

To what extent do Marx's and Foucault's approaches to power differ?

Introduction. Definitions of power?

To a large extent Foucault rejected being compared to Marx in any way (Foucault, M. 2002.p.264-274). I do agree that the two thinkers are distinct not only in time but also in structural approach, in a sense Foucault develops ideas with a far greater scope than Marx. Indicating the Ricardian influence as a root to both Foucault and Marx. (Foucault, M. 1989.p.335). A precise differentiation always points to deeper abstract similarities. They both approach discourse as power and spend time considering where it lays or does not. There are differential and fragmented or better to say entwined aspects, structures of government/institution/capitalism. Foucault covered what Marx covered, it is not that Marx covered some aspect that Foucault never. Foucault highlights discourses and relationships beyond the scope of Marx, although, within a certain materialist tradition linking to Ricardian and Hegelian themes. Foucault writes as he states himself, as an experimenter, I will attempt to draw out key themes in Marx's and Foucault's work, as to develop an understanding of the two thinkers, yet as Foucault describes his writings as flowing from one book into another my essay also takes an experimental form, as I begin to appreciate the history of the discourse that they undertake.

Marx & power

Labour, exploitation, production, surplus value, profit, money, material.

The fundamental Marxian theorem is that exploitation equals profit (Cf Hollander, S.2008. p11). Exploitation of time exchanged in wage labour and the power of the worker to produce an abundance/surplus/profit. This theory is based on a Ricardo equation (Foucault, M. 1989.

p275). Without exploitation, the surplus value of a product from labour could not bring about a profit in capital, money, if the product is valued less than the surplus after wages. When referring to capital marx is referring to material as money and the capital surplus as a function of exchange, the conversion of material into money through the capital exchange circuit (Hollander, S.2008.p.11). Marx places power in the value of material capital, money and its transformative attributes. An issue for Marx is that a worker can produce more than a worker can consume, presenting a problem, of abundance, creating a leisure class.

Exploitation and austerity are necessary to maintain the system of the capitalist. Therefore capitalisation in relations between the self and the other are always possible in actuality.

This is the reason for growth in the economy of the time. Money a relatively new commodity of capitalism a resource needed and desired by the landless poor. To exchange for goods and services, commodities needed in everyday consumption (Carrier J.G 1992). The power of the proletariat exists in labour, but is not equal to the power which exists in the capitalist, buyers, who set capital values unequal to labour value of a commodity so as to drive profits in capital (Hollander, S 2008).

Real time, machine time.

Marx's power of the proletariat was in the labour and was simply given over/extracted by capitalist buyers/investors in time slices, in exchange for wages, whereas Ong (Cf Ong, A.1987) and Carrier show that the worker has power in the informal durable relationships and in the structuring of time spent in production. For Marx capitalism takes power of the mechanisation of time for the worker (Hassan, R. 2012 p.289). Machinery, technology removing people from the cottage industry where the whole of production is a seen, lived process, to a mechanical process of production where each job is a specialised part in the process of production monitored by standardised time (Carrier, J.G.1992.p.542. Thompson, E.P. 2007). The standardisation of time disconnecting people from the land the seasons and

cycles of production, night and day. To a systematic minimum wage labour where people are easily replaced, work in shifts, (Carrier, J.G.1992.p.547) keeping wages low regardless of end product capital value. Allowing for exploitation of the labourers. Although it is shown in Carrier's work that the formal and informal lives of workers within the industrial production process cross the boundaries of categorisations of time. Individual skills removed from the process of production, from workers identities. Individual lives being more easily led without the family, land ties in economies of exchange make for new sets of informal work relations (Carrier, J.G.1992. p.551).

Fetishisation, specialisation, alienation.

Marx's fetishisation on specialisation in the process of production alienates the workers from the product, takes away the workers power in the modes of production relative to their time. In a cottage industry where the labourer decides the speed of production the regulation of time, the value/price is set in barter or trade, the workers apparent involvement in the whole process makes the product inalienable to them (Carrier, J.G.1992.p.542). Engels realises that with decreasing social reproductive labour relations, alienation increases. It is not just alienation from production but alienation from each other (Carrier, J.G.1992.p.543). For Marx money, in its function as capital, is a fetish, by which he meant to imply that money is a tiny part of the whole of capitalism and could easily be seen to multiply, Taussig goes on to bring this fetishism to the plain facts of the material world, he says 'money qualifies as the most surreal of all our objects' (Taussig, M. 2009. p.24-25). Marx and engels thought the value/price of wage labour would decline under capitalism and that the proletariat would form socialism (Hollander, S. 2008.p.85).

Marx in ethnographies entangled with Foucault.

The newly formed Corus represented in Ahrens and Mollona's 2007 ethnography, is a culmination of small steel manufacturers joining forces, monopolising the steel industry and sending UNSOR into administration. Through fixing the price high on everyday steel products and lowering the price on high end products, Corus could dominate the high end market taking sales from UNSOR. Where UNSOR's profitability lay, due to the furnace capabilities and the technical process' of the small steel works in the high end products. UNSOR go into administration, caused by the fixing of prices by the new Corus. Capitalist buyers from the steel trade wielding power over, markets in the capitalist buyers monopoly of money. The power resting firmly with the capital buyer, or buyers competing to push prices down at market (Cf Hollander, S. 2008. p.17).

Ahrens and Mollona's, steel works ethnography show Marxian alienation from production, through capital buyers power. The pride and actions of the smelters in regards to producing quality steel could be said to show the product as inalienable to them representing the craftsmanship of the smelters. Producing high quality steel as personal, the smelters pride in the quality of the steel, material produced. The product selling for a high price shows the level of skill and craftsmanship. It becomes clear that the ultimate power of what to produce rests with the capitalist, owner of the factory. I think this shows the acute alienation of the smelters, power over their own craftsmanship is controlled by the managers in a discourse between market, capitalist, manager and furnace. The smelters are easily replaceable by subcontractors. This is also a reflection of the buyer capitalist wielding power over, in the choices workers can make, in the management of staff and technology, such as the furnace, thus a Marxian power over dialogue (Cf Ahrens, T. Mollona, M. 2007).

Foucault & power

Whereas Foucault would argue that a culmination of power dynamics lying in the market capitalist buyer, the technical ability of the furnace and a free market distributes the power as such through the whole system. Both of Mollona's shop floor ethnographies are good examples of arbitrary collectives forming on the factory floor, the divide between the factory workers is in relationship with outside family/social/cultural systems. Being associated through neighbourhood, what unites the groups are skills, gender, technical abilities, engineering degrees, the smelting craft, management etc. All groups develop a capitalist narrative, within themselves alienated from the product more so than another group. This shows the tendency for workers to fetishise their positions as unique and alienates the workforce from each other. The manager's role becomes, in the ethnography, a fetishising position, concerned only with electricity costs, the long term consequences of saving energy, effects the furnace capabilities and overall production. Mollona's (2005) ethnography shows the workforce divided in similar ways, it also makes a more detailed account of the social cultural lives of the workers off the shop floor, as in *Carriers work* (1992) looking at durable, inalienable relationships. This is reflective of Foucault and power being embodied within the self (Cf. Foucault, M.1988).

Ethics, exploitation, production.

Foucault's philosophy is of the ethics of exploitation and control (Cf Osborne, T.2011. p.67). He documents historically the production of discourse, the rise of established institutions for control of the mass'. Foucault labels himself an experimenter, not a philosopher or materialist, economist or historian (Foucault, M. 2002. p.240-244). Although he documents and philosophises he is not prescriptive (ibid. p.240.) of his view of outcomes in society. Power is at present unequally distributed and does hold its place in the governmentality of

the mass'. Foucault records the history of the institutions of power from the eighteenth century to the 1980s. Foucault's writings represent a diverse understanding of power, ultimately power is productive, active, autonomous not physical coercion as substance, but immaterial existing in relationships (ibid. p.324). Osborne explains Foucault's power as less of a dichotomy of negative, power over, to a positive, power to relationship and as more of what he feels is misquoted from Foucault's work, as in power is not everywhere but potentially anywhere (ibid. p120. Osborne, T. 2011. p.73).

Time for Foucault

The clock represents power in the material 'thing', the mechanism by which time is measurable and the power to capitalise on production is standardised in time as a relative concept to history. History exists relative to the powers and times it exists in. Power as an embodied force that can be represented in action or non action, the material quality of power is played out in discourse, through a fluid tension between actors. His is an individualistic approach with arbitrary collectives, of people and organisations of technologies all as bodies holding power temporarily, that is power in people structures, institutions, politics, economics, in the production of discourse (Foucault, M. 2002. p.93). Power is a force for change not a physical object to behold although it can be said to exist in time, relational to the space and actors in strategic discourse (ibid. p.344). The technology of the clock holds a material value in standardised time and history.

Power of the gaze, power over, paradoxically power to.

In all Foucault's work power is distributed. In *Discipline and punish* the power seemingly lays in the structures, in the gaze of power over. The panopticon a power of negative domination over the mass (Cf Bourdieu, P. 1984. p.467). The inaction of the panopticon can be empty of a watchful guard, it represents the power symbolically of knowing that when a body is watched it represents norms to avoid discipline. The prison system represents the

action of discipline occupying space in its ideal. Control and dominance, power over the prisoners is acted in the subjectification of the self. The body being watched will behave as to avoid the potential of being seen in the gaze of the authority of physical power. The prison as it is architecturally constructed holds power in a material structure. This paradoxically allows for dissent, a space of questioning power (Foucault, M. 2002 p354).

Educationality, class, transformative power

In Foucault's *The birth of the clinic* 1973, power exists in the introduction of the normative narrative of health and the biomedical, 'more humane', practices of punishment equalling in the subjectification of the self through the combination of law and medicine as institutions of the court (ibid. p.94). An exploitative diversely institutionalised power wielding structure of discourse is, embedded in political economies and practised regimes. Therefore the power held in the political economy is upheld through discourse. Embedded is the systems political institutions like the prison or healthcare systems. The discourse held in the system is about subjugated bodies and how to control them to maintain the exploitative class, hierarchical system, power is potentially everywhere for Foucault. Although once the discourse exists in how to hold power then actors will move to wield it, with good, bad or communally, politically, with all possible intentions.

Fetishisation of the individual body, specialisation of law and medicine, alienation from power and control.

For Foucault institutions of power are not just in the political economy of exchange, the welfare institutions, the policing of the mass', the deviation of the individual and the concept of communalism, things and words become the very means of control for the political economy of exchange (Cf Foucault, M.1989). To control the mass' with the ideal premise that each action should be for the good of the mass' holds everybody in a subjugated position in society, including the capitalist. Foucault, links psychology with Marxism, Austrian

economics the study of human action, of what individuals do in an economic world of money (Foucault, M. 2002. p.337). Power is a quality held in discourse, transforming society, and behaviour of individuals as it moves between class, markets, people material, technology, law. The formation of discourse holding its own power, if the proletariat realise truths of the self, their own power, they can potentially rebel against a system that oppress' and exploits (ibid. p.340).

Foucault in Ethnography

In Sheffield where the factory (formal) economy and the family business (informal) economy of Endcliffe have both methods of exchange, within the factory walls as well as without, giving primacy to the idea of space appropriation within social cultural relationships (Mollona, J.G. 2007). The architecture of the factory extends into the community spaces. Between boss owner, smelters who own their own tools, labourers who need more money capital to provide and live their lives, cross formal and informal boundaries in economics and create the political economy of things. This shows power embedded in ideals in labour divisions, distinctions, structures, products, markets and capitalists.

All parts of the commodity process are Part of the circulation process (Hollander, S.2002) labour costs in a circulation process of a commodity must be exploitative, kept lower than their actual use value or profitability suffers. Marx fetishises labour as he fetishises money in a purely economic flow and discounts the power of the labour in the proletariat. Whereas Mollona shows power relationships between the factory space owners, the tool owners in detail right through to the power in family affairs, with nepotism an everyday practice, and bourgeois proletariat relations between father and daughter. Labourers working shifts bounded by time and minimum wages create power struggles within a worker's life. Although in Mollona's work (2005) the divisions between the so called proletariat is a question, of

capital hierarchical notions. Notions of inequalities individualistic constructed ideals, people in arbitrary collectives do not necessarily correspond to social class or proletariat or capitalist divisions. Within the families form hierarchies of capital and power alike, distinctions between people occur without formal pure economic obligations and exchanges (Foucault, M. 1989. p.180). This demonstrates informal, formal exchange and use values as structures in systems creating archaic hierarchies, not upwards as such. Classical hierarchical thought of Marx, is enveloped into chaotic structures of society in Foucault's present. History for Foucault, like everything else is subject to time, and power discourses.

Differentiating Marx from Foucault

Foucault defines the structures in capitalist Marxian terms acknowledging that power lays in these structures themselves embedded in history and the formation of discourse. The political economy of things. For Foucault this is an important part of restructuring systems with embedded violence and unequal relations. Power for Foucault exists in discourse relations. If the power is being held unequally in a system then this allows for structural violence, exploitation, dissent and rebellion. Although Marx is a pure economical exchange theorist, a materialist, Foucault looking at exchange is engaged in a critical discourse of all theoretical thinkers gone before himself especially the 17th-18 th centuries and the historical foundations of the discourse already known. Writing and philosophizing not theorising.

Power for Marx exists in the structures and materials, Marx's equations of exchange and use value are fundamental in providing a window into understanding the capitalist material political economy. The classic Marxian constitutive power and domination of the capitalist class becomes for Foucault more about autonomy, and intersubjectivity in the production of power and the yielding of truth (Foucault, M. 2002.p.111). Foucault says subjectification enables power to reproduce in systems whereas Marx places all the power with the capitalist

and the material value of gold. Foucault questions the power of gold in relation to all things, (Foucault, M. 1989.p.183). The gold standard and the power of money, of sovereignty, the power of the crown or the symbolism of rights, of a royal standard. An aesthetic question of symbolism in *The order of things*. Alienation of the proletariat is a function of a material system which produces abundance therefore making austerity a tool of power in the rising of a newly formed capitalist society for Marx.

Marx sees power as operating in a hierarchical structure. A trickle down economy. Marx sees the power lying in the political economy of the capitalist class at the top. The political economy being held in place by the capitalist class, the money class, the money men the marketeers, buyers, capitalists. Utilising power in knowledge of the proletariat under neath exploiting labour in exchange for money equating to time. A material exchange for a material product to be sold in exchange for the material of power, money capital. Ultimately the power of gold as the 'common denominator' of exchange.

Marx's broad collectivist ideal is due to the proletariat being lost in the world of alienated production (Hollander, S. 2002. p.217). For Foucault production is power, power exists in exchange and use value. Marx's fetishisation of capital is a narrow conception of the disenchantment of the world. Power is an embedded institutionalised discourse, a force existing in the systems not hierarchical, over or to, more like a diaspora. The self, the philosophical questions of ethics and aesthetics of power in the production of knowledge are always emerging, recreating, changing, in the systems, individualistic conceptions of the self entangled in collective systems, institutionalised, normalised, ideals. Marx defines the

structure of the capitalist system with the emphasis being on surplus value, exploitation of labour. Marx is a theorist of ethics, Foucault also philosophises ethics which is why the emphasis is of exploitation, subjectification. Hegel, Nietzsche, Spinoza and Ricardo link Marx and Foucault with the importance of recording the genealogy of history. The notion history should teach something useful for today is an ideal of power in the discourse available to the future of possibilities (Foucault, M.1989.p.238).

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