with the norms of society. The functioning of power and knowledge resulted in this technology of discipline through punishment as a part of jail and law. In this point of view, a similarity can be seen in Nietzsche’s concept of master morality. Because, master is the ruling class and so is the bourgeoisie who establish that they are good. The rights, truths, lifestyles and norms of the society are similar with their values and morals. Therefore, anyone’s disobedience of their social norms would be considered as bad because they do not obey the same. They should be disciplined and corrected by the ruler or judge, because the followers of master morality control the system or the domain of power/knowledge.

The judges and their power exist because the bourgeoisie control the domains of knowledge by establishing their lifestyle as the social norm and as the right way to live. Everyone exists within the social order or hierarchy formed by the power relations in the society. As mentioned by Foucault, “one should have a master, be caught up and situated in a hierarchy; one exists only when fixed in definite relations of domination”(Discipline291).Through the analysis of these two instances, Foucault attributes the function of power/knowledge in society as part of a wider system of discipline and social homogeneity to class conflict and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Both

Nietzsche and Foucault analyze systems of power and the genealogy of power relations and come to the same conclusions that neither power nor knowledge can be prioritized, but they are inextricably linked in the development of society. Both power and knowledge are observed to have explicit results on individuals and groups of people. Power and knowledge also give rise struggle between social existence and complex social functions. For Nietzsche, power and knowledge develop simultaneously and reinforce each other to create an environment for social strife. For Foucault, power and knowledge develop a system of social control and homogenization.

GENERAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POWER

For Nietzsche, power is considered as psychological and ontological in nature. Power is a part of descriptive theory of body and it relates to drive, desire and passion. It is the psychological view on power. He explained that power is the product of an instinctive drive of all creatures including human beings. The victory of the ascetic ideal in his Genealogy of Morals is an example. In short, the nature, society, individual, art, knowledge etc. in the world, even the world itself, is the will to power.

For Foucault, power is considered as a socio-political and micro level perspective in nature. He explores the different technologies of power exercises over mankind in the modern age. He focusses on the new way of regulating human behaviour and human bodies. The new technologies of bio-power regulate human beings themselves. The human sciences play major role in the control of human body and its behaviour during the modern bio-political era.

Foucault is more closed to Max Weber than Nietzsche in the project of power analysis. The above mentioned points of power concept are closely related to Weber's theory, 'the iron cage of modernity'. Weber's 'iron cage' draws attention to the ascetic rationalism of the modern world. It discusses the structure of bureaucratic regulation, technical specialization and material acquisition. This is an iron cage that a system of regulation of people and their behaviour with the help of human sciences. Nietzsche is a naturalist who focuses on the psychological nature of human beings to conceptualise will to power and body. Nietzsche argues that power of body is ontological, psychological, biological and natural whereas Foucault observes the power over body in a socio-political and cultural dimension.

Nietzsche analyses power as the effect of will, desire or drive of body. Power emerges and enhances within the body. Human subjects have different possibilities to become more powerful and the subjects are active form of will to do something. But, Foucault argues that the authorities collect information of individual, then develop new modern technologies and strategies with the help of human sciences to regulate and discipline bodies in the modern society. Here, Foucault's

concern seems to be closer to Weber's distinctive ways in which the modern era controls human beings, and circumscribes their identities, their actions, and their aspirations .

POWER AND PUNISHMENT

For Nietzsche and Foucault, power is a key factor in social life, because it motivates all activities and controls human behaviour. Nietzsche says that "a living thing wants to discharge its strength – life itself is will to power - : self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent consequences of this"(Beyond15). Power is the will to do something and the will as passion, desire, drive and want. The will to power is the basic reality of everything in life. Knowledge, truth, intellect and so forth, all are the supporting factors to gain power. Nietzsche observes that all beings have a general tendency to rule others and the world. Therefore, power is the basic element of all creatures in the nature. The truth, life and world, everything, are the will to power and nothing besides it.

Likewise, the Foucauldian power concept is fundamental to the world of reality. There is no social world without power relations, because no social relations workout in the absence of power. So all social relations are fundamentally power relations. Foucault observes in his book, *Discipline and Punish*, the exercise of power through the technique of punishment that "the body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property. The body, according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions"(Discipline11).

Here one finds the similarity and difference between Nietzsche and Foucault in their conceptualization of power structure. Foucault agrees with Nietzschean observation on power that all beings struggle for domination and supremacy in the world. Therefore, for Nietzsche and Foucault, the power is fundamentally and universally inherent in all human beings. In punishment, Foucault does not focus on the doer or punisher, but on the person who is punished. In other words, punishment is considered as an exercise of power against human body. The analyses focuses on the socio-political power exercise through modern knowledge and technology to discipline the human body. Nietzsche focuses on the doing subject who acts to become powerful. This is a psychological analysis of acquiring power. It is a personal issue of an individual for power. For Nietzsche, power is psychological and biological in nature. For Foucault, it is the socio-political analysis of power exercise over human body.

To sum up, in a comparative study of Nietzsche and Foucault one could find that the archaeological and genealogical methods of Nietzsche and Foucault to analyze ideas and things are significant historical projects. They challenge traditional philosophical thoughts by these methodologies. Both

the philosophers employed different approaches in analyzing the nature of power, truth, morality values, and ethics. Post-Nietzschean era witnessed multi-disciplinary discussions on power and its relation in the socio-political existence of humans. Similarly, the post - Foucauldian period is experiencing remarkable effects due to deliberations on power relations by postmodern thinkers like Giorgio Agamben, Nikolas Rose and Gilles Deleuze. When it comes to Nikolas Rose, it is interesting to note that the discussions on power move on to a molecular perspective in the place of Foucault's micro level analysis. It has expanded the notion of biopower and has gone beyond the realm of it. The debates on power have expanded to new horizons in the post Foucauldian age.

The intertwined philosophies of Nietzsche and Foucault illuminate the complex dynamics of power, knowledge, and subjectivity in modern society. Both thinkers reject traditional notions of a fixed self or subject, instead emphasizing the role of power in the creation and regulation of subjectivity. Nietzsche's concept of the will to power aligns with Foucault's idea that subjectivity is a product of power relations and historical context. Foucault's genealogical method, inspired by Nietzsche, traces the development of subjectivity through power mechanisms such as disciplinary techniques and technologies of the self. In their exploration of power and knowledge, both Nietzsche and Foucault observe a reciprocal relationship between the two forces. Power produces knowledge and vice versa, shaping societal norms, values, and hierarchies. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of morality reveals how power shapes concepts of good and evil, while Foucault's examination of punishment systems demonstrates how power/knowledge mechanisms discipline and regulate human behavior. Surveillance emerges as a central management technique of power in both Nietzsche and Foucault's works. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis highlights how surveillance reinforces societal norms and values, while Foucault's exploration of disciplinary mechanisms such as the panopticon illustrates how surveillance controls and disciplines individuals within modern institutions. Ultimately, both thinkers underscore the inseparable link between power, knowledge, and surveillance in shaping social order and subjectivity.

In conclusion, the philosophies of Nietzsche and Foucault offer profound insights into the complex dynamics of power, knowledge, and surveillance in modern society. Their rejection of fixed notions of self and emphasis on the role of power in shaping subjectivity highlight the pervasive influence of power relations on individuals and institutions. Through Nietzsche's concept of the will to power and Foucault's genealogical method, one understands how power and knowledge intertwine to produce and regulate societal norms and values. Moreover, the reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge illuminates how surveillance emerges as a central technique of power management, reinforcing social order and disciplining individuals within institutions. By examining disciplinary mechanisms such as the panopticon, Foucault illustrates how surveillance functions as a tool of control and regulation.

Ultimately, the inseparable link between power, knowledge, and surveillance emphasises the importance of critically engaging with these concepts to understand and potentially challenge

existing power structures. Nietzsche and Foucault's philosophies serve as invaluable frameworks for analyzing and navigating the complexities of contemporary society, urging one to question and resist oppressive systems of power and surveillance.

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