Questions of Self-Cultivation: Foucault, Lukes, and Power

Kim-Su Rasmussen *

Abstract

This paper reconstructs the major argument of Discipline and Punish, emphasizing the notion of disciplinary power as a production of subjectivity. It reconstructs some of the richness and detail of Foucault's study of the history of the prison. This reconstruction forms the backdrop to a discussion of Steven Lukes' critique of Foucault's notion of power. Although the paper is generally sympathetic towards some of Lukes' points of critique, Foucault's conceptualization of disciplinary power and its formative impact on subjectivity remains vitally important for contemporary aesthetics. The Foucauldian notion of power as subjectivation raises the questions of resistance, autonomy, and effective self-cultivation.

※ Key Words: Foucault, Lukes, Power, Subjectivity, Aesthetics.

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Introduction

We might define aesthetics as the philosophical study of art. It includes, as a minimum, three overlapping domains: taste, meaning, and value. The judgments of taste concern individual or communal considerations of aesthetic quality. It engages notions such as the agreeable, the beautiful, the sublime, and the abject.\(^1\) The judgments of meaning concern the varieties of methodical interpretation of artworks. It includes, but is not limited to, biographical, formal, contextual, and intertextual forms of analysis. The judgments of value engage a set of general considerations of art and the value of studying art. It includes the view that art embodies non-essential values, inherent values, critical socio-political values, and self-cultivating values. This paper mainly concerns itself with the third term, the value of art, and the value of studying art.

The first position considers the value of art to be non-essential compared to other values such as economic, political, or religious values. As an early modern example we might think of the Protestant Reformation and the iconoclastic destruction of religious imagery. The second view considers art to embody inherent values. This includes the technical dimensions of bringing forth the work of art, thus demonstrating inherent qualities of discipline, skill, and talent. The third view concerns art as representing socio-political values. This includes the view that art promotes the ideals of religious, political, or ideological regimes. An important variant is the notion

that art embodies a critical attitude towards such religious, political, or ideological regimes. This family of views on the value of art receives an important early modern articulation in Machiavelli’s The Prince. The power of the prince relies on two main sources: a strong army and popularity among the people. One of the main political values of art is to enhance the popularity of the prince among the people. This is art as propaganda. Conversely, if the aim is to overthrow a religious, political, or ideological regime, art might enhance the effectiveness of critique and resistance. The fourth position considers the value of art to reside in its potential for self-cultivation. This humanist tradition is further divided on the question of the value of self-cultivation, whether it is seen as moderation of the passions, enhancing autonomy, or promoting happiness. As an early modern example, we might think of Erasmus and his writings on the self-cultivating value of studying classical texts. While the early modern humanists often worked as private tutors to the princes, believing that a humanist education might lead to a reasonable and considerate king, modern humanism seeks to expand the scope of humanist self-cultivation to include everyone.

Foucault’s theory of power has important implications for considerations of the value of art. Machiavelli considers the value of art to reside in its power to enhance the prestige of the prince, and thereby secure the consent of the governed. Ideology critique develops this tradition by suggesting that the consent of the governed is secured through systematical obfuscation, distortion, and mystification of the consciousness of the governed. Foucault suggests that power not merely enhances the prestige of the prince or distorts the consciousness of the governed: power, or certain forms of power, constitutes the subjectivity of the governed. This raises the stakes, not only for the prince, but also for the critical position that seeks to overthrow, resist, or change the dominant social and political structures.

One of the big questions surrounding Foucault’s theory of power concerns the possibilities, and the scope, of agency: if our very subjectivity, our very consciousness, is an effect of power, does that leave any room for individual agency? Some readers, including Steven Lukes, maintain that Foucault leaves little to no room for individual agency. Other readers, including Judith Butler, argue that there is a shift in Foucault’s emphasis between Discipline
and Punish (1975) and The History of Sexuality (1976-1984): in the former work, Foucault leaves little room for resistance to disciplinary power, whereas in the later works he embraces various forms of resistance.\(^2\) In the later works, Foucault suggests that ethical practices of self-constitution, for example in the form of aesthetic self-cultivation, establishes forms of resistance to power. In the process, he suggests a new valuation of self-cultivation: not merely as a moderation of passions or promotion of happiness, but as a reformulation of the value of autonomy. The subject for the later Foucault is both constituted (knowledge/power) and self-constituting (ethics).

This paper reconstructs the central argument of Discipline and Punish, in particular the concept of disciplinary power as a production of subjectivity. Subsequently, the paper engages in a discussion of Steven Lukes’ interpretation of Foucault, defending a Foucauldian position against the criticisms raised by Lukes. The Foucauldian position demarcates an original way to bridge the gap between critical socio-political value of art and the self-cultivating value of art. Foucault’s conceptualization of disciplinary power and its formative impact on subjectivity is vital to contemporary aesthetics by analyzing the forms of heteronomy that contemporary practices of aesthetic self-cultivation seek to resist.

1.

One of the many lessons to be learned from Kant is that our cognition does not conform to the object, but, inversely, that the object conforms to our cognitive apparatus.\(^4\) This notion signals a “revolution” in our conception of knowledge, particularly concerning the status of pure intuitions (time,

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space) and pure concepts (categories). The material object of cognition conforms to the pure forms of cognition, that is the pure intuitions and the pure concepts, rather than vice versa. However, while the object conforms to the subject, the subject and its cognitive faculties remain the same. Foucault both draws on and modifies the Kantian position.\(^5\) Foucault argues not merely that objects conform to subjects (or, as he prefers, discourses of knowledge), but also, and more importantly, that subjects conform to external sources of power. The kind of power he has in mind is discipline or disciplinary power.

“Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. It is not a triumphant power, which because of its own excess can pride itself on its omnipotence; it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy.”\(^6\)

Disciplinary power moulds individual subjects. It works on a small scale. It operates on individuals, more precisely the body of individuals, not masses of people. It employs “minor procedures,” which target specific areas of the body and its movements, producing a subtle but permanent form of influence. Disciplinary power operates through the interlocking mechanisms of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and regular examination.

Hierarchical observation consists of a superior who constantly observes us.\(^7\) This constant surveillance is reflected for example in architecture or new information technologies. The purpose is twofold: to create docile bodies that are receptive to external modifications and to improve the productivity of the workers. The general effect is that someone is always, at least potentially, watching our actions. Hierarchical observation is a precondition for constant evaluation of performance, a constant grading, and a constant ranking in terms of hierarchies.

Hierarchical observation is linked with normalizing judgment.\(^8\) Individuals

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are evaluated according to a given standard, a given norm, which must be followed in order to enjoy benefits and avoid repercussions. Social norms of beauty, for example, specify the ideals of weight, facial characteristics, etc. They also apply to what is considered “normal” behavior, for example in terms of family, job, sexuality, etc. The constant pressure of normalizing judgment results in an internalized desire to be normal, where individuals take over and judge their own actions in terms of the perceived norm. The consequence of normalizing judgment is to impose a sharp distinction between those individuals who are considered “normal” and those who are deviant or “abnormal.” Normalizing judgment, in this sense, promotes conformism.

The third component, the examination, is a synthesis between hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment. The examination, according to Foucault, is a form of disciplinary ritual, which establishes a form of knowledge and a form of “truth” about each individual, for example by specifying a ranked position within a hierarchical order.

“The examination is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge. It is the examination which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgment, assures the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes and, thereby, the fabrication of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatorial individuality.”

The examination synthesizes and integrates the procedures of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment. In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, modern institutions such as the prison begin to operate in terms of discipline, thereby changing their mode of operation. In pre-disciplinary institutions, examinations were only at the end of an apprenticeship or similar process; now they become much more regular, an integrated feature of an ongoing process of disciplinary regimentation. In

8) Ibid, pp. 177-183.
short, disciplinary power impacts on individuals and moulds them into well-disciplined subjects through the integrated mechanisms of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and regular examination.

Moving from an analytical to a contextual perspective, disciplinary power operates through material institutions, a class of professionals, discourses of knowledge, and social definitions of normal and abnormal. Discipline is exercised in material institutions such as prisons, schools, hospitals, military barracks. Disciplinary power is wielded by a class of professionals, a class of experts with the required training and knowledge, for example prison supervisors, school teachers, medical doctors, military officers. Disciplinary power is enshrined in discourses of knowledge about the “truth” of individuals, for example psychiatry, pedagogy, medicine (but excluding physics and mathematics). These discourses of knowledge do not merely conform to individuals; rather, individuals conform to the discourses of knowledge. And, finally, disciplinary power activates social definitions of normal and abnormal. These four components establish the social context in which discipline moulds individuals into subjects.

Taken together, the integrated mechanisms of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and regular examination in combination with the network of institutions, professionals, discourses, and social norms establish a sophisticated “factory of subjectivity,” which does not produce commodities in a traditional sense but a mass of highly trained and well-disciplined subjects, who are ready to slot into and fulfill their specific role in the capitalist economy. This “factory of subjectivity,” which produces a well-trained army of industrial workers, is one of the backbones of modern societies.

2.

It is pertinent to situate Discipline and Punish within the context of Foucault’s work. Foucault’s work is often divided into three periods. The early period spans the formative years as well as his rapid rise to fame due
to groundbreaking books such as The History of Madness (1961), The Order of Things (1966), and The Archeology of Knowledge (1969). The second phase, beginning with the appointment at Collège de France in 1970, includes Discipline and Punish (1975) and History of Sexuality 1: The Will to Knowledge (1976). The third phase, spanning the last decade of Foucault’s life from 1976 to 1984, includes the History of Sexuality 2: The Use of Pleasure (1984) and History of Sexuality 3: The Care of the Self (1984). In addition to the books, Foucault’s work includes numerous essays as well as lecture series, interviews, and other texts. In broad terms, we might describe the central concept during each of the three phases, respectively, as knowledge, power, and ethics. Although it is convenient to think of Foucault’s work in these terms, we should nevertheless be careful not to exaggerate the discontinuities or the breaks within his work.

Foucault’s Discipline and Punish consists of four parts. In the first three parts, Foucault analyzes the history of the prison in France (and the West more broadly). Each of the three parts is devoted to one particular period: torture was the predominant form of penal justice during the early modern period (c. 1500–1700); punishment became the dominant form of penal justice during the eighteenth century (c. 1700–1800); and, finally, discipline became the new paradigm of penal justice during the nineteenth century (c. 1800–1900). In part 4, Foucault summarizes the history of the emergence of the prison, and he outlines a general theory of disciplinary power and subjectivity. The four parts, in short, can be analyzed in terms of two interrelated projects: the first is mainly historical in nature and concerns the history of penal justice and the birth of the prison as a modern institution; the second is theoretical and concerns the rethinking of power and subjectivity as operative concepts in a genealogical analysis.

The historical part of Foucault’s project in Discipline and Punish concerns specific changes in the criminal code of Western societies. One of the main questions is: Why did Western societies change from using torture to using imprisonment as the paradigmatic forms of penal justice? One very influential interpretation maintains that torture, along with the death penalty, is “inhumane,” and that imprisonment represents a more gentle, a more progressive, a more humane form of penal justice. This is the “Enlightenment
thesis" represented most famously by Cesare Beccaria.

Foucault introduces the topic through the juxtaposition of two scenarios: a description of the public execution of Damiens, which involved the gruesome practice of drawing and quartering, followed by a detailed description of Faucher’s timetable, which specifies the minute details of the regimented schedule of prison inmates.\(^\text{11}^\text{)\) The question is: How should we interpret this transformation in penal justice? The “Enlightenment thesis” suggests that the changes represent a progress towards a more civilized society. Foucault summarizes it as follows: “The reduction in penal severity in the last 200 years is a phenomenon with which legal historians is well acquainted. But, for a long time, is has been regarded as in an overall way as a quantitative phenomenon: less cruelty, less pain, more kindness, more respect, more ‘humanity.’”\(^\text{12}^\text{)\) However, according to Foucault, there is a change but no progress: a change in object, from the body to the ‘soul’; a change from judging the act of crime to the person of the criminal (from ‘what did you do?’ to ‘who are you?’); and a change in the knowledge discourses that surround and form part of the penal system, which includes the introduction of experts who make assessments of the criminal.

Foucault suggests that the Enlightenment thesis is a misinterpretation of the historical circumstances that propelled the changes in the criminal code. The changes reflect the basic changes from an aristocratic society to a bourgeois society dominated by the values of the middle class: the rise of bourgeois–capitalist society and the birth of the prison, with its new form of constant surveillance, are closely intertwined phenomena. Prisons become machines for transforming individuals. The prison as a machine of transformation has three primary dimensions: isolation, work, and moral reform. The isolation is needed in order to impose self-reflection on the imprisoned. Work is required in order to impose the educational function of hard labor. Finally, moral reform is implemented by rewarding “good” behavior in terms of shorter imprisonment. The prison becomes a penitentiary or a correctional facility with the purpose of transforming the

12) Ibid, p. 16.
population into a productive labor force.

Foucault’s interpretation of the changes in the criminal code resembles, in many respects, Durkheim’s position in the text “Two Laws of Penal Evolution.”\(^\text{13}\) Durkheim’s first law stipulates that the “intensity of punishment” is greater in less developed societies, which tend to be centralized in absolutist or theocratic governments.\(^\text{14}\) The second law maintains that more developed societies tend to use “privations of freedom” as the paradigmatic form of punishment.\(^\text{15}\) The general explanation is that changes from premodern to modern societies involve a process of individualization. Premodern societies tend to emphasize collectives. Crimes, as a result, are considered to be crimes against the collective (what Durkheim calls religious crimes). The response of the collective is meant to shock and awe, which is effective to maintain social cohesion. Modern societies tend to be much more individualistic. Therefore, the punishment must adapt, targeting the freedom of the individual, specifically the freedom of movement. Furthermore, individuals in modern societies are more sensitive; they are both more sympathetic towards criminals and more easily scared, which is why less violent forms of punishment is more effective in a modern society.

Durkheim’s interpretation of the changes in the criminal code marks an important revision of the Enlightenment thesis. The modern forms of punishment are not more humane; they are different responses to underlying sociological developments in the social fabric. Foucault’s historical thesis is quite similar to Durkheim’s. The main difference consists in the interpretation of individualization. Durkheim suggests that the rise of individualism can explain the changes in penal justice from high to low intensity and from physical punishment to privations of freedom. Foucault, by contrast, argues that individualism does not explain the changes in penal form; rather, individualism is an effect of the broader changes in the basic structures of power, which are manifested through penal justice. Modernization, according


\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 34.

\(^{15}\) Ibid, p. 35.
to Foucault, includes the rise of individualism, but this is merely an effect of deeper structural changes in the forms of social power. Thus, according to Foucault, Durkheim mistakes cause and effect.\textsuperscript{16} Durkheim assumes the pre-existence of individual subjects, which are subsequently, in a second stage, subsumed under structures of power. Foucault, by contrast, considers disciplinary power to be productive of individual subjectivity.\textsuperscript{17}

As a conclusion to the historical analysis of the birth of the prison, Foucault outlines a few general features of what he terms a “disciplinary society.”\textsuperscript{18} It includes a reversal of the axis of individualization: it results in changes in the dominant literary genres; and, more importantly, the individual subject is not a given. The individual subject, according to Foucault, does not exist in some sort of primordial vacuum, a state of nature, in order to subsequently enter into a contractual relation with other atomistic individual subjects, thereby giving birth to “society.” Rather, the individual subject is an effect of power. The individual, writes Foucault, is “the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called ‘discipline.’”\textsuperscript{19}

Furthermore, the notion of power has been commonly thought as a form of repression: power as something that excludes or represses or censors or conceals. Foucault develops an alternative theory whereby disciplinary power is not repressive, but productive.

3.

Foucault’s methodological approach, at least during the middle phase of his work, is encapsulated in the term genealogy, which he takes over and develops from Nietzsche. It signifies a form of historicist nominalism, which considers the key concepts of our discourse to be effects of historically.

\textsuperscript{16} Foucault, \textit{op. cit.}, 1995, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{17} Nigro, Roberto, “Experiences of the self between limit, transgression, and the explosion of the dialectical system: Foucault as reader of Bataille and Blanchot,” \textit{Philosophy & Social Criticism}, 31:5-6, 2005, pp. 649-664.
\textsuperscript{18} Foucault, \textit{op. cit.}, 1995, pp. 192-194.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid}, p. 194.
contingent processes of interpretation and reinterpretation. Concepts are not transhistorical universals; rather, they have a specific historical origin, and they undergo substantial changes in meaning through repeated reinterpretations, which are enabled through shifts of power. Foucault, here, draws on the Kantian distinction between concepts of understanding and ideas of reason: the former is necessarily linked with sensuous intuitions, whereas the latter goes beyond the boundaries of possible experience. Foucault, however, modifies the notion of concept in terms of a Nietzschean historicism, whereby the meaning of the concept is its history of reinterpretation. It means that critical thinking needs to address not merely the logical or transhistorical structures of an argument, but more importantly the history of the meaning of the concept. The notion of genealogy, therefore, is important for contemporary critical thinking. 20)

More specifically, concerning the methodological treatment of the history of the prison, Foucault summarizes his approach in four principles: think of punishment as something that does not merely say “no”; view punishment as a way of enacting power directly upon the subjects being punished; consider the history of penal law and the history of the human and the social sciences as closely related; and, finally, interpret the body as a battlefield, a contested territory, informed by overlapping struggles of power. 21) These methodological principles are immediately relevant for academics who wish to study not merely his theses, his propositions, but also his craftsmanship and his scholarship. They provide an insight into his laboratory.

The first methodological principle, and arguably the most important, maintains that we should think of punishment as something that does not merely say “no.” Foucault distinguishes between “repression” (saying no to something already existing) and “production” (the enabling something to come into existence). It is a distinction directly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti–Oedipus, in which the authors criticize certain forms of Freudo–Marxism for operating with a one–dimensional notion of “repression” of desire, which results in equally one–dimensional notions of emancipation.

from this repression; instead, they suggest that desire is productive, rather than repressive, which calls for different ideas of resistance.\textsuperscript{22}) The second principle maintains that punishment should be seen as a political tactic, a way of enacting power, which impacts directly on the delinquents. The second principle is similar to the first in so far as punishment must be seen as part of a larger political field. Punishment is always political, it is never politically neutral, and it actively shapes or moulds the individuals exposed to its effects. The third principle maintains that the history of penal law and the history of the human and the social sciences are interrelated. This is arguably one of the most important arguments of Foucault’s book. It is tied to the previous statement. It means: Knowledge and power are intertwined. Or, more precisely, knowledge is power that assumes a specific form. Other forms, for example, are violence or seduction. Knowledge is never outside of power or independent from power. The fourth and final principle maintains that the body is a field of power; it is invested by power relations. Disciplinary power targets the body rather than the “soul,” thereby short-circuiting traditional forms of ideology critique that emphasize how the bourgeoisie controls the working class by fooling them, thereby gaining their consent to their own exploitation. For Foucault, disciplinary power first breaks down the resistance of the body, producing docile bodies, and subsequently reprograms the body to operate in accordance with rational productive schemes.

The four methodological principles are closely interrelated with the analysis of Bentham’s panopticon, which is probably the most famous and most read chapter from Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. It is often read in anthologies without the rest of the book, which gives an impoverished or even distorted understanding of Foucault’s concepts. In fact, the panopticon is arguably one of the least interesting notions of the book, and we might as well skip it altogether. However, as a minimum, we should understand this

chapter in the context of the rest of the book, in particular the intertwinement of the four methodological principles. The chapter has three sections. In the first section, Foucault distinguishes between the plague city and the leper colony. In the following section, he describes Bentham’s project for an ideal prison, also known as the panopticon. Finally, in the third section, Foucault goes on to describe the broader outline of a disciplinary society. Here, I will ignore the section on the panopticon and emphasize instead the synthesis of the two models of power as more relevant for contemporary critical thinking.

Foucault starts by contrasting the plague town and the leper colony as idealized models of power: the plague town is a model of discipline; the leper colony is a model of exclusion. Here, it is worth noting that the leper colony, or the logic of exclusion, is a continuation of a theme that he described at length in The History of Madness.

The “Black Death” or pandemic bubonic plague broke out in Europe in 1346–53, killing an estimated one third of the entire population on the continent. Later, it resurfaced in various parts of Europe: London (1603); Italy (1629–31); Seville (1647–52); London (1665–66); Vienna (1679). It did not disappear until the nineteenth century. The history of the plague forms the backdrop to Foucault’s analysis of the plague town, which is characterized by strict forms of surveillance. In order to avoid further spreading of the plague, people are divided into various compartments of the town, which are constantly being watched by guards and officials. Surveillance is based also on documentation and registration of who is moving in and out of the town. The plague town, with its constant surveillance of the population’s movement, is “a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.” 23) The disciplinary mechanisms establish a kind of power, which observes and registers the minutiae of each individual’s life.

Leper colonies became widespread during the medieval period, and they were often run by monastic orders. Leprosy was greatly feared because it causes visible disfigurement and disability, which were incurable, and which were commonly believed to be highly contagious. Leprosy, therefore, has

been associated with strong social stigma. The leper colony, according to Foucault, exemplifies functions of exclusion: the lepers are excluded from normal society and placed in an enclosed space of permanent exile, for example an island or a mountain top, with the purpose of avoiding all contact between the leper colony and the rest of society.

The plague town and the leper colony exemplify different paradigms of social organization, which have different ways of exercising power. The leper colony is a space of repressive exclusion: it is a space of clear demarcations between normal (outside the colony) and abnormal (inside the leper colony). The plague town, by contrast, is a space of unclear demarcations, where the population is constantly under surveillance; both the authorities and the citizens are constantly looking for signs of the abnormal, which is perceived as a constant threat to the space of normality. The plague town is a mixed space: normality and abnormality is mixed or contiguous within the plague town.

In the nineteenth century, after the French revolution and the Industrial revolution, the model of the plague town and the model of the leper colony gradually merge in the form of nineteenth century institutions.

“They are different projects, then, but not incompatible ones. We see them coming slowly together, and it is the peculiarity of the nineteenth century that it applied to the space of exclusion of which the leper was the symbolic inhabitant (beggars, vagabonds, madmen and the disorderly formed the real population) the technique of power proper to disciplinary partitioning. Treat ‘lepers’ as ‘plague victims’, project the subtle segmentations of discipline onto the confused space of internment, combine it with the methods of analytical distribution proper to power, individualize the excluded […] this is what was operated regularly by disciplinary power from the beginning of the nineteenth century in the psychiatric asylum, the penitentiary, the reformatory, the approved school and, to some extent, the hospital.”

The modern institutions appearing in the nineteenth century treat the individuals as partly excluded and partly included, as plague victims and as lepers. In modern societies, Foucault argues, disciplinary power increasingly

spreads throughout society: schools, prisons, army barracks, workshops, etc. These institutions form a network of interconnected disciplinary institutions, or, in other words, a factory of subjectivity.

The broader relevance of this approach consists in analyzing the birth of a phenomenon such as the prison to consist of a synthesis of previous phenomena or models. The birth of the prison, thus, consists of a synthesis, a condensation, a metaphorical combination of two historically disconnected phenomena or models.

4.

Steven Lukes has provided an influential critique of Foucault’s work on power. He emphasizes Foucault’s theory of power for two reasons. The first is that “it has hugely influenced our thinking about power,” and the second is that “Foucault's approach has been said to reveal a ‘fourth dimension of power’ and taken by some to undermine the kind of approach exemplified and advocated here.”

He starts off by distancing himself from two rather common forms of interpretation: “far too much of the voluminous writing about his view of power is either obscurantist when friendly or dismissive when critical.” Lukes maintains that he does not want to provide yet another exposition of Foucault’s account of power, suggesting that there are already many such expositions. Instead, he wishes to “assess the extent to which and the ways in which that account offers clarifying and illuminating answers to the question on which we are focusing, namely: how do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate?”

Power, according to Lukes, is operating in-between subjects: some people wish to influence and obtain the compliance of other people. This way of framing the reading of Foucault already rejects that the notion of power as “constituting” or “forming” subjects, i.e. power as something prior to subjects, not in-between subjects.

already established subjects.

Lukes articulates six main points of critique of Foucault’s theory of power. The first point of critique is that Foucault, for most of his life, never ceased to clothe the idea of power as constitutive of subjectivity in a Nietzschean rhetoric, within which power excluded both freedom and truth.\(^{28}\)

Subsequently, Lukes discusses Foucault’s analysis of Bentham’s panopticon. It “conveys a one-sided, monolithic image of unidirectional control,” which is due to the fact that “Foucault was, characteristically, not investigating actual disciplinary practices but their design.” In other words, he portrays idealized forms of disciplinary practices, “describing not how they work, or ever worked, but an ideal type of how they are meant to work.”\(^{29}\) This is the second main point of critique: Foucault theorizes “ideal types,” i.e. general statements, projects, or stereotypes, rather than singular empirical material.

The third main point of critique is that Foucault revises his own theory of power. In the middle phase, including Discipline and Punish (1975) and the first volume of The History of Sexuality (1976), Foucault emphasizes that “the subject is ‘constituted’ through subjection to power.”\(^{30}\) However, Foucault subsequently retracts this theory in his later writings on “governmentality.”\(^{31}\) Thus, according to Lukes, the later Foucault revises his earlier theory concerning the subject as an effect of power. This change, according to Lukes, means that Foucault realized he had made a mistake and therefore changed his mind.

The fourth main point of critique: overstatement of banalities. Foucault’s later revisions of his own theory shows us that he, according to Lukes, merely recycles sociological banalities. The resulting theory “amounts to restating some elementary sociological commonplaces. Individuals are socialized: they are oriented to roles and practices that are culturally and socially given; they internalize these and may experience them as freely chosen; indeed, their freedom may, as Durkheim liked to say, be the fruit of

\(^{28}\) Lukes, op. cit., 2005, p. 91.
\(^{29}\) Ibid, p. 93.
\(^{30}\) Ibid, p. 95.
\(^{31}\) Ibid, p. 96.
regulation – the outcomes of disciplines and controls.” 32) Lukes suggests that Foucault’s view of power, that power is productive through the social construction of subjects, is nonsense. “Taking this to mean that those subject to power are ‘constituted’ by it is best read as a striking overstatement deployed in his purely ideal-typical depictions of disciplinary and bio-power, not as an analysis of the extent to which the various modern forms of power he identified actually succeed, or fail, in securing the compliance of those subject to it.” 33) The fifth main point of critique: Foucault’s power of seduction. Lukes recognizes that Foucault’s writings have had “an extraordinarily wide impact,” encouraging researchers to engage in detailed empirical studies informed by Foucault’s theoretical frameworks. This influence, according to Lukes, is due to Foucault’s considerable “power of seduction.” 34) Lukes discusses four detailed empirical studies that draw on Foucault’s theory of power. (1) Bartky and Bordo on women subjecting themselves to self-surveillance; (2) Donzelot on the history of families; (3) Flyvbjerg on political decision-making in a Danish town; (4) Hayward on anonymous structural forms of power in two American Schools. All of these studies explicitly draw on Foucault’s theories of power; however, according to Lukes, none of these empirical studies require or justify Foucault’s theory of power.

In short, Lukes articulates six criticisms of Foucault’s theory of power. First, Foucault employs a Nietzschean rhetoric that allows no alternative to or emancipation from power. Second, Foucault theorizes ideal types, i.e. general stereotypes, rather than singular empirical material. Third, Foucault revises his theory of power, thereby admitting that he made a mistake. Fourth, Foucault makes a striking overstatement of what is really a sociological banality. Fifth, Foucault’s widespread influence is due to his considerable power of seduction. Sixth, although Foucault’s theory of power has inspired a number of empirical studies, the empirical studies that draw on Foucault’s theories neither require nor justify his ultra radical theory of power. 35)

33) Ibid, p. 98.
34) Ibid, p. 98.
5.

Lukes provides several arguments against Foucault’s theory of power. The main point of contention is the relation between power and subjectivity. Power, according to Lukes, operates between already formed subjects. Power, according to Foucault, has a formative impact on subjectivity.

The first point of critique concerning a “Nietzschean rhetoric” is unclear. Lukes provides little evidence or argument for this point concerning the “Nietzschean rhetoric,” as if we all agree on what Nietzsche wrote, how he wrote it, and what they mean. Perhaps, we might suppose that Lukes refers to the concept of genealogy and its methodical implications for the interpretation of concepts. However, it seems that the main point of this critique is Foucault’s style.

The second point of critique relies on a misrepresentation of Foucault’s text. Foucault does not merely deal in generalities. Lukes emphasizes only the pages describing Bentham’s plan for the Panopticon, while he ignores the sections of the book in which Foucault discusses specific and singular prisons such as the Rasphuis in Amsterdam, the Maison de force in Ghent, and the Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia. It is incorrect to maintain that Foucault merely theorizes ideal types; he refers to singular prisons as historical references.

The third point is simply a poor interpretation of the later works by Foucault. The revisions, if this is the correct term, does not involve a break or a turn, but a shift in emphasis from the actualities of heteronomy to the possibilities of autonomy. Lukes here relies on implicit assumptions concerning the interpretation of Foucault, which does not represent a reliable interpretation of Foucault’s texts.

The fourth point, that Foucault’s position is a striking overstatement of sociological banalities, overlooks the fact that Foucault engages in a detailed dialogue with Durkheim’s position and suggests a theoretical modification of a key premise in Durkheim’s account. That is far from a sociological a banality.

The fifth point, that Foucault’s influence is due to rhetoric, refers back to the first point concerning the “Nietzschean rhetoric.” This point seeks to deflect attention from the substantial parts of Foucault’s theory.

The sixth point, that empirical sociological studies neither require nor justify the Foucauldian concept of power, depends a great deal on implicit assumptions concerning the notions of “require” and “justify.” Also, the argument rests on carefully chosen sociological studies, whereas other studies that rely on Foucault’s concept of power might provide different conclusions. Edward Said’s analysis of “Orientalism” as a form of knowledge / power that effectively produces its referent has influenced the entire field of postcolonial studies. Judith Butler’s critique of traditional notions of gender has heavily influenced the field of gender studies. Neither Said nor Butler rely on Foucault in a dogmatic sense, but they both draw inspiration from Foucault’s notion of power as constitutive of subjectivity.

Thus, to summarize, it might be reasonable to consider Lukes as a defender of a Durkheimian position: the rise of individualism, and the relations of power between individuals, explains a wide range of changes in modern societies. I am generally sympathetic to Lukes’ position concerning power as something that operates in-between subjects. However, it is a fairly standard view, and can be traced back to Machiavelli’s considerations concerning the popularity of the prince. The Foucauldian position concerning power, or certain forms of power, is perhaps more novel, addressing processes of subject formation. It is no doubt close to Althusser’s notion of ideological state apparatuses and their function of interpellation. Even if we restrict the scope of Foucault’s notion of power, thereby rejecting their universality, it is still a valuable notion of subject formation that has inspired important empirical research such as Edward Said’s study of orientalism. Furthermore, Said’s example demonstrates that the Foucauldian notion of discourse, including the concepts of knowledge / power as formative of its referent, does not exclude the claims of humanism and its emphasis on the potentiality of self-constitution through self-cultivation.
Conclusion

This paper reconstructs the central argument of Discipline and Punish. Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power seeks to diagnose modern forms of heteronomy, which impact and impose flexible limitations on the range of autonomous human action. Foucault’s genealogical analysis provides a historicist rather than a universal or ontological theory about the sources of subjectivity. He theorizes discipline as a productive form of power, which gives shape and structure to modern subjects. Furthermore, the historical and theoretical reflections on knowledge, power, and subjectivity raise the question of resistance. Foucault rejects the notion that there is a primordial human essence that somehow has been repressed, betrayed, or alienated in the process of subjectivation; rather, the disciplinary apparatus moulds the individual into a subject, thereby rendering traditional notions of emancipation obsolete. In his later work on ethics, Foucault revises, or reinterprets, the scope of his analysis of subjectivation, invoking various forms of “speaking truth to power” and “hermeneutics of the self” as modes of resistance. Here, it suffices to mention that Foucault, as far as I can tell, returns to and reconsiders the notion of autonomy in the Kantian terms of reflective judgments.

Works Cited


요약문

 자기 행성에 관한 의문: 푸코, 루크스, 권력

이 논문의 목적은 주체성의 생산으로서의 규율권력 개념을 강조하면서『감시와 처벌』(Discipline and Punish)의 주요 논증을 재구성하는 데 있다. 그것은 감옥의 역사에 대한 푸코의 풍부하면서 세밀한 연구의 일부를 재구성하는 것이다. 이러한 재구성은 푸코의 권력 개념에 대한 스티븐 루크스의 비판적 논의를 배경으로 한다. 이 글은 전반적으로 루크스의 비판적 논점을 동의하고 있을지라도, 규율권력에 대한 푸코의 개념화와 주체성에 대한 규율권력의 형성적 영향은 현대 미학에서 매우 중요하게 남아 있다. 푸코의 주체화로서의 권력 개념은 저항, 자율
성, 효과적인 자기 함양에 관해 의문을 제기하는 것이다.

※ 주요어 : 푸코, 루크스, 권력, 주체성, 미학.