

out fear." Substitute prison term and punishment for pleasure and love and you have psychiatric tartufferie at the feet of the court of justice. Nothing works better against the anxiety of judging.

RB: But it is anguishing to judge! The judicial institution can function only to the extent that the judge is liberated from his anxiety. To succeed in it he must know in the name of what values he condemns or absolves. Until a recent period everything was simple. Political regimes changed, but not the values of society. The judges were comfortable. But today in this uncertain society in the name of what does one judge, by means of what values?

MF: I fear that is is dangerous to allow judges to continue to judge alone, by liberating them from their anxiety and allowing them to avoid asking themselves in the name of what they judge, by what right, by what acts, and who are they, those who judge. Let them become anxious like we become anxious when we meet so few who are disturbed. The crisis of the function of justice has just been opened. Let's not close it too quickly.▲

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> On February 28, 1977, Laplanche published an article on the then-current trial of Patrick Henry, provoking numerous reactions. The renowned psychoanalyst in essence dismissed both adversaries and advocates of capital punishment. Robert Badinter, the lawyer who contributed to saving Patrick Henry from the guillotine (later Socialist Minister of Justice), here debates the issue of the death penalty and capital punishment with Laplanche and Michel Foucault.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Badinter, *L'Execution* (Paris: Grasset, 1973).

# 15

## Clarifications on the Question of Power

Q: Your research since, let us say, *Discipline and Punish*, has begun to extend into and bring to light the realm of power relationships and the technology of power; this fact has created problems and difficulties now that these analyses have started to have echoes in the political and intellectual fields. In the United States they are wondering into which university discipline your work ought to be placed; in Italy they want rather to know what is the political effect of your ideas.

1. How would you define the field of your work today, and what might its political implications be?
2. In your analyses there would be no difference between ideology and the process of power, between ideology and reality. This type of analysis, this *mise a plat*—for which you are criticized—would be nothing more than an echo of what already exists, a confirmation of the real.
3. The metaphor of Bentham's Panopticon—to which one attempts to reduce all your analyses—would take us back to an absolute transparency of power which is all-seeing.

4. The concept of resistance can easily function as *repoussoir*, as the external limit of an analysis which would bring to light in the presence of this concept the notion of Power with a capital P. In reality, you are probably thinking the opposite, in particular in *The History of Sexuality*. But this is a problem to which we shall undoubtedly have to return.

MF: By way of introduction, it is perhaps worth it to say something on this problem of the "amalgam" because I think it might be an important factor. I have the impression that the whole operation can be summarized in this way: there is no difference between what Deleuze says, what Foucault says and what the "new philosophers" say.<sup>1</sup> I suppose, though it would have to be verified, that yet a fourth adversary has been assimilated here, the theory of radical needs, which is, I believe, rather important in Italy today and of which the PCI would also like to rid itself. Here we find something worth emphasizing: these are the old tactics, both political and ideological, of Stalinism, which consist of having at all times only one adversary. (Also, or rather above all, when you strike on several fronts, you must do it in such a way that the battle seems like a battle against one and the same adversary. There are a thousand devils, the Church used to say, but there is only one Prince of Darkness... And they do the same thing. This produced, for example, social-fascism, in the very moment when it was necessary to fight against fascism; but they wanted at the same time to attack social democracy. There has been the category of Hitlerian-Trotskyism; or Titoism as the unchanging element of all the adversaries. So they maintain absolutely the same procedure.

Secondly, it has to do with a judiciary procedure, and one which has acted out a very precise role in all the trials, those of Moscow, those of the post-war popular democracies; that is, the role of saying: since you are nothing more than one

and the same enemy, we shall ask you above all to account not only for what you have said, but also for everything you have not said, if it is one of your so-called allies or accomplices who has said it. Hence a totalization of sins on each of the accused heads. And then: as you can well see, you contradict yourselves, since, even though you are all one and the same adversary you say one thing but you also say the opposite. So you must account for what has been said and for the opposite of what has been said.

There is also a third element which seems important to me and which consists of the act of assimilating the enemy and the danger. Every time something appears which represents a danger (with respect to given situations, affirmed tactics and dominant ideological themes)—that is, a given problem or the need for a change of analysis, you never have to take it as a danger or as an event; you need only denounce it immediately as an adversary. To give a precise example, I believe that these analyses of power held nothing more than a relatively restricted place in the institutionalized discourse of Marxism. It is a new event, the fact that the problem has been opened up, and not by me, but by many other events, other people and other trials. The various communist parties, the Italian party in particular, did not respond to this by saying: perhaps we ought to take it into consideration; rather, the response was: if it is something new, it is a danger and therefore an adversary.

In my opinion, these elements deserve to be stressed as supports of the current polemics.

In the same vein with what I have just said, the operation of "reduction to system" must be added. In the presence of analyses of this kind, in the presence of the problems, with respect to which, however, these analyses are nothing more than imperfect and awkward attempts to come up with an answer—and here I do not delude myself—one tries to ex-

① Reduce to one enemy -  
 ② rule of saying -  
 ③

④ Reduction to system / say → tries to understand

tract immediately a certain number of theses, no matter how caricaturish they may be, no matter how arbitrary the link between the "extracted" theses and what has actually been said. The goal is to arrive at a formulation of theses which might permit something like a condemnation; a condemnation which is produced solely upon the basis of the comparison between these theses and those of Marxism, or, in any case, the "just" theses.

I believe that all of these procedures can be found in the enormous network of fiction which some communists have constructed around what I was doing. There is hardly any relationship between what I have actually said and the things they attribute to me. This, I believe, can be asserted with complete objectivity. For example, a naturalistic conception of desire was attributed to me: enough to make you split your sides with laughter. Perhaps one could accuse them of stupidity, and certainly this is being done; but I think that the problem, in spite of everything, should be examined instead at the very level of their cynicism. I mean that they are well-skilled in telling lies, and that this can easily be demonstrated. They know very well that every honest reader, reading what has been written about me and what I myself have written, will see that these theses are lies. But their problem, as well as their strength, lies in the fact that what interests them is not what they themselves say, but what they do when they say something. And what they do is precisely this: to constitute a singular enemy, to utilize a judiciary proceeding, to begin a procedure of condemnation, in the politico-judiciary sense; and this is the only thing that interests them. Just so the individual is condemnable and condemned. The nature of the evidence upon which he is condemned is of little importance, since, as we well know, the essential thing in a condemnation is not the quality of the evidence but the force of the one who presents the evidence.

In reference to the reduction of my analyses to that simplistic figure which is the metaphor of the Panopticon, I think that here too a response can be made on two levels. We can say: let us compare what they attribute to me with what I have said; and here it is easy to show that the analyses of power which I have made cannot at all be reduced to this figure, not even in the book where they went searching for it, that is, *Discipline and Punish*. In fact, if I show that the Panopticon was a utopia, a kind of pure form elaborated at the end of the 18th century, intended to supply the most convenient formula for the constant, immediate and total exercising of power; and if, then, I have revealed the genesis, the formulation of this utopia, its *raison d'être*; it is also true that I immediately showed that what we are talking about is precisely a utopia which had never functioned in the form in which it existed, and that the whole history of the prison—its reality—consists precisely of its having come near this model. Certainly there was a functionalism in Bentham's dream, but there has never been a real functionality of the prison. The reality of the prison has always been grasped in diverse strategic and tactical connections which took into account a dense, weighty, blind, obscure reality. It is thus necessary to be in absolute bad faith in order to say that I presented a functionalist conception of the transparency of power. As far as the other books are concerned, the same thing is true. In *The Will to Knowledge* I tried to indicate how analyses of power ought to be made, just how they can be oriented—and all of these indications revolved around the theme of power as a series of complex, difficult and never-functionalized relationships, a series of relationships which in a certain sense never functions at all. Power is not omnipotent or omniscient—quite the contrary! If power relationships have produced forms of investigation, of analysis, of models of knowledge, etc., it is precisely not because the power was omniscient, but because it was blind,

because it was in a state of impasse. If it is true that so many power relationships have been developed, so many systems of control, so many forms of surveillance, it is precisely because power was always impotent. On the level of the nature itself of my analyses, it is easy to show that what is being attributed to me is a pure and simple lie. What must be done, then, is precisely to take things at another level and to try to understand what they are doing when they tell a lie which can be so easily unmasked—and here I believe they are utilizing the technique of the inversion of reproach.

Ultimately, it is true that the question I posed was posed in reference to Marxism, as well as to other conceptions of history and politics; and the question was this: isn't it possible, with reference to production, for example, that power relationships do not represent a level of reality which is simultaneously complex and relatively, but only relatively, independent? In other words, I was putting forth the hypothesis that there was a specificity to power relationships, a density, an inertia, a viscosity, a course of development and an inventiveness which belonged to these relationships and which it was necessary to analyze.

I was simply saying this: maybe everything is not as easy as one believes; and in order to say this I was basing my message on analyses and experience at the same time. The experience is that of the Soviet Union, but also that of the Communist parties, because sixty to seventy years of contemporary experience have taught us that the idea of taking over the apparatus of the State, of the deterioration of the State, of democratic centralism, that all of this was nothing more than a marvelously simple set of formulas, but ones which absolutely did not take into account what was happening at the level of power. And this is true for the Soviet Union just as it is for any Communist party. Furthermore, this affirmation was not as simple as some people thought, because I was basing it upon

historical analyses. It is evident, for example, that since the 16th century the problem of the art of governing, of how to govern, with what techniques, with what instruments, has been a decisive problem for the entire West. How are we to govern, how are we to accept being governed, etc.

So then, my problem was one of saying: look, the problem of power is complicated; and it was the problem of showing in what sense this was true, with all the consequences resulting therefrom all the way up to current politics. This has been the answer of the Communists: you speak of simplicity and yet you hold that things are more complicated than one thinks? But it is you who hold the most simplistic conception. And they have reduced everything I said to the simple form of the Panopticon, which was only one element of my analysis. Inversion of reproach: the technique of lawyers.

Another point which could be talked about here is the reduction of the analyses of the technology of power to a kind of metaphysics of Power with a capital P, by which technology is led back to a dualism in which the things confronted are this Power and the silent, deaf resistance to it, of which no one would ever say anything. What would be reconstructed in this is a kind of dual clash.

First of all, I never use the word power with a capital P; they are the ones who do that. In the second place, some French "Marxists" maintain that power for me is "endogenous," and that I would like to construct a real and true ontological circle, deducing power from power. This is a stupid and ridiculous affirmation, since I have always tried to do just the opposite. Let's take, for example, *Madness and Civilization*, my very first book, in which I tried somewhat to deal with this problem. I was then involved with some psychiatric institutions, where the power of the administration, of the director, of the doctors, of the family, etc., functioned absolutely, with reference to the mentally ill. If I had wanted to

make, as they say, an ontology of Power with a capital P, I would have tried to establish the origin of these great institutions of power; I would have placed my analysis exclusively on the level of the institution and of the law, and on the power relationship, more or less regulated, with which the violence against madness or madmen would have been exercised.

Instead, I tried to show how these *decoupages*, these relationships of force, these institutions and this entire network of power were able to establish themselves at a given moment. And beginning from what? Beginning from those economic and demographic processes which appear clearly at the end of the 16th century, when the problem of the poor, of the homeless, of fluctuating populations, is posed as an economic and political problem; and an attempt is made to resolve it with an entire arsenal of implements and arms (the laws concerning the poor, the more-or-less forced isolation and, finally, imprisonment of these people—in particular, what took place in France and in Paris in 1660-1661).

I tried to see, then, how this set of power relationships which encircled madness and defined it as a mental illness was something completely different from a pure and simple power relationship, from a pure and simple tautological affirmation of the following type: I, reason, exercise power over you, madness. Just as, in the opposite sense, a power relationship was born from within a very different transformation, which was at the same time the condition allowing for the regulation and control of these relationships and these economic processes, etc. It is precisely the heterogeneity of power which I wanted to demonstrate, how it is always born of something other than itself.

The same can be said, for example, of the prison. To make an analysis of power in terms of an ontological affirmation would have meant to question oneself as to what penal law is and to deduce the prison from the essence itself of the

law which condemns the crime. Instead, I was attempting to reinsert the prison within a technology which is the technology of power, but which has its birth in the 17th and 18th centuries, that is, when an entire series of economic and demographic problems poses once again the problem of what I have called the economy of power relationships.

Could the feudal type systems or the systems of the great administrative monarchies still be considered valid when it is a question of irrigating the power relationships in a social body whose demographic dimensions, whose population shifts, whose economic processes are those which they have become? All of this is born from out of something else; and there is no Power, but power relationships which are being born incessantly, as both effect and condition of other processes.

But this is only one aspect of the problem which I wanted to confront; the other is the one of resistance. If mine were an ontological conception of power, there would be, on one side, Power with a capital P, a kind of lunar occurrence, extra-terrestrial; and on the other side, the resistance of the unhappy ones who are obligated to bow before power. I believe an analysis of this kind to be completely false, because power is born out of a plurality of relationships which are grafted onto something else, born from something else, and permit the development of something else.

Hence the fact that these power relationships, on one hand, enter into the heart of struggles which are, for example, economic or religious—and so it is not against power that struggles are fundamentally born.

On the other hand, power relationships open up a space in the middle of which the struggles develop. For example, in reference to criminality, to the penal system, and to the judicial bureaucracy, there was in the 18th century an entire series of interesting struggles: the struggles of the people

against the upper echelons, struggles of the intellectuals against the old bureaucracies, struggles of the judiciary bureaucracy against the new political and technocratic classes which exerted power, at least in some states, and which sought to sweep away the old structures.

If there are class struggles, and certainly there have been, these struggles cover this field, they divide it, plough it, organize it. But we must reposition the power relationships within the struggles and not suppose that power might exist on one side, and that on the other side lies that upon which power would exert itself; nor can we suppose that the struggle develops between power and non-power.

Instead of this ontological opposition between power and resistance, I would say that power is nothing other than a certain modification, or the form, differing from time to time, of a series of clashes which constitute the social body, clashes of the political, economic type, etc. Power, then, is something like the stratification, the institutionalization, the definition of tactics, of implements and arms which are useful in all these clashes. It is this which can be considered in a given moment as a certain power relationship, a certain exercising of power. As long as it is clear that this exercising (to the degree to which it is, in the end, nothing other than the instant photograph of multiple struggles continuously in transformation)—this power, transforms itself without ceasing. We need not confuse a power situation, a certain distribution or economy of power in a given moment, with the simple power institutions, such as the army, the police, the government, etc.

Finally, there is another thing for which I am criticized. By freeing myself of the old concept of ideology, which permitted playing reality against false interpretations of reality, which permitted functioning on the basis of the device of demystification—things are not as they are presented, but exist in a different way they say I would perform a *mise a plat* of

power situation / power institution  
with a certain form

the discussions concerning reality, reducing my analyses to a simple reproduction of reality, in such a way that my discussion would be nothing more than a kind of reactionary echo which would do nothing but confirm things as they are.

Here once again we must understand what they are doing when they say something like this. Because, we have to ask what it means when they say: you do nothing but repeat reality. Above all, it can mean: you do nothing but repeat what has been said. I would answer: show me that it has been said. Did you say it? If they say to me: you do nothing but repeat reality—in the sense that what I say is true, then I agree with them and thank them for this recognition. It is true, I decided to say exactly what has happened. But I would only thank them half-way, because after all, that is not exactly what I decided to do.

This is what others would say of the analyses I perform and of that opinion which claims that these analyses simply reproduce reality: this is not at all true; it is all pure and simple imagination. The French psychiatrists, of more or less Marxist inspiration, tried to say this about *Madness and Civilization*, with dubious success, however. They tried to say that it was a fable.

In reality, what I want to do, and here is the difficulty of trying to do it, is to solve this problem: to work out an interpretation, a reading of a certain reality, which might be such that, on one hand, this interpretation could produce some of the effects of truth; and on the other hand, these effects of truth could become implements within possible struggles. Telling the truth so that it might be acceptable. Deciphering a layer of reality in such a way that the lines of force and the lines of fragility come forth, the points of resistance and the possible points of attack; the paths marked out and the short-cuts. It is the reality of possible struggles that I wish to bring to light.

This is what I wanted to do in *Madness and Civilization*. It is, however, rather curious that all the psychiatrists have read this as a book of anti-psychiatry—a book which says explicitly: I shall speak of what has happened with regard to madness and mental illness between the middle of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th, roughly speaking—and I have not gone beyond Pinel. As if the book were speaking about the mental situation!

Those psychiatrists were right and wrong at the same time. Wrong because it simply was not true; I was not speaking about the mental situation. Nonetheless, there was something of the truth in this superficial and angry reaction of theirs since, in reality, reading history in that way meant, in essence, tracing within contemporary reality some possible paths which later became, with the indispensable transformations, paths actually followed.

This polemic of reality is the effect of truth which I want to produce. The same holds true for the prison, for the problem of criminality. This too is a book which deals with seventy years of the history of penal institutions: 1760–1830/40. In nearly all the reviews it was said that this book speaks about the current situation, but that it does not speak sufficiently about it because things have changed since then. But I am not speaking about the current situation. I am making an interpretation of history, and the problem is that of knowing—but I don't resolve the problem—how these analyses can possibly be utilized in the current situation.

At this point I think we need to bring into the discussion the problem of the function of the intellectual. It is absolutely true that when I write a book I refuse to take a prophetic stance, that is, the one of saying to people: here is what you must do—and also: this is good and this is no. I say to them: roughly speaking, it seems to me that things have gone this way; but I describe those things in such a way that the possible

paths of attack are delineated. Yet even with this approach I do not force or compel anyone to attack. So then, it becomes a completely personal question when I choose, if I want, to take certain courses of action with reference to prisons, psychiatric asylums, this or that issue. But I say that political action belongs to a category of participation completely different from these written or bookish acts of participation. It is a problem of groups, of personal and physical commitment. One is not radical because one pronounces a few words; no, the essence of being radical is physical; the essence of being radical is the radicalness of existence itself.

Now then, returning to the Communists, I would say that this radicalness is what they don't have. They don't have it because for them the problem of the intellectual is not one of telling the truth, because the intellectuals of the PC were never asked to tell the truth. They were asked to take a prophetic stance, to say: this is what must be done—which implies simply that what must be done must adhere to the PC, must do as the PC does, must be with the PC or vote for the PC. In other words, what the PC demands is that the intellectual be the intermediary that transmits the intellectual, moral and political imperatives of which the party can make direct use.

But it is a different story for the intellectual who takes a completely opposite position, which consists of saying to the people: I would like to produce some effects of truth which might be used for a possible battle, to be waged by those who wish to wage it, in forms yet to be found and in organizations yet to be defined. The people of the PC clearly do not talk about this freedom which I leave here at the end of my discussion for anyone who wants or does not want to get something done.

This is exactly the opposite of what they would have me do; because for the PC the real intellectual is the one who calms down reality, explaining how it ought to be and saying

History of the present

immediately how it will have to be on that day when everyone will do as the Communist party does. A position exactly contrary to my own; and it is in this sense that they do not pardon me.

They really do understand what I am doing, but they don't understand what I am saying. Or, at least, they take the risk—and this, once again, is truly surprising—of letting everyone see that they don't understand what I am saying. But this does not worry them, because their problem is one of covering up what I do, of condemning it and thereby preventing the people from doing or accepting what I do; theirs is the task of making what I do unacceptable. And in the moment when they cannot say: what he is doing is unacceptable, they say: what he is saying is false. But in order to say this they are obligated to lie and to make me say what I am not saying.

For this reason, I don't think there's much to discuss concerning these words poured on top of my own. Rather, what we need to do is to grasp clearly the reason for this attack of theirs. And if they do understand what I am doing, then I would like to make clear what they are doing when they tell these lies.▲

Translated by James Cascaito

### Note

1 The "New Philosophers" were the first French intellectuals to openly link Marxism as a philosophy to totalitarian politics. Its main proponents were Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksman. Gilles Deleuze, a long-time friend and ally of Foucault, came out strongly against the simplifications of the "New Philosophers."

# 16

## The Masked Philosopher

Q: Allow me first to ask why you have chosen to remain anonymous?<sup>1</sup>

MF: You know the story of the psychologist who went to a little village in the depths of Africa to show a film to its inhabitants. He then asked them to recount the story exactly as they had understood it. Well, in this anecdote with three characters they had only been interested in one thing: the passage of light and shadows through the trees. For us, the characters establish the laws of perception. Our eyes naturally focus on the figures who come and go, arise and disappear.

Why have I suggested that I remain anonymous? Out of nostalgia for the time when, being completely unknown, what I said had some chance of being heard. The surface contact with some possible reader was without a wrinkle. The effects of the book rebounded in unforeseen places and outlined forms I hadn't thought about. The name is a facility.

I will propose a game: the year without names. For one year books will be published without the author's name. The critics will have to manage with an entirely anonymous production. But I suspect that perhaps they will have nothing