

## Book Review

Derek Hook (2007) *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Derek Hook's *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power* offers a series of provocative discussions of Foucault's challenge to psychology's usually-naïve allegiance to "humanist" programs of human betterment. Foucault sees these programs, and often humanism itself, as the primary vehicles or "vectors" of social power in modern societies. Hook focuses on several of his lesser-known and later writings, and his account of Foucault's view of the dispersed and decentralized operations of power provides a model of how power shapes psyches – a sophisticated alternative to simplistic theories of power "structures" operated by ruling "elites." At the same time, Hook pays attention to Foucault's critics, and especially to the charge that his view of subjects as constituted by prevailing social discourses erases both individuality and possibilities of resistance. Hook's Foucault sends "mainstream" psychologists running for cover, but also sketches a key role for critical psychologists to investigate both the psyche-shaping workings of disciplinary "bio" and "psy" power and the potential sources of resistance.

The book begins with an excellent chapter on Foucault's notion of "disciplinarity" and how the discourses of psychology, psychiatry, social work, public health, etc. – all sincerely dedicated to human "betterment" – construct modern souls, egos, and personalities in congruence with the prevailing social order. By following expert advice on child rearing, personal growth, interpersonal relations, and therapy for inner conflict, Foucault shows how individuals become agents of their own subjection, with experts called in to restore normalcy and "health" when an individual's adaptation hits a snag. But beyond viewing individuals as following natural trajectories of development that may hit snags that render them in need of care and treatment, Foucault also argues that the disciplines, by defining a society's normative developmental paths, constructs variation as deviance. Throughout the book, Hook weaves sub-headed "discussion points," set off by a shift in font, that elucidate Foucault's concepts and methods. In this chapter, the discussions cover Hook's own research on psychotherapy transcripts, which show how patients learn to adopt a "confessional" mode and internalize the analytic role of the therapist, establishing a continual self-surveillance. He then goes beyond exposition to extend criticisms that others (including Peter Dews and Judith Butler) have aimed at Foucault for viewing the individual in modern society as so isolated and powerless as to develop entirely as a product of disciplinary discourses and interventions, leaving no source of reflexivity, critique, or resistance. Pointing out the disjunction between this theoretical view and Foucault's own political activism, Hook argues that the human psyche is more complex than Foucault recognizes, with regions or processes that may escape disciplinarity, that can react to power with seemingly blind resistance, or that in

some circumstances can recognize and seek to subvert it. The door then opens for critical psychology to study both the construction of psyches by “bio” and “psy” discourses, and the sources of resistance and reflexive critique.

Hook goes on to explain Foucault’s broad attempt to “desubstantialize” the workings of social power, to move from accounts of force and compliance appropriate to pre-modern states to investigations of decentralized, relatively-autonomous socio-psychological-medical discourses and agencies dedicated to humanist values. In Hook’s view, this shift appropriately appreciates the “ubiquity, multidimensionality, and flexibility” (p. 91) of modern power, but also runs the risk of focusing so generally on “social influence” that it loses track of the macro-social anchorings of power – of viewing power as “so omnipresent, so virtually *everywhere* and *everything* that it risks becoming nothing at all.” (p. 93)

Subsequent chapters cover Foucault’s method of discourse analysis, which encompasses institutions as well as semiotics, and his “genealogical” method, which seeks to trace the historical development of regimes of power that, by deeply shaping the experience of the body, construct souls or psyches as bodily products. The effect, Hook points out, is to “destroy the individual psychological subject as a primary vehicle of explanation” (p. 171), thereby undermining the kind of victim-blaming that appears to be the main enterprise of psychology in the modern world. Yet he argues again that Foucault too radically excises the individual psychological subject, and that his methods could readily be complemented by psychological investigation of the soul/psyche-constructing process. Hook weaves interesting discussion points throughout these chapters, but they may be tough going for readers who don’t bring familiarity with Foucault and post-structuralist vocabulary. Perhaps these are best read along with another secondary work, like Dreyfus and Rabinow’s *Michel Foucault*.

Finally, Hook discusses Foucault’s efforts to conceptualize discourses as encompassing spatial arrangements, with a series of interesting discussion points analyzing a gated community in South Africa. The final chapter returns to the core of Foucault’s theory of modern “governmentality,” in which a top-down apparatus -- policing agencies acting under the guise of “protect and serve” (p. 236) -- intersect with a bottom-up “pastoral” apparatus – churches and secular social service agencies that caringly provide “personalized guidance of individual subjects,” such that individuals “voluntarily give themselves up to power” (p. 241) and government comes to be internalized as self-government. Most “mainstream” psychologists remain blissfully blind to these processes, Hook argues, which should be the central topic of investigation because they so powerfully shape psychological development.

*Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power* shifts in the demands it makes on readers. Some chapters deserve high praise for providing psychologists with an accessible introduction to Foucault, while others demand a good deal of familiarity. Foucault can be criticized for failing to acknowledge his debts to other theorists of ideology, especially to the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jurgen Habermas) and to Louis Althusser, and discussion of their views could have helped Hook present Foucault more clearly in context. But overall the book offers psychology some badly-needed consciousness-raising about the myriad ways humanist programs

promoting human development in fact serve to align individual goals with those of the modern state. And, Hook's engaging discussion points show how Foucault's writings on bio/psy power might inspire programs of research on both power and subversion.

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