



Bringing Althusser and Foucault Together: A Brief Overview of the Question of the State¹

Althusser ile Foucault'yu Biraraya Getirmek: Devlet Sorununa Kısa Bir Bakış

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Abstract

Bringing Althusser and Foucault together is common in political theory. A number of scholars have discussed this in terms of their teacher-student relationship, shared concerns on humanist theories and Foucault's rejection of the concept of ideology; but less has so far been said about the relationship between their approaches to the question of the state. This paper seeks to provide a short review of the relationship between Althusser and Foucault on the particular issue of the state. However, before analysing this relationship, some of the categorical bases of the Marxist approaches to the state primarily will be examined. As is well-known, the question of the state is of key importance for Marxism and the debate over the Marxist approach to the state has been long and engaging. Thus, to analyse it in a very detailed way here is neither my main concern nor necessary for my discussion of the relationship between Althusser and Foucault's approaches to the state. However, one can hardly discuss these approaches without first examining that Marx had upon their views of the state. Therefore, my intention is rather to summarize some of the crucial features of the classical Marxist conceptualisation of the state in order to examine Michel Foucault's relationship to Marxism through Louis Althusser with regard to the question of the state. Following this, I will focus on Althusser's thoughts on the state and claim that Althusser, does nothing but provides a state-centric political analysis which defines the whole of the political phenomena in terms of class struggle and the state. Then, I will discuss the relationship between Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser with regard to the problem of the state in a more detailed way. I believe that Foucault's turn to an alternative analysis of power, that is micro-physics of power, can be seen as a response to Althusser's seminal work *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, which appeared in 1970.

Keywords: Marxism, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, power, the state, the state theory, ideology

Öz

Althusser ve Foucault'yu biraraya getirmek siyaset teorisinde yaygındır. Bazı akademisyenler iki ismi öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkileri, hümanist teorilere yönelik endişeleri ve Foucault'nun ideoloji kavramını reddetmesi açısından tartıştılar; fakat şimdiye değin iki düşünürün devlet sorununa yaklaşımları arasındaki ilişki hakkında daha az şey söylenmiştir. Bu makale, devlet sorunu özelinde, Althusser ve Foucault arasındaki ilişkiye dair kısa bir değerlendirme sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bu ilişkiyi analiz etmeden önce, Marksist devlet yaklaşımlarının kategorik temellerinden bazıları öncelikli olarak incelenecektir. Bilindiği gibi, devlet sorunu Marksizm için kilit önemdedir ve Marksist devlet yaklaşımı hakkındaki tartışmalar uzun ve ilgi çekicidir. Dolayısıyla, meseleyi burada çok ayrıntılı bir şekilde analiz etmek, Althusser ve Foucault'nun devlet yaklaşımları arasındaki ilişki hakkındaki tartışmam için ne temel derdim ne de gerekli. Yine de, öncelikle Marx'ın devlet hakkındaki görüşlerini incelemeyi bu yaklaşımları tartışmak zor görünüyor. Bu nedenle niyetim, Michel Foucault'nun Marksizm ile ilişkisini devlet sorunu açısından Louis Althusser üzerinden incelemek için klasik Marksist devlet kavramsallaştırmalarının bazı öne çıkan özelliklerini özetlemek. Bunu takiben, Althusser'in devlet hakkındaki düşüncelerine odaklanacağım ve Althusser'in, tüm siyasi fenomenleri sınıf mücadelesi ve devlet açısından tanımlayan devlet merkezli bir siyasal analiz sağlamaktan başka bir şey yapmadığını öne süreceğim. Ardından, Michel Foucault ve Louis Althusser arasındaki ilişkiyi devlet sorunu açısından daha ayrıntılı bir şekilde tartışmaya açacağım. Foucault'nun alternatif bir iktidarın analizine, yani iktidarın mikro-fiziğine dönüşünün, Althusser'in 1970 yılında yayınlanan çığır açıcı eseri *İdeoloji ve İdeolojik Devlet Aygıtları* na bir yanıt olarak görülebileceğini düşünüyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marksizm, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, iktidar, devlet, devlet teorisi, ideoloji

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Introduction

Regarding Niccolò Machiavelli's *Art of Government*, Foucault wrote a characterisation of his placement which is quite as applicable to Marx's state theory:

I do not think there is an art of government in Machiavelli. [...] He is at the center of the debate with different, sometimes negative, sometimes positive values. It remains the case that Machiavelli is at the center of the debate [...] He is not at the center of debate insofar as it takes place because of what he said, but insofar as the debate is conducted through him. The debate does not take place because of what he said, and an art of government will not be found through or in him. He did not define an art of government, but an art of government will be looked for in what he said. This phenomenon in which one searches in a discourse for what is taking place, while actually only seeking to force it to say something, is not unique. From this point of view, Marx is our Machiavelli: the discourse does not stem from him, but it is through him that it is conducted (Foucault, 2007: 243).

As Miliband (1965: 278) maintained, "Marx himself never attempted to set out a comprehensive and systematic theory of the state". However, it remains the case that Marx is still at the heart of debates surrounding the state. As Foucault argued elsewhere: "As far as I'm concerned, Marx doesn't exist. I mean, the sort of entity constructed around a proper name, signifying at once a certain individual, the totality of his writings, and an immense historical process deriving from him" (Foucault, 1980: 76). Marx remains central to debates surrounding the state not because of what he said about the state, but because of the ways in which academics have taken his theory and applied it to the state.

Despite Foucault's open hostility to Marxism, his works cannot be considered merely as a reaction to Marxism; he was also undoubtedly influenced by Marx's materialism and later Marxist scholars (Neimark, 1994: 96; Mills, 2003: 15). Yet, unlike Marx and Marxist thinkers, Foucault did not believe that the bourgeoisie had deliberately acquired the state apparatus in order to preserve and defend class interests. Foucault also criticised the state-centric vision of Marxist theory (Melossi, 2006: 3) and, despite failing to reference Althusser, Foucault's critique of Marxism is mainly conducted through Althusser (Choat, 2010: 98). The point of the paper, therefore, is to provide a short review of the Marxist approaches to the state and Foucault's analysis of power and the state. In doing so, I would like to discuss the following question: What kind of the state do Marxist theories presuppose? What are the limitations of their consideration of the state power? How does Foucault differentiate himself from Marxist state-centrism? In what ways do Foucault's ideas challenge the Marxist account of the state?

The Fundamentals of the Marxist Approaches to the State

It is often said that there is no adequate theory of the state in Marx's writings. According to Martin Carnoy (1984: 45), for instance, "a single, coherent theory of the state" is absent from Marx's work. Moreover, for Carnoy, not only Marx but also Engels and Lenin's views on the state lack of a unified presentation and well-formulated analysis of the state that makes it somewhat difficult to identify a commonly agreed definition of the state in the Marxist theory. As Poulantzas put it in a similar way: "there is certainly no general theory of the State to be found Marxist classics: not just because their authors were for one reason or another unable to complete one, but because there can never be any such theory" (Poulantzas, 2000: 20). Therefore, Marxist considerations of the state are mainly derived from a broader framework of the Marxist theory: Marx's critiques on Hegel's formulation of rational State, Marx's theory of society and political economy, his analyses of some of the historical ruptures, such as the 1848 Revolution, Louis Napoléon Bonaparte's coup d'état, the Paris Commune in 1871, Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, and Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. Despite the fact that there are various interpretations of these texts about the nature of the state among different Marxist thinkers, what they have in common is that they mostly derive their state theories from



some of the bases of the Marxist theory and it is these bases that draw the epistemological limits of their state debates. It can be said that there are three essential points of the state in the Marxist classics.

The first feature -that they have in common is 'the priority of the base' or the 'reductive view' of the state that reduces it to the emanation from a single source-: the capitalist relations of production. Accordingly, the relations of production determine society's main characteristics, which constitute the superstructure, and include the state. Since "Marx viewed the material conditions of a society as the basis of its social structure and of human consciousness; [t]he form of the State, therefore, emerges from the relations of production" (Carnoy, 1984: 46). This account of the state is directly opposed to the Hegelian consideration of it which considers the state as an eternal, non-historical institution. Thus, Marx in contrast to Hegel, by placing the state in its historical context, claimed that it is not the society that is shaped by the state, but the state is shaped by the society. In other words, the relations of production determine the structure of the state because, for Marx, the dominant form of the mode of production also shapes the general character of any given society, such as the feudal society, the capitalist society and so on. According to this model, it is not possible to analyze the state separately from the economic structure of society.

The second assumption that is shared by the Marxist thinkers is that the state does not represent common welfare, but it is the "political expression" of the ruling class that is the bourgeois class (Carnoy, 1984: 47). This basis is perhaps the best known and the most common conception of the state agreed within the Marxist theory which sees the state as an instrument of the ruling class (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Jessop, 1990). According to this model, the state is neither a neutral force nor represents the general interest of society; on the contrary, the state is nothing but the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie which is used to suppress the proletariat. The state apparatus is controlled by the bourgeoisie that make enable it to maintain its control over the proletariat. As Althusser (2001: 137) draws attention in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*: "[t]he Marxist tradition is strict, here: in the Communist Manifesto and the Eighteenth Brumaire (and in all the later classical texts, above all in Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and Lenin's on state and Revolution), the State is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus". However, according to Jessop (1990: 27-28), this assumption remains problematic in some situations where the economically dominant class does not take over state power. This raises the question of the degree to which the state is an instrument of the bourgeoisie and let us to think of the relative autonomy of the state.

Dunleavy and O'Leary in their book *Theories of the State* (1987) note the third feature of the Marxist theories of the state: the state apparatus has relative autonomy enabling it to play a limited independent role in shaping the capitalist society and class relations. This account of the state was mainly sketched by Marx in "*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*" and Engels in "*The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*". According to Dunleavy and O'Leary, in these texts Marx and Engels put forward the idea that the state apparatus can operate autonomously in some 'abnormal times' or 'exceptional periods' "where the class struggle is equally balanced" (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987: 210). In those cases the state is ruled by political leaders and state bureaucrats, because neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat is powerful enough to take control of the state. In these states of exception the conditions of the possibilities of the state autonomy emerges as in the case of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte's coup d'état. Carnoy (1984: 54) argued, "for Marx and Engels the Bonapartist State emerged in an 'exceptional period' and was an exception to the 'normal' form of the bourgeois State". According to Draper, however, the state not only in "abnormal times" but also in "normal times" has a particular amount of autonomy: "the State arises from and expresses a real overall need for the organization of the society –a need which exists no matter what is the particular class structure" (Draper, 1977: 319). As long as a ruling class exists in the social sphere, it will try to take advantage of this need in order to shape and control the state apparatus for its own class interests. To summarise, as Jessop (1990) illustrates, it is not possible to find a singular and sustained theory of the state in the classic texts of Marxism. However, this is not to deny the fact that they outlined the epistemological framework for addressing the question of the state and provided a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the state. As we shall see following section, Althusser used these elements in order to develop a structural theory of the state.



Louis Althusser on the State

In Marxist theory, the state is considered, in the first place, as the state apparatus that enables the ruling class to maintain its economic dominance over the working class via a set of institutions such as government, legal system, prisons, army, and so on. As Resch noted "the traditional Marxist emphasis on the state as a repressive tool of the ruling class be allowed to obscure the many non-repressive ways in which the power of the ruling class is maintained" (Resch, 1992: 213). Following his Marxist predecessors, Althusser, who occupies a unique position in Marxist thought, also regarded the state as a repressive apparatus of the ruling class utilised to suppress and dominate the proletariat. Despite the fact that Althusser accepted the relative autonomy of the state apparatus with respect to the base and does not deny the reciprocal interaction between the structure of the state and mode of production, he returned to the rigid Marxist consideration of the state in the last stance (Ricoeur, 1994):

...the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base, [...] the floors of the superstructure are not determinant in the last instance, but that they are determined by the effectivity of the base; that if they are determinant in their own (as yet undefined) ways, this is true only insofar as they are determined by the base (Althusser, 2001: 135).

However, by outlining the function of ideology in the reproduction of the relations of production, he also attempted to move beyond the traditional metaphor of base and superstructure (Jessop, 2007; Resch, 1992). According to Althusser, to consider the conditions of production merely by means of the economic determinism is misleading as well as inadequate. On the contrary, the social relations of the reproduction are secured by the Repressive State Apparatus plus Ideological State Apparatuses, and it is possible to say that Althusser's main contribution to Marxist theory lies in this formulation.

According to Ricoeur (1994), Althusser's main achievement was in linking the concept of ideology to the reproduction of the relations of power. In order to accomplish this task, Althusser needed to develop the strict account of Marxist-Leninist oppressive state apparatus. In doing so, he also presented a proper reading of Marx and Lenin, who failed to develop an adequate theory of the capitalist state (Jessop, 2007). Althusser put forward the idea that the state apparatus, in fact, has both repressive and ideological institutions which somehow overlap but also maintain key differences from each other in their functioning (Ricoeur, 1994; Ferretter, 2006). In this sense, he claimed that the political power of a ruling class does not lie purely in their monopoly of the repressive apparatus of the state (government, police, courts, army, and so on) but also they need "ideological hegemony" over society which embodied in the Ideological State Apparatuses such as school, church, family, legal system, media and so on (Resch, 1992: 213-214). As he wrote: "no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (Althusser, 2001: 146). In this respect, it is possible to say that there are some parallels between Althusser's conceptualisation of the reproduction of the relations of production and Gramsci's concept hegemony (Carnoy, 1984; Balibar, 2014). Althusser himself also expressed his indebtedness to Gramsci for opening up an alternative consideration of the state apparatus:

To my knowledge, Gramsci is the only one who went any distance in the road I am taking. He had the 'remarkable' idea that the State could not be reduced to the (Repressive) State Apparatus, but included, as he put it, a certain number of institutions from 'civil society': the Church, the Schools, the trade unions, etc. Unfortunately, Gramsci did not systematize his institutions, which remained in the state of acute but fragmentary notes (Althusser, 2001: 142).

Althusser, however, pays more attention the role of the state in the reproduction of the conditions of production than Gramsci does. "For Althusser", Carnoy writes, "the State attains an overwhelmingly important position relative to the effects on reproduction of the production system and it is related 'private' institutions, both in the reproduction of labor power (nor discussed by Gramsci) and in reproducing the relations of power" (1984: 94). The state apparatus cannot sustain and reproduce political sovereignty exclusively through suppression, physical force or pure violence, but it also needs to use ideological apparatuses in order to legitimise oppression and reproduce the conditions of relations of production such as, social classes and class domination. In his essay, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser distinguishes between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses in order to show how these institutions function and reproduce the social and political conditions of the reproduction. Despite this, both of these apparatuses function to secure the



reproduction of the relations of production, while the Repressive State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by violence and coercive means; the *Ideological State Apparatuses* function mainly in the manner of ideology (Althusser, 2001: 148-149). Indicating the function of the ISAs in these terms, Althusser directly opposes, so to speak, the 'bourgeois' distinction between public and private institutions (Ricoeur, 1994). The dominant ideology, he argues, becomes a part of the ideological state apparatuses on which the state operates such as the religious ISA, the family ISA, the trade-union ISA, the legal ISA, the educational ISA, the communications ISA, the cultural ISA and so on. In some cases, these institutions are already a part of the State Apparatus; however, many of them are placed at the center of the private domain, outside of the state's direct operation. In this content, Ideological State Apparatuses constitute a significant number of functions in the reproduction of the relations of production. Therefore, it can be said that Althusser formulated "a sociological account of production" by focusing on the role of ideological apparatuses in reproducing the relations of production (Barrett, 1993: 169).

According to Poulantzas (2000), Althusser systematised the Gramscian concept of ideological hegemony that emphasized the presence of the state within the reproduction of the relations of production, such as ideological relations. Althusser defined ideology as "a pure illusion", "a pure dream", "nothingness" (Althusser, 2001: 159). Ideology, therefore, "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (ibid.: 162). According to Althusser, "the state disposes of many ideological apparatuses besides its political ideological apparatus (in which the government has its place), which is, after all, just one apparatus among a multitude of others" (Althusser, 2014: 108). Although this consideration might be useful to extend the impact of the state towards the ideological institutions, it remains the case that it functions in a restrictive level. As Ricoeur (1994: 52) stated, in this case "we must consider the state as a system of apparatuses which extend far beyond administrative functions". According to Althusser, the ultimate source of 'interpellation' is always ideology and thus the state apparatus. Yet, such an inference let us to conclude the idea that there is only the state apparatus and nothing else; this remains too abstract and theoretically dangerous. Because, it is based on the idea that the state can merely act and function via either "repression" or "ideological inculcation" (Poulantzas, 2000: 30). According to Poulantzas, however, to consider that the state merely acts and functions in this manner is simply wrong due to the fact that to consider the state by means of the oppression-ideology couplet means to overlook the 'peculiar role' of the state in shaping the relations of the production. On the contrary, the state does have a peculiar material framework that cannot be reduced to mere oppression or pure illusion (ideology). In addition to this, for Poulantzas, "to chart in this way the hold of power over the oppressed and downtrodden masses inevitably leads to an idealist, police conception of power, according to which the State dominates the masses either through police terror or internalized repression, (it matters little which) or else through trickery and illusion" (ibid.). The state also acts in a positive manner, improving the productivity of life and the level of health, and reducing the death rates.

Michel Foucault on Power and the State

Foucault was a student of Althusser and he clearly expressed in many different places his indebtedness to his teacher.² And Althusser put it in a similar way.³ However, the relationship between them was always an uncomfortable one. As Choat (2010: 98) argued, "there is a kind of silent dialogue between Foucault and Althusser in the 1960s and 1970s through which the former often seems keen to distance himself from Marx and Marxism". Although Foucault seemed to have been influenced by the works of Althusser (Mills, 2003: 35), he also differed from Althusser's state-centred view of power (Alcoff, 2006: 76; Kelly, 2009: 91). Especially, when Althusser introduced his essay *Ideology and Ideological State*

² "Having been his student and owing him a great deal, I may have a tendency to credit to his influence an effort that he might question, so I can't answer for his part. But I would still say: Open the books of Althusser and see what he says" (Foucault, 1999: 281).

³ "[Foucault] was a pupil of mine, and 'something' from my writings has passed into his, including certain of my formulations. But [...] under his pen and in his thought even the meanings he gives to formulations he has borrowed from me are transformed into another quite different meaning than my own" (Althusser, 1969: 257).



Apparatuses in 1970, one of the most important disputes between them crystallised into outright opposition on the issue of power (Resch, 1992: 234). In this respect, Foucault's turn to microphysics of power can be read as a response to his teacher. As Kelly states, "Althusser's continual evocation of the state is indicative of his distance from Foucault, and indeed something that Foucault is precisely reacting to" (2009: 37).

Foucault by the early 1970s started to argue about the limitations of the juridico-discursive view of power that sees power as something possessed solely by institutions such as the state apparatus. According to this model, power is primarily exercised by the state apparatus through prohibition and punishment. This juridico-discursive view of power was metaphorically described by his words "we need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that has still to be done" (Foucault, 1980: 121). According to Foucault, to solve the problem of power in terms of the state apparatus means to solve the problem in the manner of sovereignty and sovereign power. Power, according to this model, primarily emanates from a centre: from the state and its apparatus. In contrast to this, Foucault states that power is not always localised political structures such as the state or state apparatus (Foucault, 1995: 26-27). As he writes,

one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn't localised in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed (Foucault, 1980: 60).

It is important to say that Foucault does not want to say that the state retains no importance for him; but rather, he states that the relations of power go far beyond the limits of the state in reality. Because, as he put it:

In consequence one cannot confine oneself to analysing the State apparatus alone if one wants to grasp the mechanisms of power in their detail and complexity. There is a sort of schematism that needs to be avoided here [...] (Foucault, 1980: 72).

Thus, Foucault, in order to analyse the relations of power which extend the limits of the state apparatus, developed an alternative notion what he called "a micro-physics of power" (Foucault, 1995: 139), an analysis that focuses on how power flows through the whole social body (Foucault, 1980: 119). He wrote somewhere else:

We cannot use the notion of State apparatus because it is much too broad, much too abstract to designate these immediate, tiny, capillary powers that are exerted on the body, behavior, actions, and time of individuals. The State apparatus does not take [...] microphysics of power into account (Foucault, 2006: 16*).

Defining power in this way, Foucault opposed to the juridico-discursive account of power, especially that contained in Marxism. In traditional Marxist theory, primarily in Althusser, power is considered as a property of the state; it is localized in the state apparatus and exercised from top to bottom. However, this "one-way traffic of power" that is exercised from top to downwards has not been found to be satisfactory (Mills, 2003: 34). In contrast to this hierarchical model of power, Foucault's bottom-up model of power offers an alternative perspective on how power operates. Power comes from bottom, in this sense, means that we cannot understand the complexity of power relations by merely looking at the state apparatus, but rather we must take into account the grift webs of interwoven relations and axes in which multiple forces interact and negotiate. It should be noted that Foucault's analysis of micro-physics of power contains a critique of the state-centred notion of power under his attack on the juridico-discursive view of power (sovereignty). Foucault argues that the state and sovereign power based on this limited conception of power as a repressive force is insufficient. He argues that "if one describes all these phenomena of power as dependant on the State apparatus, this means grasping them as essentially repressive: the Army as a power of death, police and justice as punitive instances, etc" (Foucault, 1980, 122). Power does not merely take forms of oppression and repression but also it is a productive force. Inseparable from this analytics of micro-physics of power is the idea that power is not simply exercised as an obligation or prohibition in order to suppress its subjects; but it also creates them.

With the help of his genealogical approach on relations of power, Foucault opposed the idea that explains political power primarily in terms of the activities of the state apparatus (Inda, 2005: 6). In addition to this, when Foucault drew attention a form of the "overvaluation of the problem of the state" that reduces the state to a number of functions, for instance, "the development of the productive forces"



and “the reproduction of the relations of production” (Foucault, 2007: 109; emphasis added), he implicitly referred to Althusser (Green, 2013). Refusing to Marxist ‘reductive view(s)’ of the state, Foucault offered a new analysis of power and the state.⁴

Foucault with his lectures 1978-1979 advanced his analysis of the microphysics of power by expanding the scope of his analysis through the macropolitical level (Lemke, 2002; Lynch, 2011). On the other hand, Foucault rather than providing “an analysis of the development and transformation of political-administrative structures” focuses on the multiplicity and diversity of the relations between the constitution of the subject and the formation of the state (Lemke, 2007: 44). In doing so, on the one hand, he provided a genealogy of the state; on the other hand, he filled the gap between his two research interests, “technologies of the self” and “technologies of power” (Lemke, 2002: 49; 2010: 31). To put in another way, with these lectures, Foucault linked the historical formation of the state and subject. In a similar way, Protevi (2009) argues that Foucault is not a state-centred thinker; however, it is not deny the fact that he dealt with the question of the state. Indeed, by avoiding “a circular ontology of the state” (Foucault, 2007: 354), Foucault dealt with the state in a more effective way. On the one hand, he analyzed a greater number of multiplicities of concrete instances of power by moving to the field of governmentality; on the other hand, he desubstantialised the state to seeing it as emerging from his field (Protevi, 2009). Jessop, in the same fashion, notes that Foucault by rejecting the essentialist, reductive analyses of the state and state power advances “the problematic of government to explore the historical constitution and periodization of the state and the important strategic and tactical dimensions of power relations and their associated discourses” (Jessop, 2006: 36).

It can be claimed that one of the most important contributions of Michel Foucault, who considers power as a decentred network instead of pyramid organisation structure, lies in this analysis of the state as a specifically concentrated form of power. In doing so he rejects reductive analyses that reduced it to a single source: the capitalist production relations and class struggle, as in the case of Marxist theory. Moreover, Foucault challenges the idea that defines the state as merely a repressive form of power exercised from top to bottom and takes into account the productive aspects of it. As Mills (2003: 34) argued, “Foucault’s bottom-up model of power, that is his focus on the way power relations permeate all relations within a society, enables an account of the mundane and daily ways in which power is enacted and contested, and allows an analysis which focuses on individuals as active subjects, as agents rather than as passive dupes”. Foucault approaches to the question of power empirically rather than theoretically (May, 1995: 72). Because of the fact that Foucault rejects all totalising categories (Smart, 1983: 73; Poster, 1984: 39), he does not attempt to offer “a general theory of power” but “an analysis of power” (May, 1995: 72, Jessop, 2006: 36). In a similar way, Foucault attempts to analyse the state power works at the level of the technologies of governmentality than to formulate a general theory of the state. According to Foucault, the state is not a thing-in-itself but rather a condensation of primary forces and power relations; therefore, it must be analysed by means of its relational existence. As Mitchell Dean points out, “rather than addressing the state as a theoretical problem, he approaches it

⁴ In this respect, Foucault’s alternative analysis of power was welcomed by a number of scholars who have found a new way of thinking power and the state within his work. Gilles Deleuze, for example, in his book *Foucault*, points out the originality of Foucault’s concept of power. According to Deleuze, Foucault shows us power is neither a property that can be possessed, nor “the ‘privilege’ acquired or preserved, of the dominant class” like that of Marxists; but rather it is a strategy that is exercised (Deleuze, 2006: 25). Deleuze states that with this new concept of power, power can no longer be considered to be located solely within the state, on the contrary, the state itself appears as a consequence of microphysics of power. Foucault by rejecting “the theoretical privilege given to the State as an apparatus of power” broke “a complicity about the State” (ibid.: 30). Marianne Constable in her article entitled “Foucault & Walzer: Sovereignty, Strategy & the State”, asserts similar points. According to Constable, Foucault does not totally ignore the state, because “it is, after all, a creation of our still-existing knowledge of law and sovereignty, and institutions that are known as state apparatuses are involved in relations of power” (1991: 274-275). Constable (1991: 277) maintains that “Foucault challenges the centrality of the state and the centrality of political theory which posits our subjection to the state”. Moreover, while Foucault provides a genealogy of the texts concerning with the state, he also provides a history of the modern state (ibid.: 279). In the same fashion, Aretxaga (2003: 395) argues that “Foucault’s analysis of power as a field of multiple forces challenged the notion of the state as a unitary center of power, and more specifically it challenged the notion that the state was necessarily the most important target of political struggles”.



through the perspective of the practices and rationalities that compose the means of rule and government" (Dean, 1994: 153). Foucault's thought signals the point at which the classical accounts of the state should move away from an essentialist account of the state to an empirical analysis of the state. As Foucault argued, the state is "the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual statification"; [it] is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities" (Foucault, 2008: 77). That is why his aim was not to uncover the essence of the state, in the way that "Marx tried to extract the secret of the commodity" (ibid.: 78); but rather to expand the scope his analysis to "macro-physics" of power through the study of practices of governmentality (Jessop, 2006: 34).

Conclusion

In this paper, I provided a review of the Marxist theory of the state and examined Michel Foucault's relationship to Marxism through Louis Althusser with regard to the question of the state. In this respect, I argued that Foucault was influenced by Marx and Althusser's work. Yet, I tried to show that, unlike Marx and Althusser, Foucault avoids providing a state-centric political analysis which defines the whole of the political phenomena in terms of class struggle and the state. Moreover, I claimed that Foucault's turn to microphysics of power with *Discipline and Punish* (1975) can be read as a response to Althusser's essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* appeared in 1970 and illustrated that Foucault's account of power challenges the Marxist account of power, considering it relational, strategic rather than possessed and static. Foucault argued against the view that defines the state as a "monolith" in political theory; and on contrary, emphasises the importance of micro-political events that are exercised at the level of daily life. (Lynch, 2011: 23). With the micro-physics of power he looked for the way in which he can analyse the problem of power a micro-political perspective, because, for him, unlike his teacher, the way of understanding power, its function, development and effect is only possible on the basis of a micropolitical analysis and local practices. Nevertheless, Foucault's work on power has been strongly criticised by a significant number of scholars for ignoring the importance of the state and failing to address to the determining role that the state has in reproducing the relations of production. Particularly, Marxist scholars asserted that one of the most important aspects of Foucault's micro-physics of power is that in taking micro-political phenomena into account, he seems to neglect or to underestimate the importance of the centralised and centralising forms of power.⁵ However, it would be really misleading to claim that Foucault did not deal with the problem of the state (Routledge, 2013: 21) and "Foucault's work is of no relevance to an understanding of the development and operation of the modern state or that the issue of the state had been completely passed over" (Smart, 2002: 121).

⁵ In this respect, one of the most powerful critiques of Michel Foucault's analysis of power has probably been provided by Nicos Poulantzas, who was one of the key thinkers of the Marxist state debates in the late 1960s through the 1970s (Golder, 2007; Walters, 2012). For Poulantzas (2000), when Foucault formulates his own consideration of power, he attacks his peculiar imagination of Marxism; however, this reductive view of power had been abandoned by many unorthodox Marxist thinkers. Foucault, he argued, "tends to blot out power by dispersing it among tiny molecular vessels" (Poulantzas, 2000: 44). Due to the fact that, he ignores the efficacy of the state and the role of capitalist production relations and does not see the fact that the whole of the social phenomena revolves around the state and class struggle, a proper consideration of the state and its monopoly on violence is absent from Foucault's power analysis. Poulantzas does not deny the value of Foucault's analysis of micro-physics of power, he even states that "some of Foucault's analyses enrich Marxism greatly" (Poulantzas, 2008: 385); yet, according to him, Foucault was mistaken in rejecting the materiality of the state as established in "the relations of production" and "social division of labour" (Poulantzas, 2000: 67). Similar emphasis can be found in Madan Sarup's book entitled *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*. Sarup (1993: 84) claims that "an analysis of the state is absent from his work". According to Sarup, for Foucault, power rather than being a force that located in the state apparatus is a kind of network that passes through various local channels in every direction. Therefore, Sarup argues, to insist on the idea that the state plays such an exclusive role in shaping the relations of power may cause to overlook the other power mechanisms and effects of power which are not directly related to the state apparatus. On the contrary Foucault's consideration of power, Sarup argues, neglects the important of the state and focuses merely on micro-physics of power that can be seen only daily life practices. According to Sarup, Foucault does not believe that the state is the dominant form of power: "Foucault rejects the traditional conception of power as invested in a central, organizing state from which it filters down to successive levels" (ibid.: 104). To put it another way, Sarup claims that Foucault reduces the state to merely one of the ordinary forms of power that exists among many. Therefore, the question of the state, the relations of production and class struggle, are all absent from his analysis of micro-power in general.



In fact, such critics do not take into account the important shift in his work especially after the 1977 lectures at Collège de France which resulted in the appearance of the problem of the state. Foucault in his lectures of 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 at the Collège de France shifted his existing tool-box to "a new object" (Collier, 2009: 79) and integrated the macro-political question of the state, as both the "centralised" and "centralising" form of power (Foucault, 2002: 300) into his analysis. Nevertheless, his "exploration of the exercise of power clearly does not proceed on the basis of an assumption that power is vested in the state and its apparatuses" (Smart, 2002: 123) as in the case of Althusser's formulation.

Extended Abstract

Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault have been commonly brought together in political theory as leading figures of French philosophical thought. Their relationship has been discussed in various ways such as shared approaches, thoughts and attitudes towards humanist theories along with the Foucault's discontentment of the concept of ideology and their teacher-student interaction. However, less has been said about the relationship between their approaches to the question of the state. [I would like to point out that by the 'relationship' between Althusser and Foucault I do not mean 'indebtedness' but rather I mean 'influence'. For this reason, I am going to evaluate Althusser and Foucault's works "as expressions of opposing systems of thought" (Montag, 1995: 53). As Holden and Elden noted this would be better to discuss the relationship between them: "It has led to discussions of the way in which Foucault critiqued the focus on the state as an object of analysis, and took his distance from the Althusserian notion of Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses. On the one hand then, aside from the direct references, Althusser figures as a kind of absent presence in Foucault's works. When references to repression, the state and Marxism are encountered in Foucault's work as often as not Althusser is lurking somewhere in the background" (Holden & Elden, 2005: n.p.)]. Taking this account, this paper seeks to provide a short review of the relationship between Althusser and Foucault on the particular issue of the state. However, before analysing this relationship, some of the categorical bases of the Marxist approaches to the state primarily will be examined. As is well-known, the question of the state is of key importance for Marxism and the debate over the Marxist approach to the state has been long and engaging. Thus, to analyse it in a very detailed way here is neither my main concern nor necessary for my discussion of the relationship between Althusser and Foucault's approaches to the state. However, one can hardly discuss these approaches without first examining that Marx had upon their views of the state. Therefore, my intention is rather to summarize some of the crucial features of the classical Marxist conceptualisation of the state. As it is commonly acknowledged, Marxist considerations of the state are mainly derived from a broader framework of the Marxist theory: Marx's critiques on Hegel's formulation of rational State, Marx's theory of society and political economy, his analyses of some of the historical ruptures, such as the 1848 Revolution, Louis Napoléon Bonaparte's coup d'état, the Paris Commune in 1871, Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, and Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. Despite the fact that there are various interpretations of these texts about the nature of the state among different Marxist thinkers, what they have in common is that they mostly derive their state theories from some of the bases of the Marxist theory and it is these bases that draw the epistemological limits of their state debates. To put it another way, it is not possible to find a singular and sustained theory of the state in the classic texts of Marxism. However, this is not to deny the fact that they outlined the epistemological framework for addressing the question of the state and provided a starting point for a more detailed analysis of the state. It can be said that there are three essential points of the state in the Marxist classics: "the priority of the base", "the state as an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class" and "the relative autonomy of the state". As a matter of the fact that Althusser used these elements in order to develop a structural theory of the state. After providing a review of the Marxist theory of the state the paper will focus on Althusser's thoughts on the state in order to examine Michel Foucault's relationship to Marxism through Louis Althusser with regard to the question of the state, and it will be concluded that Althusser, does nothing but provides a state-centric political analysis which defines the whole of the political phenomena in terms of class struggle and the state. In the last section, the relationship between Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser with regard the problem of the state will be discussed in a more detailed way. I believe that Foucault's turn to an alternative analysis of power, that is micro-physics of power, can be seen as a response to Althusser's seminal work *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, which appeared in 1970 and I will show that Foucault's account of power challenges the Marxist account of power, considering it relational, strategic rather than possessed and static. To sum up, in this paper, I try to provide a review of the Marxist theory of the state and examined Michel Foucault's relationship to Marxism through Louis Althusser with regard to the question of the state. In this respect, I argue that Foucault was influenced by Marx and Althusser's work. Yet, I try to show that, unlike Marx and Althusser, Foucault avoids providing a state-centric political analysis which defines the whole of the political phenomena in terms of class struggle and the state.

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