

# Beyond Poststructuralism and Gender-Free Thought

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## I. What is poststructuralism?

In the 1960s the discipline called Structuralism emerged in France, and its standard-bearer was Claude Levi-Strauss. The aim of Structuralism was to model the structure of a society, based on how people recognize the world. It adopted the attitude of looking at the world rather than trying to reform it. Poststructuralism emerged soon after, and attempted to grasp a changing world, wherein some structures are destroyed as new structures are created. Poststructuralism is also called “later structuralism.” “Poststructuralism” is sometimes used in nearly the same way as “postmodernism,” but postmodernism usually means the artistic and cultural movements that appeared after modernism.

The poststructuralist claims that it is language structure that defines people and the world, and that language structure changes as time passes, through differences, violence, noise, and so on. Poststructuralism emerged based on the foundations of Marxism, Darwinism, and Freudianism. Therefore, we can say that poststructuralism is the language of materialism, the language of evolutionism, and the language of psychoanalysis.

### (1) Similarity to Marxism

#### ① Consciousness is a product of language.

Poststructuralism claims that language does not come from consciousness or from ideas, but rather that consciousness and ideas are the product of language. Thus, it is language which defines human beings and the world. People don't think freely using language, but instead language defines people. To conclude: “mind is a product of language.” This is reminiscent of the Marxist claim that “mind is a product of the brain.” This is exactly the language of materialism.

#### ② Meaning is realized by the difference of *signifiant*

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Linguist, divided communication by signs into two parts: on one hand there is the signifier [*signifiant*], the sound or the visual appearance of the word, phrase, or image in question; on the other, there is the signified [*signifié*], its meaning. According to Saussure, “language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed

before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system.”<sup>1</sup>

Catherine Belsey, chair of the Center for Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University, stated: “Poststructuralism is not a system, nor even, when you look at the details, a unified body of theory. How could it be? Its key term is difference.”<sup>2</sup> Sara Mills, a research professor at Sheffield Hallam University, said, “In some ways, poststructuralism can be seen as the move to theories without the notion of a centre, core or foundation.”<sup>3</sup>

This concept is that there was no purpose or meaning at first, but instead there was only the difference of signifier, wherefrom all the meanings arose. Such an idea is identical with the materialistic dialectic which claims that things develop through the struggle of opposites with no purpose. This is exactly the language of the dialectic.

③ Signs are independent of human consciousness, and they follow their own laws.

Shinya Oshiro, a Japanese philosopher, states: “thought is nothing other than the movement of signs which have some meaning, and the signs have their own laws and move by themselves,”<sup>4</sup> and “the signs are separated from the consciousness of humans who use them, and they move by themselves in accordance with their own laws.”<sup>5</sup> This idea is the same as the materialist view of history wherein the development of productive forces and the relations of production are independent of human will.

④ Struggle against power

According to poststructuralism, culture is the mechanism of a power system that does not seem to have power, and poststructuralism analyzes power, and criticizes current nations, with a strong will to change the present conditions. It is in agreement with Marxism, which is hostile to the state power, regarding it as evil.

(2) Similarity to Darwinism

① Denial of immutability of meaning

According to Catherine Belsey, “the language that poststructuralism advocates is useful to ask uncertain things, and not useful to give a final answer.”<sup>6</sup> Masashi Orishima, a scholar of English literature, also says that “[Poststructuralism] challenges the meaning, and always changes it.”<sup>7</sup> It is in agreement with Darwinism which claims that living beings always undergo changes through mutations and there are no immutable species.

## ② Humans as carriers of signs

Shinya Oshiro says, “If a culture is a collection of signs, a human being is a carrier of the signs.”<sup>8</sup> This is reminiscent of Richard Dawkins, a prominent spokesperson for classical Darwinism, who insists that “humans are vehicles of genes.”

## (3) Influence of psychoanalysis

Jacques Lacan, who called himself Freud’s successor, put psychoanalysis into poststructuralism. His viewpoint was that “We are virtual images given by others” and that “We live in the artificial world constructed by the language.” This is the standpoint of psychoanalysis in the context of poststructuralism.

## (4) Poststructuralism and sexuality

Stressing the diversification of sexuality, poststructuralism denies the absoluteness of ethics and morality. It has also had a great influence on homosexuality and feminism. Among thinkers advocating poststructuralism, Foucault was the most influential.

## (5) Poststructuralism and Unification Thought

As seen in the above comments, it is clear that poststructuralism was born in the soil of Marxism, Darwinism, and Freudianism. *Unification Thought* criticizes the materialism of Marxism, which denies the existence of God; Darwinism, which denies God’s role in creation; and Freudianism, which denies God’s Word (commandments or norms). *Unification Thought* has presented alternatives to all of these views. Viewed from *Unification Thought*, it can be argued that poststructuralism is an abortive flower that bloomed in the wrong soil. Sexual liberation theories—homosexuality, feminism, gender-free, and so on—all utilize poststructuralism as their theoretical support.

In the following I shall discuss three representative poststructuralists: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan, and make clear the background of their thought, and their fallacies. At the same time, I will expose the fallacies in sexual liberation theory, the foundation of which is poststructuralism. The aim of my discussion is to show that true ethics and morality can be established in order to realize true love.

## Notes

1. Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford Press, 2002), 12.
2. *Ibid.*, 56.
3. Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 28.
4. Shinya Oshiro, *Illustrated Various Knowledge: Poststructuralism* (Tokyo: Natsume-Sha, 2006), 50.
5. *Ibid.*, 54.
6. Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*, 107.
7. Masashi Orishima, An afterword to the Japanese version of *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* by Catherine Belsey (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 2003), 173.
8. Shinya Oshiro, *Illustrated Various Knowledge: Post structuralism*, 51.

## II. Michel Foucault

### (1) Foucault's thought

#### ① Genealogy and archeology

The thought of Michel Foucault is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archeology investigates the life of pre-historic human beings through the study of their relics, which have been buried under the ground. However, the “archaeology” of Foucault is the unearthing of the hidden structure of knowledge that pertains to a particular historical period. “Genealogy” for Foucault is exploring the possibility of no longer doing or thinking what we are currently doing or thinking. That is to say, Foucault's intention is not to discover any inevitable and universal truths, but rather to verify the relativity and accidental nature of truth.

#### ② Episteme

For Foucault, episteme is the “frame of wisdom,” or the “types of ways of thinking” that underlie various sciences. He says that only one episteme exists in each age, and when the age changes, the episteme changes, too.

During the Renaissance, words and things were united in their resemblance. Renaissance man thought in terms of similitudes. For example, the orchid produces seeds that look like the testicles; therefore, it was thought that the orchid was useful in the treatment of venereal disease. For another example, the resemblance of an aconite seed to the eyeball leads to the wisdom that the seed of aconite has an effect on eye disease.

In the classical age, the world was seen in terms of its order to measurable relationships. As a result, "It [knowledge] was no longer about guessing, but about order. The classification of stable and separate identities is called representation."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the emphasis of episteme came to be on "representation."

In the modern ages, attention is paid to human beings, who are influencing the world, as the principle that brings order to the world. That is, "The modern episteme studies man, in himself, as an historical subject. It is through man that knowledge is possible....Deeper forces were substituted for the surface regularities of classical knowledge: dynamic, historical categories of explanation."<sup>2</sup>

Today, human beings are deprived of their creativity and have become servants to language. Thus, the new episteme proclaims "the end of man."

### ③ Discourse

Later, Foucault dropped episteme as the dominant principle in history and instead proposed "discourse." A discourse is the accumulation of concepts, practices, statements, and beliefs that were produced by a particular episteme; that is, a specific knowledge system. Foucault called the individual unit of the collective discourse a statement (énoncé).

Foucault insists that discourse determines the reality that we perceive, rather than considering that language simply reflects an underlying reality. Further, he says that it is only through discourse, and the structures it imposes on our thinking, that we can think about and experience material objects and the world as a whole.

After all, Foucault's idea is that language is a source of thought in its own right, and not merely an instrument for expressing the ideas of those who use it. This means that we do not manipulate language, but rather language manipulates us. In other words, language and thought take the dominant position over man. Sara Mills described this as: "not setting man but anonymous thought, knowledge without a subject, theory with no identity, in God's place."<sup>3</sup> Thus, it comes to "the end of man."

Moreover, Foucault says that "discourse transmits and produces power," and he describes knowledge as being the conjunction of power relations and information-seeking which he terms "power/knowledge." Here, Foucault's attitude of making a "challenge to power" is expressed.

### ④ Sexuality

Foucault's interest was focused on sexuality. Foucault's suggestion is that human nature (inner sexual nature) is not so much discovered, as constituted by the required

self-examination. Explaining Foucault's position, Tamsin Spargo, an English literature expert, states: "Sexuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological, origins."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the norm of sexuality is merely the social norm for behavior. In this manner Foucault challenged sexual morality. Whereas he was very interested in sexuality, he said, "Sex is boring," and he regarded sexuality in human life as incidental rather than essential.

#### ⑤ Ancient sexual ethics

In order to show that the sexual ethics represented by Christianity is neither universal nor absolute, Foucault explored the sexual ethics of ancient Greece.

According to Foucault, "For the ancients, by contrast, sex was a natural good. It became an object of ethical concern not because it was essentially forbidden, but because some aspects of it could be dangerous.... The danger was . . . that we might disrupt our lives through excessive indulgence."<sup>5</sup> The *telos* of ancient ethical life was moderation (*sophrysune*).

As for homosexual love, ancient sexual ethics were free of the Christian strictures that declared that homosexual love is intrinsically evil, and an unnatural act. While the law condoned homosexuality it was, nevertheless, often treated with scorn. Images of sexuality portrayed the homosexual as effeminate, mincing and vain.

#### ⑥ Critique of Christianity

As Foucault indicated, it is because sex is connected with human original sin in Christian morality that sex has such a negative image in modern society. Foucault condemns the power of Christian pastors, saying that they rule the believers by hoisting the flag of original sin.

According to Foucault, Nakayama explains: "The pastors' power pretends to be an altruistic one which cares for believers' spiritual happiness by all means. However, pastors' purpose is not to realize the happiness of the sheep, rather, they intend to dominate the sheep with the bait of the spiritual salvation in the afterlife."<sup>6</sup> In sum, Foucault believes that, whereas a pastor's power may seem to give life, in fact it is a devilishly cruel power that sentences human beings on earth to death. He considers Christian morality a devil's act.

#### ⑦ Denial of the absolute truth

It was Foucault's lifelong purpose to show that what people believe as truths are

neither universal nor absolute, but rather they were established based on historical events. Gary Gutting, professor of philosophy at the university of Notre Dame, states as follows:

Foucault put truth to the test. His archaeologies show how it is often relative to the contingent historical frameworks it is supposed to transcend, his genealogies how it is entwined with the power and domination from which it is supposed to free us.<sup>7</sup>

According to Chris Horrocks, “[Foucault is] suspicious of universal truth. It’s pointless to ask whether human nature exists – it is a discourse produced in relation to theology, biology, history.”<sup>8</sup>

#### ⑧ Rationalization of homosexuality

The negative aspects of the construction of homosexuality in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are obvious. The homosexual was pathologized as a perverse or deviant type, a case of arrested development, a suitable case for treatment, in short as an aberration from a heterosexual norm.

However, according to Foucault, “Although same-sex relations have occurred throughout human history, the homosexual as a distinct category, with defining psychological, physiological and perhaps even genetic characteristics, was created by the power/knowledge system of the modern sciences of sexuality.”<sup>9</sup> Foucault denounced the power that had managed and controlled sex and life, infringing upon society and culture.

Foucault intended to change society and to change the way power was applied, while remaining faithful to one’s own desire. Diversifying the relationship with others, and through homosexuality, he aimed to establish a new relationship filled with friendship, among others. According to Hajime Nakayama, “Foucault tried to construct a new relationship to others, to examine the relationship to others, and to establish a new *Etchika*.”<sup>10</sup>

Foucault said, “Christianity verbosely talked about love, but it did not understand friendship at all,” (*From Rome to Paris – Path of Philosophy*) and he believed that only friendship can give a foundation for the culture of homosexuality to be accepted by the heterosexual people as well.

#### ⑨ Influence of Marxism

Foucault’s thought is strongly influenced by Marxism as follows: According to the

materialist view of history, the motive force which moves the world and history is the productive force, the development of which is independent of human will. The development of the productive force occurs solely in accordance with objective laws, without any goal or purpose.

Foucault says that discourse determines the reality that we perceive and that we can only think about and experience material objects and the world as a whole through discourse and the structures it imposes on our thinking. His claim that discourse moves both the world, and history, is on the same track with the materialist view of history which claims that the productive force moves the world and history.

Foucault says, "So the 'history of ideas'...is less important than the underlying structures that form the context for their thinking...Individuals operate in a conceptual environment that determines and limits them in ways of which they cannot be aware."<sup>11</sup> This is the same idea as historical materialism's basis and superstructure.

According to Gully Gutting, "Foucault's archaeology aims at history without the individual subject...But archaeology emphasizes that the stage on which we enact our history – as well as much of the script – is established independently of our thoughts and actions."<sup>12</sup> This is in accordance with the materialist view of history in that the productive force is independent from human will, and that the environment (social environment), and not leaders, is what decides social development.

As for the human relations in a family, Foucault regards them as a power relation. Explaining Foucault's position, Sara Mills says, "Relations between parents and children, lovers, employers and employees – in short, all relations between people – are power relations. In each interaction power is negotiated and one's position in a hierarchy is established."<sup>13</sup> This is the same idea as in Marxism, which regards a family as the base of ruling and exploitation.

According to the materialist dialectic, things develop through contradiction, or through the struggle of opposites within themselves, without purpose, just following law. Foucault's position is in full agreement with that of the materialist dialectic.

Foucault was skeptical of grand teleological narratives focused on such goals and proposed instead accounts based on many specific 'little' causes, operating independently of one another, with no overall outcome in view.<sup>14</sup>

This dispersion corresponds to the fact that there is no teleology (no dominating class or world-historical process) behind the development. Modern power is the chance outcome, in the manner of genealogy, of numerous small, uncoordinated causes.<sup>15</sup>

## ⑩ Foucault and feminism

Foucault's thought had a strong influence on feminism. Sara says:

[For Foucault] truth, power and knowledge are intricately connected and what we need to analyze is the workings of power in the production of knowledge. This is especially important for Western feminist theorists who tried initially to document the 'truth' of women's condition or women's experiences to oppose the falsehood of sexist stereotypes of women.<sup>16</sup>

Among the many influential French critical theorists Foucault was distinct in so far as his aim was to intervene in specific struggles of disenfranchised and socially suspect groups such as prisoners, mental patients and homosexuals. In so far as Foucault's discourse appeared to be more activist and less narrowly academic than those of his post-structuralist counterparts, it compelled activist feminist theorists to take a serious look at his work.<sup>17</sup>

## (2) Criticism of Foucault from the viewpoint of Unification Thought

### ① Genealogy and archeology

For Foucault, "archaeology" means the unearthing of the hidden structure of knowledge that pertains to a particular historical period, and "genealogy" means to uncover the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. This is exactly an attempt to destroy the universality and the absoluteness of the truth from its very foundations. Seen from the viewpoint of *Unification Thought*, even if the way of expressing the truth can change according to the change in an age, the truth itself originated from God's logos, and is therefore absolute. The content of our knowledge has become more enriched and refined according to the merit of the age.

### ② Episteme

According to Foucault, episteme is "the frame of wisdom" or "the types of ways of thinking" that underlie various sciences. Foucault's episteme leads only to a relativized "historical *a priori*," not to the atemporal, absolute *a priori* truths that Kant claimed to have discovered. However, it is not explained by Foucault why episteme is discontinuous and why it changes. In *Unification Thought*, "the frame of wisdom" is universal and absolute as Kant claimed, and it does not change according to the age.

### ③ Discourse

According to Foucault, human beings do not manipulate language, but language manipulates people, and language and thought sit at the top of the world instead of human beings. In the Unification Thought view, we think and recognize things with language in order to realize love. Therefore, language is originally a medium of love. Foucault's standpoint is that "man is the carrier of language." In contrast, in Unification Thought, "man is the carrier of love."

Foucault says that anonymous thought, knowledge without a subject, and theory with no identity will sit in the position of God, and "the end of man" will come. But this is not true. In contrast, in Unification Thought, human beings of true love will eventually emerge, and centering on God, such human beings will sit on the top of the world.

### ④ Sexuality

According to Foucault, the inner sexual nature is constituted by a discourse. He thinks that existing sexual ethics is fabricated by power, and he challenges it. Thus, he had a strong interest in sexuality. On the other hand, however, he said, "sex is boring" as if sex was a trivial thing.

From the standpoint of Unification Thought, the purpose of sex is to realize true love. In order to realize true love, man is created manly and woman is created womanly, both mentally and physically. Therefore, sexuality is originally sacred and precious. However, sexuality has come to be seen as sinful and debased because of the human fall. Paul Johnson, a historian, explains about the preciousness of sexuality:

But a world without gender, even if it functioned, would be stable, flat and unprofitable. It would be a form of living death. So gender supplies both dynamism and interest. It is an amazing thing. Next to the Big Bang itself, it is the most remarkable and ingenious of all God's acts of creation. It is the most fascinating too. Its operations and permutations, creating life, are more interesting to observe than the expansion of the universe itself. They have the further merit that, the higher the forms in which they exist, the more interesting they become, and will become. We are only beginning to explore the potentialities of gender, which are inexhaustible, in so far as anything is. . . . it is evidently very dear to the heart of our maker. It is fundamental, not accidental.<sup>18</sup>

### ⑤ Ancient sexual morality

According to Foucault, sex was a natural good in ancient Greece. Moderation (*sophrysune*) was encouraged because there was some anxiety that we might disrupt our lives through excessive indulgence. Homosexuality was condoned by law. However, it was often treated with scorn, and images of sexuality portrayed the homosexual as effeminate, mincing and vain.

However, as Hajime Nakayama points out, sexual ethics and truth came to be united when it came to Plato:

Plato's ambition to understand truth marked the end of the Greek way of thinking concerning the relationship between sex and morality. Previously in Greece, morality had focused on the techniques to control one's desires. However, with Plato as the turning point, morality came to focus on seeking truth and evaluating one's desire. It was a prelude to the advent of Christian morality that evaluated one's desire and its truth.<sup>19</sup>

When it came to the Roman Age, Plutarchos, a philosopher of Plato's school, taught that man and woman should both keep virginity before marriage and keep chastity after marriage, in order to live a beautiful way of life.

Therefore, it can be seen that the morality of ancient Greece was improved by Plato and philosophers of the Roman Age, in order to later be connected with Christian morality. Foucault tries to deny Christian morality by proposing the morality of ancient Greece as a counterproposal. He said, "The rise of Christian sexuality is the corruption of a more admirable antique view."<sup>20</sup> In fact, the morality of ancient Greece was a preparation for the coming true morality.

## ⑥ Critique of Christianity

Foucault strongly criticized Christian morality because he did not want to admit to original sin, and he intended to rationalize his propensity towards homosexuality. He considered Christian morality to be an act of the devil. Nietzsche also strongly criticized Christian morality, considering it as a slave morality. However, in order to realize true love, Christianity forbade living under the dominion of sexual desire. This is because, if people live solely ruled by their sexual desire, they will be dominated by Satan. From the viewpoint of Unification Thought, it is necessary for both man and woman to keep virginity before their marriage and to keep chastity after marriage, in order to realize true love between them. Also, in order to realize a true, beautiful love, man is made manly and a woman is made womanly. Therefore, true love cannot be

realized through homosexuality or lesbianism.

#### ⑦ Denial of absolute truth

Foucault tried to show that what people believe to be truth is not absolutely true, and he tried to show how things considered as truth were entwined with power. However, if the absoluteness of the truth is denied, Foucault's thought also become doubtful. C. Horrocks said, "Foucault is on the horns of a dilemma: if he is telling the truth about the impossibility of detached truth, then all truth is suspect. But if this is the case, then Foucault's truth cannot vouch for its own truth."<sup>21</sup>

From the viewpoint of Unification Thought, truth is absolute, and it is for the realization of true love. Foucault, who does not accept true love, and tries to rationalize homosexuality, could do little else but deny absolute truth.

#### ⑧ Rationalization of homosexuality

Foucault aimed to establish a new relationship filled with friendship, among others, diversifying the relationship with others, and through homosexuality. He said that Christianity talked at length about love, but it did not understand friendship at all. However, it is completely wrong to identify friendship (brotherly love) with homosexuality. Homosexuality is an example of perverted brotherly love, and it has no relation to friendship, or brotherly love.

Although he became deeply involved in homosexuality, he seemed in one regard to hate it deep in his original mind. Thus, although he gave himself over to homosexuality in San Francisco, he took an anti-California stance. C. Horrocks says:

Strange, isn't it? Despite all of Foucault's attempts to get rid of the human individual, to see everything as discourse, apparatus, power and institutions, he still refers to the most anthropological of themes: sexuality, the self, individualization and self-control or will. Is he having his cake and eating it?

Foucault's view of gay Antiquity was not completely positive. . . . Foucault was totally against the notion that through sex you could discover the "true self" – hence his avowed anti-Californian stance (despite the fun he had in 'Frisco).<sup>22</sup>

#### ⑨ Influence of Marxism

As already explained, Marxism had great influence on Foucault's thought. *Unification Thought* criticizes Marxism and presents a counterproposal to it. Therefore, it is clear that Foucault's thought, which can be thought of as a modified Marxism, is also wrong.

## ⑩ Foucault and feminism

Foucault's thought all had a great influence on feminism. But, following the pattern above, if Foucault's thought collapses, feminism will also be shaken.

## Notes

1. Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtic, *Introducing Foucault* (New York: Totem Books, 1997), 68.
2. Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtice, *Introducing Foucault*, 72.
3. Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 106.
4. Tamsin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory* (New York: Totem Books, 1999), 12.
5. Gary Gutting, *Foucault, A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 106.
6. Gen Nakayama, *Introduction to Foucault* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1996), 194.
7. Gary Gutting, *Foucault*, 109.
8. Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtice, *Introducing Foucault*, 103.
9. Gary Gutting, *Foucault*, 92-93.
10. Gen Nakayama, *Introduction to Foucault*, 201.
11. Gary Gutting, *Foucault*, 33.
12. *Ibid.*, 34.
13. Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 49.
14. Gary Gutting, *Foucault*, 46.
15. *Ibid.*, 87.
16. Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 75-76.
17. *Ibid.*, 81.
18. Paul Johnson, *The Quest for God* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 51.
19. Gen Nakayama, *Introduction to Foucault*, 213.
20. Gary Gutting, *Foucault*, 106.
21. Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtice, *Introducing Foucault*, 168.
22. *Ibid.*, 152.

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