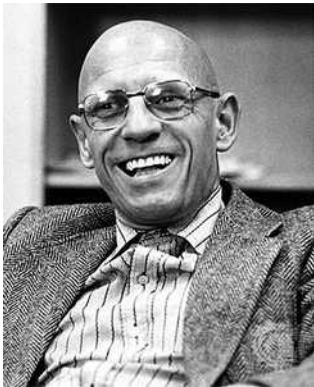


Michel Foucault

Pam Burnard

Born in Poitiers, France to an upper-middle-class family, on 15 October 1926, Michel Foucault became a French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist, philologist and literary critic. His theories addressed the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social control through social institutions. From 1966 to 1968, Michel Foucault lectured at the University of Tunis, Tunisia before returning to France where he became head of the philosophy department at the new experimental university of Paris VIII.



“Power produces, it produces reality” (Foucault, 1979, p. 194).

Foucault was profoundly and consistently interested in how ‘human beings are made subjects’ (Foucault, 1982:208) but not interested in ‘speaking subjects’ per se. He saw the modern preoccupation with self, what he called ‘**anthropological prejudice**’ as an inhibition to the possibilities of thought: ‘It is no longer possible to think in our days other than in the void left by man’s disappearance’ (Foucault, 1970:34). He talked about and enable creating ‘**the unfolding space in which it is once more possible to think**’ (p. 34). He attributed great importance to the act of writing as a **practice of freedom** and in a very late paper explored the possibilities of what he called ‘**self writing**’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 206), that is a process of self shaping through the production of texts. ‘When I write I do it above all to change myself and not to think the same thing as before’ (Foucault, 1991b, p. 27). Foucault is interested in the contingent **nature of practices**. He was interested in the ways in which power flows through architecture, organizational arrangements, professional expertise and knowledge, **systems of classification and ‘dividing practices’, and how it comes to be written onto bodies and into our conduct.**

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