

Discourse of power and social subjectivism of Foucault

MSc. Lulzim Vrapca

Abstract

From ancient times to the present day, the concept of power has been examined by philosophers and theorists in different social perspectives. Through this, it was intended to explain the manifestation of power in certain discourse lines that had the main purpose of focusing power within a political and institutional nomenclature. This represented the totality of the reports, in which the units of discourse practices were organized, listed and identified. However, the conception and discourse of power in the postmodern world is not destined to a uniform social definition, but is very pluralistic and different. A similar conception of power was examined by Foucault, who breaks down the relationship and functioning of power and the individual, emphasizing their position against/alongside each other. In this sense, Foucault puts three main concepts as a starting point: power, knowledge and discipline. And from the determination of these three categories, the identification of the unfolded concept of the individual is made as a complex process of interconnections between power-knowledge and power-discipline relations. The structural interconnection of this complexity has one main source: power and its exercise through knowledge that is absorbed by the individual and promoted by power as its legitimizer. So this power tends to always rise to the level of the eye, in order to organize this eye and extend it to its political organization as a classifier of knowledge. This leads to what Foucault calls the creation of the individual, because the discourse on individualizing truth creates power provisions for its limitation and discipline. Consequently, in this essay I will examine the concept of power, the creation of the individual and the resistance to power according to Foucault, trying to examine on the other hand the monopolization of power and social subjectivism in Kosovo, as well as the role that the intellectual should have in this comprehensive process.

Keywords: Discourse power, social subjectivism, Foucault.

Introduction

Power discourse is the result of changes in discourse practices, which have aimed at the conceptual change of power as a unit of meaning. Foucault's conception of power represents an important mechanism in today's contemporary societies that is present everywhere in different social constellations and discourses. Foucault defines power in terms of a technology of power, which regulates internal relations in different discourse systems.¹ These systems try to define a certain field of action, which means they stand on some principles that define what is acceptable from what is unacceptable, managing to impose themselves as general knowledge. Indirectly, these systems produce positions of authority in a society, where it will be seen how their authority affects the discipline of general social knowledge. This connection between discipline and system according to Foucault implies that power is not rigid and has no meaning outside a discourse system because it does not have certain

¹ Michel Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, Dita 2000, 2009, 85.

dimensions.

In Foucault's terms, power is not shaped and focused within a certain institutional framework, but the dimensions that power takes reflect a multiplicity of meaning and discourse in a certain society. This power discourse takes place in different social spheres and is not presented in a single line. This is because what characterizes today's contemporary world is the configuration of new relationships between the sphere of power, the sphere of discipline and the sphere of knowledge. So, Foucault analyzes that knowledge is always a way of power that it can be gained by power, because "power and knowledge directly imply each other and there is no relationship without a correlative construction between them"². This connection based on Foucault means that power is not reduced to political power, but means a multitude of power relations at different levels of a society. All this means that power does not have certain dimensions, but a kind of discipline that is exercised through various social mechanisms.

In other words, Foucault defends the idea that power is not a simple unit of domination and an invincible unit, but is the game of the relationship of forces that evolves and transforms constantly. Through this, it is possible for power to pass through a mobility, a changeability and a multiplicity of discourses. This leads to what Foucault mentions that "power is not a quality, but a strategy and that it is exercised and not held"³. This highlights the relational character of power, which does not have a fixed substance of an isolated power, but a dense and inefficiently variable network of power relations. In this framework, the relationship between power and Foucault's subject is associated with the corresponding elements that evolve and transform in a relational path between them. This is because Foucault does not envisage the relationship between a power and its subjects in terms of the forbidden, but in terms that oppose the simplistic division as a holder of power and as stripped of power. As a consequence of this, the proliferation of power relations brings about the proliferation of subjective attitudes which in turn generate new power relations.

It is here that the motive of resistance will find its connecting point in resistance to power. Foucault analyzes that if modern powers presuppose a certain freedom of subjects, then a reciprocal line of action becomes possible, which means that where there is power there is also resistance. In this way, this resistance will have a potential or space for a possible resistance to power. So power relations in their multiplicity and variability foster the multiplicity and variability of points of resistance. Foucault mentions that "if power is everywhere and if it is possible to appear in every place and occasion, then the points of resistance are also very present"⁴. In other words, resistance is not something that comes outside to oppose and confront power, but it takes its starting point in the very intimacy of the power relationship. First of all, this takes place as a constellation of disconnected actions in a multiplicity of heterogeneous situations where the importance of the intolerable and of power as a field of excess is revealed. This makes resistance to power have a wide scope, through which Foucault

² Michel Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, Dita 2000, 2009, 87.

³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, Odeon, Tiranë, 2010, 29.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 152.

explains the multiplicity and variability of power relations.

Consequently, Foucault sees the creation of the individual as an effect produced by techniques of disciplinary power. So the individual came on the scene when institutions began to function with disciplinary procedures that included a range of disciplinary procedures of virtual supervision and punishment.⁵ The circumstances in which this individual is presented are conditionally related to the disciplinary techniques. In Foucault's terms, this relationship can be explained for the sole reason why the body has been subjectivism, that is why the subject function has been fixed on it, where it has been psychologized and normalized. Precisely, the contemporary idea of this individual was created on the basis of some indicators that was the result of a technology that aimed to make it as useful as possible in some areas of life. And this individual for Foucault is very carefully produced in the disciplinary techniques of this power.

With this, Foucault did not intend to develop a coherent history of this concept, but to capture some basic features of the functioning and role of the individual in relation to the many disciplines that are applied to him. This highlights that disciplinary power for Foucault is not the only procedure of individualization that has existed in other civilizations, but discipline is the final form of power that creates the individual as a target and as confronted with power. However, for Foucault, it would not be a solution if the transformation and evolution of the individual remained to create itself. One must never stop creating themselves, they must continuously shift their subjectivity and they must never stop producing themselves. So, the essence lies in the fact that man must be produced, built and created. In other words, the individual cannot remain hostage to the development of a capitalist economy.

Monopolization of discursive power in Kosovo

Discursive power can be defined as the endpoint of a mixed and comprehensive measure, which in many cases contains everything in itself. This discourse is the result of a power that legislates, orders, organizes and identifies the acceptable from the unacceptable. From this definability, power as an identifying concept is reduced to a single and organizing concept, which is political power. In Western societies, this power plays its role within the framework of genuine social principles and concepts. Whereas, in Kosovo, this power can be identified as a monopolization of the power discourse, which appropriates a lot in itself. In Foucault's terms, this means blocking power games that take different directions, depending on the exercise of power.

This discursive power can be described through the incorporation of concepts such as: stability and collective order, so that the social and political reality is in a status quo state. This political power, through concepts and discourse premises, aims to destroy any transformation and critical change in society, which opposes this power. The purpose of this discursive power is to put the individual under the cloak of his discursive games, where his linear flow of thoughts is excluded from the game and the rigorous discursive relations of other epistemological regimes and structures. Through this way, the all-round influence of this discourse power

⁵ Ibidem, 169.

is achieved, which in certain cases also uses extra-institutional mechanisms to transform the camouflage of critical concepts and principles. All this causes the political and social reality in Kosovo to be described with a common denominator, which is the monopolization of discursive power.

In other words, this approach of this discursive power in Kosovo has more to do with ruling the most important spheres of social life, than with the exercise of power. In Foucault's terms, this condition can be described in practical reality, when he states that "rule is something different from power, and it is seen when power games coagulate without the possibility of going back and when asymmetry seems far from the critique of contestation, in which case it takes the appearance of another discourse"⁶. By this we mean that the rule and not the exercise of power are typical for the description of this discursive reality in Kosovo. This reality can be defined as an internal confusion of mental and political disorientation, which produces a political and social impotence in the various spheres of cultural, economic and political life.

The imposition of different concepts is crystallized in our society through expressions which are not explicitly defined, but which symbolize a daily political rhetoric for the approval or disapproval of a certain issue that the individual wants for his society. This legislative power tries to put issues such as justice, transparency, freedom, and even solidarity in the center of attention. All this is done for a kind of social awareness that alludes to substantive argumentation, but in reality this argumentation is always based on the initial argument of an intuition, and is predisposed to go outside the framework of specific issues and everyday problems with which society faces. More precisely, this discursive power sees the (de)politicization of all spheres of social life as a process of party political gains, while on the other hand, it sees the development of critical thinking in this society as an obstacle to the realization of their goals. .

In other words, in the language of Foucault, discursive power can be named as a relation of power without rule.⁷ So, the coercive forces of power cannot be transformed into rule, because it is a relationship that does not coincide with the right exercise of power, but with the blocking of power games in society. A typical situation of the appropriation of different social relations exists in Kosovo, where the discourse on individualizing truth creates power provisions for limiting the reflection of the individual in society. Based on this, this discourse power manages to absorb the individual and other social groups to act on different discourse lines that do not violate the operational limits of this political power.

Consequently, a symbiotic relationship has been created between this discursive power and the subject citizen, where this connection between them is the result of a destructive arsenal of discursive power against different rational mechanisms such as criticism. All this has caused the role of the individual to be defined only in a certain period of time, limiting and conditioning it in the most important aspects of life. So the sphere of political action is so limited that individuals are seen only as a tool of politics and nothing more. In this way, the ruling political class establishes and imposes the key concepts and themes of public political discourse, drawing

⁶ The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory, Oxford University Press, 2006, 68.

⁷ This term was used by Foucault in later works on power/subject.

attention to the fundamental problems facing society. Indeed, this discursive power is opposed to the expression of protest or rejection, because this discourse is in a one-way direction, from the political class to society and the individual. In Foucault's terms, these relations between them "constitute strategic relations in a politically and socially open game, where the criterion of the game's openness is the degree of potential and mutual reciprocity"⁸. This makes it clear that this legislative power is not the bearer of the constitution of political knowledge and practices in the defined epistemological orders, because it has not shaped the conditions in which the discursive practices are manifested. However, the legislative power in Kosovo does not consist of the acceptability of critical reviews that are made against them, but on the contrary, the political bargaining of this legislative power reaches its peak when personal interests are realized in exchange for state interests.

Social subjectivism

In Foucault's language, social subjectivism will be found installed at the core of a theoretical and practical discourse. More specifically, it was about the conditions of political action to understand the distributed practical actions that constituted as many singularities, which could be said to present an exemplary character of an empirical reality. If we adapt this description of Foucault to the political reality of discourse power, then we can say that the real problems that preoccupy the Albanian society in Kosovo lie in the concrete analysis of two aspects: on the one hand, the actions and behaviors of the individual must be seen concrete, empirical, that is, of that individual who lives in this circle and who encounters every day the matter of his social existence, as a result of general social conformism and the suppression of criticism in the most important social areas. On the other hand, the development of critical thinking in this society should be seen as an important process, even as a mechanism through which the replacement of the political format is achieved in the range of rhetorical conceptual changes.

The influence of the legislative power in Kosovo means that the society is determined by the concrete living conditions. In exchange for this, it tends to be conformist, and there is even a lack of reaction on the part of individuals to injustices or political bargaining that can be done to their detriment. This is because the development of some important social spheres has changed the way of doing politics, where reality is seen as rational and the existing system is understood as a productive apparatus of effective factors of thought and action. So, indirectly, this existing system leads to conformity, as a condition for the realization of productive and distribution work for society.

Unlike Western societies, one thing that can be observed in Albanian society in Kosovo is extreme (de)politicization in all areas of social life. Even those institutions that were once vocal in the development of critical thinking and in comprehensive social awareness, today have turned into tools of politics. It is enough to mention the disaster that has gripped the public university in Pristina, with the shame that is our Scientific Academy, with the suffocating dogmatization of the dual hegemony of

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, Odeon, Tiranë, 2010, 89.

literary romanticism and of a parochial Albanianology that prevails in official research institutes and with the failure of profiling genuine platforms. political. Among the many cases of political intervention in the institutions of knowledge and science, one should also mention the placement of a message by the current Prime Minister of Kosovo at the entrance of the new building of the Academy of Sciences. This was a grotesque message, where the general social interest turns into the personal interest of labeling a certain area. How to act in these circumstances? We can find the answer to this in Foucault, who talks about resistance to power in a contained perspective of discourse power. The resistance that Foucault mentions is that energy which has the effect of the fact that there is history and not just the repetition of actions, which has the reproduction and continuity of critical perspectives. First of all, this resistance is a topography in its living form and not instrumentalized by the discourse power, which aims to completely block this aspect.

In the Foucauldian perspective, this energetic and resistant model of power is that of modern powers. It is a question of a model that works on a first of all biopolitical way⁹, because this resisting power appears productive and absorbing towards power discourses. Among other things, resistance to power gives shape to new modes of production of social organization and new modes of subjection. This last term should be understood in its double meaning, i.e. from the side of subjection, but also from the side of self-construction of subjects. This means making the subject of the individual in his thought, in his existence and in his daily actuality. Based on this, resistance to power in our society should be seen in the framework of discourse and critical issues. The issues raised by the legislative power have the appropriate reflection and the possibility of abrogating the principles of various legislative premises. Likewise, this legislative/political power in Kosovo must have a certain line of action and not interfere in the autonomy of independent scientific and intellectual institutions.

The tendency to liberate the individual from external factors in a society is very difficult given the transmission of public political discourse from the political class to the individual. However, the development of critical thinking can bring values and ideas to the Albanian society in Kosovo, against the political conformism that moves with instructions directed and determined from outside. In Foucault's language, this aspect of social development and resistance to power is seen in a framework of reciprocity that should be understood as a key dimension and not as an antithesis of a particular society. Precisely, the times of rapid and great changes often require intellectual and critical reflection in the Albanian society in Kosovo, in order to understand the value and importance of the changes.

Political deconstruction

The analysis of the limitation of discursive power and practical reality in this society can be described through deconstruction, which is a strategy of postmodernism. The main idea of deconstruction is the undoing of certain political orders and their remaking again, but with different contents. In practical reality, this method can be used in the Albanian society in Kosovo for the construction of new relations between this legislative power and society as a mechanism of important social changes.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, Odeon, Tiranë, 2010, 149.

Through this, the configurational change of this discourse power would be achieved, where the governing logic would be changed in relation to the important cultural and intellectual spheres. In Foucault's context, this would mean "a conflictual coexistence that aims to change through power games and practices of freedom, which are defined by an iron resistance and a critical reciprocity"¹⁰. So in a way Foucault admits the possibility of a counterfactual power analysis.

Consequently, the main principles of the renewal of political/discursive power must start from the beginning of the humane treatment of man. This would mean that this power thinks about society as a mental being that acts and produces, where the individual would be seen as a being and not as a figure, as a subject and not as an object. In other words, this perspective on human nature strengthens the political agents in Kosovo, because it brings the stability of a partial renewal and of a system as a whole. In this way, a collective consensus would be reached on the most important social issues and problems. In Havel's terms this was qualified as a call for a non-political politics, while in Foucault's sense for a politics that does not have the character of manipulation,¹¹ where man must continuously shift his subjectivity and must never finish produce yourself.

Foucault and the role of the intellectual

The development of critical thinking and the role that the intellectual plays in a society are the most important drives for a fundamental change of a given situation. The role of the intellectual is the one that initiates the development of critical thinking in the various spheres of social life, and as a result of this the development of critical thinking must be a strong opposition to the political/discursive power. As a result, our cultural mystique has always seen the intellectual as an individual subject, who speaks the truth that others do not take into account. However, intellectualism should not be conceived as a feature of an individual, but as a collective activity, where the truth is broken down by everyone for everyone, and which would have a comprehensive effect of the development of critical thinking in our society. Through this, an intellectual and mental reflection would be reached, which requires time and space dedicated to fluency in various critical developments. It is all implied that the development of critical thinking and the role of the intellectual are closely related in this common social process.

Foucault's approach to the intellectual can be described in terms of a universal intellectual, which meant the all-rounder who does not remain indifferent to various issues in society, but goes down with his 'feet on the ground' and gives his opinion on the most important issues. tangible that disturb the society where he lives. He refers to Jean Paul Sartre as the typical intellectual who had a profound influence throughout Europe. On the other hand, Foucault pointed out that due to various transformations and as a result of the unstoppable process of modernism, we are moving more and more towards the specialist and the technocrat. However, Foucault makes it clear that what distinguishes the intellectual from the rest of society is education and resistance

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, Odeon, Tiranë, 2010, 162.

¹¹ Robert Lawrence, *Foucault's power*, Routledge, 120.

to various phenomena in society.¹²

The point of view of the genuine intellectual is more than necessary in this society dominated by politics and politicians with selfish nature, dubious illegal biographies and inhuman attitude with purely material goals. It can be said that in the 90s there was a 'critical person' within the intellectuals in Kosovo, but the post-war years mark a strange reversal, due to their involvement in politics, or being completely influenced by politics, even though they remain without political membership. Indeed, they represent certain political interests, which completely questions the authenticity and neutrality of a certain issue, because their interests are more material than ideological, and more personal than social.¹³

For these reasons, the role of the intellectual in this aspect is more than necessary, because it constitutes a neutral spectrum towards certain issues. Regarding this, Paul Riceour states that "the intellectual is a social critic, political educator, person of action, who is always interested in speaking the truth against politics, and other issues raised in a society". As a result, even the intellectual in the Albanian society in Kosovo must be a contradictory figure and directed more towards dissent than adaptation. In particular, the intellectual must show a kind of conscience and commitment to the society in question, in which case he can affect the moral sensibility of the respective society. Based on this, we can say that the characteristics that should distinguish the intellectual in our society from the rest of the "intellectuals" is the degree to which this intellectual makes social criticism, political education, action and involvement in the development of critical thinking and critical rationality.

In summary, it can be said that the depolarization of power in Kosovo is defined as a dissymmetry of power within different institutions, because its mechanism constitutes a counter-right and does not coincide with the power games that Foucault describes in a society. Even this aspect of the blocking of different entities in society is seen as a mechanism that tries to influence the balance of a power relation, in which case it constitutes the rule of different spheres of social life. Consequently, this discursive/political power in Kosovo tends to shed light on relations that are more and more seen as unbalancing (in the sense of various critical developments), but in fact, based on Foucault's terms, it is the opposite of the dissymmetric actions of the reports of this power.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, Odeon, Tiranë, 2010, 171.

¹³ Robert Lawrence, *Foucault's power*, Routledge, 130.