

First of all,
who is
this guy,
Michel
Foucault?

(And how do I
pronounce his
name?)

Let's answer the second
question first.

First name is pronounced
like the English girl's name,
Michelle. Foucault is **foo**
as in foey, plus **co** as in
coco-nut, coming down
harder on the coconut.

Who was he?

A French guy, of a peculiar French type,

THE FAMOUS INTELLECTUAL.

The Famous
Intellectual of the
generation before
his was



JEAN-PAUL SARTRE,

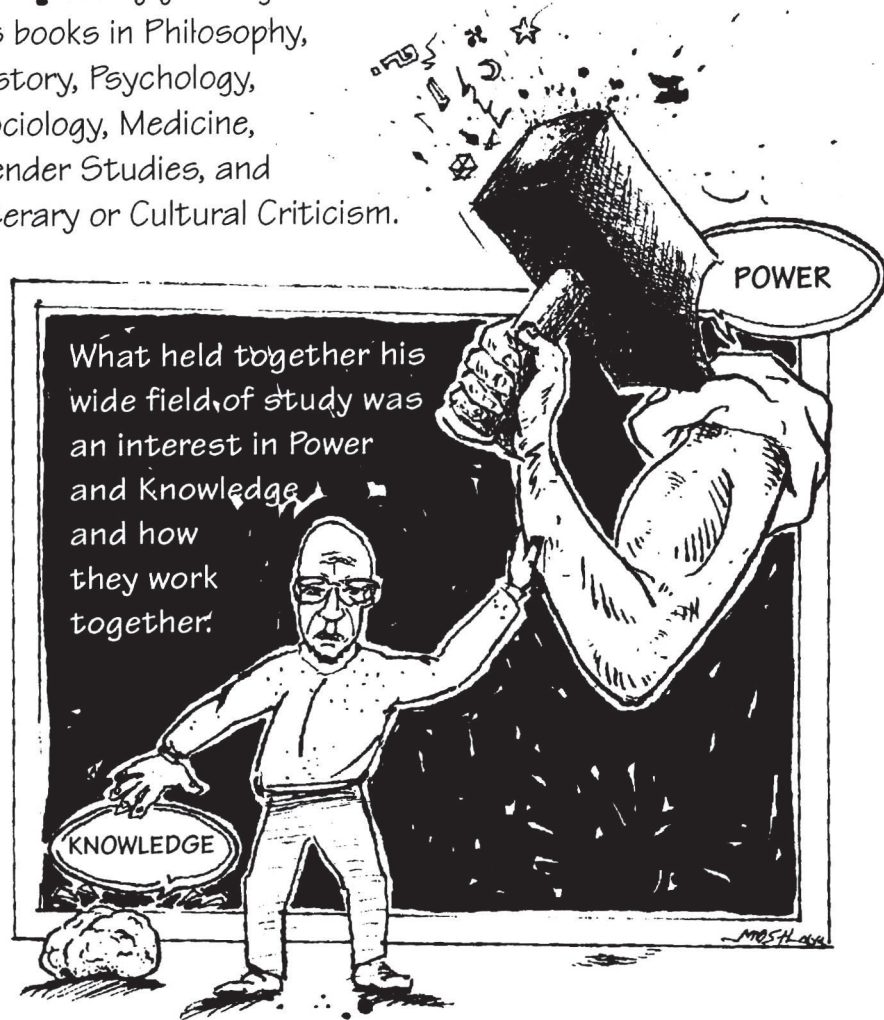
who really defined the type: a thinker, with thoughts on a wide variety of subjects, popularly recognized as an important national resource, expected to say brilliant, unexpected things, to get involved in politics from time to time, and to symbolize knowledge and thought for the nation and the world.

After Sartre, there was no agreement about who stood on the intellectual pinnacle.

Struggling towards the peak in the sixties were:



He worked in so many different fields that it is very hard to categorize his work. In a bookstore today you might find his books in Philosophy, History, Psychology, Sociology, Medicine, Gender Studies, and Literary or Cultural Criticism.



You might say he started with the truism
"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER,"

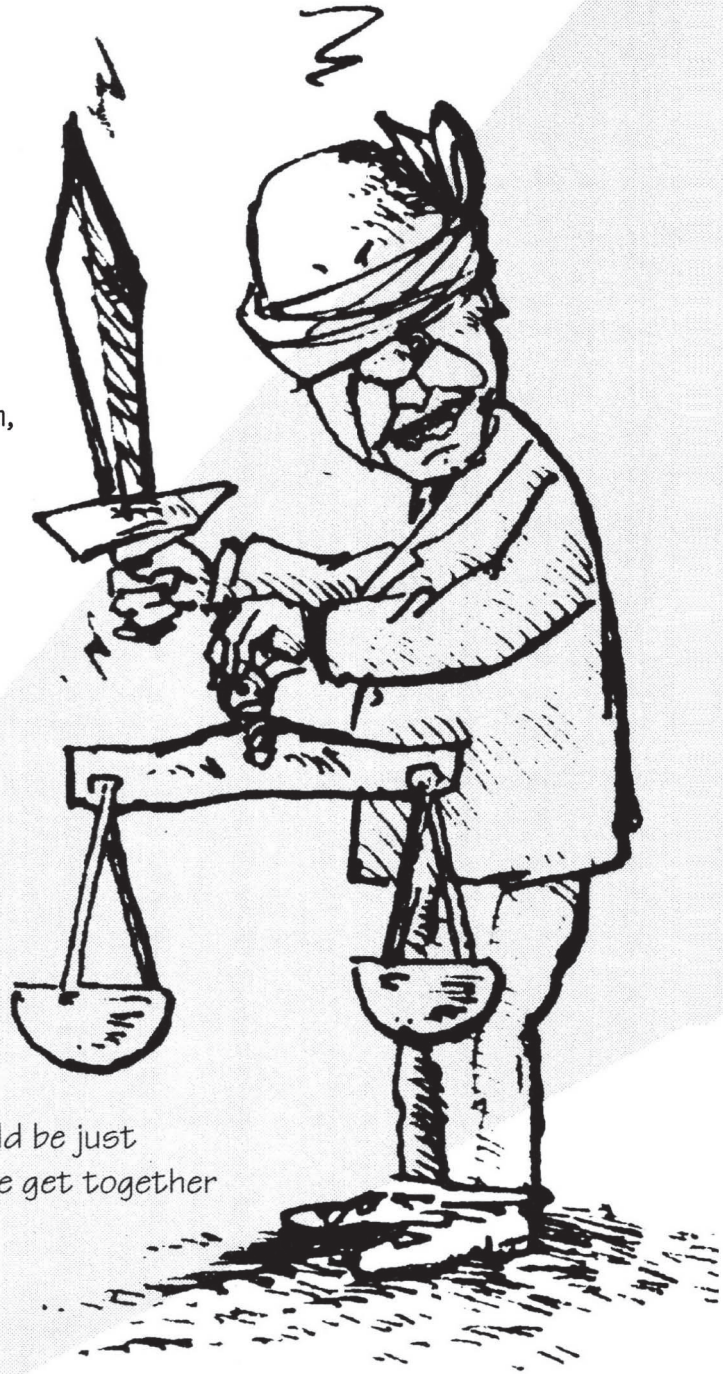
took it apart, analyzed it, and put it back together.
He was particularly interested in Knowledge *of* human
beings, and Power that acts *on* human beings.

Suppose we start with the statement

"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER"

but doubt that we have any knowledge of
absolute truth.

If you take away the
idea of absolute truth,
what does knowledge
mean?



Maybe knowledge would be just
what a group of people get together
and decide is true.

But hang on!

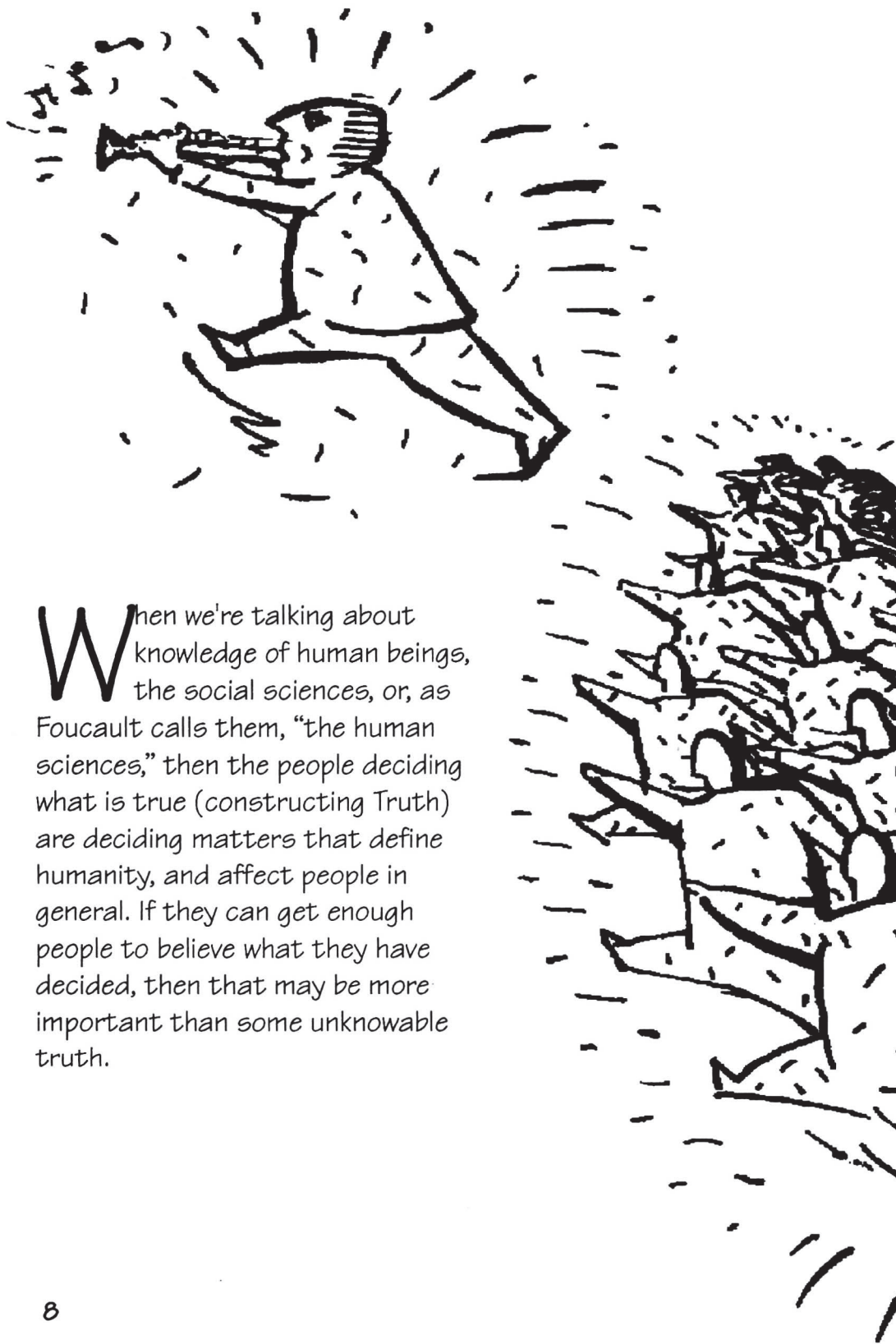
According to Foucault, the might of

**MIGHT MAKES
RIGHT**

may not be all that different
from the power in

**KNOWLEDGE
IS POWER.**

In one case physical force, in
the other mental force, is
exerted by a powerful minority
who are thus able to impose
their idea of the right, or the
true, on the majority.



When we're talking about knowledge of human beings, the social sciences, or, as Foucault calls them, "the human sciences," then the people deciding what is true (constructing Truth) are deciding matters that define humanity, and affect people in general. If they can get enough people to believe what they have decided, then that may be more important than some unknowable truth.

But hang on!

How do some people get the rest of us to accept their ideas of who we are? That involves some power to create belief. And these same people who decide what is knowledge in the first place can easily claim to be the most knowledgeable—to know more about us than we do ourselves.





**WE'VE ALL BEEN ON
THE RECEIVING END OF
PHYSICAL POWER**