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Claremont McKenna College



The Gay Science: Power on the Body, Population, and Psyche

submitted to

Professor James Kreines

and

Professor Jordan Daniels

by

Nicola Augustyn

For

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Abstract

Michel Foucault is a philosopher of power who left behind a legacy of ideas that continue to inspire scholars today. His conceptualization of power is not limited to the figures of kings, monarchs, or the sovereign state. Rather, he regards power as a productive force that shapes subjectivity, manufactures knowledge, and engenders the truth in a particular historical context. In this thesis, I aim to provide a comprehensive account of Foucault's analysis of power, starting with his refutation of the "repressive hypothesis" that challenges the predominant view of centralized top-down power. Then, I present Foucault's proposal for redefining power as a system of analytics, implying power courses through society via various social relations. This unfortunately renders liberation from power obsolete but opens new ways of resisting power. Following the reconceptualization of power, I differentiate systems of power, specifically sovereign power's inadequacies with producing subjects, disciplinary power with its domain of the body, and biopower with its concern for the population. Finally, I investigate power in contemporary phenomena of today's data-driven, digitalized, and neoliberal Western societies, taking stock of the limitations of Foucault's power analysis while exploring how it might be extended. Written in an aphoristic style, the last chapter encourages ethical inquiry into how power exerts control and governance today.

Introduction

In 1975, Michel Foucault, the renowned French philosopher, made a visit to Claremont, California, a small college town known for its consortium colleges and smog. During his stay, Simeon Wade, a Claremont Graduate University professor of History, wrote a manuscript of their weekend detailing their conversations about art, film, music, and various local lore while driving through Mt. Baldy and Death Valley. Wade shares his reflection on Foucault:

We might deem Foucault a systems analyst, even a great philosopher, historian, sociologist, and psychologist, but he actually considered himself a journalist. He studied the past only for the purpose of understanding the present.¹

Michel Foucault is celebrated as a “historian of ideas,” delving into the ways in which certain phenomena emerge by chance and linger to the present, perhaps evolving along the way. When I started reading his books, I found the experience thrilling, feeling as if I was unearthing another side of Western history that does not immediately pertain to factual occurrences or sequences, but rather to how certain historical ‘events’ can shape society’s self-understanding. One year after he visited Claremont, he published arguably his most acclaimed text, *The History of Sexuality Vo. 1*. In this text, Foucault employs a genealogical analysis of power to understand how sexuality was deployed, without assuming that it was an essential feature of the subject from the onset. The method of genealogy entails the removal of the subject from its history and focusing on the knowledge, discourses, and domains of objects that constitute subjectivity in a given historical context.²

¹ Wade, *Foucault in California*, 5.

² Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 117.

On that note, I would call Foucault a philosopher of power, as majority of his work surrounds the theme of power. His death in 1984 left scholars with a legacy to build from his ideas. Fitting, as Foucault advocates for the process of creation and construction, he leaves no limitations to his work and encourages the process of recontextualization. Several scholars began where he left off, conceptualizing power, knowledge, modes of governmentality, and subjectivity to the present day. This thesis is an attempt to do the same, exploring power in the Foucauldian sense, identifying regimes of power, and investigating its applications or limitations in the contemporary day.

My thesis is structured as follows. In the first chapter, I introduce the repressive hypothesis: the historical narrative that sexuality was repressed in the last few centuries. I present Foucault's refutation of the repressive hypothesis to opt for a productive hypothesis instead. Instead of the past few centuries is responsible for sexual repression, through discursive practices and mechanisms of power on the body and population, we find that power was actually *deployed* at this time. I examine the ways that power actually produces sexuality through its entangled relationships with knowledge, truth, and subjectivity.

The second chapter presents Foucault's new conceptualization of power by laying out the five propositions that bring us closer to identifying what power is and what it is not. These five propositions serve as a criterion to ultimately understand the conceptualization of power that Foucault puts forth. Power, in the grand scheme of things, gets abstracted in this thesis but remains informative if we want to know how it is exercised.

The third chapter overviews the technologies of power that Foucault identifies. I give examples of its techniques and scope, which I deem to be important to contextualizing power's mechanisms in society today. First, I present the sovereign model, the model of power to which

Western society has been attached since the Middle Ages. Second, I discuss disciplinary power and its mechanisms that emerged during the rise of industrial capitalism. Third, I present biopower and biopolitics which emerged shortly after disciplinary power but created a new form of governance. This chapter positions us to identify the new scheme of power identified by Foucault.

Finally, the fourth chapter is largely an unstructured exploration of contemporary phenomena through a new form of power, ‘psychopower,’ that was developed by philosopher Byung-Chul Han. Today, the power regimes of biopower and disciplinary power may not be appropriate given the drastic changes the twenty-first century went through. This chapter aims to understand how Foucauldian power works in a world that is unrecognizable from the turn of the millennia. We are data-driven, image-driven, entertained, and stimulated unlike ever before, raising new challenges and power relations that are ripe for critique. Overall, this chapter is largely a conglomeration of the intellectual curiosities I developed over the course of my undergraduate career, particularly the intersection of media studies, cultural theory, social philosophy, and psychology. As a student of philosophy and psychology, the chapter is also expressive of the tension I’ve experienced between the two disciplines.

Additionally, the fourth chapter is written in the aphoristic style inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, a form of writing I find purposeful in expressing a broad range of ideas with a running theme. While not a conventional style to write in philosophy theses, I find it inspires the practice of philosophy in one’s own life. Throughout my journey in philosophy, I found that the most impactful philosophy are the ones that do not rigidly hold an argument, but provide inspiration for where readers can start and where they finish, choose what they like, and apply it to their own worldview, or at the very least, gain new perspective to the boundless ways

of thinking. The goal of this thesis is to inspire as well, to think critically about the ways that one wields power or gets subjugated to power every day, to make space for construction, or to simply read about understanding the world a little differently. Such is the beauty and utility of philosophy for me.

On that note, the title of this thesis refers to Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, a book bursting with poetry and philosophy. *The Gay Science* does not inherently have to do anything with queer studies and refers to the word's former connotation of happy, joyous, or cheerful. However, Foucault does reside in a Nietzschean school of thought, particularly drawing inspiration from his genealogical critique of morality to trace out how sexuality was produced by using power as a point for genealogical analysis. Hence, I found the title super fitting, as the first chapter specifically deals with the emergence of sexuality. Science cannot be separated from power, as we will see. Whether that is our joy or pain is not power's concern.

Ultimately, this project aims to redefine power towards a productive conceptualization. Power, being a fundamental force in everyone's life, should be recognized as a system of force relations that produces knowledge and subjectivity. In acknowledging the power relations that shape our understanding of ourselves and the world, one might discover there is some agency to be found in resistance.³ Or not. Either way, in the Foucauldian tradition, I hope to do so in journalistic spirit, of which I hold Foucault's account of power as relevant and important to understand our subjectivity and the limits that impose on us.

³ Perhaps I even demonstrate this agency through irony.

CHAPTER 1: The Repressive Hypothesis and the Productive Hypothesis

In 1976, Michel Foucault famously declared that “in political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king.”⁴ This statement came after a decade commemorated by attempted revolutions, civil unrest, and countercultural movements in the Western world. From the West Coast’s “Summer of Love” to the May ’68 street protests in Paris, progressive thinkers and youth were unified by the common goal of liberation from sexual repression and structural oppression. The idea of free love and sexual autonomy signified a new world, one that overcame a repressive power.

This specific repressive notion of power, reminiscent of the centralized and repressive power of a king, predominated in the public imagination and rebellious social and political movements. And yet, the king had been long dead for centuries. In *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Foucault takes stock of this gap and ultimately concludes that the idea that power is concentrated in one place and capable of being overthrown is itself a myth. As it relates to sexuality, Foucault calls this myth the “repressive hypothesis.” Put simply, the repressive hypothesis posits that sexuality has been repressed by the power of laws, taboos, and the moral bourgeois order starting loosely from the seventeenth century but tightening its grip in the nineteenth century until the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Alternatively, Foucault proposes to view the restrictions, prohibitions, and laws surrounding sexuality as evidence of an obsession with sex. Power has not been repressing sex but deploying sexuality onto individual bodies and the population. Through his historical exploration of sexuality and the contingencies for its

⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 88-89.

distribution, Foucault also takes on the task of exposing power for what it is without its representations of law and liberty. Ultimately, the goal of his project is to “conceive of sex without the law, and power without the king.”⁵

The historical narrative of the repressive hypothesis is seductive for many reasons. It entails a model of power that governs our hopes, dreams, and thoughts about liberation and freedom. Its historical allure stems from the easy connections with industrial development, stricter punitive measures, and the spirit of Enlightenment. Before the nineteenth century, it seems that sexuality was still treated with a certain *laissez-faire* attitude. There were not nearly as many regulations and codes regarding one’s sexuality as there were emerging in Victorian society. In comparison to the ancient and Middle Ages, sexuality appears visibly repressed, censored, and confined to specific places.

Starting in the nineteenth century, the Victorian regime implemented sanctions on sexuality and speaking about sexuality. The new wave of sexual repression “operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know.”⁶ Sex was moved to the bedroom, where the practice was approached with utilitarianism and practicality. It was transformed into a secret and taboo, a topic not to be spoken of unless it abided by the norms of its governance. In other words, only matrimonial heterosexuality was prescribed and validated by civil and canonical law.

Certainly, not all sexualities fit into the valorized prescription of conjugal alliances authenticated by God and civil law. Rather than merely being suppressed, however, such

⁵ Ibid, 91.

⁶ Ibid, 4.

sexualities became *deviant* on the basis that they were not the norm and were confined to places that tolerated or reasoned aberrant behaviors. Hence, mental hospitals and brothels emerged to integrate individuals into places that still operated in the realm of production and profit.⁷ Medical and psychiatric institutions emerged to identify and deal with deviant behaviors, study their cases, and rehabilitate them to the normative standard of their social context. Normalizations, according to Foucault, are the historically and socially contingent product of different institutions reinforcing social control and discipline with mechanisms that shape individuals' behaviors to the ideal norm of conduct. Behaviors outside the norm were to be pathologized and problematized so they can disappear, or at least not be in visible view, in society. The repression hypothesis suggests that such behaviors were suppressed—and they were. However, Foucault draws attention to the proliferation of particular forms of sexuality and the great attentiveness with which new institutional powers began to regard the deviant desires and the subjects that expressed them.

At this crucial time of industrial development, repression of sex was viewed to be inherently tied to modes of production, procreation, and labor. Institutional apparatuses had to control the desires of individuals and the population because the pleasure was not compatible with productivity. The repressive hypothesis says power operates in this type of form, through laws and institutions that reacted negatively toward certain forms of sexualities. There was consistent scrutiny on all fronts to effectively manage the population and their desires as a means to repress unwanted behaviors.

⁷ Ibid, 4.

Additionally, the visible laws and institutions that seem to repress sexuality make points of defiance identifiable and challengeable. Foucault states that “if sex is repressed, that is condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression.”⁸ In defying power, one is also placing themselves outside the realm of power, or at least resisting its domination. Here, there is a mystification of the arrival of freedom by subverting the law, speaking on censored topics, and revealing of truth. There is a gratification to speaking on political causes, for it reinstates a pleasure that was divested from a higher power. Sexual liberation was tied to an agenda of freedom and reclaiming a new, honest, and beautiful culture of free love. Subverting the law, enlightening one’s self, and renouncing repression amount to a certain ecstasy and gratification. Emancipation from sexual repression must presume that sexuality is repressed and that there are points of resistance to empowering sexuality from its repressive sources.

Thus, the historical narrative says there are repressive powers at work. Whether in the case of sexuality or politics, we become subjects to the power mechanisms of dominating social, governmental, economical, and religious institutions that take away our freedom and desires. Through prohibition, censorship, silencing, and confinement, everyone’s sexuality was dominated, suppressed, and notably repressed. Speaking out against this repression gives rise, as Foucault notes, to great passion and pleasure. Foucault believes we are so attracted to talking about our repression that we fail to see that discourse on sexuality was not repressed, but rather proliferated. He notes:

What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures;

⁸ Ibid, 6.

to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights.⁹

The desire to talk about sexuality is high, for it entails the possibility of emancipation or enlightenment. It is alluring to think that power is simply repressive, rather than a productive force that frames the narrative under which power operates. The repressive hypothesis overlooks that power coerces us to talk about sexuality and grants the pleasure that we obtain from participating in the discourse. Even in the early twentieth century, the repressive hypothesis was still operative. The euphoria in reversing repression was clearly demonstrable with the rise of psychoanalysis and Freudian discourse. Freud declared that our unconscious is full of repressed desires, and a lending ear can help us discover the route to emancipation from our constraints.¹⁰ So, the market value of repressed sexuality and the knowledge of its intrinsic passions became demanded. One cannot access this knowledge themselves, but it is through the help of an expert that one can advise the truth about their sexuality. If they choose not to transgress by talking about their sexuality, their desires remain safely repressed and the knowledge of their truth is never realized. Therefore, power under the repressive hypothesis only has two ends: liberation from repression or the affirmation of repression. Taking this into consideration, Foucault urges us to reconsider the repressive hypothesis. The repressive hypothesis did not silence sexuality but it further proliferates the discourse of sex, making it into an object of analysis and formulating sexuality into something highly conspicuous. To free ourselves from the false narrative of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault suggests a new conceptual model of power that is not a top-

⁹ Ibid, 7.

¹⁰ Ibid, 7.

down, tyrannical, and repressive force, but a power that is linked to the construction of knowledge, subjectivity, and discourse.

To reiterate, the repressive hypothesis goes as follows: for the past three centuries, there were people and institutions in power repressing sexuality through different juridical techniques such as prohibitions, the forced reduction to silence regarding sex, the moral codification of sex, and the bourgeois marital model. Foucault refuses to inherit the repressive hypothesis that was predominant in political, social, and historical analysis, and instead, he sees an incitement to discourse and novel instruments of power that identify and recognize sexuality in its subjects. What Foucault will argue is that rather than a generalized repression of sexuality, institutions seized control of various discourses on sexuality and employed specific mechanisms that legitimized sexuality as an object of concern. Sex becomes connected to the truth of identity, and power actually adheres to a *productive* hypothesis of sexuality. Thus, Foucault investigates ways in which power *knows* rather than a power that merely represses.

Essentially, Foucault argues that the repressive hypothesis is false because power is not forcing us to speak less; power coerces us to speak more. As a central concept to Foucault's work, discourse refers to the body of language and meaning that is constructive of knowledge and power in a localized historical period. According to Foucault, discourse mediates the relationship between power and knowledge. To clarify, knowledge is an exercise of power, in that certain authorities produce knowledge that shapes society and individuals. Hence, power is not something that functions solely oppressively, but it produces the knowledge that is meant to control and regulate sexuality.

This knowledge is constituted by power relations, which refers to the way power operates not only through traditional structures of government, but also through an array of different

social institutions, scientific discourses, and human studies. These power relations will determine who is allowed to speak and what they are allowed to say, as that knowledge will disseminate within the social landscape. Hence, the arena in which the forces of power and knowledge are employed is discursive. There exists not a *single* discourse on sexuality, but a multiplicity of discourses that are governed and administered to individuals by the relationship between power and knowledge governs.

For instance, psychological and psychoanalytic institutions theorize sexuality as something that constitutes one's identity. Sexuality becomes a primary characteristic of a person, which was historically formulated through a categorization of normal or deviant. This identity is not merely a benign designation but inscribes someone within a project of rehabilitation, containment, or productivity. So, knowledge is exerted in an unequal power relationship and can dramatically affect the conditions of life for any individual known by such a discourse.

Thus, discourse is not a mode of communication, but it is how the entanglement of power and knowledge becomes transparent and wields influence on the organization of the principles, individuals, and objectives of society. Foucault rejects the repressive hypothesis because the efforts to censor sexuality actually brought it onto the main stage and spotlighted its alluring nature and the audience members being a manifold of institutions all wanted to home in and project their thoughts onto her. Sexuality, with its mystique of being dangerous, took on a new role of being an object of knowledge. At this point, different institutions, high societies, and scientific discourses took an attraction to sexuality and weaved it into a phenomenon whose truth must be revealed. Specifically, there was "a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly

accumulated detail.”¹¹ Sexuality was transformed into scientific discourse, a *Scientia sexualis* that was governed by its relations to institutional sites of knowledge and discourses.

Foucault gives a conjectural account of how sexuality came to be so central to Western society’s identity. Sexuality became the site of surveillance, and it was through discursive mechanisms that individuals were allowed to speak on it in confined places. The confessional, or the practice of confessing, became a central power mechanism that formulated the truth surrounding sex. Its history has its roots in the establishment of the sacraments of penance by the Lateran council in 1215. Western societies began regulating the truth about sex through confessional practices, albeit repenting their sins and formulating their desires through the Divine order. The sacraments of penance were the canonical laws that guided morality, desire, and truth, and they obliged all good Christians to annual confession to avow their wrongdoings and plead for forgiveness. Prompted by the Counter-Revolution in the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent imposed new rules for self-examination. Penance had to be taken up intensely, the linguistic ambiguities of the sacraments had to be cleared up, and discipline was enacted on the flesh.¹² (even at the expense of other sins). There was a need to examine every detail of one’s sexuality, so they can return to God, detach themselves from their vulgar desires, and render themselves pure from committing any more sins.

The Council of Trent mandates:

Whence it is gathered that all the mortal sins, of which, after a diligent examination of themselves, they are conscious, must need to be by penitents enumerated in confession, even though those sins be most hidden, and committed only against the two last precepts of the decalogue,--sins which sometimes wound

¹¹ Ibid, 18.

¹² Ibid, 19.

the soul more grievously, and are more dangerous, than those which are committed outwardly.¹³

This juridical law, endowed by the authority of the Catholic Church is not merely targeting the sinful behaviors of individuals but also places great emphasis on their hidden desires. This implies that internal disposition-- thoughts, desires, and intentions-- were important for salvation. It is no longer how one acts or behaves explicitly, but now sins are also constituted through the evaluation of one's implicit and internal mental processes. Sinful and aberrant thoughts were said to wound the soul more grievously, as they weigh heavy on the soul and can lead to aberrant behavior. Hence, the priest can promise salvation and relief from the thoughts that grieve the soul. When one examines their self and transforms their desires into discourse, the priest elicits a confession of their innermost thoughts, gaining access to them. Once the priest has access to the hidden desires, the Church uses the knowledge to better control desires and behavior. Foucault marks that through Christian penance, Western humans became "confessing animals,"¹⁴ extending this practice into the domains of literature, clinics, and human sciences.

The Age of Enlightenment adopted the technique of the confessional, which was prior a unitary practice only linked to religion and morality. In the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the confessional was appropriated by science, reason, and rationality through emerging institutions. This multiplied power relations through proliferating the knowledge and discourses on sexuality, which sequentially diminished the Church's authority on the topic. Morality was no longer a strong enough measure to govern sexuality. Soon, it became essential to speak about sex, and thereafter, an apparatus was installed "for producing a greater quantity of discourse about sex,

¹³ Council of Trent, "Canons Concerning Justification," chap. 14.

¹⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 59.

capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy.”¹⁵ Distinctively, medicinal, economic, and scientific institutions began to administer and regulate sexuality, as opposed to simply negotiating judgment. The confessional was secularized as science was fused with religious practice, justifying the new control and discipline on sexuality as being a curiosity, danger, or disgust:

it was a time when the most singular pleasures were called upon to pronounce a discourse of truth concerning themselves, a discourse that had to model itself after that which spoke, not of sin and salvation, but of bodies and life processes- the discourse of science. A confessional science...¹⁶

This tradition of the confessional transformed political and religious life, leading to a process of individualization and new power relations. The role of the *confessee* always assumes the role of the guilty, the criminal, the accused, and must declare the truth concerning themselves in front of the authority, the listener, the master of the truth. The institution or authoritative listener imposes their truth onto the subject or translates the subject into the terms of the authoritative truth, which always involves the normative standards of society and institutional knowledge. When there is socialization into norms, there is also pathologization as its counterpoint. More institutions emerged as centers for discourses from the demand to pathologize the behaviors that did not meet the norms of society, inflicted by other institutions. It was an explosion of different discursivities materialized, such as biology, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, statistics, pedagogy, and criminology, that induced sexuality to talk about itself.¹⁷ Instead of sexuality being silenced as is narrated by the repressive hypothesis, there was a proliferation of polymorphous discourses, each connected by a network of relations.

¹⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶ Ibid, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid, 33-34.

Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered. It was in the nature of a public potential; it called for management procedures; it had to be taken charge of by analytical discourses.¹⁸

Hence, sexuality began transforming into an object of analysis that must be studied and examined for not only its adherence to the moral codes of the Church, but also for its scientific rationalization. It is socially authorized, in that there typically is a reference to the authority of the knowledge found in discourse. Authoritative listeners of discourses, such as the psychiatrist or doctor, were the guardians of sexual knowledge through analytical discourses.

Hence, the *scientia sexualis*, a science of sexuality, was born. The truth about sexuality is detached from the individual and their immediate pleasures because it was informed by the power relations and discourses of society. The knowledge produced from the institutional discourses bleeds into the individuals, where power is exercised. The truth of sexuality and its pleasure was no longer in *experience*, but rather it was to be found through an outside source, the secular confessor, a representative of the *scientia sexualis*. Foucault states:

We have at least invented a different kind of pleasure: pleasure in the truth of pleasure, the pleasure in knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it, the fascination of seeing it, of confiding it in secret, of luring it out in the open- the specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure.¹⁹

Sex became an object of knowledge, seen as holding a truth inherent to it needing to be discovered. The sovereignty of *ars erotica*, the notion that pleasure reigns supreme over truth, subsided to a scientific pleasure. The pleasure was found in pursuing the truth about sexuality,

¹⁸ Ibid, 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, 71.

analyzing its pleasures and desires, and producing new insights into it, constructing a comprehensive account of sexuality.

Thus, discourse can be seen as both the producer and product of power and knowledge. It is discontinuous as it is contingently fragmented in each location and relation, usually having “coded contents and qualified speakers.”²⁰ There can be contradictory discourses utilizing the same techniques, challenging one another for the authority of truth. It can subvert one power for the preference of a new one with a singular narrative change in the name of scientific discovery, or it can supplement a different discourse, and add economic benefits to the scientific discovery for instance. Through the power mechanisms of the confessional and institutionalized discourse, there was a pronounced truth about sexuality, assigning everyone the perpetual task of examining one’s sexuality in relation to the sites of discourse.

Furthermore, Foucault writes that sexuality cannot be described as a stubborn drive or repressive force inherent to the body, but rather a manifold of mechanisms of power and knowledge.²¹ Instead of focusing on a primordial or pre-social body, Foucault notes that in the eighteenth century, schools, prisons, and hospitals emerge to deal with sexuality. Primarily, there emerged four specific figures who became central objects of knowledge for sexuality: the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult.²² It was at the site of these four figures that sexuality was constructed and produced through disciplinary and biopolitical mechanisms.

²⁰ Ibid, 29.

²¹ Ibid, 103.

²² Ibid, 105.

For example, the woman's body was a site for disciplinary intervention and interrogation through various institutions. Women became very important to the analysis of sex, primarily because their sexuality was in a direct relationship with the reproduction of the general population, the caretaking of the family, and the life of children. In this regard, women's bodies were saturated with sexuality, and thus easily pathologized in medical domains.²³ When their desires or behaviors deviated from the norm of a caring and docile mother, women were seen as a social threat and subject to medical intervention. Hence, the diagnosis of hysteria was a major form of neurotic illness during the nineteenth century.²⁴ Psychiatrists and doctors studied women who showed hysterical symptoms, detaining them in hospitals and asylums to build reports on their illness. The behaviors that did not conform to what was known about the female anatomy were to be categorized under the all-encompassing diagnosis and justify its need to be controlled. They were punished with seclusion, condemnation, and *observation* if they did not fit the normative prescriptions of a woman, which further enforced control over their bodies.

Furthermore, children's sexuality and psychiatrist of perverse behaviors were also targets for disciplinary interventions. Children's sex was the focus of parents, educators, and physicians, which resulted in an arrangement of their sexual life through rules of monitoring bedtimes, gender segregation, space for classes, and school curriculum in eighteenth-century secondary schools.²⁵ Certainly, the worries of adults transferred to the worries of children, making them aware of their sexuality and its concerning nature. Additionally, there was the psychiatrization of perverse behaviors. Essentially, individuals started knowing their self in relation to sexuality, and

²³ Ibid, 104.

²⁴ Tasca C, et al.. Women and hysteria in the history of mental health. *Clinical Practice Epidemiology Mental Health*. 2012;8:110-119.

²⁵ Ibid, 28.

that knowledge was produced by power mechanisms of surveillance, classifications, and diagnosis from various social institutions and scientific fields.

The fourth figure that is representative of sexuality was the *procreative couple* came to be a major force in the production of sexuality. Unique in itself, the procreative couple demonstrates the emergence of a new form of power that does not necessarily have its source in disciplinary mechanisms. Rather, it emerges with the innovation of a 'population' in the eighteenth century, tied to labor capacity and economic growth.²⁶ The procreative couple was the exemplar of a tolerated sexual alliance, hence becoming the norm of which everything else became deviant. It operated on the population level to normalize and that specific regulate alliance.

These four figures were established by institutional and governmental power relations but also became crucial weapons of power themselves. There was no repression of the hysterical woman, the sexuality of children, disruptive procreative behavior, or perverse sexualities. Instead, power produced the knowledge of these categorical figures. It produced the normalization and pathologizing of sexuality and provided the basis for the invitation of its discourse from two distinct points of knowledge: "a biology of reproduction which developed continuously according to a general scientific normativity, and a medicine of sex conforming to quite different rules of formation."²⁷ The power employed on each of the figures pertains to both disciplinary power and biopower, producing a biopolitical deployment of sexuality, but I will discuss these systems more generally in the third chapter.

Consequently, power as a product of discourse can shape one's subjectivity, one's desires, and one's values. Foucault argues that power productively shapes our identity and values

²⁶ Ibid, 25.

²⁷ Ibid, 54.

because we transform our desires into discourse. In speaking about perverted sexualities and fetishes, Foucault writes “the machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality” and “made into a principle of classification and intelligibility.”²⁸ Sexuality, as we know it today, did not exist until power mechanisms and institutionalized mechanisms took control over it, pronounced its danger, gave it its definitions, and subjugated individuals to its discretion. The power devices of discourse revealed and solidified our pleasures, and the body was the site of classifying different conduct. Society began thinking about their sexual orientations and the role of sex in their lives because it was normalized into their vocabulary. In this case, the ‘repressed’ subject of sexuality converted into a whole study of sexuality, with the four figures of analysis and the confessional anchoring its legitimacy.

Ultimately, Foucault’s rejection of the repressive hypothesis is grounded in the belief that power does not operate through the repression of sexuality, but mainly through the production of sexuality as knowledge in discursive practices. For Foucault, discourse is where power accumulates and produces knowledge on an object, as was shown in the case of sexuality. Sexuality became more visible than repressed, more scrutinized than silenced, and more analyzed than ignored. We think that sexuality is something that has existed from the beginning of time, that it is an essential feature of our being, but Foucault dismisses that claim by analyzing the way in which power creates the subject with the knowledge it produces in a certain historical context. In falling prey to the false narrative of the repressive hypothesis and believing sexuality has been repressed, one obscures the ways in which *power* operates in society. It is only when

²⁸ Ibid, 43-44.

we view power in this nuanced light can we begin to distinguish the technologies of power that have a great influence on society and individuals.

CHAPTER 2: Towards a Novel Conception of Power

Power, then, is a lot more complex than society's typical perception of it. With the deployment of sexuality, power is demonstrated as a productive force that utilizes discourse, institutional knowledge, and confession for its gains. Now, I stray away from the focus on sexuality to conceptualize power in a broader sense. Sexuality was critical for Foucault to analyze the ways that power essentialized something ahistorical and contingently appearing. If we want to understand how power operates, which is fundamental to our epistemic, political, and social pursuits, we should conceptualize power in a novel way. Foucault offers five propositions of modern power that may serve as the guidelines for the new conception. In this new light, power should not be viewed as a theory, rather it must be understood as an *analytics*, for power is a system of moving relations and does not transpire to materiality. These five propositions are the starting point for tracking the movements of power and will serve as a novel conception of power.

1. Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared

Contrary to a sovereign mode of power where the king and law reign supreme, power cannot be held onto, acquired, seized, or shared. Power should be understood nominally. This entails not seeing power as something that is material, fixed, or possessed, nor adjacent to a centralized structure or institution. Rather it is a name for something that perpetually moves

within society from every direction, in a series of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.²⁹ Power cannot be viewed as a commodity that is traded or distributed because it is omnipresent and dynamic, coursing through different power relations and reformulating itself when needed. It is omnipresent in that it is being produced at every moment, at every point, and intrinsic to every relation.

As an example, the State government is often seen as holding and wielding power. However, attributing a wealth of power to the State apparatus would misconstrue power as something finite, negative, and stable, operating only through its legislation and laws. Power cannot be seized because it courses through power relations, modifying itself to fit the objectives of the relations. Additionally, power cannot be shared because this would presume that power distributes itself freely and equally. This is not the case, for power will affect certain subjects in disproportionate ways depending on the objective of power. For example, the State targets deviant behaviors and will subject people who are most susceptible to demonstrating these unwanted behaviors. Ultimately, power is the name for the ongoing action that runs through a web of relations, rather than a symbolic and tangible object being possessed or obtained.

2. Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships

Further, there are no positions of externality in power relations. Power is immanent in all social structures, individuals, or institutions. In his analysis, Foucault relates power to physics, saying that individual and local force relations operate under the ‘microphysics’ of power. Further, there is the ‘macrophysics’ operation of power, which constitutes the superstructures

²⁹ Ibid, 94.

(economic, sexuality, governmental, etc.) that exist in the same web of power relations as individual power relations. The superstructure is dependent on other existing power relations and institutions. They might account for a greater power imbalance; in that, they produce divisions and inequality, but that is both the source and effect of power.³⁰

For example, to think that the State is a superstructure with ultimate sovereignty negates the necessary power relations that course through the State and reproduce the knowledge for the allowance of its governance. For the State to function, it must align itself with the scientific investments in the health of the population or the media outlets that project their messages. Power grasps what it can reach, so normative behaviors are in relation to media and publicity, science with the law, and urban design with economic interests. Inside the macrophysics of power, there are endless microphysics that constitutes the effects of the superstructure. Power produces a body of knowledge that runs through various social institutions and governments to justify its existence. Hence, the State does not hold or acquire power but acts in accordance with the routes power takes through other relations.

3. *Power comes from below, without a binary structure of the dominating and dominated.*

Foucault proposes that power comes from everywhere and that we should discard the idea that power comes in a top-down binary form. In Foucault's view, the top-down notion of power suggests its limitations and its effectiveness to some "fundamental lawfulness," or the juridical monarchy. It is a representation of power that is characteristic of our historical context, a transient form of power that works upon the visible body. Foucault urges us to reconsider our

³⁰ Ibid, 94.

preconceptions of power to a model that is independent of the short-lived political and law structure that exercises power through the negative. There is no top hierarchical structure because the most visible are those seemingly most vulnerable to power.

4. *Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective*

Additionally, power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective, meaning they are ever-present but there is no *one* source to blame for one's subjection to a particular effect of power. Power is intentional in that it is concerned with particular objectives, and these objectives are intelligible, but they are part of a system of relations that makes the source indiscernible. Foucault states, "The logic [of power] is clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them: an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous."³¹ Power attracts any other power relations that provide input over its reasoning. When it is intentional and intelligible, it is also *nonsubjective* so there is no singular person, with all their biases and objectives, steering the course of power. It is found in the cluster of power relations employing mechanisms that reinforce one another.

5. *Where there is power, there is resistance but no emancipation*

The final proposition refers to the resistance of power. Resistance is *essential* to power, but it is always at the same time "inside" power. If we counter a power produced by discourse, we simply shift the placement of power. Hence, power is not fixed, nor does it ever go away, even when resisted. It will reshape itself and adjust to the new courses of power. One can believe they overthrew a dominant power but still be under power, still as unfree as before. Foucault states points of resistance are present everywhere and "there is no locus of great Refusal, no soul

³¹ Ibid, 95.

of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.”³² Consider the women who did not subscribe to the bourgeois model of a passive and obedient wife. Assuming she chose not to conform to the norm, she resists power. However, she is not liberated as there are still forces targeting her visibility, attempting to discipline her and integrate her into normative society. Her resisting power subjects her to a new type of power, potentially more devious and plural than the one before. Foucault is suspicious of a sexual liberation for this reason, as a revolution is the presumed solution of the repressive hypothesis. There is no king to dethrone, therefore power cannot be overwhelmingly and exhaustively overthrown. Instead, we should look at power as an ongoing war with its tactics and militant operations, where we can dodge or fight back as much as we want but there will be no win nor an end. This last proposition is the most defining of Foucault’s philosophy of power, as it negates any possibility of liberation and signals that life is known through a perpetual struggle of power relations.

These five propositions of power serve to clarify how we should conceptualize modern power. In the next chapter, I explain why specifically sovereign power is not a useful way of conceptualizing power, reiterating the demand for conceiving power without the king. Moreover, I explain the technologies of power Foucault determines to be emblematic of not only the deployment of sexuality but also modern society in general. With this novel outlook of power, we have an understanding of power as systematic and can explore how it latches to different mechanisms theorized by Foucault.

³² Ibid, 96.

CHAPTER 3: Technologies of Power: Sovereign, Disciplinary, and Biopolitical

In this chapter, I introduce the critical technologies of power that are essential for constructing a new conceptualization of power. So far, I demonstrated how power is a productive force that deployed sexuality instead of repressing it. Then, I offered the propositions in which we should approach the analysis of power in modern Western societies. Now, I shift to talking about systems of power more generally, illustrating Foucault's regimes of power and returning to sexuality only to offer further explication. In order to understand the Foucauldian analysis of power, I explicitly first describe what power is *not*. That is, power does not operate under the sovereign model, as it reinforces the repressive hypothesis and is inadequate for modernity. Further, I explain disciplinary power and its mechanisms, which work on the body to produce docile and productive individuals. Finally, I describe Foucault's concept of biopower, which governs the population and their lives at a more systemic level. These regimes of power provide a framework in which we can analyze contemporary relations of power.

I. Sovereign Power

In Foucault's analysis of power, the sovereign model of power is deeply rooted in Western thought and politics. It largely persists in our modern representations that power is a phenomenon that is wielded over less powerful individuals. It is commonly represented in fiction and media with the binary division of a powerful king and the villages of peasants, or the villain overtaken by the underdog. The conception is also present in the historical narrative of peasant uprisings to tyrannical dynasties or shifts in the territory when one monarch dominates another. Even political philosophers like Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes viewed the purest power as

being singularly possessed by the sovereign state. Furthermore, in recent history, there have been revolts against conservative governments as well as attempted coups in the name of overcoming a malevolent or tyrannical figure of power. The grave misconception is that sovereign power is only one of the many instantiations of power; and on that note, a limited and unsophisticated form of power. Foucault argues that we must reject the sovereign model of power, for it misdirects us from actual relations of power. To do so, we must understand sovereign power to interrogate the mechanisms that linger on in the present and lead us to disappointment when revolutions don't revolutionize.

Power under sovereignty functions on its right 'to take life or let live.' The embodied representation of power is the king, who can send any of his subjects to the guillotine as he pleases or present himself as merciful in not doing so. The subject's death, pain, or pardon was a spectacle, intending to demonstrate the sovereign's total power. In this form, power "was exercised mainly as a means of deduction (*prélèvement*), a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects."³³ It relied on *signs* of obedience to the hierarchy and the *spectacle* of visible power through the act of killing. The spectacular is the sovereign's greatest strength, where physical markers on the somatic body were representative of disapproval, unlawfulness, and criminality. The degree of the punishment correlated to the degree of the crime, signifying a quantifiable and calculative power.

Moreover, public knowledge and desires were formulated by the juridical structure of law, whose own authority was vested and legitimized by God and the Christian order. This authority was established through a hierarchical order, where individualization exists at the very

³³ Ibid, 136.

top, while those below are merely pawns in the performance of power. The king, as a somatic singularity, consolidates through his control of territory, subjects, and wealth. The power is maintained through regularly displaying his dominance to suppress any challenges to his authority. Those who posed a challenge to the order were retaliated by a show of greater power from the king. In this structure, no one was above the law of the king, except for the king himself. Here, power represents a phenomenon that always had the potential to be lost or overthrown by a stronger force, so the ultimate test of power was being greater than all other powers.

Foucault identifies the primary characteristics of this form of power as a negative relation: the insistence on the rule, the cycle of prohibition, the and logic of censorship. Power is only able to say *no*; its effective strategies operate through “rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment or mask.”³⁴ This reduces power to an empty establishment of a subject’s limits and does not produce behaviors that power can benefit from. Further, power *insists upon the rule*. The moral codes of religion, the civil laws of government, or the expectations of bourgeois order are considered to enact juridical order in society, offering codifications of justice and systemic organization. In this case, juridical discourse operates via its insistence on the rule, as it maintains power’s hold on the subject only because it declares to do so. These rules must make the subject decipherable in its relation to the law and the discursive effects of the law. The legislation and codes are perceived to have the final and total say on the subject, such as sex, to establish what is permissible and what is not. Thus, the subject is put into a binary system, void of any nuance or attempt at reconciliation. Moreover, sovereign power operates through the *cycle of prohibition*.

³⁴ Ibid, 83.

Thou shalt not go near, thou shalt not touch, thou shalt not consume, thou shalt not experience pleasure, thou shalt not speak, thou shalt not show thyself; ultimately thou shalt not exist, except in darkness and secrecy.³⁵

It is prohibited to act upon one's desires or instincts if they do not correlate with the law. The prohibition of sex entails sexual suppression, renouncement, or repression, yet the punishment weaponizes the very same things. In this manner, the prohibition only results in further prohibition.

Additionally, there are three interdictions of *the logic of censorship*: “affirming that such a thing is not permitted, preventing it from being said, denying it exists.”³⁶ These three forms are intertwined with each other, in that the possibility of one affects the others. For example, by denying some form of sexuality exist, it pronounces that sexuality is deviant and silences its expression. By the deviant sexuality being silenced, the sovereign model denies its existence and acknowledges its illicitness. In this way, the logic of censorship works to ban things from discourse, existence, and manifestation simultaneously and compellingly.

Finally, there is *the uniformity of the apparatus*. In this model, we identify masters and slaves, domination and submission, or those who formulate the laws with those who obey them. At the top, there are visible agents of social domination, uniting their devices to reproduce censorship, prohibition, and laws. This power is wielded on subjugated groups of people by taking something away from them, whether it is a human right, their desires, or most notably, their freedom. Individuals become subjects, in that they are subject to the apparatus and its power. All the mechanisms of power described above are characteristic of the monarch but are also reinterpreted as a juridico-discursive power to fit today's realm of power, meaning that the

³⁵ Ibid, 84.

³⁶ Ibid, 84.

law of the State implies power is enacted over its subjects. Foucault believes that we must free ourselves from this conception of power, for it exists only to restrict or delude us into thinking that true freedom is attainable.

So, sovereign power is limiting, unproductive, and primarily functions on its right to kill. Its main technique of power is asserting that something is wrong to do and that one should obey that standard or reap the consequences. Its only justification is an emphasis upon itself, and so all modes of domination and submission are reduced to the effect of obedience. Foucault believes this perception of power to be “poor in resources, sparing of its methods, monotonous in the tactics it utilizes, incapable of invention, and seemingly doomed always to repeat itself.”³⁷ It presumes that power is only employed when it takes something away from the subjugated. It does not create change or invent any other methods of exercising power than restraint. The event in which a master’s power operates is through the negation of the slave’s power. It only subtracts, negates, and represses, but it does not explain the productive elements of power; namely the positive mechanisms of producing knowledge, multiplying discourse, inducing pleasure, and generating more power.

II. Disciplinary Power

As we have seen, the historical conception of power associated with the monarch is no longer adequate in theorizing about politics, philosophy, and social theory. There is no longer a singular king that exercises power from their high-ranking position onto subjects below through laws and restrictions. That form of power is incapable of organizing a growing population or

³⁷ Ibid, 85.

governing the economic, political, and industrial expansion that was underway by the late Middle Ages. Hence, power had to be recontextualized to reflect its extension into capital and modes of production. Alas, there was a historical paradigm shift to a new power model.

Since the classical age, the West has undergone a very profound transformation of these mechanisms of power. 'Deduction' has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, ordering them, rather than dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them.³⁸

Where sovereign power is violent and categorized by the king's right to kill, this new form of power is normative and productive. Out of the dominant and top-down power of sovereignty, we enter the age of *discipline*.

Disciplinary power emerged in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries intending to make docile, productive, and compliant individuals in adherence to the recent industrial and capital developments. The advent of disciplinary power did not discard all of the methods and mechanisms of sovereign power; in fact, disciplinary power functions within the juridical network that was established by sovereignty. However, this power is not primarily repressive or violent.

The trademark of disciplinary power is that it produces individuals and institutions with more specificity than sovereign power was able to achieve through negation or deduction. If sovereign power is thought of as a pyramid where all eyes look toward the somatic singularity of the king, then disciplinary power inverts this scheme. Those who were on the bottom of the pyramid under sovereignty, such as the convicts, the ill, and the laborers, were now treated with

³⁸ Ibid, 136.

extra surveillance. Through discipline, the body goes through an individualizing process, where it is evaluated and sourced as an object of knowledge. Individuals became linked with their production, the norms of society, and the imminent relation between power and knowledge.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault utilizes Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as a metaphor to demonstrate how supposed surveillance is followed by the self-internalization of norms and regulated behaviors. The Panopticon was the architectural design of a prison that positioned the guards in the center so they can surveil and pervade the inmates' cells at all times. The "gaze" of authority was enough to keep individuals conforming and adhering to the ideal. With this technique, the inmates suspected surveillance which regulated behaviors to the expectations of the external forces of surveillance. This constant supervision—even the threat of supervision—aimed to internalize the norm. This internalization will make the inmates speak of themselves with moral and juridical reflexivity, meaning they will interpret their behavior to the authority. Eventually, individuals would no longer need external authority, but self-discipline, conforming to the norms of society as a preemptive measure of further consequences. While punishment was no longer a spectacle like it was under sovereignty, bodies were manipulated and systemized to the productivity of disciplinary institutions. The body had to be visible to be a target of power, and its visibility would produce knowledge of the body's subjectivity and limits.

At the margins of disciplinary society were children, criminals, laborers, and the sick. These groups of people became highly visible to disciplinary power, as they did not fit the norms of society. Thus, schools, hospitals, and prisons were designed as institutions to reform and correct individuals to societal norms. These institutions isolated subjects, confined them into spaces that tolerated their deviance from societal norms, and made them highly visible to authorities. This visibility led to the systemic classification of behaviors, desires, and pleasures.

For example, in school, there were exams and corporal punishments as means to form children into productive and compliant members of society. High-performing students were rewarded for achieving an ideal while low-performing students would need extra surveillance and discipline. Medical institutions developed their own instruments for diagnosing problems and pathologizing behaviors. Physicians and doctors standardized scientific discourse to evaluate individuals by their own clinical and medical examination measures. Prisons were built to keep criminals away from normal folk, punish them for their crimes, and attempt to rehabilitate them. These institutions were crucial to disciplinary power as they not only shaped the subjectivity of the bodies targeted but also generated authoritative knowledge on the same subjects.

Knowledge and power were fused together on the discursive level of these institutions. The surveillance of the bodies transformed into discourse, wherein knowledge, definitions, and classifications were produced to understand individuals in sensible and practical language. Disciplines produced their own vocabularies, codifications, and treatments. Within a discourse of a discipline, there would be authority figures whose expertise validated certain knowledge and discounted other pieces of knowledge. Power relations multiplied at this stage where each individual can be seen in relation to disciplines, yet there was a binary coercive assignment on the subject. An individual was either normal or abnormal, ill or healthy, docile or transgressive. Consequently, the crime or transgression no longer is the primary object of concern like under so much as is the subject performing the crime or transgression. These processes of subjectification ensure that individuals are constantly monitored, even beyond their initial transgression.

III. Biopower

Despite disciplinary power being a crucial force in the genealogy of power for centuries to come, Foucault argues that it was quickly complemented by a new form of power in the late half of the eighteenth century. This new technology of power does not discard disciplinary mechanisms, similar to how disciplinary power did not discard sovereign's power techniques. Instead, the new technology of power, what Foucault calls *biopower*, modifies, integrates, and embeds itself in disciplinary techniques.³⁹ Still, biopower is revealed to operate on a different level than disciplinary power. It utilizes different instruments and has a different domain. Whereas disciplinary power individualizes the body, biopower massifies the individuals.

Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, in conjunction with his lectures on *Security, Territory, and Population* and *Society Must Be Defended*, proposed biopower as a dominant technology of power with the emergence of a *population*. Foucault seldom defines it explicitly, but his later work is dedicated to the theme of biopower and biopolitics. The last chapter of *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* lays out the powerful transformations of power that surpassed the ancient "right to *take* life or *let* live" to an organizational framework of "power over life." Strictly speaking, the two technologies, or poles as he calls them, of power prioritized security, surveillance, and investment in life. The two powers, complementary but inherently separate, are explicitly drawn out in this section:

One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human*

³⁹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 242.

body. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: *a biopolitics of the population*.⁴⁰

Biopower emerges with the advent of governmental bureaucrats concerned with data concerning life and population. The bureaucrats would treat the population as an object of analysis to gather information on demographics, health, and other metrics to conglomerate individuals into consumable statistics. These statistics would then inform bureaucrats and governmental institutions of possible ways to intervene to modify the statistics according to their objective.

Biopower differentiates itself from disciplinary power because it does not look at humans as bodies, but humans as species and living beings. Humans are massified, considered as a multiplicity of living beings that are essential for species survival and prosperity rather than mere bodies for production. Humans as species must then be characterized by birth, death, production, and illness. So, contrary to disciplinary power that individualizes the body, biopower massifies the living being, connects them with other living beings, and solidifies the species' solidarity between them. Now, the objectives of the human race are intrinsically tied to each human, and the state's investment in life, as an object of study and as an object of intervention, is what Foucault calls biopolitics.

As was discussed, biopower's domain is the population and it produces regulatory practices. Biopower inherently entails biopolitics, which "deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a

⁴⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 139.

biological problem and as power's problem."⁴¹ The population is where biopower first delineates from sovereignty power and disciplinary power. Whereas the sovereign deals with a social body and the individual, and disciplines focus on the individual as a body, the population is a new body. It is treated as a vast body, one that is difficult to count yet has specific quantitative characteristics.

Once biopower establishes the population as its object, it must be considered a "collective phenomena which have their economic and political efforts, and that they become pertinent only at the mass level."⁴² In other words, the population must be rendered as a collective force that operates on a grand scale and wields great influence on its future success. Information about a mass cannot be derived from individual accounts, as those are of a random and unpredictable nature. Thus, it records information through an extended period, ruling the population as computable and its future foreseeable. Ultimately, biopower formulated a new type of governance, one that allows institutions and the State to exert control over populations and influence their collective futures.

IV. Biopolitics

The two technologies of disciplinary power and biopower constitute *biopolitics*, the politics of biological life. To return to the first chapter on sexuality, it was biopolitics that was responsible for the deployment of sexuality. The four figures discussed in the previous section were the direct effects of "combining disciplinary techniques with regulative methods."⁴³ To understand the population, scientific, political, and economic authorities had to understand

⁴¹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 242.

⁴² *Ibid*, 246.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 246.

sexuality. Once the knowledge about sexuality was produced, it was reinforced through examinations and surveillance. Precisely, the disciplinary techniques that were employed on the body, such as normalization, medicalization, and clinical codification, aimed to manage the population. Far from being repressed, sexuality proliferated with meaning. From the perspective of biopower, knowledge of the reproduction of life and its consequences for the economy, state, and health were the object of analysis. Disciplinary power, on the other hand, also treated sexuality as an object of analysis but did so by different means. Sexuality was disciplined onto the body by medical assessments, confessional tactics, and surveillance so that the individual becomes subjugated to the classification of their deviant behavior. Under biopower and discipline power, individuals were conditioned to conform to the bodily and population norms of bourgeois society. Sexuality was the point of connection between body and population; as a result, it had to be controlled, regulated, and carefully administered for the sake of the State and individual.

Biopower shares a couple more objectives with disciplinary power. Both biopower and disciplinary power want to establish norms. Foucault states “The norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize.”⁴⁴ Regularization is a control mechanism deployed on the population that premediates certain objectives through government intervention. In terms of sexuality, strategies of biopower and discipline established the procreative alliance between wife and husband. Discipline would create the normalization of this alliance and renounce or isolate those that did not partake. Regulatory normalizations had to be applied by the intervention in the environment of the population. The design of a town would be planned out, ensuring the norm are single-family

⁴⁴ Ibid, 242.

homes. Thus, biopower deployed a norm by manipulating the environment in which biology is “bound to the materiality within which they live.”⁴⁵

Additionally, both technologies of power utilized clinical and medicinal measures. As biopower concerns itself with the health and longevity of the population, it relies on the disciplines that create the power-knowledge of physiology, psychiatry, and medicine. Hygiene awareness and medical campaigns became normalized to produce knowledge on one “right to let live,” a right to longevity and health that is entangled with the political and economic benefits of the State. Disciplinary power utilized clinical interventions to ensure that the body was in shape to function normally. As previously mentioned, it called for examinations, diagnosis, and treatment catered to identify and correct deviances from the norm.

Foucault regards the “ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population” as developing into statistics that are utilized for economic and political problems.⁴⁶ It not only dealt with problems of fertility and reproduction but also morbidity. A loss to the population from epidemics or diseases is a loss to the State, the political and economic revenue. In sovereignty, epidemics were surely a cause for concern, but subjects under a king’s throne were always intimate and imminent to death, and each catastrophe was temporary and naturally reconciled. Under disciplinary and biopolitical power, death was something that should be avoided for the problems it will cause to the population: loss of labor and productivity, decreased labor hours, wasted energy, and costs. In other words, epidemics were costly to the population and the body. Once biopower surfaced, death became a taboo. Matters of disease and death became private and shameful. It had to be escaped and prevented; biopower steps into the picture in its knowledge and control of mortality.

⁴⁵ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 25.

Altogether, there is much to gain from a normative and regulatory distribution of society. For example, ethical standards are raised from the knowledge derived about the cognitive development of children and the consequences to the psyche stemming from pedophilia and child molestation. Norms and regulations surrounding such deviant sexual behaviors are rightfully employed and ensure the safety of children. Biopolitics also informs why we advocate for basic human rights and are outraged when they are violated. At the same time, these technologies of power can exploit and objectify groups of people, unfairly reduce individuals to pathologies, and subject people to rigid standards. Genocides and state racism, for example, are extreme cases of biopolitics and infringe on a large population's right to life. The sociological, political, and historical implications of Foucauldian power can be endless. Hence, it is best to consider these technologies as ambivalent due to their domination strategies but also regulatory techniques that enable society to function. Foucault intends to bring awareness, add nuance, and make intelligible the technologies of modern power. There is always potential for danger and injustice if the analytics of power is accepted blindly. There is also the potential for danger and injustice if the analytics of power is not exercised through regulation and discipline. With these insights in mind, we can investigate how Foucault's power analytics and regimes of power hold up in contemporary phenomena.

CHAPTER 4: Contemporary Power: Limitations and Extensions

In the contemporary discourse on power and politics, Foucault's power analytics and regimes of power have been widely debated and critiqued. While Foucault laid down the groundwork to view power's operation through management and regulation of life, he nevertheless passed away before fleshing out a comprehensive theory of how it particularly functions under neoliberal and technologically advanced societies. Inspired by the new conceptualization of power and the technologies of power theorized in the previous chapters, my goal for this chapter is to extend the power analysis to various contemporary phenomena. It is unstructured, largely meditations on topics or theories I find are important to the topic of modern power and its technologies.

In this chapter, I put forth the concepts of psychopower and psychopolitics, which can be seen as either an extension of the biopolitical model or a limitation that Foucault did not account for in his purview. In my casual analysis of the current climate, I largely draw from German-philosopher Byung-Chul Han and his text *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, separating his main claims into aphoristic passages. Han also carries with him a journalistic spirit to philosophy and captures the emergence of a unique form of power termed *psychopolitics* with the recent technological and cultural transformations of society.

Furthermore, I intend to comment on alternative modes of power that are outside of Foucault's scope, such as Nietzsche's poetic power and Audre Lorde's erotic sense. The scope of this chapter is rather expansive and not bound by meticulous detail or structure. It is rather a portrait of power inspired by my undergraduate studies in philosophy, psychology, and other humanities sectors. I leave many of these topics open-ended because I truly do not know how to

comprehend most of them but Foucault's power analytics seems like a fine place to start unraveling the ethos of our time.

Part I: Psychopolitics

1

You Should vs. You Can. - Disciplinary power is not sophisticated enough to penetrate the mind, and steer individuals' desires, decisions, and wishes as effectively as it might have anticipated. Disciplinary power is not sophisticated enough to penetrate the mind, and steer individuals' desires, decisions, wishes as effectively as it might have anticipated. Its technology is constructed around the disciplinary command of "you should," when a much more coercive strategy is telling someone "you can."⁴⁷ Byung-Chul Han proclaims that we have become achievement subjects; that is, subjects that exploit themselves willingly by turning themselves into projects, treating ourselves as trends parallel to the neoliberal free-market. There is no use of the disciplinary model of power, for every "should" is turned into a "can." Through media and images, we have a boundless conception of what is achievable for a human being. "Should" has limits while "can" does not, similar to the free-market system that governs our material conditions. Where biopolitics is a form of governmentality, psychopolitics is a form of self-governmentality that operates without external authority disciplining or regulating behavior. While this seems to give one an illusion of freedom, Han argues that we have enslaved ourselves to the coercion of neoliberal capitalist modes of constant optimization, which contributes to "psychic maladies such as depression and burnout."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 1-2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

2

Politics of the Mind. - Whereas biopolitics is the politics of the body, of the somatic realm, of all things physical, psychopolitics would be the politics of the mind, of the psychic realm, of all things mental. Industrial capitalism needed to utilize the productive body for the development of its objectives, such as designing the town and working towards a longer life. Neoliberal capitalism, on the other hand, devotes itself to the productive force of the psyche: producing information, programs, and ideas with positivist undertones. Biopower is also limited in that it cannot access the *collective psychogram*, the inside scoop of the mental processes and the dispositions of a population.⁴⁹ Big Data delineates from mere statistics in that realm, as it not only has access to one subject's psyche, but a collective psyche. It has annihilated boredom, as we stimulate ourselves with the wonders of the internet, circulating information arbitrarily, and creating customizable habitats on websites and apps.

3

Self-Optimization. - Medicinal and psychiatric institutions were vital for disciplinary and biopolitical regimes of power. If the body was viewed as not contributing to the productivity of society, it was exiled to heavy surveillance, rehabilitation, and isolation in places that were still contributing productively to society. They must conform to normative standards or resist the power in which they would be further marginalized and pushed to their limits. Biopolitics ensured that doctors, physicians, and pharmacists are present in every neighborhood. For the public's safety, there were regulations made on the population level on products and services.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 21.

Psychopower or psychopolitics also utilizes psychiatric and medicinal institutions but for self-optimization rather than normative or regulative standards. Increasing neuroenhancements, a whole industry on vitamins and supplements, as well as therapeutic offices. Health is no longer the base-level standard, but one can rise above it. The new norm, derived from a new bourgeois digital class, is one of self-optimization.

Endlessly working at self-improvement resembles the self-examination and self-monitoring of Protestantism, which represents a technology of subjectivation and domination in its own right. Now, instead of searching out sins, one hunt down negative thoughts. The ego grapples with itself as an enemy.⁵⁰

The excess positivity of culture today leaves no room for negative thoughts, feelings, pain, or hurt. Instead of confining those who cannot adequately participate in society, there are no quick fixes to reintegrate them back as quickly as possible such as the healthy lamp that provides vitamin D, self-help literature that tells one how to productively use their time to attain their goals, and retail therapy to relieve stress.

4

Psychologization. - Psychology is the site of psychopolitics as psychopolitics uses our psychological processes to steer us, perpetuate coercion, and manipulate our behavior toward an objective. Hence, the discipline of psychology is really interesting to explore using discourse analysis. From behavioral economics to organizational/industrial psychology, psychology perpetuates the neoliberal machinery of consumption more than any regular business diploma probably could. If we want to lessen psychopower's domination of us, Han believes that "the art of living, as the praxis of freedom, must proceed by way of de-psychologization."⁵¹ Neoliberal

⁵⁰ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 30.

⁵¹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 6.

psychopolitics like psychology uses coded vocabulary to group and classify individuals, put them in communities of subjugation, and put us in communities of subjugation to exploit some aspect of our self meticulously. For example, the American Psychological Association gives this definition of group psychology:

Group psychology and Group Psychotherapy is an evidenced-based specialty that prepares group leaders to identify and capitalize on developmental and healing possibilities embedded in the interpersonal/intrapersonal functioning of individual group members as well as collectively for the group.⁵²

At discourse's value, we can identify the points of power's intervention upon our psychology and our collective psychology. The usage of 'capitalize,' 'prepares,' 'evidence-based,' and 'healing possibilities' orients our mental processes to productivity that espouses us to reason with Capital in mind. I'd like there to be more critical intervention in the discipline, and more routes available for mental health care that do not revolve around the forces of productivity and self-optimization. We need friendships and community, and that is not immediately forced upon us through power's exploitation of our need for belongingness, as we are becoming more estranged from the Other, more enrapt in our subjugation, more consumed by identities sold to us. Freedom and friendship have the same Indo-European root of **fri* or **pri*, which means love. We cannot achieve freedom in a realistic sense, but we can share a freed feeling, provide alleviation to the forces working on others with careful attention, gift ourselves dependence on others that is not purely transactional, or at least strive to. That is resistance to a joyous science!

"Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy," American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association), accessed April 24, 2023, <https://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/group-psychology-therapy#:~:text=Group%20Psychology%20and%20Group%20Psychotherapy%20is%20an%20evidenced%2Dbased%20specialty,as%20collectively%20for%20the%20group>.

5

The Aesthetics of Anesthetics. - Bare life and docile bodies have no place in this world of anesthetics. That is, those who can afford to live under the dominant paradigm of psychopolitics. There is an alarming dichotomy of who can afford psychopolitical problems and those who still function predominantly under the biopolitical model. That is a major qualm I have with Han's psychopolitics; he dismisses the large percentage of people who are still dominated by the biopolitical model of power. Perhaps this is due to his residing in Germany where they have public health care, but many of the luxuries that he mentions in the book do not apply to the United States. The United States decides who ultimately gets to live, who are the people who can afford privatized health care, work in professions that provide adequate life insurance or reside in neighborhoods that are not susceptible to ecological apartheid. Biopolitics, while not the most active regime of power in today's technological world, is still one with the most serious consequences. The rest of the population is largely caught up in a system of financial restriction that deprives them of health access. Psychopolitics is still relatively new and while we cannot blame all of the West's problems on this regime of power, there are many forces that can be evaluated through its technology.

6

Transparency. - The digital realm is the destruction of any top-down, juridical, and transcendent power. One can freely break laws in video games, access illegal products on the dark web, and pursue their strangest desires with the comfort of a VPN. It is the antithesis of most powers we have seen before, which makes it unique unprecedented power that could not have been theorized about properly at the start of this century. There are now generations of kids growing up alongside the multifold of new power relations. The concern is that the digital realm has

unlimited sites of knowledge, as everything is transparent and accessible. However, this regime of transparency, overstimulation, and exposure renders it almost ineffective to even talk about. Power has become even more deceptive, and many are aware of the coercive tactics of its mechanisms, yet we willingly welcome it into our psyche. It is so overt that talking about it does have some ‘taboo’ nature that posits complete defeat or lack of motivation for resistance. Han deems this the ‘dictatorship of transparency,’ the dispositive that promotes total conformity through its surveillance and then negation of an Other. Difference is made consumable through the voluntary self-exposure and de-interiorization as to “accelerate the circulation of information and speed communication.”⁵³ Thus, the ‘dictatorship of transparency’ has a flattening effect to all information and communication which has consequences of conformity and passivity. So, how transparent do we want to be? How regulated do we want to be? I find pay-rolls news sites classist but I also would like to get rid of many free apps for their addictive and manipulative qualities. What is the limit of this new psychopower that seemingly has foresight into our attitudes and behaviors? Are we freer than we have ever been? Is the illusion of freedom stronger than its ever been? Should we accept the freedom in the form of an illusion? I find the battles of these questions emblematic of Foucault’s endeavor, speaking to the logic of contradictions and inescapability. Social media spheres market themselves as places of liberation from the outside world, where oppressive structures operate at large. This is true and awesome. It provides entertainment, escapism, and community, using friendly precursors like “social” and “sharing.” It is a place for countercultural movements, and spaces for personal liberation. However, this is the same type of ruse that occurred with sexual liberation. In the end, power just shifts course. Gradually becoming more invisible, operating through relations in the digital

⁵³ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 9.

realm, using the promise of liberation for its intelligible objectives, such as commodities that signal gay with rainbow flags or conspiracy theories that hold the truth of human existence. Yes, the user feels empowered but the market or cult uses the illusion of emancipation to coerce one into spiraling further in consumptive patterns of information or commerce. The insidious thing about this power is that any resistance can be co-opted by marketing. We buy into truths like we buy our loot!

7

Emotional Capitalism. - Han believes that psychopolitics does not rely on norms for its operation. Desires must be manufactured for the psyche must be seduced. He writes, “it is not use value but emotive or cultic value that plays a constitutive role in the economy of consumption.”⁵⁴ Rationalization must be avoided at all costs in this regime of power, which marks it indistinguishable from the regimes preceding it. Whereas biopower and disciplinary power rationalized their motives through scientific discourses and institutional knowledge, psychopolitics plays in the realm of emotions. If consumers develop sentimentality towards a certain brand, they become loyal customers. If they watch a commercial that makes them laugh, smile, or feel warm inside, the product of the commercial gets accorded the same sensibility. The psyche is more off-guard when happy, so neoliberal psychopolitics are overwhelmingly positive in their technique, rather than solely normative or productive. In fact, many brands counter the normative model of disciplinary power to opt to make their customers feel unique and special for consuming them. I learned that this tradition has strong roots in the psychoanalytic tradition. Everyone knows about Sigmund Freud, as his influence was tectonic to the twentieth-century

⁵⁴ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 44.

understanding of the unconscious, desires, and drives; however, not everyone knows about his American nephew, Edward Bernays, who had an influence equal to his uncle Freud. Bernays is regarded as the “father of public relations,” a true poet in propaganda in the early twentieth century. Employing psychoanalytical methodology, Bernays realized he can implant desires onto the masses to manipulate and steer their behavior.⁵⁵ His goal was to manage and control crowd thought, so he targeted their unconscious as it did not place the same value on rationality as consciousness. While there was surely instantiation of psychopower in the past, Bernays’ experiments with mass manipulation and propaganda made a ripple in society’s structure. He explicitly deployed psychopolitical techniques to sell masses products with emotions rather than reason, marking it a distinguished event of the persisting tradition of ‘emotional capitalism.’

Part II: Other Meditations on Power

8

Algorithmic Governmentality. - The emerging philosophical question is if algorithmic and artificial intelligence transcends the immanence of human beings. There are already movements to establish robot rights, safety measures, and clear ethical regulations. This would complicate Foucault’s model of power as algorithmic power could be centralized into a coded formula that even humans do not even understand nor can make intelligible. There are even deep learning programs that are drilled with human data and developed for clinical institutions, such as Deep Patient, that appear to predict the onset of psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Curtis, *Century of the Self*, 2002.

⁵⁶ Knight. “The Dark Secret at the Heart of Ai.”

9

Digital Democracy. - Walter Benjamin thought that cinema would be used for revolutionary power, as it employed a collective experience at seeing one's own material condition through the big screen. The age of digital reproduction was imagined as one of democratic revolutions and intellectual revelations. It would be accessible Mass media, however, proved to not be democratic nor reflexive for the viewer. Hence, social media emerged to be the new emancipation from mass media's static and consumptive form. Now, individuals can participate socially, think critically, and share their views. While social media could be deemed to be the closest humanity as gotten to democracy, it still has its considerable limits. It is increasingly becoming ruled via influencers, celebrities, and corporations, and now troubling algorithms are infiltrating most platforms. This new era of digital technology brings with it benefits and consequences. It lacks any hierarchy, but also any regulation. It amplifies voices that were previously neglected, yet also creates cults of controversial figures. It does not operate on disciplining the body, but rather filling the mind with information and images. It is not institutions exerting power, but it is information that can come from anywhere.

10

Resistance and Resilience. - I'm fond of Foucauldian power analytics because despite its overall contention being that we will always be under power, it reserves some amount of agency for the subject. The subject can always resist power because power only exists if there is resistance. Power coerces you to make a LinkedIn, but you can resist. Power coerces you to post a picture of their vacation, but you can resist. In this choice, you produce new limits, maybe even more narrow limits than you have started with, but it warrants the practice of freedom. Power is everywhere, being made aware of this matrix of power can be assuring, and perhaps it might

encourage a ‘will-to-power,’ an affirmation of power’s stride. However, one must be strategic in their resistance, as Foucault mentioned any transgression is appropriated into the logic of power. It seems that power is only stronger and more deceptive, and ever more caught up in our material conditions. Thus, resistance is not nearly enough to evade power’s coercion as resistance is now confluent in the machinery of subversive consumption; it may also require resilience. To turn away from large corporations, to not nearly consume as much as is the norm nowadays. Individuals *can* return to a lower material standard of life, closer to bare life, but it is not in power’s interest to have them do so. It takes wielding one’s power to resist power, but it also takes resilience to distance from the large apparatus of corporate powers altogether. That is, what I think is radical about Foucault. Once you recognize the sites that power targets and the different dimensions of life that it operates you can start making deliberate decisions about the limits you acquire through your subjugations. It is fine to be mediocre. It is fine to not optimize, that can be the power one chooses. It’s fine to be in the norm or outside, but the fact that you *choose*-when it’s in your domain of awareness- is what makes it an alluring philosophy. It exercises some power over me, if you will. That being said, it also allows me to choose the idealistic model from time to time. In moments of exhaustion, I care to be angry at a visible oppressive power, I want to feel as though there is something to overcome, if not for me then for the collective good. The sense of passion and unity is unparalleled when you are up against a fight, manifesting a prettier vision of the future. We set and update the parameters for freedom constantly.

11

*Nietzsche said there would be days like this.*⁵⁷ - Nietzsche warned that the age of modernity will be one of the nihilistic tendencies. Humans created the unknowable and the dissatisfaction with themselves prompted this. We have killed the most beautiful creation that came out of Western humanity and are plagued with finding new meaning in a finite world. Art is a task, the metaphysical activity of it is what is important, not the artist. The artist is the representation of that task, it is the being of the art. Is it worth it to destroy your current self to produce something that could possibly be better? Your fate is determined if you passively walk through life and it will bring unhappiness knowing that you don't choose your own fate. But nature is ugly. Don't be mad at the Earth for fighting back humans. We can learn a lot from nature. There is something to be said about suffering, and our desire for it. It is an excuse for deeds, for action, for retaliation. We need suffering to think we are working towards something better. Would you awaken from the stale paintbrush and destroy your inner mural, piece by piece, for an opportunity to create your own? The masterpiece tries to conceal the uneven edges, rigid texture, and imperfect colour bases. It will still show though, it always does. And yet we still search. Only to find that our answers will never be complete nor adequate to quench our desires for knowing. Sanctify the sensuous.

12

Mailman Discipline. - Foucault states that different mechanisms of power never cease to exist, but evolve with different events in history. Instead of searching for their origin, we must look at what was already nevertheless there. As a reminder, power is intentional and nonsubjective so it

⁵⁷ Extracted sentences from a previous essay I wrote on Nietzsche.

may be utilized in a certain context or reshaped into something more efficient, depending on its aim. Disciplinary power is still a technology of power, especially in educational institutions, workplaces, and prisons. For example, I work as a mailroom clerk on campus and regularly converse with the postmen and delivery people who arrive with absurd amounts of packages every day.⁵⁸ One day, I was talking with the regular USPS carrier and asked him about how his work evolved with the rise of e-commerce and convenient deliveries. He spoke of his forty years working for USPS, the transition from delivering personal letters and bureaucratic paperwork to now Amazon packages and spam mail. He informed me of his sidekick gadget, a technological surveillance tool that must accompany him at all times. It vibrates when he is not doing anything for an extended period of time, signaling him to return to work. There is an obligation to track each carrier's route and make the information available to the anticipating consumers. Their hours are longer, their work harder, and their productivity maximized. Even a water break or pit stop to stretch can be viewed as a transgression. This is just one example of how disciplinary and panoptic measures still ensue today. However, this may better yet fit into Gilles Deleuze's theory of societies of control. In the 1992 short essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze argues that Foucault's disciplinary measures have mostly become obsolete with technological advances. There are only societies of control, which is a new social organization that places individuals under operational control through technology and media rather than disciplinary institutions. It could be considered to be amplified with the increased surveillance of the internet, social media, and surveillance cameras. In the case of the mailman, there are no strict parameters for a workplace, and he is subject to both physical and digital surveillance.

⁵⁸ I regularly converse with the delivery people and they always contend that CMC receives the most packages every day out of the five colleges. Over the course of my four years working in the mailroom, the number of packages we receive has *drastically* increased.

13

Poetic Power. - Poetry, too, has been referred to as a great power throughout history. On the origin of poetry, Nietzsche writes “The wildly beautiful irrationality of poetry refutes you, you utilitarians! Precisely to want to get away from usefulness for once- that is what has elevated humanity; that is what has inspired it to morality and art!”⁵⁹ This modern conception of poetry, one that renders poetry without utility, is proven wrong by Nietzsche as he pronounced that poetry emerged from precisely from its usefulness. Oral prayer and poetry were spoken with rhythm and caution so as to not destroy the universe. In crisis, people were guided by poetic intelligence for the cultivation of new values. Nietzsche speaks to the enchantment of verse and rhythm in myth and antiquity, concluding that the formula of poetry was quite literally life or death for the superstitious. It was powerful enough to compel Gods, move nature, manifest one’s future will, or discharge some excess (for instance, fear or mania) from one’s soul.⁶⁰ Poetry, then, is an exercise of power and its basic feeling of elevation cannot be completely shrugged off through the positivist development of knowledge. Are advertisements not the poetry of our time, and the CEOs our poets?

14

Erotic Power. - Since the thesis began with the history of sexuality, I would like close it with the consideration of Audre Lorde’s erotic power. In her essay “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” she posits that there is a deep inner subjectivity that lives inside every woman. Lorde wrote that “The erotic is the measure of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings.”⁶¹ When we strip off the dominant logic of culture and society, we are left with just

⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 85.

⁶¹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 54.

those four things: sense, self, chaos, and feeling; the ingredients for the erotic. For Lorde, the erotic is not comprised merely of the sexual realm. It is a deep power that has been repressed or distorted by the dominant rationalizations of the male American-European tradition of thought. The power of the erotic seems to be suppressed by male biases and thoughts. As we have seen, Foucault would likely deny or be suspect that such an erotic power lives inside women, for it implies a universal, ahistorical, and intrinsic nature waiting to be discovered. However, Lorde's use of the erotic is reminiscent of the *ars erotica* that Foucault described in the *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. Foucault describes *ars erotica* as the sovereignty of pleasure and one of the ways to tell the truth about sexuality. Lorde extends the erotic to embodied femininity. erotic can be found on a spiritual plane of unexpressed feeling and inner peace that feels pure connectivity with one's self and one's own desires, separate from the rationalization of others' thoughts. It is pleasure without the discourse, without the science, and without any power that the manufactured sexuality of society. Such knowledge cannot be attained from existing frameworks and therefore must be mediated through a radical subjectivity. Is this not *ars erotica*? Lorde extends the use of the erotic as something being done without the means to an end. This is such a simple idea but one of the most radical ways one can resist power and exercise power. The relationship between knowledge, truth, and subjectivity can be found in the erotic sense. If you seek out a truth external to yours, you deny your senses and negate yourself. The erotic then is a creator of power and information, and once you tasted the joy of one's sensuality. Of course, this is in confluence with neoliberal ideology, so one must be sure that the gratification is distinguishable from the instant ones we gain from societal structures. The erotic then cannot be categorized or subjected to any higher power. It is not external to power either, but internal and immanent to one's self. It is the joy in one's own wisdom.

CONCLUSION

In these unprecedented times, there are many opportunities for investigating the workings of power. We are constantly shaped and influenced by the knowledge of our time, with power being the force that shapes our subjectivity and our understanding of the world around us. As Foucault argued, there is no universal essence to the self; rather we are a product of the historical interplay of power, knowledge, truth, and subjectivity. As we have seen in the case of sexuality, power is a deceptive producer of the knowledge that we tend to take for granted. Upon closer inspection, we find operations of power responsible for its origin. This calls for a historically situated ethic of the self, one that takes into account the shifting dynamics in our societies.

Foucault's analytical framework of power and its technologies can provide a means to critically examine our interactions with institutions, informations, and subjectivities. In this thesis, I have sought to refute that power is solely repress and demonstrate it as a productive force in society. Further, I redefined power as to introduce the regimes of power Foucault devotes his studies to. This new conceptualization and overview of the regimes of power provided me the foundation to analyze power in contemporary day. It is not my intention to judge the morality of these power systems, but rather shed light on their productive and functional nature in society. Through regular critical interventions in discourse and norms, we can gain insight to how power produces the knowledge that shapes constructs our mind, bodies, and society.

Ultimately, Foucault's power analytics and regimes of power orient us in a position to be aware of our subjectivity and treat freedom as a practice rather than a goal. That is the value I found in abstracting power into a productive force that is seemingly everywhere. It has helped me live more consciously in the present moment and feel attuned to the different pulls of power

that shape my beliefs and actions. Philosophy is an endless journey of discovering truths that can be access through the practice of resistance or affirmation of the power-knowledge relationships. And above all, it is essential to do so alongside a strong sense of ethics and the self.

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