

BOOK REVIEW

MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER, KNOWLEDGE, THE INDIVIDUAL

By Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual*, Logos-A, Skopje 2025

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The publication of Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti's book, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual* (Logos-A, Skopje 2025) apart from being an addition to the Albanian academic library; it is also an intellectual event marking a turning point in the treatment of critical philosophy in Albanian language. In an era where our social and political world is shifting with unprecedented velocity, and where questions of freedom, control, and identity become increasingly urgent, this book emerges as an indispensable guide. Ahmeti does not offer a dry compilation of Foucault's ideas, but rather a vibrant and engaged hermeneutics, transforming the text into a "toolbox"—precisely as the French philosopher intended—by which the reader can dismantle the visible and invisible mechanisms of reality.

Ahmeti begins his study by placing Foucault not upon a distant pedestal of theory, but in a dynamic dialogue with the Western philosophical tradition. He treats him as an "archaeologist and genealogist of the human mind," emphasizing that the Foucauldian project was not merely historiographical, but diagnostic. Here, the author displays an expansive mastery of the history of ideas, illustrating how Foucault draws from Nietzsche the concept of genealogy as a history of power, the question "What is Enlightenment?" from Kant, and a sensitivity towards power relations from Marx – yet transmutes these inspirations into something entirely unique. This meticulous contextualization is essential, for it reveals that Foucault's philosophy was born as

a response to the fundamental crises of modernity: the crisis of the subject, truth, and freedom.

The philosophical depth of this treatment is clearly evidenced in Ahmeti's interpretation of the "archaeology of knowledge." He explains that this is not a search for lost facts, but an investigation into the *conditions of possibility* that, in a given epoch, allow something to be articulated as truth. Thus, history is no longer seen as a linear progression toward perfection, but as a series of discontinuities, ruptures, and discursive struggles. This perspective liberates history from teleological myths, allowing us to perceive it as a field of conflict where knowledge and truth are perpetually the objects and prey of power.

Perhaps the most potent aspect of Ahmeti's book—and one of Foucault's most revolutionary pillars—is the treatment of the power-knowledge symbiosis (*pouvoir-savoir*). The author masterfully avoids reducing this concept to the simple adage: "knowledge is power." Instead, he deepens the argument by showing that this relationship is not external or merely repressive, but productive and constituent. Power does not silence knowledge; it creates, channels, and distributes it. Simultaneously, knowledge always generates effects of power.

Ahmeti illustrates this through medicine, psychiatry, and penal sciences, demonstrating how the invention of the "healthy person," "mental health," and "the law" was not simply progress, but creation of new categories of control and exclusion.

This is not a power that forbids, but a power that administers life (**bio-power**)—one that regulates, measures, classifies, and ultimately produces a specific kind of human: the disciplined and normalized individual. Here, Ahmeti's study becomes particularly vital for the Albanian reader, providing him a lens to analyze our own institutional educational, health, and justice, prompting us to ask: what knowledge is being produced here, and what kind of subjects are we creating as a society?

The chapter on Jeremy Bentham's **Panopticon**—a metaphor rendered famous by Foucault—is treated by Ahmeti not as an obsolete penal theory, but as the central node for understanding the psychology of our society. The author clarifies with great lucidity how the panoptic principle extends beyond prison walls to the core logic of our social institutions: the school, the factory, the hospital, and the military.

The essence of the argument lies in the internalization of surveillance. When an individual believes he is being constantly observed, he begins to self-discipline himself. Ahmeti elevates this concept from its narrow architectural context and places it within the digital age, implying a critical question: are we not all inhabitants of a vast digital Panopticon, where our data is transparent to corporations and states, and where we regulate our own behavior in the presence of this subconscious surveillance? This is one of the book's greatest strengths: the ability to tie the abstract theory with the concrete sensibilities of our daily lives.

Through the detailed analysis that Ahmeti devotes to the "*History of Madness*" and the "*History of Sexuality*," the reader understands that Foucault's project was also a deconstruction of the modern subject itself. He shows that throughout different eras, the experience of "madness" and "desire" was not a biological constant, but was built by social practices and discourses.

Madness was transformed from a mystical phenomenon into a scientific object of psychiatry, thereby creating the category of the "insane" as the *Other* who must be isolated and cured. Similarly, sexuality became the central "secret" of our identity—a field to be perpetually investigated—transforming itself into a powerful mechanism for self-governance and control. Ahmeti emphasizes that these studies were not merely historical; they were a means of rendering "strange" and contestable what we consider as natural to ourselves. The question arises: are we truly our "sincere selves," or are we a historical product of various discourses that have taught us how to understand and express ourselves in a specific way?

One of the greatest merits of this book is the author's insistence on Foucault's radical contemporary relevance. Ahmeti argues convincingly that Foucault's choice as a subject matter of study is not accidental. In a world complicated by algorithms, social media, the management of global crises (health, climate), and identity wars, Foucauldian concepts become more tangible than ever.

Foucault does not offer ready-made answers, but a critical approach. He does not dictate "what must be done," but asks: "How did we get here?" and "What historical conditions made this state of affairs possible?" This is what Ahmeti calls the "ontology of the present"—an attempt to diagnose our era from within, without relying on borrowed doctrines. This approach provides the Albanian reader not with an imported ideology, but with a methodology

to analyze their own immediate reality, liberating them from the fatalism that things “must” be as they are.

In conclusion, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual* by Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti is far more than a book. It is a complete intellectual project that fills a profound void. With a clear and organized structure, a sophisticated yet accessible language, and a rare interpretative depth, Ahmeti achieves something difficult: presenting a complex thinker in an accessible manner without vulgarization or oversimplification.

This book rescues philosophy from its academic prison and returns it to the world as a liberating practice—a tool for questioning, doubting, and imagining other possibilities. “The freedom we believe we enjoy is often the product of sophisticated mechanisms of discipline.” It is precisely because of this reality that Ahmeti’s work is not only valuable – it is essential. It addresses not only academics and students but every individual who feels the need to dismantle reality and seek, through permanent critique, the horizon of a more authentic freedom. In this sense, this book is a fundamental contribution to the cultivation of a critical, vibrant, and autonomous mind within the Albanian sphere. It serves as a proof that our perceived liberty is often a product of sophisticated disciplinary mechanisms, and that only through constant critique can we aspire toward true freedom.