Agnieszka Czarnecka
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

The Network on/of Power Relationships: What Can Be Seen through Michel Foucault's Lens?

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine two issues related both to Michel Foucault's philosophy of power and to Sidney Lumet's movie, *Network*; here interpreted through Foucauldian categories. The first problem concerns answering the question about the integrity of Foucault's *oeuvre* on power. The second one refers to the tension between two individualizing strategies: first, individualization by power, and second, the autonomous creation of self-identity by the use of the technologies of the self, present within the context of the philosopher's debate over power. We use *Network* as a framework for developing our argumentative line in both discussions. "From Foucault to *Network*" is not the only interpretative direction adopted in this paper. What we would like to achieve is to make of the article itself a kind of network where the conclusions we arrive at after having watched the film help us to better understand the philosopher's theory; thus, the direction "from *Network* to Foucault" is justified as well.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, power relationships, pastoral power, individualization, *Network*.

Słowa kluczowe: Michel Foucault, relacje władzy, władza pastoralna, indywidualizacja, *Sieć*.

> Jest prawda czasów, o których mówimy, i prawda ekranu, która mówi…
> Stanisław Bareja, *Miś*
>
> [There is the truth of the times we talk about, and the truth of the screen, which says…]
> Stanisław Bareja, *Teddy Bear*

Introduction

The objective of the paper is to answer questions concerning the integrity of Michel Foucault's vision of power. Foucault himself does not make the task any easier. First, by multiplying complicated terms referring to power (governmentality, technologies of the self, etc.), or endowing it with adjectives (disciplinary power, bio-power, pastoral power, etc.) he leaves us with an impression of the multitude of powers. Secondly, Foucault

stresses that he has no intention of formulating a "theory of power", which may cause one to suspect that such an intellectual decision was motivated by 'seeing' too many powers to be able to integrate them within a coherent concept. Thirdly, Foucault is not particularly attached to the idea of investigating power within only one context of social relationships. The scope of his analysis is vast and it includes, among other things, prisons, hospitals, sexual practices, etc. which again direct attention toward various 'powers' depending on the researched sphere.

Thus, before starting the analysis of Foucauldian power within the movies, one is confronted with a methodological decision having important interpretative consequences. If one argues that Foucault's philosophy of power consists of disparate concepts, one will be prone to check, for instance, how his understanding of power kept changing over time by matching the movies with respective 'phases' of his vision. In other words, the scholar will choose a different film to exemplify disciplinary power, another one to discuss Foucauldian bio-power, and yet a different one to clarify the main ideas of technologies of the self; provided that this is the way one categorizes them.

However, this is not the approach adopted in this paper. The reason why I decided to focus on only one movie, *Network*, lies in the fact that it shows how to combine all of the aspects of Foucauldian power into one – multidimensional, constantly tested and revised, but thus rich and complex – *oeuvre*. *Network* redirects our attention from the separation of Foucault's philosophy of power into scattered concepts of 'powers' assigned to various 'stages' toward their integration. I shall explain how this integration can be carried out in both Foucault's vision and the examined movie.

Network's action takes place at UBS – a television station subject to restructuring shortly after being taken over by a conglomerate called CCA (Communications Corporation of America). The changes that affect UBS are reflected in a clash between two generations of media people with different visions of television, as well as, of the ways in which they should be executed. Howard Beale (an aging newscaster played by Peter Finch) and his old friend, Max Schumacher (president of the news division, in this role, William Holden) represent the first group of journalists; they treat seriously a concept of a missionary role of television journalism. Predatory and workaholic Diana Christensen (Faye Dunaway) and Frank Hackett (one of the executives of CCA, played by Robert Duvall) belong to the generation that tends to replace idealism with a business-oriented attitude towards media.

The movie tells the story of Howard Beale who, instead of being dismissed because of poor ratings, becomes a new television star overnight. What earns him this sudden popularity is that he first announces that in a few days he will commit suicide live on the air; and secondly, that when given a chance to apologize to the audience, he instead confesses that television does nothing but lie. While Beale's behavior is seen by his coworkers as a symptom of depression or even madness, surprisingly, he is given his own show. The guiding spirit of this controversial decision is Christensen who, after having consulted current ratings and the front pages of major newspapers, realizes that in Beale's new bizarreness lies the potential to create a highly profitable broadcast.

What validates the juxtaposition of Foucault's political philosophy and Lumet's *Network* is not only the possibility of identifying a set of substantial similarities concerning the representation of power, but – above all – the presence, both in the philoso-

pher's theory and in the film, of a never-ending tension between opposed strategies of individualization. While the first one is carried out by the existing power, the second one refers to the notion of government of one's self as being the result of the technologies of the self. Beale, Christensen, Schumacher, and Hackett – despite all that differentiates them – seem to be successful people with strong personalities and deep convictions about their own roles. It would be intellectually valuable to test whether and to what extent the perception of the characters as being self-governed changes alongside the use of Foucauldian philosophical perspective.

Network's Network of Strategic Power Relationships

I find it legitimate to begin the interpretation of the movie from its title. At first glance *Network* is to be associated with the television network, that is, with the changing structures of UBS, and its new place within a bigger network, CCA. As the plot develops, a new level of the network becomes visible, namely that of the growing global connections between companies. However, for the purposes of this paper another kind of network will be examined. When seen through a philosophical lens – although there is no evidence that the authors of the film intended to refer to Michel Foucault's works – *Network* servers as an dequate metaphor for a Foucauldian network of strategic power relations. To quote Foucault:

> […] the study of this micro-physics presupposes that the power […] is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension.[1]

A viewer familiar with *Discipline and Punish* is able to notice that the phenomenon of power in Lumet's movie ceases to be represented as possessed only by a political ruler who manifests it through the use of law and force. That is political power becomes only one of the possible embodiments of power, or rather power relationships, and not its only incarnation, as was the case traditionally. I argue that drawing on Foucault's categories one can discern from the movie's social reality a network of ever-changing power relationships: economic, media, sexual, and political ones. On the one hand, the ability to indicate strategic power relationships in the movie is an example of the way in which philosophical background helps to introduce new interpretative perspectives within film studies. On the other hand, a space for intellectual feedback opens up. After having examined how these complex power relationships function within the movie, one gets an additional tool to evaluate Foucault's theory.

I shall focus now on a few examples from *Network*, making use of them to identify the most distinctive attributes of Foucauldian power relationships, such as reversibility, decenteredness, multidimensionality, the focus of one's actions on the others' actions, and the productivity of power relationships and their intrinsic link with knowledge.

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[1] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York 1995, p. 26.

Along with the idea of entrusting Beale with a completely new show, Christensen develops a plan to produce a *Mao Tse Tung Hour* – a show based on authentic footage of acts of terror (bank robberies, kidnappings, hijackings, etc.) filmed by the terrorists themselves and delivered to the UBS station. It may seem that because the TV station hires the Ecumenical Liberation Party, it is the former that is in possession of power. In fact, the relationship between the television station and the terrorist group shows clearly that neither of them constitutes an unquestioned centre of power; rather, they need each other. On the one hand, the media depends on the terrorists because, thanks to sensational material directly from the attack sites, given exclusively to one TV station in the country, UBS is able to attract a large audience which translates into a considerable enhancement of its ratings. Timing also counts here. The popularity of the *Mao Tse Tung Hour* is owing not only to the public's general bloodlust, but also to the urge of Americans in the seventies to find a way of expressing social anger. One finds in the movie recurring references to the Watergate scandal, the oil crisis, and the war in Vietnam. This is also, according to Christensen, the main reason why the audience in the film reacts with such enthusiasm to Beale's new embodiment. The American public has recognized in him a long awaited prophet who will preach against the hypocrisies of the times they live in.

On the other hand, the radicals from the Ecumenical Liberation Army are well aware of the benefits that will result from getting their own broadcast, the footage of which will be accompanied by their commentary – that is, a platform to propagate their own ideas and activities which, especially in the pre-internet era, is not to be underestimated. Making use of Foucault's categories, we are confronted here with power's reversibility – both the television station and the terrorist group are involved in a subtle play in which power, far from being a stable possession of any organization, constantly circulates in a network of mutually dependent relationships.

Foucault's relational notion of power entails the displacement of attention from the subject to the relationship as such. "We need to cut off the King's head",[2] Foucault concludes, commenting on the inclination of political thinkers as well as ordinary people to imagine power as personified. In the movie such a traditional way of conceptualizing power is also present: "Who the hell's running this network, you or some conglomerate called CCA?"[3] – asks Schumacher in his talk with Edward Ruddy (chairman of the board of UBS, played by William Prince). However, the model that prevails here is the one of the decenteredness of power relationships. Briefly, it turns out soon that CCA, which has taken over the UBS television station and has been presented as the twelfth largest company in the world, is so seriously in debt (to the tune of two billion dollars) that it is about to be bought by some mysterious Saudi Arabian investor. In this context, when faced with a network of constantly circulating power relationships, it would be of no explanatory value to express the problem in terms of a power wielder.

It has already been mentioned that when interpreted through Foucault's categories the movie's social reality can be seen as a network of power relationships deriving from various fields (political, economic, sexual, cultural, etc.). Foucault identifies them only to highlight the complexity of spheres of power's activity, but by doing so he does not

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    [2] M. Foucault, *Truth and Power* [in:] *idem*, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. C. Gordon, New York 1980, p. 121.
    [3] P. Chayefsky, *Network*, https://sfy.ru/?script=network (access: 27.03.2018).

mean to emphasize their separateness; in fact, different kinds of power relationships constantly intersect and interdepend, and thus are to be understood as "a set of actions on possible actions".[4]

The movie relationship between Diana Christensen and Max Schumacher – the representatives of different generations of journalists – combines several interconnected levels of power relationships. First, a master-student relationship is identifiable, but it belongs mainly to the past – Diana, who as a student used to see in Max a model journalist, no longer shares his vision of their profession. Secondly, in the present context her adolescent fascination with Max transforms into an outright effort to seduce this middle-aged man. Thirdly, the bluntness that speaks through her seductive strategy is even more visible in her professional relationship with Max. Some kind of emotional involvement with this married, much older and more powerful man does not prevent Diana from admitting with disarming honesty that, no matter what, she is going to take over Max's post in the news division.

The object of professional disagreement between Max and Diana is Howard Beale's new show. Whereas in Max's opinion Beale had suffered a breakdown and, instead of reaching jeremiads on the air, he should undergo psychological treatment, Diana, who is not interested at all in the reasons for the reporter's metamorphosis, treats Beale only as a tool to create the highest-rated show possible. Max's attitude toward the issue is motivated, besides loyalty and concern for a friend, by an image of the news division that accentuates its informative function, which clashes with Diana's openness to infotainment.

The intersection of sexual and professional power relationships is brought out well in a scene featuring a conversation that takes place late in the evening in Max's office (at that time he is still responsible for the news division). Diana tries to convince Max to let her produce Howard Beale's show and, in order to increase her chances, she combines rational arguments with a seductive strategy. From a professional point of view this 'battle' is temporarily lost (Max decides to keep the old format of Howard's broadcast), but as for sexual power relations Diana is able to act upon Max's actions successfully (he invites her to dinner and this is how their affair begins). Finally, due to some personnel changes, Max is dismissed and his position, as predicted, is taken over by Diana who does not hesitate to cast Beale in the role of a latter-day prophet.

I shall now discuss some further attributes of strategic power relationships as Foucault understands them – in particular, power's productivity and its intrinsic link with knowledge. The French philosopher explains that, because of the traditional overemphasis on the repressive face of power, its productivity is not duly appreciated, nor even noticed.

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.[5]

A particular instance of power's productivity is power-knowledge. This distinctive way of writing the term, as is often the case with Foucauldian vocabulary, is not accidental, but conveys important philosophical meaning. Power-knowledge resembles a weave

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[4] M. Foucault, *The Subject and Power* [in:] *idem, Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. J.D. Faubion, New York 2000, p. 341.
[5] M. Foucault, *Truth and Power…*, p. 119.

where power and knowledge are inextricably linked, which precludes putting them into a cause-and-effect scheme. In fact, they act simultaneously and, what is crucial, the subject is seen not as the initiator of power-knowledge relations, but as one of their effects[6]

In his show Howard Beale gives a highly critical speech on television to make the audience aware of the extent to which people watching it function as 'end products' of its power-knowledge; this is how the individualizing power operates.

> You do whatever the tube tells you. You dress like the tube, you eat like the tube, you raise your children like the tube, you think like the tube.[7]

Power relations here are subtle actions that operate mainly on the subconscious level, and thus influence the subjects' possible actions, and their identities. The reference to knowledge in this context is double: television not only manifests its power through the transfer of some kinds of knowledge that forms people's everyday behaviors, but media success – viewers' acquisition – depends also on knowledge of the viewing population. It should be remembered that Foucault is famous for his studies on populations, which besides the biological dimension of their existence (population as the human species), interests the him also as a psycho-sociological phenomenon (population as the public).

> The public […] is the population seen under the aspect of its opinions, ways of doing things, forms of behavior, customs, fears, prejudices, and requirements; it is what one gets a hold on through education, campaigns, and convictions. The population is therefore everything that extends from biological rootedness through the species up to the surface that gives one a hold provided by the public.[8]

Taking into consideration this twofold aspect of the population and its link with power-knowledge enables us to problematize power relationships between television and the audience, which is one of the main topics in *Network*. In order to increase ratings, and thus the company's profits, people who work in television have to get access to the viewers' needs. Since knowledge of the population in its entirety does not serve the purpose, population has to be dissected according to suitably selected criteria (sex, age, profession, interests, etc.), which requires specific knowledge. The analysis of ratings is one more example of the use of knowledge to consolidate television's power. All in all, the way power-knowledge functions is exemplified by the interplay between the needs of the viewers from different target groups, constantly consulted ratings, and the changing content of the programs.

If we used the traditional imagery of power as someone's possession to interpret *Network*, we would miss a constitutive element of power relationships, which is their reversibility: "they are not univocal; they define innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion".[9] The flaw of the phrase "television possesses power" lies in ignorance of the public's role. The reversibility of power relations in this context means that a television station does not wield any universal power over the viewers since

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[6] See M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish…*, pp. 27–28.
[7] P. Chayefsky, *Network...*
[8]   M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. M. Senellart, London 2007, p. 105.
[9]   M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish…*, p. 27.

media success is fragile and dependent on the programs' popularity with the audience, in other words, on the public's reactions to possible media actions. To be more specific, as soon as Beale's prophecies cease to please people, and there is no legal way to get rid of the troublesome showman, Diana instigates TV executives to hire the ELA to murder him live on the air on his show. As the film's narrator comments, this is "the first known instance of a man who was killed because he had lousy ratings".[10]

It might seem that the last scene of the movie contradicts the Foucauldian concept of power, since we encounter here a traditional image of power: an easily identifiable decision maker ends a conflict by ordering an assassination. In fact, the philosopher never claims that the establishment of power relationships results in the eradication of the use of force.[11] Foucault only attempts to show that the relationship between power and physical violence is complex, so as to stop equating them and make us aware of the variety, and often subtlety, of the means through which power operates.

How to Conduct the Public's Conducts?

Within Foucault's field of studies on power one can distinguish the phenomenon of governmentality. Foucault analyses the whole spectrum of the art of government: starting from the political form of government, through pastoral government, and ending up with a question of "how to govern oneself".[12] The order of the types of government listed here has nothing to do with chronology. In fact, government of one's self through the technologies of the self dates back to antiquity, whereas the art of modern Western political government is understood by Foucault as deriving, to some extent, from pastoral power. However, the indicating of all these forms of government is not a matter of a simply random enumeration. First, Foucault interprets them in terms of continuity:

> There is upward continuity in the sense that whoever wants to be able to govern the state must first know how to govern himself, and then, at another level, his family, his goods, his lands, after which he will succeed in governing the state [...]. Then there is continuity in the opposite, downward direction in the sense that when a state is governed well, fathers will know how to govern their families, their wealth, their goods, and their property well, and individuals will also conduct themselves properly.[13]

Secondly, the defining aspect of each form of government, or rather governmentality as such, is the question of "conduct of conducts",[14] be it on he level of the individual, family, Church, or state.

What will be argued in this section is that Howard Beale's performances on his new show, which was produced by Diana Christensen, are to be situated at the nexus of strate-

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[10] P. Chayefsky, *Network...*

[11] See M. Foucault, *The Subject and Power...*, pp. 340–341.

[12] M. Foucault, *Governmentality* [in:] *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, P. Miller, Chicago 1991, p. 87.

[13] M. Foucault, *Security...*, pp. 132–133.

[14] M. Foucault, *The Subject and Power...*, p. 341.

gic power relations and power as governmentality. Moreover, I argue that the showman's practices contain the potential to be seen as a representation of a *quasi*-pastoral power. Beale's entanglement in power relationships is highly ambiguous which is very much in keeping with Foucault's multidimensional concept of power. An example of the complexity of his entanglement is to be found in the scene from the beginning of his 'career' as a television prophet, when he delivers a memorable speech denouncing the miserable conditions of American state and society (recession, violence, ecological problems, and materialism, just to name a few). The ex-presenter wants his viewers to get up, open the windows and yell: "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this any more!"[15] People react enthusiastically and follow his instructions. The paradoxality of his situation lies in the double role that he plays within the television industry's power relationships. One could say that the success of his program is nothing other than a manifestation of the practical functioning of power-knowledge. Emotional needs of the population (anger, frustration, fear, sense of isolation) have been properly identified based on public opinion studies. This kind of knowledge, instead of serving only scientific purposes, for instance, better understanding of actual social moods, is used as a tool to create content for the broadcast that will attract the public by appealing to its recognized fears and desires. In light of the above interpretation Beale as a showman represents the network (CCA) which means that the high ratings of his broadcast contribute to the network's revenues, and thus strengthen CCA's position in the market. However, the position of this new television star needs some nuancing. It would be too simplistic to see in Howard Beale only a relay within a complex network of strategic power relationships, a faceless point through which power circulates. We can see his appeal as the first among several manifestations of Howard's governmental power or, more precisely, his *quasi*-pastoral power.

As part of his general characterization of the Christian pastorate as a technology of power, Foucault indicates, among other things, the pastor's care for "the flock in its movement",[16] regardless of its geographic location, as well as his focus on people's salvation in the next world. The specificity of the Christian version of salvation lies in the fact that it is to be attained not only by the flock as a whole but also by each of its members individually. In order to achieve this twofold goal the pastor (a shepherd) builds a connection with a believer (a sheep) using detailed knowledge of the latter's material needs, and – what is more – his or her sins revealed during confession. What especially interests Foucault is how pastoral power triggers the processes of individualization. In the context of the Christian pastorate the construction of the individual's identity consists of a meticulous analysis of one's virtues and vices. That is why such categories as "sinners" *vs.* "virtuous" dominate within the range of identities shaped by the power. The members of the flock subject to this kind of individualization are to produce their inner truths as a result of self-examination and confession. Contrary to the practices of the self-examination developed in ancient Greece and Rome, the aim of which was to incite one to work on one's self-improvement, the Christian's self-examination helps to make his or her inner life more transparent to the shepherd, and thus totally obedient to the spiritual guidance

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[15]   P. Chayefsky, *Network...*
[16]   M. Foucault, *Security...*, p. 171.

of the latter. Therefore, instead of the individual developing a capacity to conduct him or herself, the conducts of the sheep become permanently conducted by the pastor.

As has already been mentioned, Foucault, examining modern Western political governmentality, finds its roots in the Christian pastorate. According to his reading, the 'pastors' of the modern state (the officials of public institutions) share with Christian shepherds a focus on salvation which in its secularized form means, among other things, the set of activities intended to constantly improve the population's health, wellbeing, security, protection against accidents, etc. The success of thus understood earthly salvation depends – as was the case with the pastoral power – on precise knowledge of the population (macro-level) and the individuals (micro-level). The acquired knowledge is to enable the increase of the state's forces through a proper conduct of its population's conducts,[17] and – as already discussed in the case of the Christian pastorate – it serves individualization under the auspices of the political power (*assujetissement*); a human being can be categorized – and thus produced – as "mentally ill", "sexual deviant", "delinquent", etc. Within pastoral power and the political art of government two complementary strategies coexist: totalization and individualization, that is, simultaneously addressing the flock (the population) and each of its members (the individual).

Secularized pastorship as embodied by Howard Beale means his internalization of the role of a prophet. Although this term is used for the first time cynically by Diana referring to the unexpected change within the presenter's behavior, Howard himself takes his metamorphosis seriously and claims to be "imbued with some special spirit […] connected to all living things, to flowers, birds, to all the animals of the world […] [and] on the verge of some great ultimate truth".[18] Howard's activity is to be situated within a *quasi*-pastoral power because of his own refusal to associate what he sees as his task with any specific religion ("It's not a religious feeling at all"[19]) and his concern for people's earthly salvation. His flock is "population as the public". Since earthly salvation is at stake one may try to link his practices with the Foucauldian political art of government, but I find such a link groundless. In fact, what interests Beale does not have much in common with thinking in terms of conducting the population's conducts in order to intensify the state's potential in a broad sense. All in all, his power is neither pastoral power *per se*, nor political art of government in the sense given to this term by Foucault. However, to call it *quasi*-pastoral seems legitimate because of its main goal which is salvation for both the flock (the public) and for each person (appeal to the individuals watching television). Within the movie's process of salvation there are a few stages to be indicated, and they are all rhythmed by the content of Beale's programs.

It should be noted that his first show has not only a critical side (Beale helping people to name and express their negative feelings about society, strongly inspired by 1970s America), but also a productive one – when driven by, what he calls, his "inner voice" he wants the public to admit: "I'm a human being, goddammit! My life has value!"[20] What is produced here is self-affirmation. I appraise the speech to be the first step of his salvation strategy during which some socially important message is conveyed: he indi-

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[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 407–422.
[18] P. Chayefsky, *Network*...
[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] *Ibidem*.

vidualizes the members of the public by dignifying their experiences as human beings in their particularity.

In his subsequent shows he takes things a step further. This time the object of his criticism is television itself. While on the air, he reveals with disarming honesty some of the medium's malpractices (manipulation of the audience, creation of illusions, responsibility for causing addiction to television). Then, in a more positive vein, he appeals emotionally to his viewers to turn their TV sets off and direct their attention toward themselves: "If you want truth, go to God, go to your guru, go to yourself because that's the only place you'll ever find any real truth. But, man, you're never going to get any truth from us".[21] As a result of these speeches people are to regain their own voice and realize that they are not masses to be arbitrarily molded, in this case, by the media. Beale's rhetoric resembles a preparation of the groundwork for the manifestation of the public's acting on its own behalf. After one of the shows, in response to his call to stop the takeover of CCA by the Saudi investor, six million people send their protest letters to the White House. This protest makes the audience realize that it is able to conduct a meaningful action. It is also a good example of how totalization and individualization relate to each other, namely, efficient action (blockage of the transaction) depends on a massive feedback, which, in turn, consists of millions of individual decisions to sign and send protest letters.

Although in the role of a prophet Beale does not follow a pastor's example in requiring form people to keep meticulous records of their everyday deeds, he, just like the latter, is deeply attached to the idea of spiritual direction of the public's thoughts and conducts. However the purpose of the showman's guidance differs substantially from the pastor's. The Christian shepherd promotes such practices as self-examination, confession, and spiritual guidance to prompt the believers to renounce their earthly selves which are seen as being responsible for people's egoism, as well as for making their salvation in the next world impossible. The eradication of the individual's inner truths and making him or her obedient to the truth provided by the pastor – a guarantee of salvation – represents what Foucault calls the self's "mortification".[22] On the other hand, the earthly salvation toward which Beale conducts his flock resembles Foucauldian technologies of the self. One of the crucial issues examined by him is the problem of individuality, or more precisely a complicated relationship between two types of self-identity: one created autonomously, and another one being a product of individualizing strategies of power – be they pastoral, political, or other. Foucault uses the notion of the technologies of the self to talk about

> [...] techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power.[23]

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[21] *Ibidem.*

[22] M. Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim*: *Toward a Critique of Political Reason* [in:] *idem*, *Power: Essential Works...*, p. 311.

[23] M. Foucault, *Sexuality and Solitude* [in:] *idem*, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, P. Rabinow (ed.), New York 1997, p. 177.

What differentiates the technologies of the self from Christian self-renunciation is, first, the fact that they are directed towards working on the earthly self. Second, thanks to turning to oneself, the individual – instead of being endangered with egoism – attains, among other things, self-awareness (better understanding of oneself, and one's capabilities and limitations) and an ability to control his or her passions. In other words, the work on the self is a particular instance of transforming oneself into a free subject. Third, as a result of practicing care for oneself, the individual's conducts are not conducted by any 'pastor', since a person has learned how to govern him- or herself independently. One finds here another justification to call Beale's power *quasi*-pastoral – the showman, instead of criticizing the alleged egoism of one's earthly self, interprets the work on the self as a condition of the individual's freedom and as a laboratory of citizenship.

As soon as Beale, influenced by the rhetoric of CCA chairman Arthur Jensen (Ned Beatty), radically changes the main topic of his speeches:

> […] is dehumanization such a bad word? The whole world is becoming humanoid, creatures that look human but aren't. The whole world's people are becoming mass-produced, programmed, wired, insensate things useful only to produce and consume other mass-produced things, all of them as unnecessary and useless as we are […][24]

people react immediately by turning off their television sets. I interpret their move as, first, the evidence of the effects Beale's conduct has had on the audience's conducts, in other words, it shows the extent to which the spectators internalized his preaching regarding their individuality and the necessity of looking into themselves as preconditions for their development in various spheres, including the political. And that explains why the flock, after having understood how important it is to cherish the uniqueness of every single freely created subject, disapproves of such an anti-humanist vision of life and chooses not to be conducted by this prophet any more. Thus, taking into account the essential change within Howard's Beale's message, the decision to turn off their television sets symbolizes the flock's counter-conduct, of which numerous examples are to be found in Foucauldian pastoral power.[25]

Conclusion

I argue that Foucault, analyzing the practices of power in different social contexts and writing about them, resembles a photographer who changes the zoom setting in his camera. In that way, depending on what the target of his 'zoom' is in a given period of his work, he focuses either on strategic power relationships, or on pastoral power, or finally on technologies of the self. When strategic power relationships are at stake, the philosophical zoom is set on 'distant' mode, so as to grasp the power operating on a global scale as a network of political, economic, media, sexual, etc., relations. These are exemplified in the movie in the functioning of the "headless" television network, where all of

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[24] P. Chayefsky, *Network…*
[25] See M. Foucault, *Security…*, pp. 268–304.

these interdependent relationships are reflected. Secondly, in the case of pastoral power – let us call it the intermediate 'blow-up' – the French philosopher is interested in the specificity of power within Christianity and in the effects of its appropriation by modern Western governments. As a result of the use of the intermediate zoom, while interpreting *Network*, Howard Beale and his relationship with the flock (the public) is examined and serves here as an example of a *quasi*-pastoral power. Finally, whenever Foucault investigates technologies of the self, the closest level of philosophical zoom concentrates on the individuals' relationships with themselves. I argue that the movie equivalent of such a practice is, among other things, the process of individualization experienced by Beale's public. What Foucault's zoom and its *Network*'s exemplification have in common – no matter which mode they are set to, distant, intermediate, or close – is their constant focus on power's relationality, which makes both the thinker's *oeuvre* and the movie coherent.

The second issue I shall refer to is, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the tension between two strategies of individualization, perceptible both within Foucault's thinking and in *Network*, which justifies their comparison. In my interpretation Beale can be seen as a person who has experienced a kind of earthly salvation – a deep internal change as a result of which he feels self-governed, and thus free, for instance, no one within the television station is allowed to write speeches for him, nor is anyone able to stop the showman's new anti-humanist rhetoric by the use of business arguments. This is the image that we get when using the close (the showman and his relation to himself) or intermediate (Howard as a *quasi*-pastor of the public) zooms. However, the image changes as soon as the philosophical zoom used by the interpreter is set to 'distant' mode, that is, focused on television power relationships. From this perspective a new Howard Beale owes the identity individualizing power of the television station which, as a business-oriented institution, instrumentalizes his mental breakdown by attaching the label of a latter-day-prophet to the presenter and selling him as such to the audience. "Howard-the-prophet" is a product that has to be eliminated in the most literal sense of the term, once his shows ceases to please the public. In this context his death would be read as a symbol of the victory of the individualization which the power defined over the one that stems from the individual work on the self.

While examining Diana's position within the network of television power relationships (distant zoom), she looks like an individual able to create herself (she seems to know herself and her capabilities) as well as her professional environment. The young journalist takes responsibility for, first, categorizing Beale as a prophet and, subsequently, for taking the decision to have him assassinated. However, the image of Diana's identity changes substantially when seen through her ex-lover's eyes. In his farewell conversation with her Max concludes bitterly:

> It's too late, Diana! There's nothing left in you that I can live with! You're one of Howard's humanoids … You are television incarnate, Diana, indifferent to suffering, insensitive to joy. All of life is reduced to the common rubble of banality. War, murder, death are all the same to you as bottles of beer. The daily business of life is a corrupt comedy. You even shatter the sensations of time and space into split-seconds and instant replays[26].

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[26]   P. Chayefsky, *Network...*

In Max's opinion Diana's individuality is nothing other than the effect of the individualizing power of television. That explains why the woman, who "learned life from Bugs Bunny"[27] and deeply internalized television's mechanisms, looks at everyday events as if they were only a combination of various television genres in which the actors who do not match their scenarios' counterparts are automatically replaced by a better cast.

As was mentioned in the introduction, two directions are taken in this paper: "From *Network* to Foucault" and "From Foucault to *Network*", which makes the interpretation a kind of network in itself. The conclusions after the adoption of the first interpretative perspective are as follows: first, *Network* can be referred to as an argument in a debate on the integrity of Foucault's philosophy of power (zoom metaphor). Secondly, the movie opens a new way of reading the concept of Foucauldian pastoral power, here called *quasi*-pastoral power. Its novelty consists in daring to imagine a version of pastoral power that does not necessarily lead to self-renunciation (individualization by the power), but can serve as a trigger for the government of the self (autonomous individualization). On the other hand, thanks to the philosophically grounded interpretation of *Network* – the direction "from Foucault to *Network*" – we are offered more complex and ambiguous images of individualization and its relationship with power, depending on the settings of the 'zoom' used in at any given moment, than if we watched the movie without a proper theoretical preparation.

Sieć (o) relacji(-ach) władzy. Co widać przez obiektyw Michela Foucaulta?

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza dwóch zagadnień związanych zarówno z filozofią władzy Michela Foucaulta, jak i z filmem Sidneya Lumeta *Sieć*, interpretowanym przy użyciu pojęć francuskiego myśliciela. Pierwszy z problemów badawczych dotyczy odpowiedzi na pytanie o integralność Foucaultowskiej twórczości na temat władzy. Drugi zaś odnosi się do napięcia pomiędzy dwiema strategiami indywidualizacji: (a) indywidualizacją jako rezultatem działania władzy; (b) autonomiczną kreacją własnej tożsamości z wykorzystaniem „technologii siebie". Film *Sieć* stanowi źródło argumentów filozoficznych w obu dyskusjach. Kierunek „Od Foucaulta do *Sieci*" nie jest jedyną propozycją interpretacyjną przedstawioną w artykule. Skoro wnioski, jakie zostaną wyciągnięte z krytycznej analizy filmu, mają służyć lepszemu zrozumieniu teorii politycznej filozofa, będziemy dowodzić, że odwrotny kierunek interpretacyjny, czyli „Od *Sieci* do Foucaulta", również jest uzasadniony.

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[27] *Ibidem*.

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