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The World of Psychiatry and the World of War: Foucault's Use of Metaphors in Le pouvoir psychiatrique

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The World of Psychiatry and the World of War: Foucault’s Use of Metaphors in *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*

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Summary

In his series of lectures, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, Michel Foucault employs concepts from the military field of knowledge in order to analyse the founding scenes of psychiatry. I focus on three issues connected to Foucault’s use of these military terms. Firstly, I examine why Foucault was reluctant to use concepts from sociology and psychology in *Le pouvoir psychiatrique* and how this affects the notions that he had formulated in his earlier work, *Histoire de la folie*. Secondly, I show how he challenges traditional understandings of the founding scenes of psychiatry by using concepts from a different field of knowledge. In doing this, he creates metaphors, and this is something that he himself had previously been critical of doing. Thirdly, I reflect upon the fact that Foucault’s creative use of concepts from different disciplines and examples from different historical times can be related to episodes in his own life; I argue why it is important to supplement a structural analysis with linguistic, phenomenological and hermeneutical ones.

Keywords: War; psychiatry; knowledge areas; life experiences; metaphors.

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1 Some of my views in this article have earlier been presented in a Norwegian journal of sociology. See Line Joranger, ‘Foucaults militære metaforer: Livet som erfaring og vitenskap’, *Sosiologisk Tidsskrift*, 18 (2010), 203–226.
1. Introduction

This article is about Michel Foucault and the concepts that he uses in his lecture series, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*. In these talks, Foucault chooses not to employ concepts from the fields of sociology and psychology in order to describe the origin of psychiatric power. Instead, he more or less unconsciously uses terms from the military field of knowledge. In using these military concepts he finds *power* and *powerlessness* in every scene. My hypothesis is that there is a connection between Foucault’s choice of military terms and certain earlier experiences in his own life. In applying Foucault to Foucault, i.e. deconstructing his use of conceptual metaphors in terms of biographical experience, I challenge not only Foucault’s theoretical views, but the entire poststructuralist field by exploring what may be seen as a linguistic or structuralist phenomenology. My opinion is that we miss something important in our understanding of textual perspectives if we totally exclude the first-person perspective; that is, who the author is, and what kind of experiences he has had. At the same time I believe we are all subjects of temporal, material, linguistic and cultural influences. The ability to understand ourselves and others as concrete subjects requires a complex mode of understanding capable of integrating heterogeneous discourses and temporalities. My research suggests a significant link between Foucault’s own experience and his choice of academic focus and metaphorical concepts in the 1970s.

It was something that I read in a work by a Norwegian sociologist, Professor Willy Pedersen, which suggested the perspective that I take in this article. In a collection of essays entitled *En fremmed på benken* (*The Stranger on the Bench*) (2010), Pedersen asks questions about a possible connection between his earlier, more or less unconscious everyday experiences in the 1960s and 1970s and his later professional use of concepts and fields of knowledge. It is while he is at an icy Oslo public swimming pool that Pedersen, in a Proustian ‘madeleine moment’, suddenly remembers an unpleasant childhood encounter with a man who had tried to abuse him. This sudden recollection opens up for reflections on his later childhood and young adult experiences and, in turn, causes him to ponder over how these have shaped his own professional concerns, notions and opinions. In a similar fashion, I want to examine the connection between Michel Foucault’s experiences in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and the concepts and fields of knowledge that engage him in the 1970s.

Is it the case that Foucault’s use of military metaphors in *Le pouvoir psychiatrique* may have been rooted in the conscious and unconscious experiences of his childhood in wartime France? Could these childhood experiences have been reawakened by the revolutionary mood that Foucault experienced in Tunisia and France in the late 1960s? Could it be that his unique personal experience is the cause of his choice of concepts and academic focus in the 1970s? And could it be that without these personal experiences he would have chosen other concepts and

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descriptions of the psychiatric scenes in the early nineteenth century? With the help of biographical data and theories about how conceptual metaphors work as explanatory models in both individual and cultural experiences, I shall attempt to examine this possible link.

Foucault gives his series of lectures on *Le pouvoir psychiatrique* at the Collège de France, between 07 November 1973 and 06 February 1974. He takes a look at early nineteenth century psychiatric ‘scenes’, some 150 years after they have taken place. He presents them to his listeners as examples that support his diagnosis of the true nature of early psychiatry. Foucault uses the term ‘scene’ frequently and explicitly in his two first lectures; the term is used to frame and depict his themes and theories. What he wants to do is reinterpret these past scenes with the aid of military concepts. His project is historical; through a genealogical approach, he wants to show that modern psychiatric practice is built upon specific historical power structures and needs. In his second lecture he states:

> What I would like to do this year is basically a history of these psychiatric scenes [...] the game of power which is sketched out in it, should be analyzed before any institutional organisation, or discourse of truth, or importation of models [...] It seems to me that if we want to produce a true history of psychiatry [...] it will be by situating it in this series of scenes – scenes of the ceremony of sovereignty, of rituals of service, of judicial procedures, and of medical practices – and not by making analysis of the institution the essential point and our point of departure. Let’s be really anti-institutionalist. What I propose to bring to light this year is, before analysis of the institution, the microphysics of power.3

Foucault states in his opening lecture that he has derived his concepts from a particular field of knowledge. He explains that he wants to avoid using concepts from sociology and psychology, since this would put him on the wrong track and hinder him from describing psychiatric power as it actually manifested itself in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is not until later that he sees he has instead used terms from a pseudo-military field of knowledge in his opening lecture. He tells us that even whilst preparing his lecture notes, he had not been aware of which field of knowledge he was drawing his concepts from. Foucault points to examples in his manuscript that he now realises are not described as theatrical episodes but as ‘rituals’, ‘strategies’ and ‘battles’. This terminology means that his themes are expressed in terms of war and military models.

2. Foucault’s Scepticism towards the Human Sciences

In contrast to my own analysis, where I attempt to link a semantic analysis of metaphorical ambiguity to a hermeneutic and more psychoanalytical explanation, Foucault links language and reality, culture and knowledge in a way that is strongly reminiscent of the French structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan.

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In the 1970s Foucault did not wish to be associated with the universalism of French structuralism. However, his discourse analyses emphasised the importance of structuralism’s linguistic direction, its focus on the relation between things and their linguistic and cultural structures, rather than the study of the essence of things themselves. Foucault was also inspired by the French *nouveau roman*, and this literary movement’s most prominent figure, Alain Robbe-Grillet. In his 1961 essay, *Pour le nouveau*, Robbe-Grillet went as far as Foucault himself had done (in a 1969 lecture, entitled *Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?*) in claiming that an author cannot be said to stand in the centre of his own work, since he always operates within a linguistically determined reality, a specific structure and a context of meaning. The fact that this school of thought ignored questions of subjective existence and consciousness caused great irritation within humanistic circles; phenomenologist and existentialists were particularly critical of the vague and abstract nature of cultural relativism.

Foucault had already by the end of the 1950s started to have doubts about the scientific validity of the contemporary human sciences. This was only a few years after he himself, as a psychology student, had used phenomenological and existential theories to criticise the abstract nature of cultural relativism in order to describe what he believed was the best method of psychiatric treatment. In his first book, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (1954), he explains how psychological and psychiatric treatment must be based on reflections on what it means to be human. In this work, as well as in the introduction he wrote in the same year to the French edition of the German psychiatrist and phenomenologist Ludwig Binswanger’s 1930 work, *Dream and Existence*, Foucault is very much the existence phenomenologist when he emphasises the importance of the unique subjective experience when it comes to understand the origin of human action and intention. However, already in the ‘secondary’ thesis, *Introduction à l’anthropologie de Kant*, which accompanied his major doctoral thesis on the history of madness (1961), he takes issue with the so-called human sciences, and existentialism in particular. He derives his critical model from Nietzsche, in terms that the German philosopher used when declaring the death of God: ‘For is not the death of God in effect manifested in a doubly murderous gesture which, by putting an end to the absolute, is at the same time the cause of the

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5 Foucault, Defert, Ewald and Lagrange, *Dits et écrits*, I, number 52, 654–665. In the introduction to *Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?* we hear the echo of Roland Barthes’s *Death of the Author*; Foucault says that it is the lot of the author to expose his private ‘I’ in what is written. He also talks about the ‘obstinance’ of signs when he writes that literature is ‘a game that constantly breaks its own rules and transgresses its own boundaries’. See Michel Foucault, *Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?* (Paris, 1969), or; Foucault, Defert, Ewald, Lagrange, *Dits et écrits*, I, pages 817–849.


8 Ludwig Binswanger, *Le rêve et l’existence*, translated by Jacqueline Verdeaux (Paris, 1954); Foucault, Defert, Ewald and Lagrange, *Dits et écrits*, I, pages 93–147. Foucault takes the starting point of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and later Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and not least the German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers, when in these texts he describes man’s consciousness and body as a lived totality which, in turn, is the foundation for all understanding and production of meaning.

death of man himself?". This sentence is the starting point for Foucault’s great critique of humanism from 1966, *Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things)*, with its characteristic subtitle: *Une archéologie des sciences humaines (An Archaeology of the Human Sciences)*.

### 2.1. Two Models for the Human Sciences

In *Les mots et les choses* Foucault explains the emergence of the human sciences by conducting an archaeological, historical analysis. This analysis is based on the premise that each epoch and each culture is characterised by a subterranean or subconscious configuration, a knowledge or conceptual repertory that makes scientific discourse possible. Foucault uses the term ‘episteme’ to describe this historical a priori. In Greek philosophy, *ἐπιστήμη* (epistemi) refers to certain scientific knowledge; it stands in contrast to *δοξά*, which refers to assumption or belief. *Episteme* is a product of reason, while *doxa* is a product of sense experience. There is no doubt it was Foucault’s mentor and teacher, Georges Canguilhem, who inspired him to use this concept, in order to point to the established truths that lie under the scientific discourse of a specific epoch.

Foucault argues we should distinguish two models of the human sciences. The first of these takes its concepts from other fields of knowledge, and consequently loses any operational efficacy because it only functions in terms of images and metaphors. The organic metaphors of nineteenth-century sociology are an example of this. Later in this article I will suggest that Foucault himself uses this model, to great effect, when he uses military metaphors to describe early psychiatry. Foucault’s military metaphors give a powerful picture of psychiatry as being warlike and full of power strategies.

Foucault’s second model is constitutive. The constitutive model draws from biology, economics and philology, fields of knowledge that developed out of the three epistemes of the classical epoch (1650–1800): *natural history, the science of wealth and grammar*. Within the constitutive model, the human sciences are only representations of the more proof-based fields of knowledge. Psychology emerges from biology; man is understood as a creature that receives and responds to physiological, social and interpersonal stimuli and this contributes to establishing *norms* that permit humans to carry out their *functions*. Sociology is derived from economics, which understands man as a creature driven by needs and desires: Western man’s search for profit puts him into innumerable conflict situations and so a system of *rules* that serve to limit conflict is needed. From philology emerges the study of literature and myth; from this point in time, everything that humans do, even their slightest gestures and involuntary actions, is credited with significance.

And so it is, according to Foucault, that the three conceptual pairs, ‘function and norm’, ‘conflict and rule’, and ‘meaning and system’ become the central terms in our understanding of man, in respectively psychology, sociology and the study of literature and myth. In the classical age, when representation was identical with thinking itself, it was impossible to talk of man as being an object of knowledge, since

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13 Here it seems that Foucault’s theories differ from Canguilhem’s (1979) view of science, in that the latter does not seem to be especially interested in projection, representation or history as such.
representation was identical with man himself. Our contemporary concept of ‘Man’, in which he is a separate object of knowledge, was first possible when Kant, at the end of the 1700s, separately identified representation as one of several ways of thinking by asking the question: ‘What is Man?’\textsuperscript{14} This was also the point of departure for the questions raised by the surrealists and the adherents of ‘le nouveau roman’: ‘Who is speaking?’ and ‘Who is the author?’\textsuperscript{15} Kant and Foucault agree that knowledge of Man is dependent on representation and that therefore this field of knowledge can never satisfy the criteria for proof that we find in the natural sciences. This must not, according to both thinkers, be understood negatively. Beside the natural sciences, and on the same archaeological pedestal, the human sciences constitute other knowledge configurations; they must be recognised for what they are and not be made into empirical sciences, in the strictest meaning of the word.\textsuperscript{16}

2.2. The Limitations of Sociology and Psychology

What, then, can the field of military knowledge explain that sociology and psychology cannot? Foucault’s goal is to describe what actually happens in the first psychiatric scenes. He wants to give a real history of psychiatry, and consequently he cannot use the non-verifiable discourse (doxa) of the human sciences and their notions of ‘function and norm’, ‘conflict and rule’, ‘meaning and system’; these are mere representations of the more empirical knowledge fields of biology, economics and philology. He needs a field of knowledge that contains concrete concepts such as ‘intervention’, ‘attack’ and ‘encroachment’ in its discourse. Foucault clearly believes that it is the field of military knowledge that can best illustrate what really happens in the first psychiatric scenes. It seems that Foucault believes that concepts from the military field of knowledge can cast more light on what he wants to describe than the human sciences are capable of doing.

The concepts he uses clearly indicate that he does not wish to take his starting point in the subject and its experience of the world, or in its ‘functions and norms’, as psychology does. In Foucault’s new perspective on power, as we shall later see, norms are not manufactured in individual institutions or subjects; they are created in the interaction between institutions, in a society that is becoming more and more institutionalised. With the help of the military field of knowledge, he wants to draw attention to the concrete exercise of power, which for him is about the power strategies of the politics of knowledge. Knowledge of man and discipline appear to be mutually dependent. It is through a detailed knowledge of man that discipline really becomes effective. Similarly, Foucault does not wish to take his starting point in structural power constellations where specific groups have power over other disempowered groups, which would be the sociological approach. He does not rule out that class conflict exists; his point is that all of those who talk about class struggle have failed to analyse what that struggle actually consists of.\textsuperscript{17} He finds in the field of

\textsuperscript{14} Kant et al., Anthropologie d’un point de vue pragmatique: précédé de Michel Foucault, introduction à l’anthropologie.
\textsuperscript{15} Michel Foucault, Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur? (Paris, 1969), or; Foucault, Defert, Ewald, Lagrange, Dits et écrits, I, pages 817–849.
\textsuperscript{16} Foucault, Les mots et les choses, 376–78.
\textsuperscript{17} Foucault, Defert, Ewald and Lagrange, Dits et écrits, II, number 192, pages 140–160, number 195, pages 190–207, number 200, pages 256–269.
military matters a repository of concepts and knowledge that he can draw upon and apply as analytical tools.

3. Foucault’s New Concepts

While Foucault is preparing his lectures on the origins of psychiatric power in 1973, he is also in the process of making a complete break with the linguistic and structuralist archaeological analysis that we see in works such as *Les mots et les choses*. His new understanding of reality has significant consequences for how he now understands the origin of psychiatric power. We see this coming in *L’ordre du discours* (*The Order of Discourse*, 1971), and it is evident in *Surveiller et punir* (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975). Instead of focusing on how superior conceptual structures and experiences at the macro level shape human reality, he is now more interested in studying the power and disciplinary mechanisms that regulate human relations and practices at the micro level.

On a number of occasions Foucault attempts to formulate his control and power perspective with the help of models from the military sphere and the world of war. In a 1976 interview he says: ‘Power is essentially a relation of strength, to a certain extent a war relationship, and thus the schemata one must use are not from psychology or sociology but from strategy and the art of war’.

According to Espen Schaanning, it is clear that Foucault’s war metaphors are intended to open up a new analytical field.

It is from this new military field of knowledge that Foucault now finds examples of military utterances and actions in the early texts of psychiatry. He argues that psychiatry did not develop from the acquisition of knowledge about the insane, as is often claimed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts, and as Foucault himself describes in *Histoire de la folie*. Psychiatry emerges from military and disciplinary asymmetrical power mechanisms that are forced upon the insane in what he terms a battlefield. It is important to remember that Foucault takes his starting point in the period when psychiatry and the human sciences established themselves as autonomous disciplines of knowledge. This was in the wake of a number of intellectual trends: the establishment of the human rights ideals of the French Revolution; demands for a scientific rigour of knowledge-based investigation, observation and documentation; Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*). This new understanding of human dignity and liberty was certainly not visible in one of the nineteenth century’s most groundbreaking psychiatric texts, *A Treatise on*...
Insanity, written by the French psychiatrist Philippe Pinel in 1805. On the book’s frontispiece we are told that it contains:

[... ] the principle of a new and more practical nosology of maniacal disorders than has yet been offered to the public, exemplified by numerous and accurate historical relations of cases from the author’s public and private practice: with plates illustrative of the craniology of maniacs and ideots [sic].

What seemed to be groundbreaking was Pinel’s description of a new liberal treatment method. He describes his psychiatric practice at the French hospital of Bicêtre with concepts found in contemporary political and democratic discourse:

A degree of liberty, sufficient to maintain order, dictated not by weak but enlightened humanity, and calculated to spread a few charms over the unhappy existence of maniacs, contributes, in most instances, to diminish the violence of the symptoms [...]. Cruel treatment of every description, and in all departments of the institution, was unequivocally proscribed. No man was allowed to strike a maniac ever in his own defence.

Pinel also expresses the contemporary political desire to protect society by interning the ‘abnormal’ and the ‘inadequate’. He writes:

As the public safety ought to be conscientiously studied and provided for, I grant no attestations of cures without due examination of the state of the applicant, and without stating the circumstances upon which I found my opinion.

His conclusion is that the fundamental principles advanced in his treatise will enable France to establish a ‘superstructure’ for the treatment of the insane, one that will be the envy of its neighbours. ‘For the accomplishment of these our earnest wishes’, he writes, ‘we look out to the councils of a firm government, which overlooks not any of the great objects of public utility’. However, along with this new human science came what Foucault calls modern micropower discipline.

3.1. Seeing the Early Psychiatry Scenes from a Very Different Perspective

In order to legitimate his own scientific standpoint, but also to demonstrate that power was a part of the general psychiatric discourse of the 1800s, Foucault supports his theories by giving a number of examples. Two are taken from François-Emmanuel Fodère’s, Traité du délire (1817) and Pinel’s Traité médico-philosophique sur l’aliénation mentale ou la manie (1809). Pinel writes:

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24 Pinel, Treatise on Insanity, 90. Emphases added.


26 Pinel, Treatise on Insanity, 288.

27 In an article in Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening I show in detail how the treatment of the mad King George III of England at the end of the eighteenth century is characterised by power techniques. This example is also used by Foucault when he describes modern psychiatry’s disciplinary power. In my article I compare this example to psychiatric power in today’s psychiatric health care. See Line Joranger, ‘Moderne forvaltningsidealer og psykiatrimakt’, Tidsskrift for Norsk psykologforening, 46 (2009), 1186–90.
I attach a great importance to maintaining calm and order in a home for the insane, and to the physical and moral qualities that such supervision requires, since this is one of the fundamental bases of the treatment of mania and without this we would be unable to obtain exact observations or permanent cures however much we insist on the most highly-praised medications.  

Generally, writes Fodéré:

[... ] perhaps the first step towards success in our profession [...] is that our physique impresses the insane. Dark hair, or hair whitened by age, a proud bearing, limbs and chest that signal strength and health, and a strong, expressive voice; such are the physical attributes that will have a great effect on individuals who think they are superior to everybody else. It is undoubtedly the mind that governs the body, but since this is not visible to begin with, external forms are needed to lead the multitude.

Because Foucault employs concepts from a different field of knowledge than Pinel’s and Fodéré’s humanistic psychiatry discourse, he sees no humanistic or knowledge-based care for the patient in what they say. Foucault sees ‘discipline’, ‘power’ and ‘moral coercion’. He does not, in his lecture, say explicitly that Fodéré and Pinel are wrong; this is not his project. However, he attempts, by comparing different historical periods and fields of knowledge, to show that Fodéré and Pinel have managed to create a picture of a humanistic and knowledge-based atmosphere that does not correspond with what is actually going on. In the treatment that they both describe, Foucault sees a permanent, militarised regulation of time, activities and actions. In the quote from Fodéré, Foucault sees the foundation for an asymmetry between patient and doctor that is not intentional, but nevertheless manifests itself in the whole culture of the asylum. The asylum cannot, in other words, be described as it often is in the sociopsychological discourse, as a *rule-governed system of norms*. The asylum is, in reality, an area governed by an asymmetric power, one that has its form, its figure and its physical inscription in the doctor’s own body. We see here how Foucault moves from the macro level (the institutional and state level) to the micro level in order to study the concrete expression of power, as it is manifested at the interpersonal level between psychiatrist and patient.

In the opening to his second lecture of 14 November 1973, Foucault describes a well-known psychiatric scene:

You obviously know about what passes for the great founding scene of modern psychiatry, or for psychiatry itself, which got going at the beginning of the nineteenth century [...] the famous scene at Bicêtre [...] which had not yet become a proper hospital [...] Pinel removes the chains binding the insane to the floor [...] the lunatics express their enormous gratitude to Pinel [...] and thus embark upon the path of cure.

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Foucault tells his listeners that this is a psychiatric scene that might initially be understood as one that is humane and free of asymmetric power relations. However, this is not the case if one views it historically and from a power perspective. At the same time as Pinel releases the chains from the feet of the insane, these same individuals take on a lasting debt of gratitude and voluntarily enter into a condition of subservience. Their freedom is replaced by a constant submission to the will of another. Their gratitude will subdue them to the discipline of medical power; this disciplinary system will have the power to cure them. Recovery will become a form of payment that the thankful patient makes to Pinel.

3.2. Power and War in Psychiatry and Peacetime

Foucault’s new military concepts enable him to understand Pinel’s psychiatric treatment as an order that surrounds, penetrates and works its way into the bodies of the patients, an order that is visible on the surface, but simultaneously leaves its permanent traces in the nerves, or in what the lawyer Servan, in 1767, terms the ‘soft fibres of the brain’. This is an order with internal and external control mechanisms, one which sneaks into the patients’ experiences, just like micro-organisms do. Control appears as a natural and meaningful whole, because it is experienced in patients’ physical bodies and mental cognitions. According to Foucault, our physical bodies constitute surfaces to be penetrated and volumes to be worked on. He uses the citation from Pinel to explain how real actions are concealed because Pinel describes his psychiatric practice as necessary for medical observation and knowledge acquisition, and as something that in itself is essential to the therapeutic treatment. If we end up with this tactical arrangement, explains Foucault, it is because before the problem has anything to do with humanism or knowledge, or anything whatever to do with knowledge of illness and treatment, it must first and foremost be about winning a victory. What we have in the asylum is, in reality, a battlefield, upon which patient and psychiatrist confront each other.

We can clarify this point if we consider Foucault’s 1976 lecture Il faut défendre la société, in which he describes two great power systems. One of these is to be found in the social contract philosophers of the eighteenth century; it is based on the natural right that is surrendered to a power that constitutes it in a political power contract. The other power system is one that Foucault himself takes his starting point from, a system of power based on repression and war. This is not based on a juridical model that links it to questions of how power can be exercised legitimately and legally. Rather, it bases the exercise of power on terms such as ‘intervention’, ‘attack’ and ‘encroachment’. In this way, Foucault turns military philosophy on its head; von Clausewitz’s well-known dictum that ‘war is politics by other means’ becomes ‘politics is war by other means’. According to Schaanning, Foucault here conceives

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33 Joseph Michel Antoine Servan (1737–1807) was a French publisher. After having studied law, he became at the age of 27 prosecuting attorney in Grenoble. In his *Discours sur l’administration de la Justice Criminelle* (1767) he eloquently protested against the legal abuse of power and the severe criminal codes.
of power in terms of interpersonal conflict. And he conceives of politics in terms of the politics of knowledge.

Foucault’s Nietzsche-inspired power genealogy clearly emerges; it colours his concepts and explanatory models. He also calls his hypothesis ‘Nietzsche’s hypothesis’. It has three aspects. Firstly, it has a historical foundation: ‘Power relations as they function in today’s society are rooted in positions of strength that at specific historical points of time were established in war and by war’. ‘War’ is something that enlightened people like to think that they have put behind them, but Foucault’s second point is that the techniques of war are also present in peacetime. They are to be found in institutions, practice and language. The third aspect that Foucault stresses is that the permanent state of war that we all live in can be ended, in a final and decisive struggle which will lead to the end of politics. However, this is a utopian perspective and simply explains why all utopian programmes have ended in conflict.

Schaanning argues that Foucault uses war metaphors in order to gain insight into the ways in which power is actually exercised: ‘It opens up for understanding conflicts and disputes, the level where the struggle actually takes place’. When we consider Foucault’s lectures on psychiatry, it would seem that Schaanning’s observation is correct.

We see how Foucault, in his lecture, moves from the notion of the founding scenes of psychiatry as humane and knowledge-based to the notion that they are a power struggle. In early psychiatry we have a coupling of power and knowledge, and it is thus that psychiatry makes its contribution to the development of modern Western society. According to Foucault, it distinguishes the ‘normal’ from the ‘insane’ and, in the early 1900s, pathologises the latter category. Foucault was working on Surveiller et punir (Discipline and Punish) at the time he gave his psychiatry lectures, and the conceptual pair ‘punishment (punir)’ and ‘knowledge (savoir)’ became fully developed during discussions on forensic psychiatry. Knowledge becomes at all levels in modern society infected with power, and with strategies that manifest themselves as power struggles in all interpersonal relations.

4. Foucault Develops the Perspectives of Histoire de la folie

Foucault had described, in Histoire de la folie (History of Madness, 1961), the historical development of civilisation that he uses as background material and for source metaphors in his lectures on psychiatric power. He says in his first lecture that Histoire de la folie must be regarded as the starting point for his Collège de France lectures, in spite of the fact that over the course of the years his thinking has undergone a significant number of theoretical and ideational changes. This can be understood in a number of ways. In the period between Histoire de la folie and the lectures, Foucault had begun to describe his work as genealogical rather than archaeological, or, more precisely, as being characterised by both perspectives, something that his lectures and his texts both make clear. During the lectures he also says that he intends to correct what he perceives to be the weaknesses of Histoire de la folie. This especially concerns the book’s final chapter, where he discusses institu-

37 Foucault, Il faut défendre la société, 17.
40 Foucault, Le pouvoir psychiatrique, 14.
tional power \((pouvoir\ asilaire)\). Foucault’s new military perspectives are a methodo-
logical challenge and contribute to the fact that in \(Le\ pouvoir\ psychiatrique\) he
develops different perspectives than those of \(Histoire\ de\ la\ folie\). These perspectives
also differ from those of \(Les\ mots\ et\ les\ choses\), where his theories focus on
representation. He wants to move from an analysis of representations to an analysis
of power; from an analysis of violence to an analysis of the microphysics of power;
and from an analysis of institutional regularity to ‘dispositions du pouvoir’\(^4\).\(^1\)

His earlier more-or-less sociological concepts of representation, violence and
institution are no longer fully adequate as explanatory models for what he now sees
as important political and psychological power techniques. Foucault has in many
ways turned his gaze from the domains’ internal matters; he is now looking at the
invisible micromechanisms that lie outside of the representations, violence and
institutions themselves. He now sees power as a complex, strategic situation in a given
society. It cannot be acquired, taken away, divided, kept or lost. Power is exercised
from innumerable points, in an interplay of dissimilar and mobile relationships. In a
1977 interview he says: ‘These power relations use methods and techniques that are
very, very different from each other, from epoch to epoch and from level to level’\(^4\).\(^2\)
A decade after \(Histoire\ de\ la\ folie\), he is now using concepts from a fresh field of
knowledge in order to convincingly depict his new ideas about power.

\subsection*{4.1. The Historical Starting Point for the Human Sciences’
Disciplinary Micropower}

In his lecture, Foucault explains the historical origins of the human sciences’ and
psychiatric scenes’ disciplinary micropower. He distinguishes between two types of
power. One of these he terms ‘the macrophysics of sovereignty’, a physical and
hierarchical power with explicit signs and symbols that we find in post-feudal and
pre-industrial government.\(^4\)\(^3\) This is the power type we find in Shakespeare: King
Lear standing stripped, powerless, mad and poor; Richard III being menaced by the
power of another sovereign. It is not this type of power that concerns Foucault,
although he does use it as a foundation metaphor for the second power type, which
he calls ‘the microphysics of disciplinary power’. This is identified in the emerging
industrial society and it is manifested in human science and early nineteenth-century
proto-psychiatric practice. The elements of ‘the microphysics of disciplinary power’
rest, in a way, upon the disconnected, unmasked and dilapidated elements of
sovereign power.

Disciplinary power, which Foucault sees in the first psychiatric scenes, originated
in various religious and moral communities, in pre-Reformation medieval times. A

\(^4\) Foucault, \(Le\ pouvoir\ psychiatrique\), 14–18. Gilles Deleuze argues that \(dispositifs\) or apparatuses in
Foucault’s analyses are clusters that tie together different elements: ‘\(Dispositifs\) are composed of lines of
different natures. The lines in the apparatus do not encircle or surround systems that are each homogenous
in themselves, the object, the subject, language, etc., but follow directions, traces processes that are always
out of balance, that sometimes move closer together and sometimes farther away. Each line is broken,
subject to changes in direction, bifurcating and forked, and subjected to derivations’; see Gilles Deleuze,
Hodges and Mike Taormina (Los Angeles, CA, 2006), 388. The generation of \(dispositifs\) shows how
utterances, discourses, laws, rules and architecture are tied together. The different elements of distinct,
decentred processes are connected, and this produces the formations that provide a basis for Foucault’s
analysis of power.


\(^4\) Foucault, \(Le\ pouvoir\ psychiatrique\), 28.
symbolic reference point for Foucault is the Brethren of the Common Life (known in Latin as *Fratres communis vitae*), a community for priests and laypersons, established in the Netherlands at the end of the fourteenth century. Its members lived in common houses (*fraterhuis*) where they shared possessions and held prayer meetings in which reading and pedagogical and religious education had a central place. The religious community’s strong religious and moral pedagogy and their control and methods of punishment find their way into the societies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and come to characterise the relationship between the individual and society. This relationship is metaphorically expressed in Bentham’s *Panopticon* of 1779. The *Panopticon* was invented at exactly the same time as the psychiatric treatment to which Foucault refers was going on.

Foucault believes that we can contrast disciplinary power term for term with sovereignty. Firstly, disciplinary power does not make use of those asymmetric power forms that we see in the relationship between master and subject in the age of sovereignty. Instead it totally captures the individual’s body, actions, time and behaviour. The military discipline we see at the end of the 1600s and throughout the 1700s is a clear example of this, even though the sovereign order still prevailed. In the middle of the 1600s we see for the first time a form of systematic discipline in the army; this is strongly reminiscent of medieval religious discipline, but the control, supervision and punishment is much more systematic. Soldiers are engaged by the day, and in peacetime as well. From 1750 to 1760, demobbed soldiers receive pensions. This military discipline is as a general seizure of bodies, lives and time.

Secondly, the new disciplinary power has no need of rituals and cyclical ceremonies to survive. It is not discontinuous, like sovereignty, but has continuous control procedures. Under disciplinary power, one is always visible and under constant surveillance. There is no longer any reference to an act, an event or an original right; this is evident in the early treatment scenes. Sovereignty has been replaced by an *inner* disciplinary micropower, a final self-constituting optimal state which now also manifests itself in the human sciences.

Foucault asks what makes this possible and again draws upon military history. In the army during the time of sovereignty, the training that soldiers received could not be defined as disciplinary. Rather it consisted of activities such as jousting and other games, competitions of strength and courage. It was not until the mid-1700s, with Fredrik II and the Prussian army, that we see the emergence of a completely new type of physical training. This training demanded that soldiers show a talent for marching and performing a variety of elementary physical movements; this was quite unlike the earlier cyclical repetition of jousting and games. With the new system of discipline comes the need to register and write down what soldiers say and do, so as to control and govern their individual bodies. This is a need that spreads to all social institutions, such as schools, the workplace and apprenticeship schools. The result is that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, everything that individuals said and did was recorded and written down. These records were registered and codified in a legal and political system that sent the data on to a centralised observation point. The visibility of bodies and the permanence of written records go together, and the effect

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44 Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, 43.
45 Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, 49.
46 Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, 50.
is a schematic and centralised individualisation. It is Bentham’s panoptic model of omnivisibility and the internal control mechanisms that emerge. We see the contours of a society with its own psyche that can predict developments before they happen.

The final feature of disciplinary power is its scientifically isotopic character of classification and subordination systems. In the army there are established ranks and, likewise, in eighteenth-century schools, age-specific classes and ability levels arrange individuals according to a hierarchy of skills. In order to coordinate the different disciplinary systems there is a transformation of institutional disciplinary systems and an adaptation to civil society that eventually characterises the whole political and social system. However, the perpetual classification, hierarchisation and observation that we find in a disciplinary society will necessarily create a residue of unclassified individuals who cannot be integrated. Thus there are established a number of deviance systems with their own specialised institutions set up to care for deviants. In this way, the disciplinary system fabricates subjected bodies; in Foucault’s words, ‘it pins the subject-function exactly to the body’. The whole panoptic system is a project of somatic singularity whose function is to project norms into the subject’s body and psyche, and in that way distinguish the normal from the abnormal, claims Foucault. With the help of the new human sciences, human bodies are psychologised and normalised so that they can be fitted to the work and education demands of modern industrial society. It is only within this isotopic system that individuals are able to communicate, establish branches of learning, and engage in discourses.

5. Discipline, Control and Power: The Strength of Fields of Knowledge

Foucault makes the point that his analysis represents a particular field of knowledge and draws upon several historical periods. He also points out that he became retrospectively aware that he had replaced concepts from the sociopsychological field with military ones, and that he did this in order to describe psychiatry in a different and more truthful manner. All of the lectures are thus structured, orientated, understood, performed and discussed with the help of military terms.

War and psychiatry represent different fields of knowledge, as well as different areas of experience, practice and action. It might seem that Foucault’s model functions in the same way as one of the human science models he criticises in Les mots et les choses for using concepts from other fields of knowledge, and by so doing transforming these concepts into metaphors. Foucault’s criticism was that such a process lacks any operative power. However, this cannot be said about what Foucault does. His model is powerful.

Foucault’s vision of scientific facts appears at first glance to differ radically from his notions about poetry and art, for which he frequently expresses great interest and respect. The ability of abstract literature to express aspects of life that the language of conventional science fails to capture is held up as a model. To Foucault, artists such as Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stéphane Mallarmé, Antonin Artaud, Friedrich Nietzsche and Raymond Roussel have managed to follow the path that leads back from the representative function of language to the raw being

47 Foucault, Le pouvoir psychiatrique, 54.
48 Foucault, Le pouvoir psychiatrique, 57.
that seems to have been forgotten since the sixteenth century. In the same way as these poets and thinkers, Foucault wants to write the true history of psychiatry by using concepts in a way that they have not been used before.

In his introduction to Binswanger’s essay *Dream and Existence*, Foucault explicitly states that he is using poetical concepts in order to create a new definition of the relationship between meaning (‘signified [signifié]’) and symbol (‘signifier [signifiant]’), and between image and expression—in short, a new way of conceiving how meanings are manifested. Through poetical reflection, he wants to create a text that is neither philosophical nor psychological; a text that is a contrast to the concrete, objectivistic and experimental. According to Foucault, poetical expression does not realise its greatest potential in finding the greatest number of substitutes for reality and where it invents the most duplications and metaphors: on the contrary, it is most expansive where it restores presence to itself—where the proliferation of analogies wells up and where metaphors, by neutralising each other, restore depth and immediacy to experience. In his lectures he uses concepts that are more concrete and literal than those he uses in his introduction to Binswanger’s essay. However, in all of these texts he wants to describe reality by using other concepts that have not been used before. The danger of doing this is that his writings may be regarded as fiction. Taking this into account, can there be a possible link between fiction and truth?

5.1. Truth, Power, Knowledge

In his lecture on the origins of psychiatric power, Foucault does not want to merely suggest a method of analysis; he also wants to give us a true history of psychiatry. It is easy to agree with those who claim that although Foucault opens our eyes to the ways in which psychiatric knowledge and power are connected, his analysis gives a one-dimensional picture of what actually happened. The fact is that the Collège de France in 1973 gave Foucault the opportunity to lecture on the true history of psychiatry. The venerable and highly respected seat of learning gave him, in Foucault’s own words, both ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’:

The production of truth cannot be detached from power and power mechanisms, both because these power mechanisms make possible and bring about the production of truth and because the production of truth itself has the power to bring us together and tie us. It is these truth/power and knowledge/power relationships that I am concerned with.

Foucault has clearly no intention of giving his audience other images of the first psychiatric scenes than those of power struggle and torture, and he has received criticism for this. Charles Taylor, for example, believes that Foucault’s analyses of power leave out much of what in fact has contributed to the development of modern civilisation. Habermas says that Foucault gives the concept of power a supernatural

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status; all human relations are reduced to the one and the same will to demand power.53 Schaanning defends Foucault, arguing that his analysis of power is not intended as a contribution to political philosophy, or as a general description of types of political power. He claims that Foucault’s analyses are suggestions as to how one may analyse specific scientific disciplines in practice, because Foucault believes that the legalistic model is incapable of this micro-level analysis.54

Foucault himself claims in his lectures that modern psychiatric treatment is guilty of under-communicating the paralysing force of disciplinary power. This is because it is founded on a human science discourse that aims to couple the juridical individual and disciplinary individual: ‘Scratch the judicial individual, say the psychological, sociological, and other human sciences’, exclaims Foucault, ‘and you will find a particular kind of man [. . .] the disciplinary individual’.55

In his book, The Rule of Metaphor, Ricœur argues that metaphors are the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to re-describe reality. By linking fiction and re-description we restore the full depth of meaning to Aristotle’s discovery in the Poetics, which was that the poieśis of language rises out of the connection between muthos and mimēsis. He writes:

From this conjunction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the ‘place’ of metaphors, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb to be. The metaphorical ‘is’ at once signifies both ‘is not’ and ‘is like’. If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally ‘tensive’ sense of the world ‘truth’.56

Ricœur is a post-structuralist hermeneutic philosopher who employs a model of textuality as the framework for his analysis of meaning, which extends across writing, speech, art and action. He considers human understanding to be cogent only to the extent that it implicitly deploys structures and strategies characteristic of textuality. It is Ricœur’s view that our self-understandings, and indeed history itself, are ‘fictive’, that is to say subject to the productive effects of the imagination through interpretation. According to Ricœur, human subjectivity is primarily linguistically designated and mediated by symbols. He seems to believe that the ‘problematic of existence’ is given in language and must be worked out in language and discourse. In his book, he refers to his hermeneutic method as a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ because discourse both reveals and conceals something about the nature of being. Unlike Foucault, for whom subjectivity in Les mots et les choses seems nothing more than an effect of language, Ricœur anchors subjectivity in the human body and the material world, of which language is a kind of second order articulation. In the face of the fragmentation and alienation of post-modernity, he offers his narrative theory as the path to a unified and meaningful life; indeed, to the good life.

53 Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1987).
55 Foucault, Le pouvoir psychiatrique, 59.
Foucault’s new concepts seem to be effective tools in changing long-established perspectives of the truth. His use of these concepts has an innovative force that can explode notions of what is believed to be true. When he in his first lecture says that he wants to replace Pinel’s concepts of ‘calm and order’ with the concept of ‘the microphysics of power’, a third meaning and a new conception arises: psychiatry as subordination and discipline. By changing concepts, Foucault does not only create metaphorical expressions and images by replacing the concepts of one field of knowledge with those from another; he also produces metaphorical expressions and images by comparing pictures from different historical periods in order to say something new about how psychiatric power was developed and subjected to the techniques of power and discipline. This is anything but inoperative.

5.2. Foucault’s Military Experiences Become Knowledge

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) adhere to an interactional perspective of metaphors which argues that using metaphors is a way of thinking that seeks to describe or understand one area of reality in the light of another. When they claim that metaphors let us understand one field of knowledge in the terms of another, they point out that understanding and knowledge come from different areas of experience and not from isolated concepts. For example, when we use metaphors such as ‘medical knowledge is power’, ‘discussion is war’ or ‘time is money’, this tells us something about the experiences we have had with ‘medicine’, ‘discussion’ or ‘time’. Our experiences are conceptualised and defined in terms of other basic areas of experience, such as power, war and money.

What metaphors have in common is that they bring about new associations, so that new conceptions and understandings can emerge. They are thus an effective tool in bringing about new realities, as Foucault wishes. They believe that all areas of experience (for example ‘power’, ‘war’ and ‘money’) constitute structured wholes in our awareness. These appear natural because they are experienced through ‘our bodies’, that is to say our sensory and motor apparatuses, mental capacities and emotional dispositions, as well as through interaction with our physical environment and, in addition, through interaction with other people in social, political, economic and religious institutions. Foucault seems to confirm this view in an interview from 1980:

I never think exactly the same, because my books constitute experiences, in the widest definition of the word. An experience is something that leaves you changed [. . .] I am an experimenter in that I write in order to change myself and to not think the same as I did previously.

When Foucault describes psychiatry as ‘micropower’ and ‘a battlefield’, he uses terms that are derived from specific experiences. We can again see parallels to Willy Pedersen’s new realisations. Pedersen’s earlier views and interest in drugs and sexuality now seem, according to Pedersen himself, to stem from earlier time-typical experiences that led to certain types of explanations. At the time, Pedersen was

understood and accepted when he opposed the legalisation of cannabis. In a similar fashion, Foucault is understood by his listeners and readers when he employs military concepts to explain the psychiatric scenes of the 1800s; he is using cultural codes that describe conventional and normative notions.

When Foucault held his lectures, he was an internationally respected professor; his lectures were very popular and the lecture halls were full. He wanted to be understood and wanted to say things that had not been said before. He is influenced by the anti-psychiatry of the time. Anti-psychiatry’s critique of psychiatric power extends to a critique of society; when someone is labelled as insane, locked up, and ‘punished’ in a psychiatric institution, it is necessary to critically evaluate the whole social system and the ways in which some people have power and control over others. Foucault had, just like his contemporaries, his own military experiences, and on a number of occasions refers to his own childhood in the period between two world wars. In an interview from 1980 he says:

The experience of the war had shown us that there was an acute need for a society radically different from the one we lived in [...] the society that had permitted Nazism [...] . Great sections of young Frenchmen reacted with total contempt. We wanted a world and a society that was [...] different than ours [...] we wanted to be totally different in a totally different world.

In his collection of essays, Willy Pedersen puts it like this:

Our lives play a part. [...] I have, for example, made several studies of sexual abuse, but have never told anyone that as a child I was subjected to sexual abuse myself. Here I describe what happened, how first, many years later, I remember it and how difficult it has been to categorise it, to give it meaning.

Pedersen’s new recognition of his own childhood and young adult experiences means that now, like Foucault, he needs other concepts and knowledge fields in order to describe the world. The new concepts he has acquired through analysing his own past have given him new notions that have contributed to the fact that, amongst other things, he no longer wishes to ban cannabis. He sees now, after having studied his own childhood experiences, that there may be a link between the experiences of the past and the conventional opinions of that time, and his own wish to forbid legalisation. In an interview about his essays in Morgenbladet, on 23 April 2010, he says:

I try to see if there are any anecdotes that can explain the direction that my own research has taken. I belonged to a student environment in Tromsø that drank a lot [...] . The fact that many people get a lot of pleasure from alcohol is hardly recognised by researchers. In 1998 I wrote the book Bittersøtt, where I examined the two sides of intoxicants. [...] I think it would have been difficult for me to have written that book if alcohol hadn’t had a positive role in my life.

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60 Foucault, Le pouvoir psychiatrique, viii.
63 Willy Pedersen, En fremmed på benken: essays (Oslo, 2010), 7–8
I don’t think there’s any ideal of objective social research, it would be a sort of positivist ideal that I think would have very few adherents.\footnote{Willy Pedersen and Tove Gravdal, ‘Professor Pedersens posering’, Morgenbladet, 23 April 2010, <http://morgenbladet.no/kultur/2010/professor_pedersens_posering/> [accessed 28 March 2012].}

Like Pedersen, Foucault has, since writing *Histoire de la folie* and *Les mots et les choses*, gained new experiences. Foucault has experienced political militancy and, like many of his contemporaries, he shows a great interest in the ‘military’ power techniques of the time. Despite being quick to distance himself from Marxist ideology, it seems that he was influenced by the Marxist-orientated engagement with the rights of the oppressed, an engagement that peaked in May 1968 in Paris with the huge student protests that ended in the fall of the government. There was an environment for fighting against oppression and an awareness of military tactics. When the Parisian student riots were at their most intense, Foucault was in Tunisia (1966 to 1968), which was also hit by many very violent student demonstrations, directed against the state of Israel. Foucault witnessed these bloody demonstrations and, on returning to Paris in 1968, chose to support the students and became politically active. In a 1980 interview he says that after his experiences from Tunisia he wanted to get involved, personally and psychologically, with concrete political issues when he returned to France at the end of 1968.\footnote{Foucault, Defert, Ewald and Lagrange, *Dits et écrits*, II, number 281, page 868.}

In the 1970s Foucault became a figurehead for social activists and militants who sought to fight social injustice in France. Groups he assisted included those fighting for prisoners’ rights, immigrants, and asylum seekers. During his lectures on psychiatric power he worked with *Groupe d’information sur les prisons* (GIP), a group that provided legal information to prisoners. He was later to help an organisation that assisted asylum seekers, *Groupe d’information sur les asiles* (GIA). Given his own military and political experiences, it is not strange that he should see the techniques of war in peacetime and turn Clausewitz’s maxim that ‘war is politics by other means’ into ‘politics is war by other means’.

### 5.3. The Relationship Between Individual and Cultural Configuration of Military Power

Foucault is not alone in having experienced the techniques of military power. He is in good company with his students and intellectual colleagues. His military concepts are loaded with experiences and notions that are shared by his followers. Since the revolts of 1968, there is a clear tendency that power analysis replaces the position that structuralism previously had in the media and in the intellectual arena. Foucault’s personal experiences in Tunisia changed his intellectual focus; he began to apply military concepts to knowledge areas where they had not normally been used. As a result of the 1968 événements, large sectors of the Parisian intellectual community underwent a similar refocusing.

Foucault appears to be aware that there are a number of different worldviews. Through exchanging concepts from different areas of knowledge and experience, and from different historical epochs, he has managed to build a bridge between his own understandings of the early psychiatric scenes and contemporary understandings of reality. He guides himself and his listeners along new paths. Foucault moves and inverts the meanings of conventional concepts, and the effect is dramatic. He opens
our eyes; it is a process rather like the sun’s rays shining through the falling rain and creating a rainbow of fresh, vivid colours. The first psychiatric scenes are seen in a new and different way.

Foucault and his audience live in a time and culture where one has begun to doubt the nature of normality; therefore he is understood when in his lecture he loads the concepts with downwards associations by describing them as a necessary power technique and an important condition of a modern society’s production system. He does the same with the concepts of ‘insane’ and ‘abnormal’. Usually such concepts have a negative emotional connotation. He clearly shows how concepts such as ‘insane’ and ‘abnormal’ are social constructions. The same applies to the concept of ‘power’. To have ‘superior power’ is described by Foucault as the feeling of owning knowledge, truth, power, control and strength. On the contrary, to be ‘under the power’ of others leads Foucault’s lecture audience to associations where we lose control and power. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors which have this kind of ‘oriental’ and ‘associative power’ do not have the same ambiguity as other types of metaphors.67 They are rooted in our physical and cultural experience and are dependent on conventional expressions to be understood—and Foucault clearly is understood. In many ways Foucault’s own conscious and unconscious use of military concepts has become a shared cultural experience that makes him understandable. They represent underground configurations, which Foucault, through his own childhood war experiences and his Tunisian experiences, manages to make visible through his lecture notes in a French intellectual environment.

Lakoff and Turner make the following observation:

To study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one’s own mind and one’s own culture. To understand poetic metaphor, one must understand conventional metaphor. To do so is to discover that one has a worldview, which one’s imagination is constrained, and that metaphor plays an enormous role in shaping one’s everyday understanding of everyday events.68

6. Conclusion

My argument in this paper is that perception is not simply passive but rather involves an active reception, a concept that Ricœur takes up and develops in his account of the ontology of the self and one’s own body in Oneself As Another. In other words, our body has an active role in structuring our perceptions, and so, the meaning of our perceptions needs to be interpreted in the context of our bodily situation. In Ricœur’s view, the question ‘Who am I?’ is a question specific to a certain kind of existence; namely, being the subject of a temporal, material, linguistic and social whole. As mentioned earlier, the ability to understand oneself and others as concrete subjects of such a world requires a complex mode of understanding that is capable of integrating heterogeneous discourses and different temporalities. It is this temporal dimension of selfhood and the use of related concepts that I have addressed most directly in my semantic, hermeneutic and narrative analysis of Foucault’s use of concepts in Le pouvoir psychiatrique.

67 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago, IL, 1980), 14.
My opinion is that cultural events do not necessarily become personal experience. How one experiences cultural or personal events is subjective and must be studied separately in each case. Sometimes our individual experience will lead to scientific notions that correspond to cultural notions, or maybe subcultural ones as in Foucault’s case. It is most likely that his ideas about psychiatric power were not shared by most contemporary politicians or indeed most psychiatrists. On other occasions, as in Pedersen’s case, our personal experiences will lead to notions that oppose contemporary political or cultural notions. After several years of recommending that cannabis remain banned, Pedersen’s new experience leads to him adopting the opposite notion of decriminalisation. His new conception opposes Norwegian public opinion and the political consensus.

Following the work of Wittgenstein and Austin, I believe that language can be regarded as a reservoir for expressions that convey the highest descriptive power of human experience, especially in the realms of action and feelings. Like Ricœur, I believe that some of the most refined distinctions attached to ordinary words provide phenomenological analysis with linguistic guidelines:

The recapturing of the intentions of ordinary language experiences may become the major task of a linguistic phenomenology, a phenomenology which would escape both the futility of mere linguistic distinctions and the unverifiability of all claim to direct intuition of lived experience. Thanks to this grafting of linguistic analysis to phenomenology, the latter may be cured of its illness and find its second wind.69

Despite the fact that Foucault in Les mots et le choses is critical of knowledge areas that refer to other knowledge areas, i.e. psychology and sociology, he confesses in his lectures that he has used concepts from the fields of war and military matters, knowledge areas he has physically and mentally experienced, after writing Histoire de la folie and Les mots et le choses. It is seems obvious that Foucault’s new military concepts and experience, and his antipathy towards sociology and psychology, influence his thinking. He creates other images of discipline, control and oppression that serve to orientate him through theories of psychiatric power. His experiences and his use of concepts signal what he should understand as good and bad, central and peripheral, and lead him, more or less unconsciously, to use different concepts than he had used a decade earlier, in works such as Histoire de la folie. In order to succeed in the task of changing traditional understandings through the employment of metaphors, it is necessary to exhibit a number of qualities. One needs patience, a certain flexibility in one’s worldview, a generous tolerance towards misunderstanding and a talent for finding the right metaphors of change.

There is an art in communicating the relevant aspects of experiences that are not shared, or in emphasising the experiences that are common and de-emphasising the others. In his lectures, Foucault demonstrates his mastery of this art. The ability to imaginatively employ metaphor is a valuable quality if one wants to create sympathy and communicate experience that is not shared. When it is necessary, as in Foucault’s case, one must negotiate meaning; one slowly discovers what is shared, what one can safely talk about, and how one can pass on unshared experiences in order to create a

shared understanding. With the sufficient flexibility to alter one’s worldview, and with luck, skill and goodwill, it is possible to reach a common understanding.

Foucault’s lecture series, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*, is invaluable in providing a context to the texts he published in his lifetime, and helps us to gain a more nuanced understanding of them. First and foremost, the lectures show the continuity in his interests. They clearly demonstrate how his themes are linked and how he returns to earlier works with new perspectives, comments and examples. This, in turn, casts light on what is to come. Finally, but not insignificantly, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique* shows the many avenues Foucault chose not to explore in the period during which he gave these lectures.