Manifestations of Power - Discourse - Knowledge Michel Foucault as a Model

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power, discourse, and knowledge, emphasizing his philosophical departure from traditional notions of centralized authority. **Method:** *Using a qualitative descriptive approach through critical textual analysis of Foucault's key works — such as Discipline and Punish and The Archaeology of Knowledge — the study explores how Foucault constructs an interdependent relationship between power and knowledge within social structures.* **Results:** *The findings reveal that Foucault reconceptualizes power as diffuse, relational, and embedded in everyday practices rather than confined to formal political hierarchies. Knowledge, in this framework, becomes both a product and an instrument of power, shaping discourse and social order. Discourse, in turn, functions as a mechanism through which power is manifested, legitimized, and reproduced across institutions.* **Novelty:** *This study contributes to philosophical scholarship by highlighting Foucault's unique synthesis of power and knowledge as mutually constitutive forces, offering a critical framework to understand contemporary social, cultural, and epistemological dynamics beyond classical political paradigms.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of power has long been characterized by complexity, having occupied a central position in philosophical inquiry across various historical periods, given its importance and pivotal role in the life of societies at economic, social, strategic, and cultural levels [1], [2].

Foucault departs from the classical view that equates power with the state. For him, power cannot be understood merely as synonymous with state authority; rather, it must be sought in the lower strata of society rather than its upper echelons—in schools, hospitals, and daily practices. Foucault's philosophy of power rests on the idea that all social relations and systems of life exercise power in one form or another, with power permeating every level of society [3].

For Michel Foucault, discourse constitutes a field of social knowledge: a set of statements through which the world is perceived. It is composed of relations and practices that organize social existence. Discourse, in his framework, is inherently connected to power, forming a complex network of political and social relations [4].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method based on philosophical textual analysis. It systematically examines Michel Foucault's primary works, including *Discipline and Punish*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and *The Order of Discourse*, alongside relevant secondary sources that interpret his theories on power, discourse, and knowledge. The analysis follows Foucault's own archaeological and genealogical approaches, which emphasize the description of historical and discursive formations rather than causal explanations. Through this method, the research seeks to uncover how Foucault redefines power as a network of productive relations diffused throughout society, inseparable from the processes of knowledge formation and discursive regulation. The study proceeds by categorizing key philosophical concepts, tracing their evolution across Foucault's writings, and interpreting their implications for understanding the interdependence of knowledge and power within social institutions. This methodological approach allows for a critical reconstruction of Foucault's epistemological framework and its contemporary significance in political and social thought.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Similarly, knowledge is inseparably linked to power; the relationship between the two is so integral that it is impossible to separate them. Wherever knowledge exists, power is also present.

1.   Power

Michel Foucault's contributions to the development of the philosophical concept of power represent one of the most significant theoretical advances in the history of political philosophy. Before Foucault, the idea of power was built upon a set of unquestioned theoretical assumptions, primarily defining power as a reflection of a particular political condition involving two parties—one possessing power and the other subject to it. This condition could arise only within the context of a specific political entity, whether a tribe or a state. The foundation of power, in this earlier view, rested on the relationship between ruler and ruled within a political process [5].

Foucault's philosophical approach to power transcends this entrenched, state-cantered conception. He rejects the restriction of power to the existence of a society subject to a set of administrative and ideological apparatuses. Instead, he treats power as a practice before it is an apparatus or an institution. For Foucault, power is, above all, a set of productive relations.

His interest in power and his attempt to study it rigorously emerged notably in the wake of the French uprisings of 1968, which profoundly transformed contemporary French thought and concentrated intellectual projects on questions of power and the manifestations of political thought. Foucault sought to restructure the understanding of authority, moving it away from notions of violence and despotism, and shifting the discussion from the political domain to the social sphere [6].

Foucault writes:

"Power, first and foremost, signifies the multiplicity of force relations immanent to the sphere in which these relations operate, constituting the organization of those

relations. It is the movement that transforms those forces, intensifies them, and shifts their balances through ongoing struggles and confrontations" [5].

Foucault's conception of power goes beyond the liberal view, which frames it in legal terms—as the embodiment of constitutional sovereignty and subordination to law as the supreme authority. It also surpasses the Marxist conception, which sees the state as the possessor of power and interprets power as an expression of class struggle.

Foucault does not seek to discard these earlier conceptions, which emerged as attempts to interpret and explain entrenched philosophical ideas. Rather, he offers a new conception of power that transcends its traditional and rigid image. He moves away from a vertical understanding of power, cantered on subordination (ruler–ruled, victor–vanquished), rejecting the notion of power as a privilege or property possessed by one party and denied to another [7].

Foucault views power more as a strategy than a possession. Its effects and mechanisms do not derive from ownership but from arrangements, means, techniques, and operations. Power, for him, is exercised rather than owned. It is not a right retained and monopolized by a dominant class, but the effect of strategic positions. He thus surpasses the traditional understanding of power as either ownership or subordination, asserting that power relations are, above all, productive relations [8].

For Foucault, power belongs to no one; it is diffuse and distributed throughout all structures of society. He affirms this in stating:

"The power that is exercised should not be taken as a possession, but as a strategy. Its coercive effects should not be attributed to ownership, but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, and processes; it should rather be conceived as a network of relations that is always extending, always active—rather than as a privilege that can be held—and should be understood as modelled on continual struggle rather than as a contract through which property is relinquished or seized" [9].

Foucault seeks to isolate the concept of power from its traditional connotations, stating:

"The word 'power' gives rise to considerable misunderstanding, whether regarding its definition, its form, or its unity. By power, I do not mean the sum of the institutions and mechanisms that enable the subjugation of citizens within a given state. Nor do I mean a form of subjugation that, as an alternative to violence, takes the form of law. I do not mean a system of domination exercised by one element over another, or by one group over another, that gradually extends its effects throughout the entire social body. An analysis that employs the concept of power should not begin by assuming the sovereignty of the state, the image of the law, or the comprehensive unity of a given domination. These are not, strictly speaking, the forms to which power ultimately leads".

Here, Foucault attempts to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the concept of power by rejecting its confinement to institutions and mechanisms. In other words, power is not merely an expression of the state. While the state may embody advanced forms of power, the concept of power cannot be equated with that of the state. Moreover, power does not necessarily denote a condition equivalent to violence, domination, or subjugation. The

exercise of power cannot be reduced solely to acts of coercion; it may also occur through the performance of a constructive or positive role [9].

Foucault searches for power at the lower levels of society rather than at its summit—within everyday practices in the hospital, school, prison, army, and all spaces where microphysical power operates. This form of power parallels traditional power (embodied in parliaments and political parties) as a system of surveillance established by modernity within Western society. According to Foucault, the human being is a modern invention that became the subject of knowledge in the late eighteenth century, coinciding with the emergence of the human sciences such as sociology, economics, and psychology. Consequently, humans began to be considered in all their dimensions—as linguistic, economic, and biological beings—rendering all their actions subjects of observation and control [10].

The philosophical conception of power in Foucault's thought constitutes a marked departure from the theorization of power by social contract philosophers. While he acknowledges that power, as a conceptual framework, includes the formal apparatus of government and its political mechanisms, he refuses to disregard or marginalize human behaviour and its power dynamics in favour of a centralized conception of power. Foucault reexamines the notion of power: whereas previously its exercise was understood mainly in terms of the ruler–ruled relationship, expressed in a hierarchical descent from top to bottom, Foucault proposes a new approach in which power is not a fixed institution or defined structure.

Foucault's philosophical approach to power seeks to dismantle power practices and the techniques of control, discipline, regulation, and domestication within society. He addresses both symbolic and material forms of surveillance—whether at the family level, in public spaces, in schools and universities, or in hospitals, factories, and restaurants. At this level of inquiry, power is examined through the relationship between disciplinary systems, power practices, mechanisms of control, and the prevailing value system within society [11].

The form of power Foucault investigates is no longer the legalistic power that manifests primarily through punishment and execution. Instead, it is a form of power that targets life itself and subjugates bodies through the political anatomy of the human body and the biopolitics of populations. This is the form of power that integrates, monitors, regulates, and domesticates individuals—a power that Foucault terms biopower, or the "power over life" [5].

Foucault rejects the traditional conception of power that emerged alongside the development of legal and juridical thought in European societies during the medieval period. He argues that this conception was fundamentally centred on royal authority, designed at the behest of and for the benefit of the monarchy. This understanding of power later evolved in the work of Thomas Hobbes, who vested absolute authority in the ruler as a means of governing and determining the destinies of the governed.

Hobbes conceives sovereignty—or power—as an artificial soul that reunites individuals fragmented by conflict, war, and disorder into a colossal artificial body: the

state. Because centralized sovereignty is the soul of the state, Hobbes was compelled to define sovereignty and absolute monarchy as vested in the king. For Hobbes, a state that lacks absolute legislative authority is incomplete; indeed, he does not distinguish between the terms "sovereignty" and "tyranny." Correspondingly, he calls upon those who resent tyranny to exercise tolerance toward it, since such tolerance ultimately serves the state as a whole.

This understanding of power was employed to justify absolute monarchies in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hobbes articulated the concept of the "Leviathan" state, built on the absolute renunciation by the governed of their rights in favour of the king. This renunciation was irrevocable, precluding any review of the ruler's actions; the monarch was thus bound by nothing and subject to no external restraint.

Foucault's and Hobbes's theories differ markedly. Hobbes, in his view, holds that human beings possess a capacity for domination that can only be extinguished with the extinction of the self. Foucault, by contrast, searches for power in all places—in the street, at the lower levels of society, in schools, hospitals, prisons, and the military—rather than in royal palaces. This stands in opposition to the liberal tradition, which is primarily concerned with questions of legitimacy, the origins of power, and sources of authority as articulated in social contract theory [12].

Foucault's philosophy of power begins with the premise that all social relations and life systems, in fact, exercise power in one way or another. The physician exercises authority over the patient; customs and values exert power over those to whom they are directed; and society as a whole exercises power over its members (Al-Khudair, M. A., p. 401). In his study of madness, Foucault concluded that psychiatrists wield a form of authority by accusing individuals of insanity and consigning them to asylums—often by virtue of the institutional authority vested in them alone, regardless of the truthfulness of such diagnoses. In this regard, Foucault views such domination as a repressive form of control over individuals, subjecting them to various punishments without justification. Foucault classifies power into three distinct types:

a. **Sovereign Power** – In the case of sovereign power, Foucault alludes to a hierarchical structure akin to a pyramid, in which a single individual or a small group of people (at the apex) wield authority, while the ordinary and oppressed populace occupies the base. Positioned in the middle tiers of the pyramid are those responsible for carrying out the ruler's commands. An archetypal example of sovereign power is the absolute monarchy.

b. **Disciplinary Power** – Foucault conceives this form of power as aiming to maximize the utility of the body's capabilities. The more useful the body becomes, the more obedient it is. As Foucault notes, disciplinary power is not fundamentally a repressive form of authority; rather, it is a productive one. It does not suppress interests or desires but instead subjects the body to reconstructed patterns of behaviour, thereby reshaping individuals' ideas, desires, and interests. According to Foucault, such mechanisms operate in factories, schools, hospitals, and prisons.

c. **Biopower** – Foucault defines this as "*the form through which, since the eighteenth century, we have sought to rationalize the problems posed by phenomena specific to a group of living beings constituted as a population, with respect to governmental practices: health, sanitary regulations, birth rates, life expectancy, lineage…*". Biopower is the authority that regulates, develops, monitors, and oversees collective and individual life in its materiality and its most minute details. It does not merely issue commands but presents itself as willing to sacrifice for the well-being of its population. This is what Foucault calls *pastoral power*, whose functions are tied to salvation, individuation, attention to vital needs, and the production of truth.

This biopower gains intimate knowledge of citizens' lives by embedding its mechanisms within society in the form of administrative institutions, media agencies, and similar structures. It claims the right to determine the fate of its population based on the perceived necessity of preserving public vitality, security, and health, exercising this control through security apparatuses and government institutions specializing in health, science, and related matters.

Thus, for Foucault, power is pervasive, penetrating all aspects of life. He asserts that power is everywhere—even embedded in one's relationship with oneself—stating: "*The individual, in his identity and personality, is the product of relations of power that operate on his body, its diversity, its movements, and its desires. Hence, power is not merely repressive but also productive*" (Al-Wuqayyan, Sh., n.p.).

For Michel Foucault, power is an omnipresent force diffused throughout the very fabric of society at all its levels. Ultimately, power describes the ongoing political and social functions inherent in any human collective [13].

2. **Discourse**

This concept is among the most widely used across numerous fields of knowledge, including philosophy, literature, sociology, psychology, and others. Despite its multiple applications, the term has remained ambiguous and complex. It can be defined as "a dialogue of a formal nature" or "an articulate and organized expression of thought, whether spoken or written," and may also take the form of a sermon, an essay, a paragraph, or a unit of continuous speech or written text [14].

In reality, discourse extends beyond this limited definition, referring to "all that is said, broadcast, or read—comprising utterances that we ceaselessly produce, circulate, and record in works" [15]. With Foucault, the term developed further, taking a new direction distinct from the approaches of linguists, grammarians, and rhetoricians, who had confined their inquiry to its grammatical and rhetorical meanings.

Foucault defines discourse as: "Sometimes it denotes the general field of all utterances; at other times, a distinct set of utterances; and yet at other times, a practice governed by its own rules, describing and pointing to a specific number of utterances". He also describes it as "a set of utterances belonging to the same discursive formation— it is not a rhetorical or formal unit infinitely repeatable, identifiable solely by its appearance and usage throughout history, but rather a finite number of utterances capable of renewing the conditions of their existence."

From these definitions, it is clear that discourse, for Foucault, is a collection of utterances. But what does "utterance" mean? The utterance is the atom of discourse—its primary unit and ultimate element.

According to Foucault, discourse is a system of propositions within which the world can be apprehended. It constitutes a framework enabling dominant groups in society to shape the field of truth by imposing knowledge systems, epistemic domains, and cognitive values upon subordinated groups. As a social construct, discourse functions to shape reality—not only for the objects it appears to represent but also for the subjects that form society and upon which discourse depends [16].

For Foucault, discourse represents a domain of socially regulated knowledge—that is, a system of propositions within which the world is apprehended. It is an assemblage of relations and practices that organize social existence and production [17].

Discourse is also described as "a linguistic term distinct from text, speech, writing, and other forms. It encompasses all mental production—whether prose or poetry, spoken or written, individual or collective, subjective, or institutional. Discourse has an internal logic and institutional connections; it is not necessarily the product of an individual subject who expresses or intends it, but may be the discourse of an institution, a historical period, or a disciplinary field" [1].

Furthermore, discourse may be understood as an organized mental process, logically coherent, or as a composite process made up of a series of partial mental operations—or as the expression of thought through a sequence of words and propositions interconnected with one another.

According to Foucault, the production of discourse is motivated by:

a. Self-realization.

b. Dialogue.

c. The discovery of the unknown.

There are multiple types of discourse, such as religious, philosophical, political, cultural, scientific, mystical, literary, and critical.

Foucault based his analysis of discourse on a critical-historical method known as the archaeological method. He employed this concept in many of his works, including *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic*, reflecting the centrality of this term in his philosophy.

Archaeology, in its conventional sense, refers to the science concerned with studying the civilizations built by humankind in the past, using various tools and methods to excavate and investigate the artifacts and monuments left behind by those civilizations [5], [18].

With regard to Foucault, he employs this concept to describe discursive practices. He uses the term *archaeology* to refer to the description of the document—not to the discovery of an origin or the unearthing of ancient remains.

Thus, description and the document constitute the foundation of Foucault's archaeology, which he defines as follows:

"We could, based on the law of statements — which does not correspond to the law of linguists — apply to such research the name *archaeology*, a term that entails no attempt to pursue or chase after beginnings, nor does it associate analysis with any geological excavation or probing. Rather, it refers to the fundamental and central idea of describing, with the aim of eliciting what has been said at the level of its existence, at the level of the enunciative function exercised upon it, the discursive formation to which it belongs, and the general system governing its retention and appearance. Archaeology classifies discourses as a specific practice within the element of the system of retention and emergence" [7].

After Foucault identified *description* as the defining basis of the archaeological method in his study of discourse, he clarified its subject matter, noting that to analyse any discourse we must regard it as an archive, for it encompasses the principles and foundations under which statements converge. Regardless of the nature of the statement — whether material or conceptual — it does not contain a hidden meaning beyond its internal structures. Archaeology considers each statement as a trace or monument to be described and analysed, by indicating the impact of its practice on reality [10].

Accordingly, the primary aim of employing the archaeological method in discourse analysis is to provide a historical description of discourses without the need to interpret them or uncover their hidden aspects, and to define them as practices governed by specific rules. It does not treat discourse as a document or as a sign pointing to something else; rather, it examines discourse in and of itself as a monument. But why the archive? Because it represents the general conditions of possibility that determine what can or cannot be thought within a given historical moment.

Foucault uses the archive to refer to the unwritten rules that lead to the production of certain kinds of statements and to the totality of discursive expressions circulating at any given time. Through it, he analyses the utterances of discourse to uncover their traces and determine the extent of their connection to the reality in which they emerged.

Archaeology as a method aims to describe discourses as they are, excluding any interpretive approach to texts. Its purpose, therefore, is to reconstruct the past at the level of discourse, using the archive as its object and description as its method. In this sense, description and the document form the foundation of archaeology.

From this, we conclude that archaeology does not seek the earliest beginnings — it is neither an excavation nor a geological inquiry — but rather seeks to elicit utterances and statements as represented in the archive.

Turning now to the relationship between discourse and power: for Foucault, discourse is intrinsically linked to power, which he conceives as an institutional field encompassing a set of events, practices, political decisions, sequences of economic contexts, demographic changes, supporting technologies, and demands for labour. Discourse is interwoven with institutions that act as regulators, existing only under authoritative control that defines and subjects it to its power.

For Foucault, discourse transcends its linguistic sense, possessing an internal logic and institutional affiliations. It is not necessarily the product of an individual subject who expresses or intends it, but may be the discourse of an institution, a historical period, or a specific field of knowledge.

As Foucault states in The Order of Discourse:

"I assume that the production of discourse, in every society, is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed through a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to control its chance occurrences, and to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality."

From this perspective, Michel Foucault insists that discourse is neither produced freely, spontaneously, nor improvisationally, as though it emerged in isolation. Rather, it is inherently imbued with intentionality that is bound to power, regardless of its nature or historical moment. By its very nature, discourse is governed by specific frames of reference—religious, political, or intellectual—and by a particular context, such as a classroom lecture or a sermon delivered from a pulpit. In such settings, discourse derives its strength and credibility from the spatial and situational context in which it occurs, and it is oriented toward particular objectives, such as informing or persuading, among other considerations that structure its production.

To subject discourse to the laws of surveillance, it must be linked to power, which in turn produces coherent and persuasive discourse. As Foucault affirms, "Power plays a central role in the production and interpretation of discourse; it is also what grants it its performative force. For this reason, some have argued that discourse itself is a form of power" [12].

As evidence of discourse being subject to mechanisms of monitoring, guidance, and control, Foucault outlines a number of procedures:

a. **The Principle of Prohibition**: Every discourse is monitored and produced within pre-established boundaries that must not be transgressed. Foucault states: "We are well aware that we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak about everything under all circumstances, and that finally, no one can speak about just anything. There are subjects that must not be spoken about, there are rituals specific to each circumstance, and privileges or exclusivities granted to the speaking subject." This entails observing three key criteria: avoiding the "forbidden trinity" (politics, religion, and sex), respecting the situational context of speech, and recognizing the specificity of the speaking subject.

b. **The Principle of Division and Rejection**: Discourse is divided into that of the rational and that of the irrational, with the latter being excluded as the speech of one lacking reason. Such discourse is deemed empty, devoid of truth or significance, untrustworthy in legal contexts, and incapable of serving as proof in a contract or treaty. Those producing such discourse are often confined to psychiatric institutions or rehabilitation centres—institutions that Foucault critiqued in *Madness and Civilization*, where he sought to restore the dignity of the "madman's" discourse.

c. **The Principle of Truth and Falsehood**: Broader than the previous two, this principle is shaped by historical contingencies and is subject to constant change. As Foucault notes, beliefs—religious, philosophical, and even scientific—that are regarded today as truth may tomorrow be exposed as falsehood. What renders certain discourses "true" is their reinforcement by an entire institutional apparatus that sustains and enforces them. Thus, the "true" or "correct" discourse is often that which aligns with the exercise of power.

Foucault observes that these three principles—prohibition, division and rejection, and truth and falsehood—are externally imposed upon discourse. It is *we* who determine what subjects are permissible or forbidden, *we* who enact division and rejection, and *we* who classify statements as true or false.

In parallel, Foucault identifies a set of **internal procedures** for regulating discourse:

a. **Commentary**: Within any given field, there exist foundational texts that guide, monitor, and shape the structure of discourse in subsequent eras. In religious discourse, for example, sacred texts function as the central organizing thread, such that later discourse cannot contradict or disregard them. All subsequent discourse is framed as commentary, interpretation, or dialogue with these foundational utterances.

b. **The Author**: This principle plays a significant role in unifying and organizing the meaning of discourse. The author functions as the point of coherence and the source of discursive unity, although the weight of this role varies between discourses. For instance, in medieval scientific discourse, authorship served as a guarantor of truth, whereas in literary discourse, the expectation shifted over time toward revealing the identity and origins of the writer, even linking the work to the author's biography [13]. In imaginative literature, the author grants fictional language its coherence, complexity, and integration into reality. However, Foucault notes that there are discourses without authors—such as everyday speech—while for authored texts, the discourse is attributed to a specific individual.

Foucault's concept of the "death of the author" is part of his broader notion of the "death of man" articulated in *The Order of Things*. The aim is not to trace what lies outside the text, but rather to focus on the text or work in and of itself, independent of the author. Writing—especially in narrative form—displaces the author as an originating subject, transforming them into a written construct. As Foucault clarifies: "The matter is not the author as the speaking individual who wrote a text, but the author as a principle of grouping discourses, as a unity and origin of their meanings, and as the focal point of their coherence. This principle does not operate everywhere nor in a fixed manner; there are discourses circulating without deriving their meaning or force from an attributed author—such as daily conversations that vanish immediately—or decrees and contracts requiring only a signature."

The dismantling of the author concept thus entails dismantling the individual "I" championed by rationalist Western philosophy. In doing so, Foucault seeks to empty history, discourse, and knowledge of the foundational subject, advocating for the

elimination of the subject altogether. This, in turn, enables an analysis that situates the subject within a historical framework.

c.   **Disciplines**: This procedure entails adherence to the conditions of a given disciplinary field, including writing on topics deemed acceptable within that field, following established scientific methodologies, and respecting its methodological tools. Foucault underscores the significance of disciplines to the point of asserting that discourse falling outside a disciplinary framework becomes distorted, and that an error committed within a discipline is more significant than a truth stated outside it (Zaidi, Naeem, 2019–2020, p. 48).

He illustrates this with the example of biologist Gregor Mendel, whose research on the "laws of inheritance" sparked a revolution in genetics. Yet, because his work did not fit within the biological discourse of his era, it was dismissed as "monstrous," despite being scientifically correct.

Finally, Foucault asserts that discourse derives its authority from the institution in which it operates. He identifies specific institutional sites for particular discourses:

1.   **The hospital** – for medical discourse.
2.   **The laboratory** – for scientific discourse.
3.   **The library** – for documentary research.

d.   **Knowledge**

Foucault does not link power solely to discourse; he also ties it to knowledge. The relationship between power and knowledge forms a central component of his intellectual project. This relationship is deeply intertwined, to the extent that it is difficult to conceive of them as separate or independent. Each depends on and sustains the other; power cannot operate without knowledge, which provides the very foundation for its functioning [14].

Foucault defines knowledge as the domain of accepted procedures and cognitive effects at a specific moment in time and within a specific field. Power, in turn, consists of a network of particular mechanisms that prescribe patterns of behaviour and discourse.

As Foucault notes: philosophers and intellectuals have traditionally justified their identity, distinctiveness, and even elitism by erecting a rigid barrier between the realm of knowledge—perceived as the domain of truth and freedom—and the realm of power and its exercise. Yet, he found it impossible to separate knowledge from the practice of power. Indeed, "Power produces knowledge; knowledge and power directly imply one another. There is no relation of power without the formation of a field of knowledge, nor is there knowledge that does not presuppose and simultaneously constitute relations of power".

A clear example is the university professor, who possesses knowledge and simultaneously holds the power to pass or fail students, or to grant or withhold academic approval. Wherever there is power, there is a corresponding form of knowledge; and wherever there is knowledge, there exists a certain degree of power. The mere exercise of power generates knowledge and accumulates information, while the exercise of knowledge inevitably produces forms of power.

Knowledge exerts various forms of power over us at all levels of our practice—especially through the system of thought in which we live. Foucault developed this concept to show that each historical epoch operates under a dominant intellectual framework that dictates a set of cognitive and inferential rules. This framework exercises a form of normative authority over us; our task, therefore, is to challenge and disrupt its self-evident assumptions and to work toward establishing a new intellectual order more aligned with our aspirations.

If knowledge constitutes an institutional form of power—compelling us to adopt certain "truths" through systems of education, training, and experimentation—then power itself also produces specific forms of knowledge. Knowledge has power, and power has knowledge: power generates knowledge, accumulates it, and employs it to extend its own reach.

The mediator between knowledge and power is discourse. In the case of medical discourse, for example, we can see the network of power it exerts over our lives: it focuses on life and its vulnerabilities, diagnoses the diseases of the body, and offers tools, advice, and directives for their prevention and treatment. Such discourse positions itself as an ever-available, life-serving resource, to which we turn in moments of danger—as though it possesses the ultimate solutions in its domain.

Thus, those who hold power determine what is known and the manner in which it can be known. Those who possess such knowledge wield authority over those who do not [16], [17].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study concludes that Michel Foucault redefines power as a diffuse and omnipresent force that permeates every level of society rather than existing solely within centralized political institutions. Power, discourse, and knowledge are intrinsically interconnected, forming a dynamic system in which each element sustains and legitimizes the others. The utterance, as the core unit of discourse, operates within historically specific rules that determine the production and circulation of knowledge, revealing the productive and regulatory nature of power. **Implication :** These findings deepen philosophical and sociological understandings of how modern institutions shape human behavior, identity, and truth, providing a framework for analyzing power relations in contemporary contexts such as digital governance and social media. **Limitation :** However, the study is conceptually based on textual analysis and does not empirically test Foucault's ideas within modern societal structures, limiting its scope of application. **Future Research :** Further studies are encouraged to empirically explore the manifestation of Foucault's power–knowledge framework in digital societies, educational systems, and biopolitical governance to assess its relevance to current socio-technological transformations.

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