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The signature of power

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The signature of power

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This concept of power keeps referring its users to a domain of apparent antinomies, which from a formal theoretical perspective are in turn construed as unities in opposition to further terms. Three such sequences are 'power to' and 'power over', power as capacity and as right, and juridical conceptions of sovereignty and 'economic' conceptions of government. This movement of opposition, unity and renewed opposition is however the *signature* of the concept of power, which, instead of being transcended or neutralised, must be kept in play in its analysis. As a consequence of the view that there is no essence of power, the paper further argues for a substantive rather than formal approach to power in which the analysis of power proceeds by paradigmatic cases, analogies and exemplars. The work of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, Michel Foucault, Max Weber and Giorgio Agamben helps to elucidate this approach.

Keywords: concept; signature; visibility; economy; sovereignty; government

Introduction: from concept to signature

For the layperson, it is hardly necessary to pause and consider the notion of power. Power is quite self-evidently the preserve of the powerful, is exercised over those with less power or the powerless, and ensures that those who hold it get their way in most situations and typically gain substantial material or other rewards. This definition of course is tautological and would please neither logicians nor social and political scientists. Yet when the most famous of sociologists, Max Weber, formulated a definition of power in the early years of the twentieth century, he did so with something similar to this view of power in mind:

> 'Power' is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which that probability rests. (1978, p. 53)

Since then this definition of the form of power has been repeated and refined many times, most eminently by Robert Dahl and Steven Lukes. Dahl, writing in McCarthyite America, translated something like this into the alphabetical terms that would kick off 'the community power debate' with what he saw as a 'bedrock idea of power':

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> A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do. (1957, pp. 202–203)

Continuing in the same vein, Steven Lukes, in a discussion which both completed that debate and inaugurated much of the recent discussion of power, stated:

> The absolutely basic common core to, or primitive notion lying behind, all talk of power is the notion that A in some way affects B … in a non-trivial or significant manner. (1974, p. 24)

In recent years, these definitions of power are less the building blocks of a theory of power than the point from which that theory departs. There is no element of these definitions that is not viewed as questionable or partial in some way, although there is considerable slippage between them. While all three suggest a situation of two or more actors in which one realises its aims or will at the expense of others, we see a shift from Weber's notion of power as probability, and hence as a capacity or even potentiality, to Dahl's concept of power as something possessed, although his own formulae are expressed as probabilities. This idea of power as possessed has been called into question, most famously by Foucault (1979, p. 94), and all three could be read as implying a 'zero-sum' conception of power in which the exercise of power by one actor subtracts from the power, or even the freedom, of other actors.

In so far as all three imply an asymmetrical relationship between more than one actor, they could be viewed as instances of power as 'power over' or domination. However, Weber's definition also contains the fundamental notion of the capacity of an actor to carry out its own will. In this sense, Weber's definition encompasses an even more basic sense of the word power as capacity. This idea of power as 'power to', or the capacity of actors to achieve their purposes, can be found in the canonical figure of the English state-theorist of the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes (1996, p. 62):

> The Power of a Man is his present means to obtain some future apparent Good.

We have already, then, departed from the everyday view of power with which we started. Power is not simply the power of one actor (individual, institution, etc.) over (an)other(s), but, even more fundamentally, the capacity to achieve some desired end. We can thus distinguish between 'power over' and 'power to'.

Barry Hindess (1996) argued that 'power to' and 'power over' are each variants of a notion of power as a kind of quantitative capacity to realise an actor's will, and so part of a single conception of power. This conception can be contrasted with the other major conception or discourse of power in the West, power as right. This conception of power usually appears in what Hindess (1996, p. 12) calls sovereign power, 'the power that is thought to be exercised by the rule of the state or by its (central) government'. This kind of power for Hindess is most clearly exemplified in the work of a later English political theorist, John Locke, with his notion of political power as the right to make and enforce laws resting on the rational consent of the governed. Power as right is hence a concern with the legitimacy of political power, which Locke and the framers of the American Declaration of Independence viewed as residing in the decision of the people themselves. With Max Weber, this question of power as right, or what he calls legitimate domination, is less a feature

which may or may not reside in the relationship of people to their government, and more the sociologically specifiable conditions which secure the compliance of subjects to most, if not all, the commands of the ruler. Unlike Locke, legitimacy is secured on different grounds, including legal, charismatic and traditional ones (Weber 1978, p. 215). However, in modern types of administration, legitimacy for Weber bears a striking similarity to Locke's notion of political power as the right to make and enforce laws in that it is based on rational grounds 'resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rule and the rules of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands'. In many twentieth-century variants on liberalism and in notions of 'good governance', the domination of the state is held to be legitimate to the extent to which it corresponds to the 'rule of law'.

Another antinomy thus displaces that between 'power to' and 'power over'. This is power as capacity (including 'power to' and 'power over') and power as right or legitimate power. Even those who start from 'power over' find themselves drawn to the problem of the legitimacy of power. Thus Lukes asks, in relation to what he calls the 'third dimension of power':

> Is not the supreme and most insidious example of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they see it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (1974, p. 24)

Lukes' third dimension of power clearly rests upon the idea of power as right. The idea that power so shapes people's consciousness that they are not in a position to know, let along air, their grievances, implies a 'radical' view of power. Lukes thus presupposes an ideal of a community of morally autonomous individuals who would be capable of giving consent to the exercise of political and social power, had they not been prevented by its 'supreme and insidious' exercise. Lukes therefore holds not only a conception of power as 'power over' but a conception of power as legitimate or illegitimate as the case may be. While power as the capacity to realise one's will is usually thought to imply an analytical or empirical approach concerned to describe how power is exercised, power as right implies an ideal of how power ought to be exercised, and is thus at the basis of many normative conceptions of power.

The idea of a community of morally autonomous subjects who freely consent to the binding commands of sovereign political authority runs through much moral and political philosophy with Locke as a key exemplar. It is found in twentieth-century critical theory, such as that of Herbert Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional man and Jürgen Habermas' search for an ideal speech situation, and in the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsi's view of hegemony. In the latter, the rule of the bourgeoisie in advanced capitalist societies is based on both coercion and consent, but consent is given by those who do not know it is in their interests to overthrow the system of capitalist production. This is of course very similar to Lukes' view. Alongside the distinction between 'power over' and 'power to', and that between power as capacity and power as right, we have empirical and normative conceptions of power. The defining characteristic of critical theory, may be that, however it is analysed, power is approached from such a normative point of view.

Another distinction is often drawn between conflictual and consensual views of power. The former emphasises the sense in which power is exercised at the expense of or in relation to another party and focuses on power over or domination. The latter by contrast emphasizes what might be called 'power with', a kind of collective version of 'power to'. In the case of the ancient distinction between potentia and potestas, as taken up by Spinoza, the former represents an original constitutive force, and the formation of the state is no longer a foregoing of certain aspects of humans' power in the constitution of the sovereign but remains grounded in the collective power of the multitude (Saar 2010). While there is a large number of twentieth-century thinkers, including Talcott Parsons, who adopt a consensual view of power, it is Arendt (1958, p. 200) who most clearly states that:

> Power is always, as we would say, a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable and reliable entity like force or strength. While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse.

Unlike recent social scientists who have stressed the dependence of the exercise of power through assemblages made up of technical, material and inhuman elements (Latour 2005), Arendt (1958, p. 201) strikingly argued that 'the only indispensable material factor in the generation of power is the living together of people'. Power then concerns plurality. It can be divided without its decrease, *contra* the zero-sum notion of power as domination, and the checks and balances upon power do not repress but facilitate it and generate more power.

Arendt's notion of power opposes power not only to domination, but also to strength, force and violence. Rather than existing on a continuum of forms of power, it is violence that destroys it, undermining the sense of humans acting in concert. Rule that relies on violence is known as tyranny: 'the time-honored fear of this government is not exclusively inspired by its cruelty … but by the impotence and futility to which it condemns the rulers as well as the ruled' (1958, p. 202). A similar sentiment is found in Foucault for whom neither consent nor violence 'constitute the basic principle or basic nature of power' and whose definition of power as a 'way of acting upon one or more subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action' implies something akin to this notion of potential or capacity of all human individuals and collectives (2001, p. 341).

The attempt to define and characterise power leads us down the path of a multiplying and cross-cutting set of distinctions. The distinctions between consensual and conflictual, 'power with' and domination, power and violence, can be read as versions of 'power to' and 'power over', although they also clearly bring into play conceptions of power as right and normative views of power. A further distinction is between what might be called episodic conceptions of power implied in the alphabetical scenarios of the initial definitions and 'economic' conceptions of power.

Rereading Foucault's (1977) most famous and widely cited work, *Discipline and Punish*, it is surprising how many times he refers – at least in its English translation – to aspects of an 'economy of power'. He writes of an 'internal economy of a penalty' (p. 18), imagines situating systems of punishment in a 'certain "political economy" of the body' (p. 25), views the true objective of the eighteenth-century penal reform movement 'as to set up a new "economy" of the power to

punish' (p. 82), adopts the 'standpoint of the economy of the power to punish' (p. 99), analyses a 'whole learned economy of publicity' (pp. 109–112), describes the relationship of the new disciplines to the body as one of 'the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organisation' (p. 137), and shows how the examination 'transformed the economy of visibility into the exercise of power' (p. 187). It is, I think, not simply a matter of a metaphor, whether in quotation marks or not, but an indication of an approach to the analysis of power that has become, since his initial contribution, increasingly influential.

One theorist of organisational power, Clegg (1989), amplified our vocabulary of power when, in addition to the episodic exercise of power, he added two other 'circuits of power'. They were 'dispositional power', which for him sets up the rules of the game and 'facilitative power' that, like Foucault's notion of 'positive power', establishes the game itself, forming the actors and agents that enter into episodic interactions. Clegg (1989, p. 18) himself also speaks of an 'economy of power' to capture this sense that practices, such as disciplinary techniques, and forces, coalesce to create the conditions under which actors are shaped and power in its episodic sense might be exercised.

This notion of an 'economy of power' is extremely intriguing and has come to occupy a central place in recent discussions and indeed suspicions of power. An economy of power seems to reverse the commonsense syntagma of 'the power of the economy'. The latter is a thread that connects the quasi-biblical 'money is the root of all evil', Marxian metaphors of economic base and political superstructure, conspiracy theories of many kinds, to the recent decrying of the greed of the financial sector, banks and their executives. An 'economy of power' is more than a simple reversal of this. Here, economy suggests an ordering, or form of management, of power relations and thus recalls the earliest etymology of economy (or *oikonomia*) as the management of the household (*oikos*) in Ancient Greece. This idea of power as a kind of self-managing order was proposed, without the word, in one of the first attempts by Foucault (1979, p. 92) to understand power:

> It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization …

Power comes to be viewed as strategic in this regard and often it is Machiavelli who is invoked as the admittedly scandalous godfather of this conception (by both Clegg and Foucault, for instance). Another contrast thus opens up between the causal, mechanical, episodic view of power, which is Hobbessian, and a strategic, fluid, 'economic' or dispositional view of power, which is Machiavellian.

Clegg presciently draws upon the early work of two French thinkers, Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, who have subsequently made significant interventions in science and technology studies. Their approach, sometimes termed actor–network theory (ANT), has more recently led Latour (2005, pp. 260–261) to the conclusion:

> 'Drunk with power' is not an expression fit only for generals, presidents, CEOs, mad scientists, and bosses. It can also be used for those sociologists who confuse the expansion of powerful explanations with the composition of the collective. This is why the ANT slogan has always been: 'Be sober with power', that is, abstain as much as possible from using the notion of power in case it backfires and hits your

explanations instead of the target you are aiming for. There should be no powerful explanation without checks and balances.

This conclusion thus juxtaposes the structural analysis of sociologists which presupposes some form of class, gender, racial or economic, power structure, and the view that power is the outcome of a set of relations of forces, of different actors, technologies, materiality, forms of knowledge and so on. From this perspective, power takes the form of the resultant association and the concept cannot be used to explain anything:

> Once again, we don't want to confuse cause and effect, the *explanandum* with the *explanans*. This is why it's so important to maintain that power, like society, is the final result of a process and not a reservoir, a stock, or a capital that will automatically provide an explanation. Power and domination have to be produced, made up, composed. (Latour 2005, pp. 63–64)

There have come to exist a plethora of terms, with their own nuances of course, that describe this self-organising and assembling conception of power, this economy of power inaugurated with Foucault in recent times but which has a long history beginning with the notion of *oikonomia* as the management of the household, found in Aristotle and Xenophon. Foucault used the term *dispositif*, often translated into English as 'apparatus'; it is however derived from the Latin *disposito*, one translation of *oikonomia*. Latour and Callon, following Deleuze, use the term *agencement* or assemblage. These terms have been fruitfully applied to science and technology, to law and, as if at last revealing their own implicit destiny, to the work of economists in the production, or 'performation', of markets themselves (Callon 2006).

All of this suggests how far we have come, just by following recent definitions and uses of the term power, by no means exhaustive but at least illustrative of a vast and rich literature, from the commonsense view of power and the 'power over' definitions we started with. Indeed, it is very hard to generalise about the study of power in the social and political sciences today if we take into account the extraordinary array of disciplines, debates, theories and approaches to the concept, from sociology, political science, anthropology, gender and cultural studies, to fields of management and organisation studies.

However, I want to make a number of provocations that grow out of the kind of work I have precised on the definition of the concept and theory of power. First, it relies on a series of distinctions, if not binaries, that serve to delineate the field of research, some of which we have touched on here. These include 'power over' and 'power to', power as capacity and power as right and the juridical/repressive conception of power and the facilitative/economic conception. What is striking about the discussion of concepts of power is that it first proceeds by the identification of a binary, or at least a distinction, which is then shown to form a unity that can be opposed to another pole. Thus 'power to' and 'power over' can be shown to be variants of power as a capacity, which in turn are juxtaposed to power as right. Similarly power as capacity and power as right are viewed as elements of a juridical theory of sovereign power that is now opposed to the dispositional and facilitative conception of power as an immanent domain of self-organising forces.

What is distinctive about the concept of power is the way the notion refers us to an opposition that in turn can become a unity in another opposition. What the discussions of the concept of power thereby reveal is that there is an 'excess' in the concept of power beyond what it might signify, which marks it and forces this movement towards oppositions, their unification and further opposition. I shall call this excess or mark of the concept of power its *signature* in the sense in which Giorgio Agamben (2011, p. 4) has recently defined it, that is, as:

> something that in a sign or a concept marks and exceeds such a sign or concept referring it back to a determinate field of interpretation, without for that reason leaving the semiotic to constitute a new meaning or new concept.

This movement of dualities is thus a strategic operator that marks recent formulations of the concepts of power. To put this another way, to attend to the movement and shifts of the dualities held to define the concept of power, and to their deviations and aberrations, is to seek the conditions of formations of statements about power, in Foucault's (1972) sense.

A second provocation follows from this. It is often thought that the fact that the notion of power is marked by a signature that refers it to a determinate 'field of interpretation' is a reason to try to suspend, in the human sciences, the explanatory value of power or, as we would now say, to neutralise its signature. Latour's move consists of an objection to this signatory function of the concept of power and a consequent attempt to neutralise it so that power always appears only at the endlessly deferred end of the analysis. But what occurs here is nothing more than the deconstruction of power, just as in the method of deconstruction signatures are regarded as a pure writing and rendered idle in an infinite and indefinite deferral of meaning (Agamben 2009, p. 78). The neutralisation of the signature of power in recent social science analysis gives these analyses the technicist or economistic cast they are striving to avoid and that reproduces power relations themselves. The problem is that as soon as you seek to neutralise the signature of power, you disconnect it from the dense network of pragmatic and hermeneutical relations that it refers you to. Viewing power as a *dispositif*, an economy or an assemblage provides doubtless invaluable insights. However, restricting power to a dispositional ontology as a complex and heterogeneous assemblage cannot prevent its referral to those issues occluded but not abolished by governmental, economic and performative versions of power: the problem of the state, the function of law, the exercise of sovereignty, the question of violence, the mode of legitimacy, the holders of power and a myriad other issues. Theorists of power are in danger of not taking into account their own insights about how concepts and statements are performed.

One basic example of this is the movement in the literature we have surveyed away from an actor-centric conception of power. The episodic exercise of power of the 'power over' type gives emphasis to the parties to the power relation and is thus concerned to discover, quite consistent with the commonsense view of power, who holds power and conversely who does not have power. By the time we get to a dispositional view with its focus on the economy of power, it is the arrangement of forces, the strategic situation, or the form of the mobile and changing assemblage which is given priority over the question of who is powerful and who is not. Thus techniques, technologies and materialities, humans and non-human organisms, rationalities, inventions and innovations are viewed as creating the conditions of power relations

between agents that might ultimately appear to take the form, as in Clegg, of the limited and partial perspective of the causal, mechanical and episodic exercise of power. But by now it is the apparatus or the assemblage, the *dispositif* or the *agencement*, which needs to be made intelligible and is hence the focus of the explanation, not the actors themselves. With Callon and Latour, humans themselves are denied any privilege in analyses that have variously demonstrated the key role of scallops, electric batteries, microbes and other 'actants'. Their work makes the point that the question of the possession of power by human agents only offers limited analytical capacity compared with this focus on all the elements of the materiality of an organised set of practices, an economy if you like, that have been stressed in this literature.

My third provocation follows from this. It is that in this move toward an 'economic' conception of power, contemporary social and political thought does not do anything as much as get caught in the reproduction of current political metaphysics for which the world and its constituent parts are imagined as self-acting networks or complex systems. If, however, we follow the signature of power we will find that the praxis of power is as important as its being, in the same way we need to understand power as 'power to' and 'power over', as capacity and right, as facilitative and repressive, as dispositional and episodic. The signature of power refers us not simply to how power comes into being, or how it is assembled, but to how it is used and blocked, furthered and resisted. To approach power through its signature, through what marks it and prevents it being limited to a particular signified or referent, we need to register its apparent dichotomies and replace them with what might be called a 'di-polar' conception of power relations. One way of expressing this would be to say that we must suspend the oppositional character of our polarities, without neutralising either side, and approach power as a force field in which these polarities attract and repel one another. Thus power is, for example, being and action, collective capacity and domination, empowerment and violence or both sides of whatever other opposition we discover. In the language of Foucault and Agamben, the operation of contemporary political power can be approached both as reign and government, transcendent and immanent, juridical and 'economic', and, without giving privilege to either, sovereignty and governmentality.

My final provocation is that it is possible to reset the analysis of power relations not from these formal definitions but from an analysis of the substantive kinds and manifestations of power relations. Haugaard (2010) has concluded that a survey of formal concepts of power reveals that there is no essential or unitary form or substance of power, and that at best all of these different kinds or approaches, or perspectives on power, bear what Wittgenstein called a 'family resemblance'. A substantive approach to power builds upon the idea of power relations as a set of resemblances and examines singular cases and examples as exemplars and paradigms of kinds of power. Sometimes the study of these exemplars is also an analysis of their signatures, a feature I stress here. This approach can now be explicated in relation to the central problem of the economies of visibility of power.

Exemplars of power

The question of visibility has long been central to the study of power. Let us accept, for argument's sake, that there is a tendency in contemporary political culture to seek to render power visible and public and that this has deep roots in Western political thought and practice. The study of power has sought to identify

its source or foundation through -*archy* words such as monarchy, oligarchy or anarchy and those who occupy or hold power in -*cracy* words such as democracy and aristocracy. The formal theorisation of power we have followed is continuous with this in its desire to achieve clarity about power relations. In doing so, it is consistent with the demands of contemporary liberal-democratic political culture for the transparency and accountability of politicians and public officials and with the governmental techniques of auditing and accounting which render the exercise of bureaucratic, scientific and professional expertise calculable and comparable and make the opaque enclosures of knowledge and professional practice open to inspection.

The signature of the concept of power again refers us to a counter-tendency of power to hide itself. Perhaps the darkest of thinkers about power, Carl Schmitt, the putative 'crown jurist' of the Third Reich, posed this move when in 1957 he stated that 'power is the "secret sinister end"' (2004, p. 336). Schmitt draws us not into the world of the search for liberal transparency, but one, from that perspective, populated by fantasists, conspiracy theorists and cynics:

> The impulse to secrecy and to learn the secret is the first tendency of any power, whatever form of government or method of administration it services. No ruler can escape this impulse, which becomes greater and more intense the stronger and more effective power becomes.

Schmitt's source for this view is not, however, fantasists, but Carl Friedrich. Arendt's comment that 'real power begins where secrecy begins (1951, p. 386), and even Max Weber for whom a will to domination can be found in the worldly asceticism of the Puritans. For Schmitt, power seeks an 'implicit centrality' which is not an assumption, such as the one Foucault contested, but a kind of tentative and fragile construction:

> From its compulsion to self-affirmation, daily and hourly power seeks to secure, to justify and to consolidate its position anew. This creates a dialectic, whereby the ruler, in order to maintain this position, is compelled to organise new security systems around himself and to create new anterooms, corridors and accesses to power. (2003, p. 357)

These passages present an immediate counterpoint to the tendency to wish to view power in terms of visibility and publicity and to make power visible and public by our theorisation. This is the notion of power found in spy novels, and in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. It is also the power of the surveillance instruments such as the now ubiquitous closed-circuit television camera which, in rendering certain activities and potential threats visible, protects an area in which access is not public but restricted, such as a military establishment or naval base, and whose activities are not visible but hidden from the public. While it is the notion of power associated with the names of organisations that go down in infamy, such as the Stasi, the Gestapo, the NKVD and its successor, the KGB, it is also that of their liberal-democratic equivalents, MI5/MI6 and the Central Intelligence Agency. It is also the power of the court society of the absolutist monarchy in the France of Louis XIV with its intrigues, status hierarchies, rooms, sequestrations and rituals described by Elias (1983). One could think that Schmitt had all this in mind when he continued:

> The inescapable dialectic consists in the fact that, through such security measures, he [the ruler] distances and isolates himself from the world he rules. His surroundings thrust him into a stratosphere, wherein only he has access to those over whom he rules indirectly, while he no longer has access to all the others over whom he exercises power, and they no longer have access to him. (2003, p. 337)

If we can accept that the exercise of political power tends as much toward secrecy and stealth as openness and publicity, then can we expect a formal definition of power to be the most effective or only way of approaching this whole problem? In this respect, we get caught in the twined spiral of the normative desire to render power visible and public, consistent with the governmental ethos of contemporary liberalism, and the analytical desire for definitional clarity and theoretical coherence.

But how can we catch sight of the tendency to secrecy and invisibility, the locked doors, the restricted areas, the darkened passageways, antechambers and mazes where power is manifest as much as in the kinds of visibility and publicity of liberal normativity? How are we to grasp the arcana of power relations as much as its visible manifestations without succumbing to some inevitable delirium? Foucault already began to write the history of this relationship of visibility and power when he proposed an inversion of visibility in the functioning of the disciplines. Against the excessive, spectacular, exaggerated expression of potency and might, often related to triumph, found in the solemn appearance of the sovereign and the hidden shadows of his subjects, Foucault (1977, pp. 187–189) proposed the invisibility of a disciplinary power that exposed its subjects to a compulsory visibility and inspection. But a clue to our analysis of power through exemplars and their signatures is given in the manner in which Foucault demonstrates this inversion of the 'economy of visibility' by a commemorative medal struck of the review of 18,000 soldiers by Louis XIV on 14 March 1666. I cite it at length:

> It bears the exergue, '*Disciplina militaris restitua*' and the legend '*Prolusio ad victorias*'. On the right, the king, right foot forward, commands the exercise itself with a stick. On the left, several ranks of soldiers are shown full face and aligned in depth; they have raised their right arms to shoulder height and are holding their rifles exactly vertical, their right legs are slightly forward and their left feet turned outwards. On the ground, lines intersect at right angles, to form, beneath the soldiers' feet, broad rectangles that serve as references for different phases and positions of the exercise. In the background is a piece of classical architecture. The columns of the palace extend those formed by the ranks of men and the erect rifles, just as the paving no doubt extends the lines of the exercise. But above the balustrade that crowns the building are statues representing dancing figures: sinuous lines, rounded gestures, draperies. The marble is covered with movements whose principle of unity is harmonic. The men, on the other hand, are frozen into a uniformly repeated attitude of ranks and lines: a tactical unity. The order of the architecture, which frees at its summit the figures of the dance, imposes its rules and its geometry on the disciplined men on the ground …

> Let us take this medal as evidence of the moment when, paradoxically but significantly, the most brilliant figure of sovereign power is joined to the emergence of the rituals proper to disciplinary power. The scarcely sustainable visibility of the monarch is turned into the unavoidable visibility of the subjects. And it is this inversion of visibility in the functioning of the disciplines that was to assure the exercise of power even in its lowest manifestations. We are entering the age of the infinite examination and of compulsory objectification. (1977, pp. 188–189)

The medal is thus more than a commemoration of an event. It marks, and is marked by, a shifting economy of visibility that entails a change of both what is secret and what is hidden. Foucault's response to Schmitt would be that it is the sovereign's spectacular visibility that determines his quest for seclusion and secrecy and discipline's hidden presence that places his subjects in the open space of inspection. Thus he describes the disciplinary economy of punishment as 'the coercive, corporal, solitary and secret model of the power to punish' (Foucault 1977, p. 131). Later he would add the contrast between law, which fixes limits to power and seeks to make its exercise transparent, and discipline; the latter is a form of counter-law, 'a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetries of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law' (Foucault 1977, p. 223). This is why, for Foucault, it is necessary to examine what might be called the substantive instances or mechanisms of power – exemplified by this medal – and to move beyond the formal questions of its possession, its source and its legitimacy. In this case, the disciplinary techniques and their economy are as important as who holds and exercises power and these techniques can run counter to the claims of legitimate power circumscribed by the discourse of right.

Even more importantly, Foucault's approach to the different, substantive kinds of power, in this case, discipline and sovereignty, proceeds from a knowledge and deciphering of the signatures found on medals, in architecture, in statuary, ceremonies, inscriptions and representations. The medal commemorates a particular event but it marks the possibility of co-presence without contradiction of two apparently very different, substantive, forms of power and their economies of visibility.

To make the same point, I could have chosen the well-known example of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, which again is not an ideal type but a concrete instance of disciplinary power. To have done so however would lead to a repetition of an important insight that is common in governmentality studies and in actor–network analysis: that visual techniques, such as drawings and diagrams, architectural plans and maps, are constitutive of power relations and the conditions of their exercise. While this is an important point, a more interesting and generalisable one emerges for the study of power. For Foucault, the Panopticon is interesting not simply to the extent that it influences the building of actual prisons, workhouses, dormitories and so on, and their plans and schemes. He approaches it as 'the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (Foucault 1977, p. 205). In other words it functions as a paradigmatic case for this new, disciplinary power, a 'pure architectural and optical system … a figure of a political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use'. If we accept that power has no essential substance or form, then it is best approached through the illustrations or instances of different substantive kinds and mechanisms of power – in this case, disciplinary and sovereign power. A corollary of this is that while these instances can sometimes be a condition of particular power relations, as in the relationship between a flow chart and the actual organisation of an office, at best they can be approached as paradigms. Here, as with Kuhn (1996, p. 187), paradigm means shared example or exemplar, which he claimed was the 'most novel and least understood aspect' of his book. Often these exemplars mark, or carry a signature, of these singular kinds of power.

Let me give another example similar to Foucault's. In an effort to understand the mediaeval doctrine of 'the king's two bodies', the mortal body natural and the immortal body politic, Ernst Kantorowicz starts his analysis by examining a series

of medallions struck during the prosecution of King Charles I by the English parliament that reveal that the doctrine was still not without efficacy. The parliament had issued its resolutions against the king paradoxically under 'the stamp of Royal Authority, although His Majesty … do in his own Person oppose or interrupt the same' (1957, p. 21). Analysing the first of the medallions, Kantorowicz (1957, pp. 21–22) observes:

> We recognize in the lower section of the reverse, the Commons with their Speaker; in the upper, the Lords; and uppermost, on a dais of three steps, the royal throne on which the king, visible in profile, is seated under a canopy. He is clearly the King body politic and head of the political body of the realm: the King in Parliament whose task it was to stand together with Lords and Commons, and if need be, even against the king body natural. In this fashion, the parliament King did not cease being included in the body of the Parliament, nor was the king 'in his own Person' as yet excluded. PRO RELIGIONE-LEGE-REGE-ET-PARLIAMENTO said, on the obverse of one of those medallions, the legend surrounding the portrait head of Charles I, king body natural.

The king's obverse image was accompanied by the admonishment that 'he should hear both houses of parliament'. In later medallions, the king's personal image is replaced by a battleship and, on the reverse, he is now visible only to the knees, thus reproducing his appearance on his Great Seal. To understand the power relations at stake in the conflict between parliament and Charles 1, we must understand much more than the episodic and tragic civil war between two parties, the parliament and king. It is to understand a particular economy of royal power in which the king is twice objectified, once as an immaterial and immortal body and status and the other as a material and mortal body and person, and to understand that the parliament could act on behalf of the king against the king. 'It was, after all, by the authority of the seal that parliament acted against the individual Charles I', remarks Kantorowicz (1957, p. 22). The English, unlike the French in 1793, had the capacity to execute the 'king's body natural without affecting seriously or doing irreparable harm to the King's body politic', as Kantorowicz (1957, p. 23) notes, and the later history of the restoration illustrates.

For Kantorowicz, the analysis of power leads him to a varied array of coins, seals, banners, standards, illustrations in gospel books and bibles, frescoes, architecture, sarcophagi, tombs and statuary. Both he and Foucault practise a kind of paradigmatic analysis. In this sense, a paradigm is a singular case that, while exhibiting its own singularity, which can be known and explicated, makes intelligible the ensemble or set of which it is a case or, more precisely, an exemplar. The paradigm is a singularity that can be turned into an *exemplar* of a general rule that can never be stated a priori (Agamben 2009, p. 18). The example of these medallions and their signatures confirms the continuing efficacy of the mediaeval doctrine of the king's two bodies and indicates how royal constitutional power worked without exhausting its intelligibility.

To approach relations of power through exemplars is to open it up to a genealogical study. Thus, to pursue this genealogy upstream, we have the distinction between *dignitas* and *administratio*, the office and the activity in which it expresses itself, found in the thirteenth-century canon law doctrine of the *rex inutilis* (Agamben 2011, p. 98). We have Kantorowicz's own exploration of the early mediaeval origins of the doctrine of the king's two bodies in ideas of 'Christ-centred king-

ship', based on Christ's two natures in one personhood, divine and human. Or, to take the genealogy downstream as it were, the relationship between *dignitas* and office could be explored, even allowing Kantorowicz's (1957, p. 384) caution that they are not quite the same thing, in the emergence of the notion and ethos of office so central to Max Weber's account of bureaucracy. We could further examine the role of the Crown as a legal personage in contemporary British law and in the law of many former British colonies.

The written inscriptions on the medals examined by Foucault and Kantorowicz indicate another analytical path for this study of signatures found on these exemplars. The Latin phrase on Louis XIV's medallion urges 'restored military discipline' as the 'path to victories'; the inscription on the medals issued by the English parliament extol 'the law of king and parliament for religion'. The interpretative capacities of epigraphy and philology thus become central to the analysis of power relations and forms. Kantorowicz's (1957, p. 556) index refers to analyses of some 30-odd legal Latin maxims alone.

In our time, maxims have come to encapsulate different analytical and theoretical approaches to power. Thus Foucault's rejection of the juridical theory of sovereignty is marked by the maxim 'we need to cut off the king's head' in political theory (1980, p. 121). The old maxim, so far traceable to 1600, *le roi règne mais il ne gouverne pas* (the king reigns but he does not govern), in contrast, has proved central to reconnecting the thread between government and sovereignty severed by Foucault. The phrase is found in and links Schmitt's debate with the theologian, Erik Peterson, on the closure of political theology, Foucault's lectures on the arts of government and Agamben's recent work on economic theology (Dean forthcoming).

To summarise, then, the approach to studying power has three distinctive moves. The first is to view the concept of power through its signature, which is the way the concept of power generates and is constructed through dispersed sets of apparent oppositions. The objective here is to keep these oppositions in play: power as both visible and hidden, secret and transparent, being and praxis, episodic and dispositional, etc. The second is to look for and examine paradigms or exemplars that constitute but do not exhaust the set or ensemble formed by these singular kinds of power. The third is to attempt to read signatures of these kinds of power often found on or with such exemplars. Rather than viewing power as homogeneous, whether as a fixed substance possessed by individuals and institutions, or as a fluid that circulates and flows, this approach attempts to observe it in its all its substantive, material, symbolic, signifying, linguistic and ceremonial manifestations. In this sense, power relations do not have a substance but can only be known through their substances or, quite possibly, through their signatures that mark these substances. Moreover, the concept of power itself has a signatory function that ensures we should never mistake its poles for a dichotomy.

In contemporary constitutional democracies, we start from the assumption that power is exercised in a particular way and that the ceremonies, inscriptions and symbols that accompany power are secondary to its form. To adopt a substantive conception of power, we must suspend the assumption that power is somehow separated from everything that allows its manifestation and exercise. What comes into view when we do so is not only an enormous wealth of data already before our eyes but the existence of analyses that have already been made of this data by historians, anthropologists, theologians, semioticians, and cultural and media analysts. With governmentality studies, we are used to regarding architectural plans, statisti-

cal tables, graphs, techniques of accounting and the management of performance as constitutive of kinds of rational, calculable power relations. Yet we should extend this generosity to less immediately rational, more obscure and difficult to read elements, a task undertaken by Agamben's (2011) economic theology. An inscription on a column or a coin, a Latin phrase, legal maxims, an ancient doctrine, a theological debate on the Trinitarian mystery or the role of angels (Peterson 2011, pp. 106–142), the anthropological analysis of prayer and sacrifice (Mauss 2003), religious liturgy, imperial and religious acclamations and their histories (Kantorowicz 1946), symbols associated with states and political actors, are no longer the archaic media of power but their concrete, material, substantial historical manifestations that carry signatures of power. While power is not a substance or thing, it takes and can be known through these substantive forms and their signatures. The same can be said for philology and epigraphy. It is not a matter of the language of power being sequestered in a sphere of truth and rationality outside power but how power is manifest in the signatures of words and phrases and in the language by which we seek to understand power.

Foucault (1972, p. 7) once spoke of the difference between traditional history, which treated monuments as documents of the past, and more recent history that transforms documents into monuments. If formal conceptions of power treat monuments as something to be penetrated, to see beyond, to the actuality of the exercise of power, a substantive understanding of power treats documents, in all their forms, as monuments to the visible presence of power. It is not a matter of seeing through them, but of using them as exemplars, cases and markers of a set of power relations from which they cannot be detached and which cannot do without them.

Conclusion

Let me summarise the perspective on power suggested here so far:

(1) The concept of power is best approached through its particular signature. This refers us to a series of antinomies of different conceptions of power and the process which suspends or overcomes one antinomy in order to oppose the resultant unity to another. To approach the concept of power through its signature is no longer to take sides in these antinomies but to be sure to capture the entire field of dispersion of various concepts of power.

(2) This means that rather than a dichotomous conception of power, we need to adopt a di-polar one. To analyse power, then, is to grasp power as both 'power to' and 'power over', capacity and right, facilitative and repressive, law and violence, episodic and dispositional, sovereign and economic, being and action and ultimately reign and government.

(3) Power is neither a substance possessed by some nor a liquid circulating among many. Rather it can only be known in its substantive and singular instances, cases and examples. In the analysis of many of these substances, we can seek resemblances and analogies in the way they have been marked by signatures.

(4) This analysis is necessarily historical, or genealogical, because it is focused on neither the general nor the particular, but the singular. It brings into play conceptual–historical, epigraphic, philological, historical–sociological,

religious–historical and anthropological study and makes pertinent the study of ceremonies and rituals, state symbols, oaths, gestures, acclamations, liturgy, hymns and prayer, legal maxims and inscriptions. Following this, the mass media and its 'representations' of power again become central to our analysis of power.

(5) Each singularity is an exemplar or paradigm for a substantive kind or mechanism of power. Rather than a formal specification of the nature of power, we seek to understand substantive kinds of power such as the disciplinary, biopolitical, sovereign, governmental and pastoral, ones identified and analysed by Foucault.

There is of course no need to restrict these substantive domains of power to the Foucauldian ones mentioned. We could, for example, view Weber's typology of legitimate domination as contributing to the substantive characterisation of power. This is because, for Weber, legitimacy is not an additional element to domination but intrinsic to it. Thus while he extends his definition of power to domination as the 'probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons', he immediately adds that the every such system of domination 'attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy' (1978, pp. 212–213). In this sense Weber follows the signature of the concept of power in maintaining not only a definition of domination and power in episodic terms of As and Bs but also a fully dispositional or 'economic' analysis of domination '… according to the type of legitimacy which is claimed, the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff developed to guarantee it, and the mode of exercising authority …'. Legitimate domination thus concerns the self-organisation of particular power relations. Moreover, Weber insists on the objective of analysis being the concrete form of power or, as we have put it, its substantive instance. Thus, his ideal–typical analysis:

> can in the particular case of a concrete form of authority determine what conforms to or approximates such types as 'charisma', 'hereditary charisma', 'the charisma of office', 'patriarchy', 'bureaucracy', 'the authority of status groups' and in doing so it can work with relatively unambiguous concepts.

To be sure, Weber's ideal types differ from Foucault's 'diagrams'. However, in both cases, the aim is to understand the singular and substantive instances of power and domination with reference to a series of concepts that are constructed in a kind of diagonal relationship to them.

All this, of course, opens up a vast array of considerations that are not usually addressed in the formal approach to questions of power. I mention only one. This is the philosophical–historical debate on modernity and secularisation. We know how central the concern for the role of religion in the formation of modern capitalist organisation is for Weber and his legacy around the idea of secularisation. Like Weber, virtually all the authors mentioned to illustrate our substantive analysis of power have had to deal with the relationship between theological and secular domains in their genealogies of power. Fundamental to a substantive conception of power is the relationship between religious practices, institutions and beliefs and the development of post-religious, modern, political ones. This, of course, is at the core of important twentieth-century German debates over political theology (Taubes

2004, Schmitt 2008, Peterson 2011, pp. 68–105) and the origins of modernity and its notions of progress (Löwith 1949, Blumenberg 1985). What is at stake here is how, and to what extent, modern, secular political and power concepts can be viewed as some kind of historical or analogical transference of theological notions and practice. This debate also returns to the problem of tendency to the transparency and openness or to opacity and secrecy of certain kinds of power relations. It raises the question of how far theological genealogy can provide the intelligibility of contemporary arrangements of political power in liberal-democracies, a theme that, to my mind at least, has been answered in part by Agamben's (2011) theological genealogy of economy and government.

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