



Risk, Power and the State: After Foucault

Magnus Hörnqvist

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Risk, Power and the State addresses how power is exercised in and by contemporary state organisations. Through a detailed analysis of programmatic attempts to shape behaviour linked to considerations of risk, this book pursues the argument that, whilst Foucault is useful for understanding power, the Foucauldian tradition – with its strands of discourse analysis, of governmentality studies, or of radical Deleuzian critique – suffers from a lack of clarification on key conceptual issues. Oriented around four case studies, the architecture of the book devolves upon the distinction between productive and repressive power. The first two studies focus on productive power: the management of long-term unemployment in the public employment service and cognitive-behavioural interventions in the prison service. Two further studies concern repressive interventions: the conditions of incarceration in the prison service and the activity of the customs service. These studies reveal that power, as conceptualised within the Foucauldian tradition, must be modified. A more complex notion of productive power is needed, which covers interventions that appeal to desires, and which govern both at a distance and at close range. Additionally, the simplistic paradigm of repressive power is called into question by the need to consider the organising role of norms and techniques that circumvent agency. Finally, it is argued, Foucault's concept of strategies – which accounts for the thick web of administrative directives, organisational routines, and techniques that simultaneously shape the behaviour of targeted individuals and members of the organisation – requires an organisational dimension that is often neglected in the Foucauldian tradition.

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