



The Achievers Journal

Volume 6, Issue 3

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

Michel Foucault and Judith Butler: The Entwined Twins of Power Politics

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Abstract

The concept of gender is woven around and indulges in a persistent dialogue with larger discourses like psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and post-structuralism, however, as the etymological body, i.e. language has not succeeded in devastating the effects of substantial body- regardless of whether it has ordained an acknowledgment of a definitive mysteriousness of its structure. The camouflaged pattern or multitudinous varieties of feminism render immense possibilities to study and analyze the social status of women in society. Essentially, different shades of feministic examination address both plainly visible and infinitesimal issues, for example, issues identified with the development of subjectivity and representation of women in society. Regardless of whether the female body is a notion, an abstraction, a print reality, or a schematised configuration; it is never free from the effects of power and the same rule applies to the male body as well.

Keywords: gender-performativity, power-politics, biological essentialism, gender stereotypes

Gender relations occur as extensively and entirely discretionarily social and cultural phenomenon that is dependent on the rules characterising masculine and feminine identities decided and fixed through historical roots, not biology. Foucault brings in the views of para-Marxists scholar Marcus on the idea of repression and quotes "...because power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising



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itself only in a negative way. If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at the level of desire-and also at the level of knowledge” [1].

Gender is a functional term and ever-shifting idea; not a fixed phenomenon or an essential determination of an individual’s identity. Gender is relational and works in accordance with the socio-cultural, ethical and, political modes of social life. It is not a passive idea imprinted in the organic profile of the individual from where there is no escape; rather it is a flexible, mobile and, constructive term that governs our political life. Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and the materialist feminist Monique Wittig have comprehensively discussed about the fluid nature of gender identity. Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity and Wittig’s lesbian phallus present a critique on the utility and relativity of the term gender. Gender functions as a signifier and shapes the socio-political, and cultural life of an individual.

Foucault’s concept of hysteria describes the plight of women who neither conform to the ideals of patriarchy, nor fit in the essentialist framework of masculinity. Eventually in order to achieve social recognition, or, in popular terms to adjust, the ill-fated women surrender to the idea of the real which is contrived by the master discourse. Foucault’s book *The History of Sexuality* centres round the description of hysteric women and marginalised communities. The poststructuralist war is set against the patriarchal aesthetics and ideas of heteronormalcy. In the wake of talking about sexuality and its connection to power politics, it is relevant to relate the issue with identity politics. Generally, identity is said to be the composite profile of an individual and various types or attributes structure the identity of an individual. The identity crisis is the most pivotal and controversial issue in the postmodern time. The embracement of the essentialist comprehension of gendered identity is the vital purpose of dispute for the poststructuralists. From Sigmund Freud to Jacques Lacan, the essentialist comprehension of the female identity has been hailed as an encouraging option since the western transcendentalism have contained their enthusiasm for the possibility of a master discourse. The deconstruction of supreme or fixed identities followed by the development of liquid identities by philosophers like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler has strikingly revolutionized the field of scholarly investigations.

The female undertakings to de-chain from the rigid standards of patriarchal power/knowledge nexus turn futile since the female is profoundly permeated in the system and same is valid for the male who has to embrace the heterosexual norms else he may confront defamation, in this way,



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both genders are unfree at the social level and are compelled to experience their rigidly individual sexuality as a social encounter. Both genders are made to believe in socially defined categorical patterns of sexuality that are exclusive for each gender. Sexuality relates us with our general surroundings. However, sexuality ceases to remain private or personal as it enters in a symbolic relationship with the other. Bodies desire each other and copulate as the two distinct bodies, i.e., male and female but as discussed earlier, if sexuality is a strictly personalised experience then the categorisation between male and female becomes futile and even two homosexuals can experience an uncensored, blissful physical relationship. It is only after interaction with the other body that our sexual identity becomes a gendered identity, however, at personal level, the body is absolutely free.

The complex and distinct structure of gender relations with an exceptional blend of authority and affectionate association creates a major conflict for both the sexes. The inner conflict rises from two auxiliary realities, i.e. social predominance and an emotive relationship between the genders. However, the disparaging and considerate disposition of the male, that is, principally established in the blended sentiment of fondness and mastery is the most troublesome riddle in the power relations. Male and female as a couple experience social inequalities at all levels of social existence. Undoubtedly, at the time of birth, the principal question individuals ordinarily raise about an infant is whether the child is male or a female. Gender difference is established in organic sex classifications, given the genotype and genitalia, one is born with when conceived. However, numerous socio-cultural features and traditions, for example, gender stereotypes, are layered over the natural or organic sexual dissimilitude. These social convictions direct the relative manliness or womanliness of a large group of practices, attributes, and tasks of a given society. The traditional differentiation that the analysts draw between the terms sex and gender is mind-boggling. When carefully alluding to the natural classification of male and female we regularly utilize the term sex and while alluding all the more comprehensively to social developments of manliness and womanliness, we normally refer to the term gender. The gender and sex differentiation is employed by the scholars and analysts as an attempt to abstain from essentializing social roles comprising of manliness and femininity. The essentialists see contrasts in how female and male situate themselves, feel, and act as naturally fixed and unchanging beings. The issue of biological essentialism is much the same for both genders because the idea of essentialism is, fundamentally, weakening and fixes the extent of the subject to a set of characteristics. For instance, transgender couples frequently think that it is baffling to adjust and



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fit into the hetero standards of society. Regardless of whether male or female, the essentialist comprehension of sex is malicious and distressing.

This research article surveys how sexual orientation illuminate our comprehension about power relations that are based on metaphysics of patriarchal psychology, and also studies how investigations of patriarchal denomination shed light on the significance of gender in the public arena, and the legislative issues. It centers round gender relations during present times, where men will, in general, be progressively preservationist and participate in more impactful and opportunistic activities than the female. Two significant highlights of the setting are the sexual orientation of modern times and the guidelines that oversee how choices are made and thus how people convey and obey the contrived meanings. However, gender gaps merit an opportunity to comprehend how power, through repression, controls the mind of the people. Power is the generator of legislative issues and subsequently, whatever shapes control is important to the investigation of gender relations. As we illustrate, sexual orientation influences how power is started up, strengthened or undermined when individuals practice voice. The relationship between power and gender relations is even more important and the construction of gendered identities plays a significant part in the life of an individual. The varying degree of power is allocated and distributed to both sexes through the governance of gender politics. Foucault contends that power “is only intelligible when it is set against and among particular cultural practices” [2]. Foucault's thoughts of knowledge and power rise through his idea of archaic exploration where he thinks about how knowledge is composed and what sort of avocations are considered worthy to help that information. Foucault argues that knowledge emanates from power and thus power and knowledge are rooted in one another and power-relations constitute the knowledge and form the collective ideology of a given society or the state. Foucault has featured the resistance in characterizing what power is, and how it is to be found. Power never predominates or practices through a single body or area. Power is not the safeguard of the decision-making class. ‘Power’ is “not something which the State or a dominant class has or possesses and which others don’t have” [3] and even the most subjugated class possesses the situational control over the events of life. “...the field of power is not a structuralist framework in which humans are passive objects and mere products. Humans have some degree of ‘liberty’ or ‘freedom’ ” [3]. Through Foucault's work on the *raison d'Etat*, he draws a connection between power and the corporal functioning of the body. Through Foucault's work on the *raison d'Etat*, he draws a connection between power and the corporal functioning of the body. He contends that the body reflects the impacts of the authority. According to Foucault “...power and knowledge



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directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known..." [4]. A supposition may be held that power relations tend to be negative, however, Foucault contends unexpectedly. He guarantees that the deliberateness of the state is for the most part planned for guaranteeing the unity of the social body that germinates the strategies of the power struggle. This can be considered as one reason why Foucault accepted that the shiftiness of power could likewise be appreciated. Restriction to power ought to likewise be comprehended as working inside indistinguishable parameters or interact as the power itself. Foucault likewise makes the statement that "...where there is power there is always resistance, but this resistance cannot be seen outside of power" [5]. Foucault contends that power operates as a hidden agent. "Power is tolerable only on the condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" [6]. Power is hard to characterize however can be comprehended as mind-boggling strategically maneuvered connections between various groups. Foucault accepted that power is purposeful, social, and multidirectional; that restriction to power can be comprehended as a major aspect of a similar power dynamic that makes the resistance, and power cannot be characterized as purely negative, and there are numerous types of power relations. This investigation contends that women's activists presently have missed on developing a palatable record of power. Existing women's activist records of power will, in general, have an uneven accentuation either on power as mastery or power as a method for strengthening. This reasonable one-sidedness must be survived if women's activists are to build up a record sufficiently complex to light up females' differing encounters with power struggle. Feminists have discoursed much on power to an extent that it might appear as though nothing more is reserved to be addressed on the theme. In any case, the women activists' evaluation of sexual orientation requires a systematic investigation of the nature of power relations. The contending women's activist debates over topics like erotic entertainment, parenthood, marriage, homosexuality, lewd behaviour, and imbalance as a deliberate strategy. Judith Butler attests that it is inappropriate to think about personality without connection to sexual identity. As do I think, this qualification is refuted by the way that an individual can be distinguished just when being credited sex as indicated by the customary measures of social and sexual validity. Subsequently, the question arises: to what degree the techniques for (social) sex development and division comprise



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character, internal equalization, and mindfulness of an individual? Is character the result of a standardizing norm or an expression of experience? The identity of an individual is controlled by sex and since sex itself as of now establishes personality; gender identity is subject not exclusively to sexual and racial contrasts but also ethnic and social ones. Should a distinction be comprehended as something clear, existing, and present in history and thus considered as theoretical foundational? In his *A History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault underlines the significance of power and assigns it a foundational role in the system of sexual identity. Gender identity is along these lines, not a pre-given fundamental substance but instead occurs through the discourse of interaction between genders. The distinction ought to be viewed as an essential characteristic for recognition, and non-recognizable individually because the difference is not something that should be understood as a solitary opinion or characteristic; rather the difference is always relational and thus it must be comprehended as an open-ended process.

The steady moving of concentration away from female issues of identity revises the comprehension of sex through the discussions on the philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological study of power relations. The shared concern, for all intents and purposes, is a predicament emerging from a basic inquiry in contemporary character formation: what is the number of sexes? The most widely recognized answer, two, is an impression of an organic hypothesis that decides the real sexual orientation based on natural proof. Nonetheless toward the start of the twentieth-century sex was viewed as a constitutive and relative piece of social gender relations. Butler maintains the contrast between sex and sexual orientation by characterizing sex as a social body. Gender identity doesn't determine a fixed identity that attributes a fixed existential role, along these lines no permanent qualities can be prescribed to any gender. Since further reflection upon the subject will contain the double angle as a regularizing sexual orientation framework in Western culture, the presence of an alternate order of sexes seems coherent. Various terms can be entitled to nominate a gendered identity: without a doubt male, without a doubt female, bisexual, transsexual male turning into a female, and transsexual female turning into a male, and several classifications rise considerably: straight male, straight female, gay woman, gay man, indiscriminate female, swinger man, transvestite man, transvestite woman, transsexual female, and transsexual male, etc.

Studies have demonstrated that overemphasizing sexual differences strengthen essentialist generalizations just as it enhances the depiction of manly and feminine sexual attributes, in this way keeping up the sub-par social situation of the female. Generalizations are profoundly



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ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

imbued in childhood and are accountable for the formation of the social profile of an individual just like shaping young female's personality bases on her socio-sexual qualification, i.e., the ladylike sexual orientation passed on through generalizations of female roles in the social life. As per Darja Kobal-Palcic, there is a downside to the male/female sexual identity concoction: if hermaphroditism is just a total of stereotypical attribution of the ladylike male in the sexual orientation schemata then bisexuality itself must be pervaded by perverted sexual generalizations. Butler's smartly understands sex and thinks about as a variable, non-generalised social arrangement.

Women's activist literary analysis fundamentally reacts how female is exhibited in writing. The woman is exhibited in writing by male authors from their personal perspective. The two sets of ideologies known as phallogocentric and the subsequent women's activist analysis gynocriticism have spurred the attention of the academicians and researchers alike. The women's activists accept to comprehend a woman's position on the planet one must comprehend the stratagem of male-controlled society. Men everywhere throughout the world took a gander at women from this perspective. Though the organic differentiation among male and female is an acknowledged truth, the idea that woman exists an alternate as compared to the man.

Foucault's reservations of standardized roles viably dislodge dualistic records of selfhood. Foucault shows that undeniably since the nineteenth century, bodies are comprehended as crossing points of formative procedures, including procedures of scholarly development, which leaves no hypothetical space for an ethereal psyche. Dualism in this manner retreats as standardization broadens itself; its capacity to shape experience is disseminated. Furthermore, he states that endeavors to destroy mind/body dualism are pointless. Hence feminists must channelize their enterprise toward expansion of normalcy and increase participation in power grid exercises. According to Foucault power is never localized at a fixed point for eternity rather it keeps on assuming various shapes following the demand of the context. Power is expressed in the form of relations of dominance and the dominant cannot escape resistance. He contends "...there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies" [1]. The current eco- feminist activists exhibit immense enthusiasm in disassembling



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mind/body dualities as a part of culture/nature dualities. However, progressively women's activist exertion is being focused on assaulting dualisms which drives the discussion toward the mind/body binaries that have dominated the feminist thought for centuries. If we abide by Foucaultian ideas that standardization uproots mind/body dualism, then eco-feminist will investigate the clear differentiation between the two examinations, however, it becomes evident how reason/nature dualism may remain operational as a normative standard of any society. Butler also in her one of the most celebrated books *Bodies that Matter* challenges the notion of subjectivisation and naturalization of the body by targeting the monopoly of so-called heterosexuality or heteronormality and she supports the cause of homosexuality to deconstruct the claim of universal male hegemony as is advocated by the deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray.

Conceivably the frequently cited piece of the Foucaultian heritage is the examination of power relations usually discussed under the social relations corresponding to our insight into the world. These two components are associated with what Foucault in his analysis delineated as the most crucial intrigue: subjectivity, for example, the manner in which we identify with ourselves and how we interact with others around us and project ourselves to others. Methods of subjectivity are dominated by a twofold connection, i.e., the subject's communication with itself and with others. The intricate working of power and its connection to subjectivity and information development is the significant contribution of Foucauldian hypothesis. As a disciplinary power, power relations choose the potential activities of subjects. Foucault affirms that the disciplinary force is hard to control, circumscribe, seize, or share. However, power can truly possibly be said to exist when substantially applied and manifested through actions. Arguably no one can be blamed for practicing power for it cannot be practiced over completely latent bodies, rather power acquires signification only when it meets resistance.

As Foucault researcher Judith Butler puts it, power appends the subject to its own identity. The identity is a creation of the acceptance of the subject as a part of social hierarchy. The power imprints a potential impact on the subject in such a way that the latter surrenders the idea of a free and unified existence. Freedom and resistance are significant components of power and these components challenge the fixed denomination of power, what Foucault calls the shifting of power relations. Thus the subject is both the conspirator as well as the victim of power politics.



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However, the individual has been settled upon fundamentally to exist as a social being then it would not the slightest bit be denied that social relations work inside and through power relations, some way or another debilitating, such a declaration may be misleading if we imagine a sovereign power, an imposing agency to administer and command, like a drifting power covering the whole range of our life. Foucault has been charged by the democrats based on the extreme grounds of his discourse that issues and ensures dominance to the elite class which is a demonstration that envelops and confines the freedom of the subject, in case of feminist criticism male-centric area screens and applies their control over the weaker segment of society. Regardless of the criticism exacted on Foucault's ideas, the latter's statements firmly command the academia through his masterstroke that ensures the degree for resistance for the dominated class. The postmodern critic needs to analyse the conditions that justified the immanence of power relations. Foucault attempts to comprehend these methods of power relations that declare and thus underestimate subjects as distressed, psychically challenged, burdensome for the sane, and so on. Notably, the empowered class does not initiate such minimization, however, they draw advantage from it, working of power originates from beneath, flowing among people without much restraint; it originates from several instances and social events and finally merges to form specific structures and organizations. Purposefully, in this way, bodies become a zone of experimentation and oppression. Foucault highlights the apparatuses for interpreting how the anxiety to attain power dominates the powerful, and how power further expands its horizon. How subjects are established as copies of the real. Power relations reveal a potential field of activity for the subject who receives recognition as a coherent self only through the channel of power. Evidently, Foucault's redefined power not as a negligible or detestable concept rather he presented the bright side of it that proposes is not only conceivable but also inevitable to identify oneself with others and society. Undoubtedly, a jargon is opened to understanding different social wonders. Power is a double mouthed organ, as defined by Foucault, it is an omnipresent force that determines the social consciousness of the society and it is through a dual activity, Foucault succeeds in justifying that power is essentially built upon the superstructure. i.e., freedom and that is the reason no society can deny the presence of power relations.

Feminism as a term is both obscure and extensive and incorporates inside itself various speculations which vary profoundly and frequently repudiate each other. Without a doubt, it is difficult to evoke a solitary meaning of what feminism as a movement adds up to. The term regularly is affiliated to other philosophical as well as political systems- liberal woman's rights, radical women's liberation, Marxist woman's rights, post-modern feminism, and several others to



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ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

demonstrate various forms of feminism. Judith Butler conveniently portrays feminism as a theory grounded on the principals of shifting of power and transference of gender relations. Feminists endeavour to challenge and change society's standardizing desires for sex, the term relations recommends that gender relations ought to be treated logically, that is, as something which exists in relation to one other. Therefore, gender relations exist just to the extent that subjects are perceived as being gendered. The prominent critic and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft concentrated basically on the call for the acquisition of voting rights and the acknowledgment of female political activism along with men. Then again, numerous types of radical feminism protested for acknowledgment of exclusive female space, a disassociated experience. And most importantly demand for recognition of female independence in social hierarchy with the male.

Judith Butler presents an apt record of the acknowledgment and powerful methods for hypothesizing gender relations through the channel of 'performativity'. Her basic viewpoint depends on contemporary political activism, just as it reveals insight into gender relations and its association with acknowledgment, power, and subjectivity. Besides, a conceivable feminist structure must have the option to comprehend the development of gendered roles and how gendered bodies identify with the predominant standards and social practices that provide a basis for the gender relations framework. However, feminism as a political movement must come up with certain strategies to represent the hierarchy of specific gender relations and introduce methods to subvert binary schemata supported by western metaphysics and provide new possibilities for over-lapping the set patterns.

The feminist hypothesis must have the option to offer methods for seeing how we come to distinguish or, all the more critically, neglect to relate to given identities or attributes of personality. And more importantly, how can we achieve self-recognition through the interplay of identity politics? Judith Butler recommends that summoning a performative, insecure, and divided record of the subject can assist us with responding to the multifaceted nature and vacillating self-acknowledgment, and along these lines can assist us with re-evaluating the significance of a positively shaped life.



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ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 July to September 2020

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