

Book Reviews

Mark G. E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, New York and London: Routledge, 2009, 186 pp.

Jon Simons wrote that “commentary on and critique of Foucault’s notion of power has become an intellectual industry in itself” (129), in his book entitled *Foucault and the Political*. But only a few of those books which engage with Foucault have an original perspective and coherent trajectory. The main reason underlying this may be Foucault’s being “on a perpetual slalom course between traditional philosophy and the abandonment of any pretension to seriousness” (93) as Maurice Blanchot said. Foucault permanently changes his position from theme to theme and never sticks to any political or philosophical constant. His fluid thinking style always challenges and compels his commentators.

Mark G. E. Kelly’s book is one of those few works that distinguish themselves: he elaborates Foucault’s oeuvre as a *coherent whole*. Actually Kelly tries to show that the philosopher’s thought is consistent in itself. In this respect, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* which locates itself against Eric Paras’ *Foucault 2.0* is very attractive for both beginners and scholars. The book cuts across Foucault’s political positions, arguments and reasoning as a whole in seven chapters; thus, we encounter a new image of Foucault by the end of the book.

The first chapter of the book, which is entitled “Epistemology,” begins with the first studies of the philosopher such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Kelly *thinks that these books* are foundational. The main motive of this chapter is locating the philosopher’s thoughts within a “materialism”. But this materialism has a very different structure and features than other ways of thinking called materialism. Because of that, Kelly calls it “a materialism of the incorporeal”. This term seems paradoxical at first glance, but according to Kelly, “the incorporeal, here typified the event, is not necessarily immaterial since it can be something that occurs in the material world” (13). “A materialism of the incorporeal”, as a specific foundation of Foucault’s oeuvre, is also a kind of ontology which never looks like other ontological approaches in general. Kelly continues his task by providing a reading of theorists and philosophers such as Althusser, Nietzsche and Derrida. Thus, he discusses Foucault’s epistemological and ontological attitudes with these figures’ intellectual inventory.

Another important aspect of this chapter is depicting the influence of “May 1968” on Foucault. When the “events” of ’68 happened, he was living in Tunis. However, according to Kelly, the events changed him in two ways. Firstly, “Foucault threw himself into political activism for the first time in his life” (17). The second change was actualised at a theoretical level and he became seriously interested in Marxism. During this time, he never described himself as a Marxist, but the Marxist influences never shade away especially in his later works. He once mentioned that “Marx is our Machiavelli: the discourse does not stem from him, but it is through him that it is conducted” (243) in *Security, Territory, Population*.

The subsequent chapters (second and third) deal with power. The second chapter investigates Foucault’s early power concepts which ended in late 1970’s. The third chapter focuses on the transformation of his thoughts and concepts about power. The second chapter not only brings the main fulcrums of “the analytics of power” to light, but also tackles different aspects of power such as power-knowledge linkage, “power as war”, and “technologies of power” etc. Thus, Kelly explicates what “a need to cut off the king’s head” means in political theory. Moreover, he marks Foucault’s principal lines of conceptualising power and he compares the essential characteristics of power in *The Will to Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*. In the third chapter, Kelly explores how Foucault’s late works interact with his early thoughts on power. He questions the concept of “game” in order to do that. Kelly’s book distinguishes itself at this point because he produces a new interpretation against commentators who argue that there are two different power models in Foucault’s thought. According to Kelly, one cannot posit a change in the model, because these terms should be understood at a *metaphorical level*. The essential difference between “war” and “game” models is their level: “war occurs at a grand, societal level, whereas the game occurs at an interpersonal one” (59). From “war” to “game”, he tries to assess that what power means and how it works in Foucault’s terminology.

In the context of this debate, Kelly examines the concept of “government” in more detail. Especially, he focuses on Foucault’s well-known article entitled “The Subject and the Power”. According to Kelly, this article is a touchstone of Foucault’s re-conceptualisation of power and subject. The main theme of this article is relationality which brings out the real character of Foucault’s conception of power. There, Foucault defines power’s relationality for the first time. After that, according to Kelly, power is defined as the capacity for making someone to do something by Foucault. This approach gives an opportunity for linking the concepts of “power” and “conduct”.

Kelly examines the concept of “resistance” by focusing on “the reversibility of power relations”, which he discusses in more detail in chapter five. Regarding power relations, one should use this phrase cautiously, because, according to Foucault, all social relations are not power relations, but all power relations are co-extensive. Kelly discusses power as a capacity in terms of reversibility. In this regard, his analysis perceives power is a two-way street: not only domination, but also resistance.

In chapter four, which is entitled “Subjectivity”, Kelly argues that there is no rupture between Foucault’s earlier works and later works on subjectivity. Especially, he strikes out at Judith Butler regarding her misreading.

Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Friedrich Nietzsche's thoughts, he offers a new conception of Foucault's subjectivity theory which depends on materiality of the body. In this context, he elaborates the "death of man" and "return to the subject" that are attributed to Foucault. According to Kelly, the philosopher's position was never "anti-subjectivist"; but his endless quest for the "subject" should always be understood relating to the concept of "experience". Therefore, one should keep in mind that "Foucault is not interested in looking for the origin of the subject" (85).

The most important discussion in this chapter is about Butler's misreading. Kelly claims that she confused terms such as "subjection" and "subjectivation". Tracing the trajectory of how these terms are misused, Kelly criticises Butler from a very solid theoretical position. The rest of this chapter's debate revolves around "psychoanalysis" and the concepts of "interpellation" and "self".

Resistance is an inseparable part of Foucault's power theory. Therefore, Kelly discusses to the co-extensiveness of power and resistance in chapter five. He sets out to develop the concept of "resistance", which proceeds from the contention that "where there is power, there is resistance". According to Kelly, this well-known formulation points out the "potentiality" of resistance. After that point, he focuses on the relation between micro- and macro-resistances. On the one hand, he tries to make a proper analysis about these resistance types; on the other hand, he underlines that "Foucault does not himself make his distinction between micro- and macro-resistance explicitly, as in the case of power" (110). In this respect, Kelly argues that the "will" is a key notion in terms of resistance because –if I have any right to deflate the famous motto– "*We do not even know what a will can do.*" Kelly's emphasis on "will" is not as decisive as he thinks, for Foucault avoided this term and never elaborated on its meaning.

The last two chapters engage with "Critique" and "Ethics" respectively. These chapters interrelate to each other in regard to practical implications of Foucault's political ontology. According to Foucault, critique is the main political duty of a philosopher. Likewise for Kelly, "The central political role of the intellectual is to advise as to the *possibilities* of political action, though an analysis of the strategies of power." In short, the critique is a kind of key for understanding historical relations between politics, subject and truth. One should mention the debate on "Bodies and Thoughts" in this chapter. There, Kelly follows Hinrich Fink-Eitel's critique about Foucault's expression in *The Will to Knowledge*, "Against the device of sexuality, the fulcrum for the counter-attack ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures". Kelly's position is slightly different than Fink-Eitel's. He argues that "Foucault is doing something very simple, referring to bodies and pleasures themselves, the actual bodies we are/inhabit, and pleasures we experience/constitute" (147). This assertion actually stresses Foucault's materialism.

The concluding chapter of the book deals with the meanings of ethical practices in Foucault's thought. The chapter begins with a debate about "critical ethos" and then "ethics of the self". Kelly argues that Foucault uses "ethics" at least in two different senses in his later works: practices of self-relation and permanent resistance. According to Foucault, "freedom is the

ontological condition of ethics". From this point of view, ethics is determined by politics for Foucault.

What is striking about Kelly's book is how he forges Foucault's works on power into a coherent theory by using philosopher's own conceptions and reasoning. In particular, his emphasis on materialism is considerably important for discussions on Foucault's thought. As a final remark, one may conclude that the hidden matrix of the book is the conceptualisation of the connections between Marxism and Foucault. Yet, Kelly never clarifies which Marxism he particularly refers to. Nevertheless, the most visible contribution of the book to Foucault studies is its original approach developed in the second and third chapters. Kelly succeeds in developing a new perspective from Foucault's oeuvre by making use of a series of hints embedded in his works.

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Noël Carroll and John Gibson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Literature*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2016, 520 pp.

Under the editorial wisdom of Noël Carroll and John Gibson, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Literature* brings forward 40 newly commissioned essays dedicated to philosophical exploration of the wonderfully rich and excitingly intriguing phenomenon of literature. To my knowledge, this is one of the most encompassing books dedicated to analytic philosophy of literature, and the breadth of coverage testifies to the extent to which the discipline has grown and to the variety of problems it is concerned with. The outstanding selection of contributors (difficult as it was to make it, as the editors lament, given the amount of first rate philosophers who work on literature and literature-related issues), in itself indicates that this book is a must have/must read for everyone interested in and infatuated by literature.

Ranging from the forefathers of analytic philosophy of literature, to philosophers who have expanded the field by throwing light on not so often discussed specimens of literature such as popular fiction, poetry and screenplay, to people who helped deepen the field's interest in certain themes, such as emotions, imagination, empathy and character, and people who have strengthened the field's connection with other philosophical areas or have introduced literature to new areas of research such as neuroscience, the *Companion* brings together the most respected philosophers of art today, whose tireless work on philosophical challenges raised by our artistic practices is at the very foundation of contemporary philosophical approaches to art. Their contributions provide an excellent mapping of the 'philosophy of literature terrain' and give insightful summaries of the main positions, arguments and thesis. Consequently, this *Companion* is excellent