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EDITORIAL

This special edition of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* is devoted to Michel Foucault. Foucault was born in Poitiers, France in 1926 and died in Paris in 1984. He founded the philosophy department at the newly established Vincennes Experimental University Centre in 1969, before being appointed to the chair in the History of Systems of Thought at the *Collège de France* in 1970.

Foucault's first work was in the field of psychiatry: he wrote a long introduction to the French translation of Ludwig Binswanger's *Traum und Existenz*, published in French in 1954 as *Le rêve et l'existence*, and *Maladie mentale et Personnalité* also published in 1954 (which he later extensively revised and published under the title *Maladie mentale et Psychologie* in 1962), both of which testify to the influence of existential phenomenology on Foucault's early thinking. Foucault himself was at pains later to disavow this influence, allying himself instead with what in the introduction to the English translation of Georges Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*, he called "a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality, and of the concept", which he contrasted with "a philosophy of experience, meaning, of the subject."¹ Foucault argued that this division within French philosophy had roots that went back to the nineteenth century, and that it influenced the reception of Husserl's work in France, which accordingly took two different directions. On the one hand, with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty there developed a philosophy of the subject, itself influenced by the encounter with Heidegger's *Being and Time*; on the other hand, with Cavaillès there developed a concern with the problems of formalism and intuitionism.

The issue of Foucault's relation to phenomenology has, in part, taken its cue from these remarks, with numerous commentators either attempting to identify the traces of Husserlian phenomenology on Foucault's major works, or seeking to establish the links between Foucault's archaeologies and transcendental and genetic phenomenological enquiry. However, for all the insights such work offers into Foucault's development and the philosophical significance of his writings, it marginalises not only many issues that are central to Foucault's work, but it also threatens to remain marginal to many of Foucault's concepts and problems that have come to prominence over the last decade, in part inspired by the ongoing publication of Foucault's lecture courses from the *Collège de France*. The articles collected in this edition all make a contribution to this side of the reception of Foucault's work. Organised around the issues of power, pleasure and politics – themes which are central to the lecture courses, which can be seen as a constantly revised attempt to provide a "morphology of the will to

knowledge”² – these essays interrogate and develop Foucault’s work along lines that are significant to the contemporary development of phenomenology.

In his article “Neither Violent nor Tranquil”, Leonard Lawlor takes up an issue that has been posed with some insistence by both Heidegger and Derrida, namely that of rethinking the difference between humans and animals. Lawlor argues that it is necessary to do so in a way that avoids the traditional peril of positing either an abstractly conceived identity, or an equally abstractly conceived difference, between the animal and the human. As Lawlor points out, where animals have been seen as substantially or qualitatively different from the human – that is, as lacking the substantial attribute or specific quality of reason – they have either been subjected to violence, or viewed as irrationally violent. On the other hand, where animals and humans have been thought of as ontologically indistinct, in accordance with their common biological being, then all life has, as Lawlor puts it, been thought of “indifferently, tranquilly.” Lawlor’s aim, then, is to conceive the relationship between the animal and human as “neither violent nor tranquil”, a phrase which he takes from Foucault’s *History of Madness*. Lawlor builds his argument on Foucault’s demonstration of how historically in Europe the perception of madness intersects with the way in which the relation of humans and animals has been pictured, and he uses Foucault to unbind us from our traditional conceptions and to suggest that there is a continuity between humans and animals, albeit one that is continually undergoing differentiation. Human experience, he claims, is no longer purely animal or purely separate from animality, but is instead inextricably entwined with animal suffering.

In “Foucault’s Bodies” Mathieu Potte-Bonneville begins by highlighting the apparently ambiguous status of the body in Foucault’s writings – it is both endowed with a disruptive capacity, being capable of provoking thought to new investigations, and also shown to be a reality constructed by historically specific technologies of power. Is it not the case, Potte-Bonneville asks, that this ambiguous status of the body reproduces the “empirico-transcendental doublet” that Foucault says in *The Order of Things* is characteristic of modern thought? And does not the appeal to the disruptive capacity of the body as the guiding thread for his critical analyses, treat it as an ahistorical presence, an immediate given, simply repressed and distorted under specific historical conditions? His response to these questions is to chart both the complex, multi-layered, functioning of the “body” within Foucault’s works, and the modifications of this functioning in the transition from archaeology to genealogy and the late “problematizations”. In doing so, he shows how Foucault inverts the phenomenological approach to the body as it is found in Merleau-Ponty. Thus rather than revealing how the objective body of modern knowledge is dependent on a brute corporeality, for Foucault it is a matter of showing how the individual’s awareness of his or her own body derives from an anonymous objectivity itself constituted by various regimens of power. Nevertheless, behind this, or alongside it, Potte-Bonneville finds a third register of

reference to the body, which leads towards what he calls “an ethics of heterogeneity”, which reminds us of the “precarious, contestable and potentially violent nature of every [...] characterisation of the body.”

In their articles, Todd May and Katrina Mitcheson both examine the theme of power and its connection to subjectivity in Foucault’s work, and on its basis both conclude by envisaging forms of non-subjugated subjectivities, capable of resisting and disrupting the existing order of power relations. Todd May’s article, “Power in Neoliberal Governmentality”, presents an analysis of Foucault’s recently published lecture courses from 1977-78 and 1978-79, *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. He shows how both can be understood to offer a genealogy of neoliberalism, and demonstrates convincingly that bio-power and security are fundamental to the economic approach of neoliberalism. Thus his article is a curative to the old canard that Foucault simply does not do economics, and a corrective to the more recent metaphysical excesses with which the concept of bio-power has been burdened. May goes on to show how it is possible to identify, *pace* Foucault, a particular form of subjectivity germane to neoliberalism – *homo œconomicus*, the (supposedly) self creative, entrepreneurial, individual. Finally, he considers the complex normative transformations that are implied in the change from what Foucault called “disciplinary societies” to neoliberal ones, and in relation to those changes he seeks to identify a mode of resistance to neoliberalism.

In her article “Foucault’s Technologies of the Self: Between Control and Creativity”, Katrina Mitcheson places Foucault’s earlier meditations on the nature of power in dialogue with his later reflections on “ancient technologies of the self.” In doing so, she seeks to explore the possibility, opened up by the late work on the practices of self-government and self-constitution, of resisting the constitution of contemporary subjectivity by the power strategies of control and discipline. In relation to the issues of power, force and strategy raised in Foucault’s earlier work, Mitcheson examines the manner in which resistance can take place in relation to both existing structures of domination as well as in the relation between self and others. Mitcheson then shows how the technologies of the self that Foucault examined in his later works are active forms of power that are essential to the self not being subjugated to the exercise of power by others. She bases her account on the difference Foucault identifies between Ancient technologies of the self and Christian ones. For Mitcheson, the difference is grounded in the distinction between activity and passivity. Whereas the Ancient technologies of the self bespeak an active examination of self in relation to oneself, with a view to consolidating one’s future conduct, the Christian practice of the confessional marks a turn towards identifying weaknesses within a hidden self, withdrawn and unable to engage with the world. However, as Mitcheson recognises, the Ancient practices of self-constitution, are not pure acts of self-creation, since they always occur within,

and in re-action to, existing power relations. Thus, in sum, what, for Mitcheson, unites much of Foucault's work is that technologies of the self can be cultivated out of the material of existing social orders in efforts of creative liberation.

In his article "Foucault's Biopolitics: a critique of ontology", Maxime Lallement argues that the notion of biopolitics, which emerges in the course of Foucault's lectures at *Le Collège de France*, should be understood as a decisive concept throwing light upon the intrinsic logic of Foucault's philosophical enterprise. Taking the opposite view to that found in recent works which tend to split the notion of life into its biological and existential dimensions, Lallement shows that Foucault links biopolitics to the question of government as "an action over actions" and that *bios* is invested, from end to end, by relations of power which determine its becoming. On this basis, Lallement argues that biopolitics nowadays finds its locus in ongoing processes of normalization. For Lallement, the pervading immanence of norms poses an ontological problem which overtakes phenomenology and reveals the nihilistic dimension of our age. Thus Lallement concludes by showing how the concept of biopolitics offers the reader a way to understand how disciplinarity, in our contemporary society, transforms itself into various processes of control, without obliterating its nihilistic roots.

In "Foucault's Nietzsche", Florent Jakob argues that Foucault's entire project is a questioning of the will to truth. If the archaeologies are descriptions of the various forms that the will to truth has taken, the genealogies, he claims, are the attempt to account for the *will* that imposes such forms upon us, and to displace that imposition. Going beyond the will to truth amounts to changing ourselves, and thus it calls for, and responds to, a fundamental alteration of experience. Nietzsche, Jakob claims, is plainly Foucault's inspiration for such a task, to the extent that the whole of Foucault can be understood as the "re-enacting" of Nietzsche at the end of the twentieth century. Interrogating the significance of this re-enacting, Jakob carefully reconstructs the development of Foucault's relation to Nietzsche. He shows how Foucault is led by the internal dynamic of his appropriation of Nietzsche to disclose the conditions of genealogy itself and to justify its strategic intention – which is to open the space of a new experience – and how he is consequently (and paradoxically) led back to the Greeks "in order to attempt to [...] constitute an ethos proper to the philosopher, to take over the 'know thyself' of truth with a care of the self which no longer beyond wholly to truth."

Keith Crome and Patrick O'Connor

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NEITHER VIOLENT NOR TRANQUIL: HOW TO RECONCEIVE THE ANIMAL-HUMAN RELATION ON THE BASIS OF FOUCAULT'S *HISTORY OF MADNESS*

LEONARD LAWLOR

Despite the recent and vigorous philosophical discourse on animality, there is probably only one strategy to change our relation to animal life.¹ We shall be able to change the practices regarding animal life and the earth more generally, only if we start to think differently. And we shall be able to think differently, only if we start to reconceive the difference between humans and animals. Such a reconception of the difference, it seems, must avoid two extreme positions. On the one hand, there is the extreme of metaphysical separationism, which means that animals are conceived as substantially (or qualitatively) different from humans. On the other hand, there is the extreme of biological continuism, which means that humans are conceived as non-different (or only quantitatively different) from animals. In order to avoid these extremes, we must return to Aristotle's definition of the human as the "rational animal."² Of course, Aristotle's famous definition suggests a relation of commonality and non-commonality. The non-commonality aspect of the definition, elevated to substantial difference through the idea of reason, has authorized violence, or it has made us conceive animal life as irrationally violent. The commonality aspect of the definition, elevated to biological continuism through the idea of animal, has authorized non-violence, or it has made us conceive all life indifferently, tranquilly. Here with this "both-and" formula – *both* commonality *and* non-commonality – new philosophical work is required. It seems that the relation, in its non-commonality, must not be violent; and in its commonality, it must not be tranquil: "neither violent nor tranquil." This phrase "neither violent nor tranquil", does not come from Aristotle, it comes from Michel Foucault's history, not of reason, but of *unreason*.³

As far as we know, Foucault never speaks explicitly of animal life. Yet, in his first major work, his 1961 *History of Madness in the Classical Age*, Foucault traces out the multiple ways the Western ideas of madness intersect with its ideas of animality. As Foucault says: "Undoubtedly, it is essential to Western culture to connect in the ways that it has its perception of madness to the imaginary forms of the relation between humans and animals." (HF 202/151) What I am therefore pursuing here involves looking at these connections, by way of Foucault, between madness and animal life. Over the course of the long study that is the *History of Madness*, we see Foucault isolate two major transformations. On the one hand, at the beginning of the study (which opens with the famous chapter called "Stultifera Navis", on the late Middle Ages and

the Renaissance), the madman and his madness are understood through unreason, that is, in terms of secrecy, invisibility, and negativity. By the end of the study (which closes with a chapter called “The Anthropological Circle”, on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a chapter that anticipates the famous “Man and his Doubles” chapter of *The Order of Things*), the madman and his madness are understood through madness itself (now called alienation), that is, in terms of publicness, visibility, and positivity. On the other hand, at the beginning, the madman and his madness are understood, to say this again, through unreason, but now unreason means absolute freedom. At the end, the madman and his madness are understood through responsibility. These two transformations are, of course, connected. Madness becomes a positive object of knowledge only when its freedom is reduced; or the freedom of madness can be captured only when it becomes a positive object of knowledge. These two interconnected transformations (having taken place, according to Foucault, over about 300 years of Western history) are involved in transformations of conceptions of animal life. When madness becomes positivity, animality loses its violence, and when animality loses its *violence*, it becomes *tranquil*, tame, like little children.

We have returned to our title: “neither violent nor tranquil.” It is clear that we must move back across this double transformation. We must reverse tranquillity back into violence. But this reversal should lead us to a new conception of animal life and of our relation to it, one that is neither violent nor tranquil. The hope is that, perhaps, formulas for thinking differently like “neither violent nor tranquil” will lead us to an experience, to a “fundamental experience”, as Foucault would say, that would put the values that define our culture at risk. If Foucault’s histories are correct, then the value that most defines our culture, the value that still defines us today, is *natural positivity*. The question is: can the formulas that I am going to develop lead to an experience that would force us to put the value of natural or even *scientific* positivity at risk?⁴ Clearly the value of scientific positivity does not let the animals be what they are. It overpowers them through operations of objectification, forcing whatever interiority they possess – in a word, freedom – into available exteriority. We can formulate our question in one more way. Near the end of this astonishing book, Foucault says that “Through Sade and Goya, the Western world rediscovered the possibility of going beyond its reason *with violence*.” (HF 660/535, my emphasis) Our question is different. Our question is: is it possible to go beyond reason *without violence*? And that possibility, does it mean going beyond reason, not with the worst, not with the most violence, but with the least violence? At the end, we shall return to this question of the worst and the least violence. The possibility of doing the least violence to animal life comes into view only if we have an acute awareness, right in us, of the pain of others. We must hear what Foucault himself calls “the

murmur.” The acute awareness of the murmur requires therefore, we shall suggest, something like what Nietzsche called “mercy.” Before we come to the possibility of the least violence, let us examine Foucault’s *History of Madness*.

1. The Borders of Classical Age: The Mad and Animals in the Renaissance and the Nineteenth Century, according to the History of Madness

As the title suggests, *The History of Madness* concerns the Classical Age, that is, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ The specificity or singularity of the Classical Age, for Foucault, lies in the fact that it made a *division* (*un partage*, and this word will turn out to be important for us) between the practices in relation to the mad and the knowledge of madness.⁶ Yet, as in all of Foucault’s histories, it is impossible to understand the singularity of one age without comparing it to others. So, Foucault’s discussions of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance form one border of the Classical Age. The other border is what he calls “the Modern Age”, that is, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, our times. The Classical Age then for Foucault is a kind of passage, a passage that Foucault describes as one of desacralisation. (HF 89/61, HF 612/493)

What Foucault calls desacralisation of course refers to the decline of Christianity. What Foucault calls desacralisation is what we commonly call the secularization of Western culture. But, unlike the word “secularization”, the word “desacralisation” contains the association to transcendence. Due to desacralisation, no longer, in the West, was life on earth understood by reference to another, transcendent world; it is no longer understood in terms of verticality. (HF 366/289) This shift in transcendence has an effect on both the mad and the animals.⁷ *On the one hand*, this change concerned how the mad were experienced. As Foucault says: “A familiar figure on the landscape of the medieval world, the madman had come from *another world*. Now [in the seventeenth century] he stood out on the background of a problem [... the problem] of the order of individuals *in society*. Once, [the madman] was welcomed because he came from *elsewhere*; now he was excluded because he came from *here*.” (HF 89/62, my emphasis) *On the other hand*, the decline of Christianity concerned how the imagery of animal life worked. In the Middle Ages, according to Foucault, people understood the images of animals such as the gryllos by means of “the great Platonic metaphor.” (HF 35/18) The images served as images of Platonic ideas, that is, of ideal virtues or vices. However, “in the early Renaissance”, Foucault says, “the beast is liberated; it escapes from the world of legend or moral illustration in order to acquire a kind of fantasy-life that is its own.” (HF 36/19) There is one more way that this decline in the belief in another transcendent and external world appears. According to Foucault, up until the end of the fifteenth century, death was thought of as an “absolute limit”; but afterward, the limit becomes “interiorized”, with madness becoming “the already-there of death.” (HF 30-31/14)

The idea of madness being “death already-there” indicates the kind of difference Foucault sees, in Western culture, between the time of the end of the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. For Foucault, in the late Middle Ages and going into the Renaissance, madness (and the world in general) is “sensed” as a “tragic experience.” (HF 46/27)⁸ The tragic experience consists in the feeling that this world will end in destruction; it is a “presentiment” of the absolute limit of the Apocalypse. In the late Middle Ages, madness refers to the secrets that, since the dawn of time, have menaced this world: “the great unreason of the world.” (HF 27/12) In short, the tragic experience is a cosmic experience. (HF 47/28; also HF 287/224) *In contrast*, in the nineteenth century, there is no longer a tragic experience but rather an “analytical consciousness” of madness. (HF 222/169) In the analytical consciousness, madness (and perhaps the entire world) is no longer unfamiliar and it no longer presents danger. It is no longer external lying over an absolute limit; it is internal and has become a part of nature. Madness is no longer sensed; it has become the object of a perception. The world is no longer at the mercy of an unreason; it is entirely rational. Now, in the nineteenth century, the truth of madness is no longer found elsewhere in the cosmos; its truth is found here as a truth of man. (HF 42/23) We can formulate the difference between the late Middle Ages and the Modern Age as an opposition. Indeed, we can make a quite stark opposition.

If we start from the adverbial pair of “here” and “elsewhere”, we can position the Modern Age as proximity while positioning the later Middle Ages as distance. In other words, in the Modern Age the mad and animals are understood in terms of immanence (horizontality), which means that they are provided with a “this world” explanation such as mechanistic causes. And, since they are explained in terms of mechanistic causes, they are natural. *In contrast*, the mad and animals in the Middle Ages are understood in terms of transcendence (verticality), which means that they are explained by reference to another world. And, since they represent the end of the world, they are “counter-nature.” (HF 36/18) The idea of the “counter-” allows us to convert, as Foucault seems to do, these spatial adverbs into logical categories. In the Middle Ages, the mad and the animals are conceived as “radically other”, while in the Modern Age, they “revolve around a circle of sameness.” (HF 439/350) Insofar as they are radically other in the Middle Ages, the mad and animals are defined by negativity, while in the Modern Age they are defined by positivity. (HF 239/183) From this negativity, Foucault (making use of negative prefixes) unfolds the opposition into that of dis-order and order, and un-reason and reason. But most importantly, on the basis of the opposition between unreason and reason, he defines the mad and the animals in the Middle Ages in terms of “a space of unpredictable freedom”, (HF 201/150) which he opposes to “the monotony of a single determinism” in the Modern Age. (HF 634/513) We can see now the real opposition that is driving all the others we have located: it is

the opposition between freedom and determinism. In order to understand this well-known opposition of freedom and determinism that Foucault is using to distinguish the Middle Ages from the Modern Age, we must turn to the moment at the close of the Classical Age, the moment of the birth of psychology.

2. *The Birth of Psychology: Transparency and Responsibility*

So, for Foucault, one large movement of desacralisation runs from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age. As we saw, this movement is also one of internalization. Death is internalized to life and madness comes to be internalized to man. The internalizing process of desacralisation takes place across the Classical Age. The process taking place across and within the Classical Age means two things. On the one hand, the movement of desacralisation which internalizes unreason and the mad within the “here” determines the Classical Age. Yet, on the other, the Classical Age makes, within the “here”, the practices in regard to the mad and knowledge of madness external to one another. The process of *externalization* (yet within internalization) is made concrete in “the great confinement” of the seventeenth century, the result of Louis XIV’s edict of Nantes: the poor, the indigent, the mad, the libertines, anyone who made disorder must be interned in one of France’s general hospitals. The establishment of general hospitals has no other purpose than confinement; it provides no cognitive benefit in relation to madness. Yet, at the same moment, just as the mad have no contact with knowledge, medical knowledge has no contact with the mad. And yet, without dialogue with the mad, medical knowledge develops knowledge of madness. In other words, always within the internalization of madness in the “here”, the Classical Age concretely alienates the madman from society, while medical knowledge of madness develops externally from the spaces of confinement. The Classical Age is, as we have already noted, the age of division. This division between practice and knowledge is what is overcome “on the threshold of the nineteenth century.” (HF 373/295) If it is the case, as Foucault says in the 1961 Preface, that, in the *History of Madness*, he ended up writing “a history of the conditions of possibility of psychology ...itself”, we find these historical conditions precisely in the period of the French Revolution.⁹

Let us see now, following Foucault, how these historical conditions functioned. In order for the Classical division of practice and knowledge to be overcome, what happened first, according to Foucault, is that the mad emerged distinctly from the undifferentiated population of the houses of confinement. (HF 494/394-95) Foucault provides a twofold explanation for the differentiation. On the one hand, from within the houses of confinement, the criminals protest that they no longer want to be locked up with the mad; the criminals think that being locked up with the mad is inhumane for the criminals

themselves. On the other hand, there was a recognition that the labor value of the unemployed was not being exploited if they were hidden away in houses of confinement; the unemployed must be put to work. (HF 509-14/406-10) The mad therefore came to be distinguished from the criminals and from the working poor. The result was that a special place is required to care for the mad, and this special place is the asylum.

However, at this stage of the history, the asylums look identical to the houses of confinement. So, what next happened is a change in the space of confinement. Just as the French Revolution was to begin, there were projects of reform for the houses of confinement. (HF 534/427) In these reforms, what remains of the old idea of confinement is that confinement is an enclosure, avoiding all contact with the reasonable world. (HF 543/435) What is reformed however is the internal space of confinement.¹⁰ Confinement in the seventeenth century had no other purpose than confinement. Now, at the end of the eighteenth century, the internal space of confinement is no longer to be the absolute abolition of freedom. Still enclosed, the space would be one of restrained and organized freedom, the madman being allowed “to take some distance” from things so that he is able to consider them, express himself about them and react to them.¹¹ But having been freed of constant constraints, the madman did not express himself in violence and rage. (Although we shall return to this point below, we should note now that, instead of the frenzy of animality, the madman became now more like a tamed animal and a child.) But, the main idea of these confinement reforms was that freedom, “semi-freedom”, as Foucault calls it, works better at curing the mad than chains and cages. This “semi-freedom” forced the raving imagination of the madman to confront reality. (HF 544/436) This “internal restructuring” of the space of confinement was, according to Foucault, an “essential step.” (HF 545/436-37) Through it, confinement took on the value of a cure, a medical value. When confinement becomes the space of the cure for madness, then doctors are allowed to enter the asylums. Therefore, the restructuring allowed the space of the asylum to become, in relation to madness, “the space of truth.” (HF544/436)

According to Foucault, the change in the space of confinement then has an effect on how madness was conceived. At the time of the French Revolution, madness comes to be considered from the viewpoint of the rights of free individuals. (HF 547/438)¹² Earlier in the Classical Age (and going far back into juridical thought), the disappearance of freedom, in a word, confinement, had been the consequence of madness. The madman could be locked up because his madness (which was caused by delirium) made him no longer be responsible for his actions. Now however, the madman is confined, the madman is indeed mad, because his freedom has been compromised. (HF 547/438) Now reason and freedom have the exact same limits. If one is unreasonable, if one is mad, then one’s freedom has been affected. If one’s freedom has been affected, then

one's reason is affected and one is mad. Freedom has become "the foundation, secret, and essence of madness"; (HF 548/439) it has become "man's nature." (HF 547/438; also HF 171-178/126-31) This change in the conception of madness had an effect inside the asylum: in the asylum, there was to be an "exact measurement of the [madman's] use of freedom." (HF 548/439) The exact measurement of freedom would determine how much madness had alienated the madman from his freedom. Then the amount of constraint applied on him would be in conformity to that amount of alienation. To make this exact measurement of freedom, what is required is a new perception. (HF 140/102) Because the asylum is *still* an enclosure, it is free of all influences that might give rise to illusions about madness, illusions based on the interests of families, or political power, or even the prejudices of medicine. Only in the asylum then do we find "an absolutely neutral gaze", a "purified gaze." (HF 550/441) Having this purified gaze, the guardians who "watch over [*veillent*] the limits of confinement [become] the sole persons who had the possibility of a positive knowledge of madness." (HF 550/441)

The new gaze however is not purified of language. Foucault stresses the "curious idea" of the "asylum journal." (HF 550/441)¹³ The asylum journal added a vocabulary to the gaze. In this way, "[Madness] became communicable, but in the neutralized form of offered objectivity"; it is offered as "a calm object, put at safe distance without anything in it stealing away, open without any reticence onto secrets that do not disturb." (HF 551/442) With "the new gaze," there are no "complicities" between the one who gazes and the one gazed upon. (HF 552/442) The gaze "is directed upon an object that is attained through the sole intermediary of a discursive truth that is already formulated." (HF 552) The madman therefore appears clarified in the abstraction of madness, his individuality having no other function than adding to the truth of madness. Now madness takes its place in the "positivity of things known." (HF 552/443)

The positivity of madness, its truth, being determined in the asylum at the end of the eighteenth century, however, was not yet a psychology. Psychology and the knowledge of all that is internal to man is born from a shift in morality. (HF 560/449) Foucault recounts how at this moment a reorganization of the police led to the "citizen" being conceived as both the sovereign authority that designates someone as an undesirable element and the judge who determined the boundaries of order and disorder, morality and immorality. (HF 555/445) The citizen now became both a man of the law (the police) and a man of the government (the judge). This change led to a transformation in the nature of punishments. (HF 557/447) For the "bourgeois consciousness", as Foucault calls it (he also calls it a "revolutionary consciousness" [HF 559/449]), scandal became an instrument for the exercise of its sovereignty. To know of a case is not merely to judge, but also to make public so that the "glaring spotlight of its own judgment was itself a punishment." (HF 557/447) As Foucault says: "in

this consciousness, judgment and the execution of the sentence were unified through the ideal, instantaneous act of the gaze.” (HF 558/447) In other words, while in the Classical Age what was scandalous was to be shut away and hidden, confined, now at this moment, in “bourgeois consciousness”, everything scandalous must be made public. (HF 559/449) All that had been previously concealed, all the deepest obscurities of fault, had to be converted into manifest truth. In this demand for publicness, we have the new psychology coming into being. According to Foucault:

psychology and the knowledge of all that was most interior to men was born from the fact that public conscience had been elected to the status of universal judge [...] Psychological interiority was constituted on the basis of the exteriority of scandalized conscience. (HF 560/449)

Therefore, with the birth of the asylum, and the punishing gaze of scandal, there could be no secrecy. Whatever negativity we might have thought the madman possessed, now he possessed only known positivity. Whatever interiority we might have thought the madman possessed, now he possessed only “psychological interiority.” He possessed only an interiority destined to be made visible and present, indeed transparent.

According to Foucault then, the new psychology would not have been possible without this reorganization of scandal in the social consciousness. (HF 561/450) The purified gaze (or the “universal gaze of bourgeois consciousness” [HF 561/450]) required that the link between the fault of a crime and its origin be made manifest. Thus knowledge of the individual, that is, knowledge of heredity, the past and motivations, became possible. The demand for knowledge of the origins of criminal behaviour had two consequences. On the one hand, because the demand was for knowledge alone, madness lost its prior association with a moral sensibility concerning the passions. (HF 565/454) Through this dissociation of madness or criminality and morality, criminal conducts become “empty gestures” or “the rage of an empty heart.” (HF 566/454)¹⁴ The “gestures” and “heart” – now voided of any moral sensibility – are filled in with psychological mechanisms or psychological laws. Crimes of passion, and indeed, madness result when the mechanism of passions become excessive; or madness is nothing but these mechanisms unhinged and alienated. What psychology states then is that the truth of man is nothing but alienation. (HF 566/455) These psychological mechanisms of course also result in the madman not being responsible for his actions and therefore in him being judged innocent. But, Foucault stresses that innocence here must not be taken in an absolute sense. (HF 567/455) This claim about innocence brings us to the other consequence of the demand for knowledge. On the other hand, there is, as Foucault says, a “new division in madness.” (HF 569/457)

What Foucault sees in this moment is not the liberation of psychology from the moral, but a restructuring of the equilibrium between them. (HF 567/455) In order for the mechanisms a criminal madman is undergoing to render him not

responsible for his actions, it had to be the case that his passions indicate a different morality. So, a crime of passion being done out of extreme fidelity displays a rarefied or elevated virtue that could result in the madman being judged innocent. Psychology then takes up residence within what Foucault calls “a bad conscience”, that is, in the play between the values that society acknowledges and the values that it demands. (HF 568/456) The “new division” that Foucault is describing consists in this: only the madness that displays “heroic” virtues can be granted innocence, while there is a form of madness that no determinism can excuse and this madness – moral madness, bad madness – received absolute condemnation. (HF 570/458)

According to Foucault, the new equilibrium between psychology and morality, and the new division in madness appears in the asylum itself. One of the main innovations, one of its operations, was the use of fear to control the mad. (HF 600/483, and HF 619-23/500-03) Unlike the Classical Age where the madness hidden in the houses of confinement struck fear into society, in the asylum fear was to be struck into the madman. The innovation, however, was not merely the use of fear, but the way fear was used. Instead of trying to limit a “raging freedom” with frightening instruments, the superintendents and doctors at the asylum directed fear right at the patient through discourse. (HF 601/484)¹⁵ Through discourse, fear transformed freedom into “simple responsibility.” (HF 601/484) Because the psychological truths of madness now said that mechanisms determined conducts, the madman was not guilty of being mad. Despite this innocence, through the use of fear (through repeated judgments on the madman’s actions and repeated punishments for those actions), the superintendents and doctors force the madman to think of himself as responsible for all that, within his madness, might disturb the asylum and thus, farther beyond (yet in continuity with the asylum [HF 614/495]), society, and its morality. Therefore, the use of fear in the asylum resulted in the madman himself developing a bad conscience.¹⁶ Once again, the new division in madness appears: patients who resisted this fearful “moral synthesis” were simply locked away. As Foucault says:

as it has evolved over the last three centuries, Western culture has founded a science of man [that is, psychology and anthropology] on the basis of the *moralization* of what in earlier times for Western culture had been the sacred. (HF 130/94, my emphasis)

3. *The Displacement of Animal Freedom: Couthon*¹⁷

The movement of desacralisation displaces distance. In the Renaissance, there was the distance between the other world, the “elsewhere”, and this world, the “here.” That distance between elsewhere and here is then internalized, located in this world. Desacralisation is internalisation. Then, located in this world, the distance between elsewhere and here becomes the distance between the practice of confining the mad and the knowledge of madness. In the asylum,

however, the distance between practice and knowledge is overcome but only by means of distance (from chains and bars) being granted to the madman. The distance granted to the madman becomes, on the one hand, the distance between the one who gazes and the object gazed upon. On the other hand, the distance is internalized right into the madman himself. (HF 597/481) At one and the same time, the madman has been reduced to the status of an object, and he has been made to feel responsible for his reactions to that objectification. The madman's so-called "semi-freedom" is at once his enslavement in bad conscience. Due to his bad conscience, no longer does the madman rage like a beast. We have moved from desacralisation to internalization and from internalization to moralization, and from moralization, we move to purification. The enslavement purifies him of counter-natural, violent animality, leaving only an animality "associated with the *tranquillity* and happiness to be found in nature." (HF 467/373, my emphasis)

In order to understand the purification, we must examine the scene toward which Foucault's entire *History of Madness* marches: Pinel's liberation of the mad from chains in Bicêtre Hospital in 1794.¹⁸ As Foucault explains, Pinel's famous liberation is ambiguous. (HF 585-86/470-71) The Revolution (at the moment of the "Convention") seems to have appointed Pinel as the director of Bicêtre because of his reputation as a doctor. Pinel the doctor was supposed to "outplay" madness. That is, he was to determine who was really mad and who was faking it, and thereby he would be able expose suspects hiding in Bicêtre pretending to be mad. It is not known, according to Foucault, whether Pinel intended his "liberation of the mad" as a way of making this determination, making the mad "appear in an objectivity that was no longer veiled by persecution or the frenzy it provoked in return" – or whether he intended the liberation as a way of allowing revolutionary suspects to hide more easily among "the whole population of Bicêtre, engendering further, inextricable confusion." (HF 585/471) That the "Convention" thought that there were suspects hiding in Bicêtre is confirmed by one part of the Pinel legend. The President of the Convention, Georges Auguste Couthon, visits Bicêtre in order to see for himself if there are suspects hiding there. Pinel heroically confronts the paralytic President who was involved in Robespierre's "reign of terror." The legend is that the invalid retreated from the mad at Bicêtre, "leaving 'such animals' to their fate." (HF 592/476) Yet, what Foucault sees below this legend is a "decisive chiasm." (HF 592/476) Couthon went to Bicêtre to find suspects, reason in hiding, but what he found was animality. Yet, when he leaves Bicêtre, Couthon himself ends up "carrying the charge of animality", while the mad he left behind, about to be liberated by Pinel, exhibited the inalienable freedom that made them be human. (HF 592/477) Because of "the double stigmata of his illness and his crimes", Couthon "incarnates what is more monstrous in inhumanity." (HF 592/476) Animality therefore migrates to the side of the

guardians of the mad; the beast rages now in them. And as Foucault will show later in the *History of Madness*, it is the asylum doctor, not the madman, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, takes on demonical powers. (HF 623-32/503-11) The important point is however that, through Couthon “the mad were thus purified of their animality, or least of that share [*part*] of animality which is violence, predation, anger, and savagery, and what remained was a docile animality.” (HF 593/477) What was purified, conjured away, in this “metamorphosis” was what Foucault calls “animal freedom.” (HF 198/148)

4. Conclusion: Neither Violent nor Tranquil

Foucault’s entire *History of Madness* marches toward Pinel’s “liberation of the mad” because the entire *History of Madness*, insofar as it is a history of unreason (and not a history of reason), is a history of freedom. Perhaps, more than any other book that Foucault wrote, the *History of Madness* concerns freedom, even the “essence of freedom.” (HF 619/499) We have seen however that what was conjured away in Bicêtre Hospital during the nineteenth century was the violent side of freedom, leaving behind only its tranquil side. We have already seen that Foucault qualifies the word “freedom” with “animal.” He also calls it the “freedom of the mad”, (HF 634/513) the “freedom of unreason”, (HF 211/158) but more importantly, he calls it “absolute freedom” (HF 209/157) and “constitutive freedom.” Indeed, he speaks of the “paradox of constitutive freedom.” (HF 635/514) The paradox lies in the fact that “the freedom of the mad is only ever in that instant, in that imperceptible distance that makes him free to abandon his freedom and chain himself to his madness, freedom is there only in that: “virtual point of choice, where we decide to ‘place ourselves within the inability of using our freedom and correcting our errors.’” (HF 634/513)¹⁹ In this passage, we can see that Foucault defines freedom as a distance-instant. Moreover, being in that “virtual point,” in that “not yet” mad, freedom is prior or *a priori*, “originary” and “from the origin”, (HF 635/514) deeper and more subterranean. (HF 209/157) The priority of absolute freedom implies that freedom is prior to all oppositions, contradictions, and antinomies. How are we to think of this prior freedom?

We can determine this prior freedom by returning, with Foucault, to the Classical Age. As Foucault says, the Classical Age is the moment when humans “still perceive animality as negativity [as in the Middle Ages], but now also as natural [as in the Modern Age].” (HF 202/150) That is, in the Classical Age, animality and madness – has not yet lost the “potency” of negativity, even though it is immanent to nature. Yet, in the nineteenth century and especially in the twentieth, “when philosophy becomes anthropology”, when humans want to recognize themselves in “a natural plentitude”, then animals are constituted as “the positive form of an evolution” leading from the determinism of nature to human reason. It seems, for Foucault, that all of these developments in the

conception of the human relations to animals (and to the mad and to others like children [see HF 543/435]) have their source, as anticipated at the beginning, in the ambiguity of Aristotle's definition of man as the "rational animal." The formula "rational animal" suggests, as Foucault interprets it, that there is a "common order" between reason and animality, but this common order has been understood, starting in the nineteenth century and still today, in terms of "a natural positivity." Aristotle's definition of man as "the rational animal" perhaps gives us the terms through which we might begin to think about animal life *differently*. Thinking in different formulas might then lead us to an experience that would put the value of natural positivity at risk.

Therefore, starting from Aristotle's definition (informed by Foucault's understanding of the history of madness), we are able to develop something like a "derivation" of formulas for animal life, and its relation to the human. As we just noted, Aristotle's definition suggests that there is a "common order" between reason and animality. But in order to change our thinking, we must orient ourselves *away from* commonality. We must say that the relation between reason and animality is not common, but *different*. From this first formula – not common, but different – we can unfold others. The relation between reason or humans and animal life is a relation of difference but *not* a relation of contradiction, which is how the difference was understood in the Classical Age. (HF 225/171) It is not a contradiction, but animal life is counter-natural. We must try to think animal life as *against* nature. Then, to continue the derivation, we can say that animal life is *not* natural, but it is *immanent* to the world. Although these formulas attempt to preserve the "absolute existence" of animal life, animal life must be made *relative* to the world. (HF 52/32) There can be no return to the cosmic, to the other worldly experience of the Middle Ages. Animal life is immanent, intra-worldly – but just as it is not natural, it is not positive. To change the way we think about animal life, we must, as Foucault thought of unreason, think of animal life as *negativity*. We must say therefore that animal life never completely enters into, is never completely confined in, and it is never completely exhausted by, "the rational order of species. Other deep forces are at work there." (HF 266/206) We can go further in our derivation. Animal life is a negativity, but it is not an emptiness. Not being an emptiness, animal life is a kind of plentitude. But it is a plentitude filled *not* with determinations (and especially not with the *determinisms* of scientific positivism). It is filled with the plentitude of the indeterminations of freedom. To think about this animal freedom, we must appropriate a phrase from Foucault, a phrase that moreover suggests negative theology: the freedom of animal life is *neither violent nor tranquil*. (HF 467/373)²⁰

If there is a principle for this derivation, it lies in the idea that animal life must be conceived as a negativity. In an essay from the same period as that of *The History of Madness in the Classical Age* – "Preface to Transgression" –

Foucault speaks of a non-positive affirmation.²¹ To clarify this idea, he refers to Kant's distinction between *nihil negativum* and *nihil privatatum*. Kant developed this distinction in relation to negative magnitudes. *Nihil privatatum* refers to a negation that makes a zero or void. In contrast, *nihil negativum* refers to negative numbers, about which one is able to add and subtract. In short, *nihil negativum* provides affirmative quantities, but these quantities remain under the minus sign or under the sign of negation ("−"). For Kant, remaining under the negation sign, these negative magnitudes allow us to think of certain philosophical problems associated with the body and virtue. For us, however negative magnitudes allow us to think of animal life as a negativity (not as a natural plenitude or positivity), but also *not* as an emptiness. The negative sign opens up an infinite number of affirmative quantities, which means that animal life, animals (in the plural), remain unreachable like a true outside. A true outside is one that contains no inside. Therefore, lacking an inside, there is no entrance, and lacking an entrance, we have encountered a true outside. We sense the outside but it remains distant. If the parallel we have drawn between animal life and the outside (based on Foucault's essay, "The Thought of the Outside"²²) is valid, we can say that the animals have a sort of presence. This presence, however, cannot be the presence of an object of perception; it cannot be presence as it is conceived in scientific positivism. Through the idea that animal life is present but also indeterminate and out of reach (like the infinitely receding line of minus numbers), then we must speak of the possibility of us sensing them, feeling them, or undergoing them, as they were felt in the Middle Ages. Our sensing of them would be perhaps, as Foucault says in *The History of Madness*, a kind of "dialogue." (HF 218/165) We know that Foucault (unlike someone like Gadamer) never developed a theory of dialogue. Yet, if we look at the beginning of his career (at the same time as *The History of Madness in the Classical Age*) and if we look at the end of his career (his final courses at the *Collège de France*), we see Foucault taking up the self-relation or auto-affectation.²³ The self-relation can take many forms (me touching my own body, for instance), but the form privileged by the philosophical tradition is interior monologue. Thus the kind of dialogue we are suggesting here would be one that appeared only after we had removed (or deconstructed) the appearances that interior monologue presents. The central appearance is that interior monologue is a discourse I carry on with myself alone. When the appearances are deconstructed, we find that inside of myself there are other voices. These voices would not be composed of soothing and peaceful words. But they would also be quieter than silence. The voices would be nothing but a murmur – or the cry of madness and squawking of animals in their cages. In this "dialogue" (if we can still call it that), we might feel as though we are being violated. Certainly, however, we would no longer be tranquil. In this "dialogue," the forces of animal freedom would produce fear

in us, would even haunt us. This haunting might finally make us let the animals be.

Although the inspiration for the idea of letting the animals be comes from Heidegger, it remains to be seen whether through it we have gone beyond the thought of Michel Foucault or even contradicted it.²⁴ Yet, it seems likely that Nietzsche's idea, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, of mercy (*Gnade*) inspired Heidegger's idea of "letting-the-beings be" (*Gelassenheit*).²⁵ This philological question however – the question of whether, through Nietzsche, one can find a concept of "letting-be" in Foucault – is not really philosophically interesting. What is interesting and important is to investigate the self-relation (auto-affection) as Heidegger and Foucault did.

If we were to continue their work, the investigation of auto-affection would disclose three ideas. First, as we have already suggested, the deconstruction of the appearances of interior monologue would reveal that, in truth, interior monologue is not a monologue. It is something like a dialogue. Or, more precisely, what I find inside of myself are other voices. Second, when we experience our interior monologue as contaminated with other voices, we find that our interior life is not one of tranquillity. Inner experience is no longer peaceful. Instead, we have an acute, sharp, even painful awareness of the murmur of others who themselves are suffering and in pain. Then we can no longer ignore the injustice done to them. Third, when we have become acutely aware of the violations done to others, then we must confront the question of how to react to this painful awareness, to this incessant murmur. One possible reaction would be to suppress the murmur, suppress it even to the point of annihilation. This reaction would be the worst violence. It would be the worst violence because, since the other voices are in me, since the other voices *are* me, the annihilation of the others would amount to self-annihilation. This suppression would be the end of everything: hyperbolic self-destruction. However, there is a different reaction. Instead of massively suppressing the other voices in me, the other reaction would be equally hyperbolic. It would hyperbolically let all of the other voices cry out and be heard. It would let all the other voices have their say. Through this hyperbolic *Gelassenheit* – perhaps only this reaction is true mercy – we humans might be able to do the least violence to animal life.

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References

1. There may of course be a variety of tactics, or at least there seems to be two major tactics. On the one hand, there is an inflationary tactic: one tries to add a property of man to animals, which would result in a de-hierarchization. On the other, there is a deflationary tactic: one tries to remove a property from man, which would likewise result in a de-hierarchization.
2. Aristotle, *Politica*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957) 1253a 9-10
3. Michel Foucault, *L'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Tel Gallimard, 1972), p. 108; English translation by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa as *The History of Madness* (New

- York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 77. Hereafter cited with the abbreviation HF, with reference first to the French, then to the English translation. The English translation has been frequently modified. I am referring to and modifying the 2006 hardback edition of the English translation. Apparently, the 2009 paperback edition contains some corrections to the English translation. The following secondary sources have been consulted in the writing of this essay: Jeremy Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporeality and Political Spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2000); Frédéric Gros, *Foucault et la folie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986); English translation by Séan Hand as *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Jacques Derrida, “Cogito et histoire de la folie,” in *L’écriture et la différence* (Paris: Points Seuil, 1976), pp. 51-98; English translation by Alan Bass as “Cogito and the History of Madness,” in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 31-63; Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason: Toward an Existentialist Theory of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Lynn Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007).
4. This question might seem to contradict Foucault’s description of his thinking as a “happy positivism.” Cf. Michel Foucault, *L’ordre du discours*, (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1971), p. 72; English translation as “The Discourse on Language,” in Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 234. However, the type of positivism to which Foucault refers here (and throughout *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) functions at a level smaller (at the “micro” level) than scientific positivity. Being smaller, this kind of positivity contains the potentiality of change. Or, more precisely, it opens the possibility of freedom.
 5. The Classical Age runs from the time of Descartes’ *Meditations* (in 1641) to the time of Kant (in the 1780s), or, in other words, to the Enlightenment. In fact, Foucault also provides us with political historical markers for the period: Louis XIV’s edict of 1653 – the edict of Nantes – for the confinement of the indigent and Philippe Pinel’s liberation of the mad from the Bicêtre hospital in 1793, a liberation that is one of the episodes from the French Revolution. Foucault also calls the Classical Age “the age of understanding” (*l’âge de l’entendement*) in order to emphasize the idea of a division. See HF 225/171; 265/206.
 6. That is, during the Classical Age, there was the practice of interning the mad in “General Hospitals” across France, but this practice did not produce knowledge of the mad. Correlatively, medical thought developed knowledge of the mad by classifying phenomena of madness, but it did not engage in any dialogue with those interned. For Foucault, the division ended up confining the madman as subject but as a subject who was bestial and counter-natural, while at the same time turning the madman into an object of investigation, eventually determining the truth of the madman as something wholly natural and positive.
 7. At this moment, “transcendence” is a positive term for Foucault, meaning “going beyond”; Foucault’s use of the term in the *History of Madness* resembles Heidegger’s use of the term. See especially HF 304/238.
 8. Foucault in these discussions uses the verb “éprouver.” See, for example, HF 140/102.
 9. This quote is from the 1961 Preface, p. xxxiv of the *History of Madness*. The French is found in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001), pp. 187-195. This citation is found on p. 194. Foucault makes a similar comment in the book’s final chapter (HF 653/529).
 10. Here Foucault refers to Jacques-René Tenon’s *Mémoires sur les hôpitaux de Paris*.
 11. The phrase “take some distance” translates the word Foucault uses to describe this new semi-freedom: “recul” (recoil or withdrawal, taking some distance) (HF 543/435).
 12. Here Foucault refers to Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis.
 13. This idea is developed by Cabanis, according to Foucault.
 14. See HF 565-69/453-57. Here Foucault describes a court case for a crime of passion; he is interested in the defence made by Bellart.

15. Foucault shows how religion plays a large role in this operation of fear.
16. Later Foucault takes up the idea that punishment aims at the soul, not the body, in *Discipline and Punish*. See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Tel Gallimard, 1975), p. 24; English translation by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 16.
17. Georges Auguste Couthon (1755-1794) was the President of the “Convention” and aided in Robespierre’s Terror; he was also a paralytic.
18. Clearly, one of the purposes of Foucault’s *History of Madness* lies in showing that Pinel’s famous 1794 liberation of the mad at Bicêtre Hospital is a myth. Below this myth, we see Pinel put into place operations that in fact enslave the mad worse than during the time of the “Great Confinement.” These operations are silence, mirror reflections, and perpetual judgment.
19. Here, Foucault is quoting Boissier de Sauvages.
20. The word “violence” does not appear in this discussion, but it is clear that the “rage” of the beast indicates the violence that on other pages in *The History of Madness* describes animality. See, for example, HF 63-64/41; also HF 203/150; HF 543-44/435.
21. Michel Foucault, “Préface à la Transgression,” in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001), p. 266; English translation by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon as “Preface to Transgression,” in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 2. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 74. See Immanuel Kant, “Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy,” in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, translated and edited by David Walford (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 205-241.
22. Michel Foucault, “La pensée du dehors,” in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001), pp. 546-567; English translation by Brian Massumi as “The Thought of the Outside,” in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 2*, pp. 147-169.
23. E. Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique* & Michel Foucault, *Introduction à l’Anthropologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2009); English translation by Roberto Nigo as *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2008). Michel Foucault, *L’Herméneutique du sujet, Cours au Collège de France, 1981-1982* (Paris: Seuil Gallimard, 2001); English translation by Graham Burchell as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).
24. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976. Band 9. Wegmarken*. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), pp. 73-97, especially, p. 88; English translation by John Sallis as “On the Essence of Truth,” in *Pathmarks*, ed., William McNeil (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 136-154, in particular, p. 147.
25. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse, Zur Genealogie der Moral, Kritische Studienausgabe*. Herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Massimo Montinari (München: de Gruyter), pp. 308-309; English translation by Walter Kaufmann as *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1968), pp. 508-509.

FOUCAULT'S BODIES

MATHIEU POTTE-BONNEVILLE

(Translated by Maxime Lallement)

The case seems settled: both in the field of the social sciences and in the discourses that accompany various contemporary political protests, Michel Foucault's legacy is that of an eruption of bodies in at least two respects. Firstly, as an object of research, as is shown by the countless studies that borrow, more or less explicitly, from the programme announced in *Discipline and Punish* and developed in *The Will to Knowledge*, a programme whose categories are criticized only to better accept its fundamental horizon. This programme comprises a "political history of bodies" that carefully transfers their constitution from nature to history and that underlines how much the definition of their identity and reciprocal relations (whether of class, race or genre) is traversed by various forms of domination.¹ Secondly, such an enterprise is often presented by its initiators not merely as an internal inflection of academic research, nor as the quest for a paradigm able to dominate a particular historical or philosophical issue, but as an echo of, and a contribution to, the disruptions that took place in what should be called the cultural, social and political regime of bodies within this closed field of theory. Hence, in the 1999 second introduction to her classic *Gender Trouble*,² Judith Butler locates her book at the intersection of two movements, both leading outside the academic realm. The book, she explains, born from an autobiographical experience, is marked by a fourteen-year involvement in the gay and lesbian culture of the East coast of the United States of which it is an internal product.³ As for its reception, Butler congratulates both herself for finding readers and her book for engendering effects outside the academic sphere through movements such as *Queer Nation* or *Act Up*. Thus the "gender trouble" of the title should not merely be understood to refer either to an object of enquiry, or to the introduction of certain changes within the traditional conception of the genre, of which Butler, simply because of her intellectual position, would be the instigator. If theory provokes "trouble", it is first because the register in which it deploys itself and the domination it usually claims vis-à-vis the social world are themselves disrupted by the breakthrough of an instance ordinarily kept at a distance – namely, the body of its author, her emotions and their fraying: "Though *Gender Trouble* is an academic book, it began, for me, with a crossing-over, sitting on Rehoboth beach, wondering whether I could link the different sides of my life."⁴ The mention, at the beginning of the book, of this body sitting at a seaside resort – which is also one of the centres of North-American gay and lesbian culture – is not merely an autobiographical interpolation; in its own way it also has a

Foucaultian heritage. In her way of placing side-by-side an intellectual argument and an immediate physical experience – an experience from which the theory arises and that it attempts to rejoin – Butler silently mimics the way in which Foucault, in 1972, made the mutinous bodies of the prisoners the stimulus for the composition of *Discipline and Punish*, the instigators of the upheaval this work aspired to produce in both its reflection on prisons and the privileged recipients of this new perspective. Thus Foucault was able to write of the mutinies that occurred in French prisons in 1971:

That punishment in general and the prison in particular belong to a political technology of the body is a lesson that I have learnt not so much from history as from the present. [...] In fact, they were revolts, at a bodily level, against the very body of the prison. What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power [...] I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture.⁵

From *Discipline and Punish* to *Gender Trouble*, from the prison roof in Toul to Rehoboth beach, as the example of Judith Butler shows, a part of Foucault's contemporary posterity resides in this asserted coupling, in this link between the renewal of the theoretical comprehension of bodies and the way in which, on the outside, they assert their presence, their requirements and their irreducibility to the structures imposed on them.

The coherence of such a coupling must still be justified. It is not that the circularity of this "history of the present" (DP 31) is misleading in itself. What is at stake in the entire Foucaultian enterprise is that the categories supposed to account for the transformations of the contemporary world owe their own renewal to these transformations; that these crises provoke a conceptual tremor by dint of which it becomes possible to "think them otherwise." Rather, if there is a difficulty, it is to be found in the differing manner in which the reference to the body tends to be articulated on each side of such a system or, at least, between the beginning and the end of the enquiry. On the one hand, at the beginning of the analysis, Foucault grants to these bodies struggling to make themselves understood, to these shadows of the prisoners on the roof of the prison, an immediate and constitutive presence. He attributes to them the capacity to force their way into theory, crediting them with a disruptive power capable of opening a space for new investigations in thought. On the other hand, at the end of a route of which the aim would have been to show how what we take as the immediate given of our worldly being actually springs from a conflicting genealogy, the body will have become the mere product of circumstance, an effect whose precarious consistency becomes dissolved into history. From the initial impulse to the final picture, the reference to the body thus oscillates between accounting for an instance whose demands impose themselves imperiously, and the decomposition of a historical construction endowed with an artificial and transitory unity. If, through the immediacy of

their refusal (revolts “against cold, suffocation and overcrowding, against decrepit walls...” (DP 30)) the prisoners’ revolts strike a chord with Foucault, the analysis which follows rather tends to multiply mediations and to show how “the individual [...] is a reality constructed by this specific technology of power which is called discipline.” (DP 227) As Michel de Certeau already pointed out, “we find in Foucault a theory of the body as an unreadable condition of the fiction of the body itself.”⁶

1. The Body and its Doubles

We should take our time, however, before proclaiming a double bluff because the whole interest of the approach lies, it seems, in this very tension, in this paradoxical complementarity outside of which each side would be weakened. It is the least interesting aspect of Foucault’s legacy to see occasionally these two modes of reference to the body distancing each other in order to create two series of equally unproductive affirmations. On the one hand, there is the monotonous evocation of the resistance of the body to political order, of its stubborn and silent opposition to all the forms of oppression; on the other hand, there is the litany of monographs which have no benefit other than that of establishing the cultural dimension of those physical determinations hitherto unduly attributed to nature. But the problem is therefore that of knowing how this double position of the body (as the foundation and the result of history, as condition and horizon of the theory that takes hold of it) can avoid extending two mistakes correctly denounced by Foucault himself:

1. Of entering what was called “the empirico-transcendental doublet” in *The Order of Things*, a position characterised in that work as both the principle of the modern *episteme* and the sign of its closure. As Foucault showed, once the positive contents offered to that knowledge that presents man as a living, speaking, working being, reveal themselves as the conditions of possibility of this knowledge, then reflection can only oscillate indefinitely between each one of these poles. As it does so it becomes proportionately less certain of its operations as they are discovered as being profoundly rooted in the mundane coordinates of human experience. We should emphasise that in the typology proposed by Foucault to describe this game of mirrors between “man and his doubles”, the first of these “positive forms in which man can learn that he is finite” is well and truly the body: “to man’s experience a body has been given, a body which is his body – a fragment of ambiguous space, whose peculiar and irreducible spatiality is nevertheless articulated upon the space of things.”⁷ And yet, genealogy seems rightly to extend this intellectual strategy: it depends here on the transformation arising from the eruption of the bodies in the social field in order to retrace the steps and the forms of their historical constitution. Can we avoid, henceforth, reproducing the gesture which, according to Foucault, condemns the human sciences to the endless repetition of the Same, by

transferring the conditions of the possibility of knowledge on to the facts offered to it?

2. A normative difficulty is added to this epistemological problem: how to make the immediacy of bodies, their protests and their demands, the guiding thread of an active critique without indirectly extending the fiction of an instance so far repressed and kept at the edge of history? And how, in this instance, to avoid reinforcing the idea, considered by Foucault as suspicious, according to which emancipation would rediscover what has been kept silent for too long? It is in *The Will to Knowledge*, this time, that the problem becomes more apparent, as the book takes to such a high degree of radicality the idea, on the one hand, of a historical-political constitution of the body and, on the other, the affirmation that the calls for liberation contribute effectively to maintaining the modern system of power. Refusing the horizon of a “sexual liberation”, Foucault claims that on the contrary, we ought to understand how the instance of sex, and its supposed concealment, are actively produced by the organisation of power-knowledge which he calls “the system of sexuality”: what properly qualified the profound aspirations of the body, is thus exposed to the effects of social construction. In the same movement, however, answering the question that looks for an appropriate opposition to such a system, the text calls for the body:

It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim – through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality – to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures and their knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistances. The tallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.⁸

Given that sex is a product of the mechanisms of sexuality and furthermore given that these mechanisms should oppose the body and its pleasure, how can one avoid naturalising the latter? How can one avoid playing to the “repressive hypothesis” which throughout this first volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault asks us to distance ourselves from?

In order to respond to this question, we must pay attention to detail. “The body” that Foucault invokes here is not exactly the “sex” that he represents, in the singular, as a construction. From one to the other, there is a numerical difference that is understood as not merely playing a quantitative, but also an operative role insofar as it helps to distinguish the different registers of the analysis. Unity, diversity and multiplicity are staggered in this passage and come to characterise respectively: 1) the phenomenon whose justification is at stake (“the agency of sex”); 2) the mechanisms which combine to produce it (“the various mechanisms of sexuality”); 3) the constitutive elements of this operation, which are at one and the same time the surfaces of inscription for “the factory of sex”, and the principles of its possible destabilisation: “bodies, pleasures, and knowledges in their multiplicity”, “bodies and pleasures.” We do not face, therefore, a circular argument of which the same body would constitute

at the same time both the starting point and the destination, but a layered analysis where Foucault distributes, in several distinct registers, the acceptations ordinarily confused with the general notion of the body. Without doubt, any philosophy rigorously beginning to approach this object, is constrained to such an ordering: whoever claims to treat the subject of the body is soon led to distinguish and articulate at least the question of one's own body, of the living body and finally of the material body. If Foucault's approach is distinct, as we will see, it is by his way of conducting this analysis in reverse and performing decisive inversions of it. In short, contrary to all phenomenology, he firstly gives the lived consciousness of one's own body a foundation in the anonymous objectivity that constitutes the body; then, contrary to all research into essences, he derives this very unity from the multiplicity of the bodies and their socio-political interaction. Let us now examine these different aspects.

2. *The Body: An Archaeology of One's Own Body*

A frequent interpretation claims that Foucault only made reference to the body at the beginning of the 1970s, influenced both by a careful reading of Nietzschean genealogy,⁹ and the deadlock to which archaeology succumbs because it is too exclusively discursive, and therefore incapable of giving a foundation to statements and of explaining the passage from one *episteme* to another.¹⁰ Such a reading is justified: we will come back to this. But one cannot forget that the research undertaken during the 1960s, far from ignoring the body, already placed it as one of the central points of focus through *The Birth of the Clinic*, published in 1964. The point of this work is firstly to show how it is possible to relate the birth of modern medicine, not to the discovery of the truth of disease already available in things, but to the re-organisation of the social, discursive and epistemic conditions of medical experience itself. As the conclusion of the book states:

For clinical experience to become possible as a form of knowledge, a re-organisation of the hospital field, a new definition of the status of the patient in society, and the establishment of a certain relationship between public assistance and medical experience, between help and knowledge, became necessary [...] It was also necessary to open up language to a whole new domain: that of a perpetual and objectively based correlation of the visible and the expressible.¹¹

By choosing to proceed in this way, Foucault nonetheless forces himself to give an account of another way of researching the "conditions of the possibility of medical experience." This other strategy, starting from the observation according to which the strictly objective comprehension of the body is powerless to ground itself, would consist in rooting it in the originary experience of the lived body, understood not as a sensible apprehension preceding a rigorous knowledge, but as the condition of every presence of the subject to the world and to itself. We will have recognized, in this alternative route, the approach developed in French phenomenology by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose *Structure of Behaviour* (1942) and *Phenomenology of Perception*

(1945) constitute the background from which Foucault's work aims to distinguish itself. From this sort of rivalry between historical archaeology and phenomenology there ensues a peculiar mix of proximity and distance vis-à-vis the Merleau-Pontian characterisation of the body. Thus one can hear Foucault, during a 1966 radio conference, adopting a position very close to that of Merleau-Ponty:

[My body] is linked to "elsewhere" in the world, and, actually, it is somewhere else than in the world. For it is around it that things are disposed and it is in relation to it, as in relation to a sovereign, that there is an above, an under, a right and a left, a forwards and a backwards, a near and a far [...] The body is this small utopian core at the heart of the world from which I dream, speak, go forward, imagine, and perceive things in their own place.¹²

Conversely, in *The Birth of the Clinic*, it is a matter of taking a step backwards vis-à-vis this sovereignty granted to the lived body concerning the organisation of the world. Foucault's position is that if modern objective knowledge is, as Merleau-Ponty claims, dependent on a more fundamental corporeality, it is not necessary to see an essential datum here, returning to the root of the *cogito* in the experience of one's own body. Rather, it is a fact of history, linked to a change in the "fundamental structures of knowledge", (BC 246) a structure of which the subject is not the centre. This is the thesis which is announced with clarity in the last section of the work: Foucault makes positivism, which apprehends the body as exteriority, and phenomenology, which claims on the contrary to install it at the very centre of experience, opposing slopes of the same historical configuration:

That with which phenomenology was to oppose (positivism) so tenaciously was already present in its underlying structures: the original powers of the perceived and its correlation with language in the original forms of experience, the organization of objectivity on the basis of sign values, the secretly linguistic structure of the datum, *the constitutive character of corporal spatiality*, the importance of finitude in the relation of man with truth, and in the foundation of this relation, all this was involved in the genesis of positivism [...] so much so that contemporary thought, believing that it has escaped it since the end of the nineteenth century, has merely rediscovered, little by little, that which made it possible. (BC 246, my emphasis)

As far as we are concerned, this passage can be read thus: if phenomenology is right to bring back the knowledge of the body – the knowledge in particular that medicine develops – to a system of conditions that is not revealed by the sole authority of facts, and which would impose themselves and derive their sense from themselves out of the concern for objectivity, it is in turn mistaken about its own account when it posits its conditions as an ahistorical experience, when it claims to deduce them from the manner in which, for all of eternity, my body is given to me (and gives me the exterior world as its relation, turning the latter into an organised, spatialised and significant system). If we follow Foucault, we must however rediscover both "the body", such as it is understood by modern medicine, and "my body" from which phenomenology tries to unfold experience, as two sides of the same historical transformation, one that initiates the development of a body offered to the gaze and a body speaking

about itself, and we must derive both of them together from an encounter with exterior determinations – social forms, perceptual codes, discursive structures.

This diversion is at the heart of the argument from the very first chapter of the work. Entitled “Spaces and Classes”, it is characteristic of the two-way movement according to which Foucault deals with the question of the body. Noting that “to our well-worn eyes, the human body defines, by natural right, the space of origin and of distribution of disease”, (BC 2) he endeavours however to establish that the:

exact superposition of the ‘body’ of the disease and the body of the sick man is no more than a historical, temporary datum [...] The space of *configuration* of the disease and the space of *localisation* of the illness in the body have been superimposed, in medical experience, for only a relatively short period of time. (BC 2)

Indeed, for the classifying medicine of the eighteenth century, disease first of all is defined in the taxonomic space which links it to the other maladies according to relations of genre and species. As for this first distribution, the localisation of the disease in the body of the patient plays a lateral role, a “secondary spatialisation” which inflects symptoms in the same way that in botany the geographical distribution of a species, the soil and depth on which it grows, are able to modify some of its characteristics without changing its essential definition:

The same, single spasmodic malady may move from the lower part of the abdomen, where it may cause dyspepsia, visceral congestion, interruptions of the menstrual or haemorrhoidal flow, towards the chest, with breathlessness, palpitations, the feeling of a lump in the throat, coughing and finally reaching the head. (BC 10)

What interests Foucault is visible in the faltering of the gaze induced by the exhibition of this medicine from another age. There are two stages to his approach. First, he questions the positivist reduction of the body to an object in which, for all eternity, the disease would have been readable as long as we want to see it: the fact that the disease unfolds itself in the space of the body is an event which, as phenomenology maintains, requires a displacement of objective vision. Then, digging into the medical archive allows him to locate the constitutive character of corporeal spatiality where the phenomenologist was not expecting it: not in the intimacy of the experience that the subject has of his own body and through his own body, but in the recovery of two spaces, at first mutually exclusive – classified and organic space; that is, the “flat, homogenous, homologous space of classes” and the “geographical system of masses differentiated by their volume and distance.” (BC 9) As for this train of thought, it is important to account for the way in which the modern subject acquires a body that is his own body – in the present case, a disease that really is his own, for it will no longer be indifferent to its definition that it appears at such a point of the organism. But this transformation does not show, as phenomenology claims, the regaining of a relation to the self that would be older than any possible objectification. The deep intimacy between the disease and the patient follows from the first exteriority and the overlap between

the spaces where knowledge was distributed up until then. One could say that where Merleau-Ponty brings back the “body as object” to one’s own body, which gives it its sense and permits its understanding, Foucault argues that this “own” [*propre*] is first of all alien [*impropre*], as it results from historical events that are both contingent and diverse and, as such, the basis of this seizing of the self completely and definitively escapes the subject. Foucault finds in Bichat’s injunction “to open up a few corpses” the sign of this dispossession and expropriation from which the complete grasping of man by himself nevertheless ensues. It is from this injunction that the dissection will stitch together both the list of symptoms and the anatomical observation and confirm, at the same time, that “the first scientific discourse [delivered by our culture] concerning the individual had to pass through this stage of death.” (BC 243)

Thus, seeming to borrow the regressive path of phenomenology, in order to abruptly change tack towards history, serves a precise purpose, beyond the disagreement regarding the foundation of knowledge. This purpose could already be called “ethico-political”, even though this terminology only appears later on in Foucault’s work. For Foucault, the issue is to consider the deep solidarity, within modernity, which unites the objective gaze and the body cast in the role of a thing offered to observation, and a discourse that asserts, on the contrary, the dignity of the experience of one’s own body and its irreducibility to all external comprehension. Is it really possible to oppose to the body-machine and the science which takes hold of it, the eminence and authenticity of the lived body, on the pretext that the latter would be both the foundation and the limit of all knowledge of the body? Reading between the lines, this question is posed in the *Birth of the Clinic*, with regard to the reasons which incite science to stand at the patient’s bedside. And yet, the indications made by Foucault do not allow much room for doubt concerning his position. On the one hand, the fiction of an immediate and sensible relation between the doctor and his patient and the invocation of their mutual understanding is unable to account for the appearance of modern medicine as a science of the individual:

Our contemporaries see in this accession to the individual the establishment of a “unique dialogue”, the most concentrated formulation of an old medical humanism, as old as man’s compassion [...] the feebly eroticized vocabulary of “encounter” and of the “doctor/patient relationship” exhausts itself in trying to communicate the pale powers of matrimonial fantasies to so much non-thought Clinical experience. (BC xvi)

On the other hand, if Foucault is so virulent, it is because such approaches obscure what (according to him) is the real historical event which accounts for the appearance of modern medicine:

This new structure is indicated – but not, of course, exhausted – by the minute but decisive change, whereby the question: ‘What is the matter with you?’, with which the eighteenth century dialogue between the doctor and patient began (a dialogue possessing its own grammar and style), was replaced by that other question: ‘Where does it hurt?’, in which we recognize the operation of the clinic and the principle of its entire discourse. (BC xxi)

We touch here upon the link that unites the “historical and critical” (BC xxi) dimensions of Foucault’s reflection. Neither the attempt to go beyond the opposition between positivism and phenomenology, nor the effort to let their common historical surface appear, are strangers to this enigma. In modernity, the renewed access of man to himself, articulated in the objective discourse of science and the reflexive forms of an analysis of lived experience, unites the dispossession in which the body is only speaking *for* the other or *through* the other, structured under the scrutinising gaze or attentive ear, where in any case, the interpretation of signs duplicates itself in the establishment of an asymmetrical relation that Foucault later calls the power relation. If access to the individual, an event which both begins and ends *The Birth of the Clinic*, cannot be understood through the sole exploration of one’s own body, it is also because the latter is unable to realise the solidarity between the understanding of oneself and the rise of the little question: “where does it hurt?” – a question which entirely reorganises the relations between the doctor and his patient and empowers the former over the latter. If *The History of Madness* was meant to be “the archaeology of silence”,¹³ *The Birth of the Clinic* leaves discreet but decisive room for the silence of the patient.

3. *The Body: Genealogy of the Individual Body*

If we spent a long time considering *The Birth of the Clinic*, it is because it seems possible to recognise some germinal elements in it, even to shed some light on the proliferation of bodies which will mark Foucault’s works in the following decade. Where then, to locate the break, if it is true that the references to the body introduce a transformation between the “archaeology” of the 1960s and the “genealogy” practiced in *Discipline and Punish* and *The Will to Knowledge*? In fact, we must make a distinction here: if from 1964 the body is an object and an issue for critique, at the beginning of the 1970s it becomes a tool, an operator, of Foucault’s method which henceforth relies on the reference to the body to clarify the way in which its critical categories could be ambiguous and unsatisfactory.

Foucault explains this new usage in a lecture given at the beginning of 1973, whose posthumous publication throws a vital light over the whole period.¹⁴ Explaining why he plans to return in that year to psychiatry, which he studied fifteen years previously in *The History of Madness*, he blames himself for too often using the notion of “violence” at that time in order to qualify Esquirol’s or Pinel’s use of physical force during their asylum treatments. At the same time, the critical tone of the book implicitly relies on an unquestioned opposition between a “violent” power and another power which is not violent. Such a supposition, Foucault observes in 1973, produces two defects. Firstly, it makes it possible to assume the existence and legitimacy of a power which, because it is not physical, would therefore be non-violent. Secondly, it tends to

identify all physical expression of power with the unpredictable exercise of an irregular force, making imperceptible the element of rationality involved in the use of force and the plurality of ways in which it can be organised. To these two defects, Foucault endeavours to make two corrections, perceptible in two theses announced in this lecture course: “what is essential in all power is that ultimately its point of application is always the body. All power is physical, and there is a direct connection between the body and political power”, (PP 14) furthermore, “power is physical [...] not in the sense that it is unbridled, but in the sense, rather, that it is commanded by all the dispositions of a kind of microphysics of bodies.” (PP 14)

The reader of *Discipline and Punish* will recognise in these two precepts, announced in a tone of regret, the foundations of the “microphysics of power” employed in the study of discipline. From now on, taking into account the fate of the body will play a double role. Firstly, it will look to demystify all approaches to social phenomena limited solely to the consideration of the discourse of legitimisation which supports them or to the legal forms which organise them. To remind us that “all power is physical”, is especially to forbid the understanding and evaluation of modernity in accordance with the humanism to which it lays claim, insofar as it claims to have substituted for bodily constraint a whole set of relations controlled and authorised by law. Secondly, the minute attention applied to the body will have to show that, on a physical level, the historical difference regarding the exercise of authority does not involve a move from brutal violence to disembodied obligations, but is rather between various modes of organisation of power, each of them constituting a “rational, calculated, and controlled game.” (PP 14) The aim is therefore to contest all legal-political idealisms in the name of the materiality of the body and to shed light on the various forms of rationality, if not “idealism”, immanent to them.¹⁵ The whole economy of *Discipline and Punish* is situated between these two gestures for the sake of one and the same objective: to shake the acknowledged opposition between the penalty of an *Ancien Régime* founded on violence and the modern prison, an institution in which obedience to the principles of the state would suffice to guarantee humanity.

To this alternative, Foucault responds thus: 1) The establishment of legal equality amongst citizens, the codification of procedures or the establishment of a scale of punishments do not prevent the necessity for power to have a hold over the body. Furthermore, they require as a condition for their exercise a preliminary ordering of society through mechanisms which allow the application of legal forms but continuously bias their effect.¹⁶ 2) This critique which reveals the body beneath reason, does not, however, work without another movement which discloses and differentiates the modes of rationalisation of the body. In the first part of *Discipline and Punish*, called

“Torture”, Foucault shows that the apparent barbarity of the punishments of the *Ancien Régime* complies with a precise economy which regulates its procedure and links its protocol to the intrinsic logic of royal power: “‘penal torture’ does not cover any corporal punishment, it is a differentiated production of pain, an organised ritual for the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes.” (DP 34) It is not that Foucault is looking to bring back instruments of torture such as quartering, the wheel or pliers. Rather, he is concerned to take apart the discourse which, by returning ancient forms of punishment to an ageless barbarity, claims in contrast to exonerate modern penalty by locating it on the side of an immaterial intervention, only concerned with the “soul” of the condemned. He aims overall to show on the one hand that a precise rationality was already involved in the most brutal punishment inflicted on the body, whilst on the other the body still contributes to a regime which would claim to be the pure incarnation of reason. The issue is therefore not to confuse everything but to apprehend, in its uniqueness, the political technologies through which the body is kept in order.

It is at the heart of this renewed programme, directed towards challenging both the supposition that modern politics transcends the level of physical relations between individuals, and that this relation comes down to the uncontrolled exercise of brutal force, that the questions already presented in *The Birth of the Clinic* return. Let us once more consider the three affirmations put forward by Foucault: 1) that an intimate solidarity links the body as object offered to an objective knowledge and “my body” as lived experience. 2) that, *a parte subjecti*, the relation that each person experiences with his or her own body is intertwined with an exteriority where the threat of dispossession is posed beginning with the doctor’s question “where does it hurt?” which turns speech into a symptom, right up until Bichat’s dissections. 3) that critiquing this modern arrangement of the body must involve a history of the individual and not a fundamental experience in which the self-affecting subject reconquers its integrity. This history would establish how the individual far from being an infrangible given, is the result of the exterior intersection of historical determinations and political operations. These are the three claims which are going to be fully developed through the genealogy of power, elaborated in particular in *Discipline and Punish* and in *The Will to Knowledge*. Being unable to recall here all the remarks that Foucault devotes to the body, we will limit ourselves to indicating what regulates its economy.

1) *A false alternative*. The particular manner in which these works seem to form a diptych is instructive. It seems at first glance that they are differentiated from each other by the experience of the body which they put forward: in 1975, *Discipline and Punish* deals essentially with the observed body, that is, exposed to a scientific characterisation and a technical reorganisation that maximises its utility and obedience:

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. (DP 137-138)

In 1976, in *The Will to Knowledge*, it is the speaking and spoken body that is put into question, a body of which each manifestation demands not an exterior and objective description, but a deciphering of which the subject itself is both the source and the rule, the text and its reader, a proximity of which the fable of the speaking sex invented by Diderot in *Les Bijoux indiscrets* would become the emblem:

For many years, we have all been living in the realm of Prince Mangogul: under the spell of an immense curiosity about sex, bent on questioning it, with an insatiable desire to hear it speak and be spoken about, quick to invent all sorts of magical rings that might force it to abandon its discretion. (HS 1, 77)

It is thus striking to see Foucault, in the space of one year, thematising the presence of the body in modernity under two figures that are not only different, but that seem, at firstly mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the disciplinary operations are characterised by the eradication of significant elements of behaviour solely for the sake of the account of its determination and physical effects: “constraint bears upon [...] forces rather than upon [...] signs; the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise.” (DP 137) Foucault devotes considerable attention to this discarding of meaning in the management of the body, showing how, in the chapter “The Gentle Way in Punishment”, silent imprisonment has by the end of the eighteenth century overcome a “semi-technical” penalty founded on ceremony and representation.¹⁷ As for the enquiry into sexuality, this leads to completely opposite results: “We have placed ourselves under the sign of sex, but in the form of a *Logic of Sex* rather than a *Physics*.” (HS 1, 78) There is multiplication, this time, of signs and of meaning. And yet, these *a priori* incompatible forms of attention to the body are eventually reintegrated within one and the same history in the last chapter of *The Will to Knowledge*. There Foucault converts them into two major poles of power over life, poles “linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations” which he calls “an *anatomic-politics of the human body*” and “a *biopolitics of the population*.” (HS 1, 139) There is nothing of the pre-eminence, then, of modern man’s intimacy with his own body, nor of the interpretation that extends that pre-eminence over the operations which claim to explain corporeality objectively and modify it technically, thereby denying it any significant value.

On the contrary, from a methodological point of view, it is surely essential that the enquiry undertaken in *Discipline and Punish* precedes the analyses in *The Will to Knowledge*: the anti-hermeneutic principle that governs the first book (“beneath every set of figures, we must seek not for a meaning, but a precaution” (DP 139)) allows, in the second book, this sidestep which, rather than accepting the body as an object for interpretation, takes this very

interpretation as an object of history. In other words, it is necessary to have measured how modernity could meticulously eradicate the slightest element of meaning from the relation that each person experiences with their own body, in order to reveal in all of its strangeness the surfeit of meaning that individuals give at the same time to their sex. It is necessary to have taken the measure of this anatomy of detail constituted by the disciplines in order to shed another light on this discourse where the subject, in the first person, seeks its own identity in the wanderings of its desires. Not as the revelation of a deep truth wrongly hidden by the objectifications of the body, but as the effect of a primordial incorporation, and as the anonymous exteriority of practices and social institutions.¹⁸

2) *Objectification and reflexivity*. The historical contemporaneity of the body-object and of the signifying body also implies a game of reciprocal borrowings between the processes that give birth to each of these figures. In other words, as opposed as they may seem, one would not dissociate entirely the techniques which institute, from the outside, the body as object of knowledge and those which, contrarily, compel the subject to acknowledge itself and provide explanations for itself through discourse. According to Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow,¹⁹ *Discipline and Punish* would demonstrate the grounding of the “objectifying social sciences” in the practice of the examination,²⁰ and *The Will to Knowledge* would demonstrate the grounding of the “subjectifying social sciences” in the ritual of confession.²¹ But such a distinction only carries a relative value because the aim of these two books is to show how each of these processes essentially embraces a moment borrowed from another: there is no disciplined body without a “subjection” which exceeds its strict physical determinations. Similarly, there is no body that is sexualised without the constitution of an objective knowledge of, and a subordination to, the other which exceeds the framework of the strict relation to oneself.

This intertwining is thematised in *Discipline and Punish*, through the famous metaphor of the soul, allowing the reversal of the Platonic *soma sema*.

The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A ‘soul’ inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (DP 30)

The modern transformation of penal practice with which the book opens is here targeted. It is a transformation which sees modern judgment shift from the criminal character of facts towards the personality of the accused and the biographical origins of his gesture through “a whole set of assessing, diagnostic, prognostic, normative judgments concerning the criminal.” (DP 19) And yet, Foucault is so far from considering this shift merely illusory, as if this dual quest for the meaning of crime and punishment were only hiding the strictly corporeal efficiency of discipline, that he will return to “microphysics” in order

to unveil it. The soul involved here is not only a mirage but a “part”, which means that the concrete reference to the personality of the criminal is an indispensable element in the coordinated functioning of the diverse instances henceforth involved “in the framework of penal judgment.” (DP 19) In short, the exteriority of knowledge and intervention secured by discipline on the body of the individual calls for the reference to the interiority of a “who?” likely to confirm in the first person the legitimacy of inflicted treatments, just as in the case of the modest residents of the penitentiary colony in Mettray whose voices end *Discipline and Punish*: “the inmates [...] in singing the praises of the new punitive policies of the body [would remark]: ‘We preferred the blows, but the cell suits us better.’” (DP 293) As for *The Will to Knowledge*, this movement is reversed since the book is concerned with revealing the “objectifying moment” hidden within the device of sexuality, even though the latter is firstly defined as a permanent incitement to reflexivity as the social production of a hermeneutic relation of every individual to himself. On the one hand, Foucault clarifies that the manner in which individuals seek their truth through their own sex is historically accompanied by an apparently more theoretical and exterior discourse, where medieval pastoral care strongly maintained links to the interrogation of the flesh and the practice of penitence:

the secure bond that held together the moral theology of concupiscence and the obligation of confession (equivalent to the theoretical discourse on sex and its first-person formulation) was, if not broken, at least loosened and diversified: between the objectification of sex in rational discourses, and the movement by which each individual was set to the task of recounting his own sex, there has occurred, since the eighteenth century, a whole series of tensions. (HS 1, 33-34)

However, if this disjunction is possible, it is because the logic of confession, which according to Foucault originates from the twofold contemporary search for the truth of sex and the truth of the self through sex, is itself traversed by a fundamental ambivalence. It is “a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement”, but that notwithstanding, the effects of the statement provoke “intrinsic modifications” in the speaker. It is, therefore, in a sense a pure game played by oneself with oneself. However, the confession is not conceivable without “the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile.” (HS 1, 61-62) We once more discover here a general aspect of Foucault’s thought: a suspicion of the same kind which led him in the *History of Madness* to revise downward the value of self-consciousness promised by asylum treatments and to read it instead as the “humiliation of being an object for oneself.”²² As far as we are concerned, we will note that the reflexive relation of every individual towards his or her own body, as described in *The Will to Knowledge* in the nodal reference to sexuality, is essentially compromised by the form of an objective knowledge in which Foucault does

not see a vector of emancipation but an anchoring point of power relations at the very core of oneself. In short: my body is not disciplined like an object: sooner or later it requires my own narration; similarly I cannot admit who I am to myself without making use of the distance required by both knowledge and the gaze, vis-à-vis my lived body.

3) *A history of the individual*. How does one characterise the body thus constituted at the crossroads between disciplinary normalisation and the hermeneutics of desire? It is perhaps here that the concept of the *individual* would best designate the vanishing point of the various enquiries that Foucault undertook. The idea may seem paradoxical: according to etymology is not the individual that indivisible entity grasped by discourse and power as the material upon which they operate, and which they tend to conceal under various historical figures? We touch here again on the suspicion of that circularity which for Foucault seems to make the individual sometimes the support, and sometimes the product, of discursive and social processes. However, the ambiguity comes undone as soon as we detect that Foucault distinguishes several times between bodies and individuals' bodies, making of the latter a historical and political transformation of the former. It is thus, for example, that we must understand this passage from *The Will to Knowledge*, which describes how power works:

It did not set boundaries for sexuality; it extended the various forms of sexuality, pursuing them according to lines of indefinite penetration. It did not exclude sexuality, *but included it in the body as a mode of specification of individuals*. (HS 1, 47)

Such a statement is unintelligible if we do not recognise that the "specification", far from being applied to bodies whose individuality would be entirely fixed in advance, instead contributes to their determination by calling on everyone to recognise and distinguish themselves through the objects, practices, etc, on which they fix their desires. The individual body is thus described by genealogy, not as pre-political unit of analysis but as the superimposition of a series of processes of individualisation, whose solidarity and variety Foucault underlines.

It is thus that *Discipline and Punish* can define the modern individual body as the synthesis of four characteristics working alongside four disciplinary techniques whose logic is different and complementary:

To sum up, it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality, or rather an individuality that is endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). (DP 167)

We can see that if *The Birth of the Clinic* considers how modernity could have lifted "the old Aristotelian prohibition", in order to show how "one could at last hold a scientifically structured discourse about the individual", (BC xv) the answer provided in *Discipline and Punish* consists, on the one hand, in

linking this structure not to an internal evolution of the history of biology, but to its social matrix, and on the other hand, in showing that certain epistemological alternatives concerning the very status of individuality can find a common foundation in the history of the various techniques of keeping the body in order.²³ The human individual is not indebted to a mechanical, organic or dynamic understanding without firstly being shaped by being distributed in tables and classifications *as well as* by its enlistment in operations *and* by the virtues of exercise.²⁴ In addition to this already complex portrait, *The Will to Knowledge* contributes the correlation between at least two modes of individualisation: on the one hand, what should be called a subjective identification, taking the form of a personal discourse about oneself; on the other hand, an objective differentiation, opposing diverse types of bodies by attributing a threat and a mode of precise normalisation to them. In the first, the body individualises itself as the source in which everyone seeks their identity, whilst trying to discern its own identity according to a dual quest for the “true sex”, a task which Foucault will later summarise as follows: “At the crossroads of these two ideas – we must not be mistaken concerning our own sex and the fact that our sex conceals what is truest within us – psychoanalysis has rooted its cultural strength therein.” (HS 1, 104 – 105) In the second, bodies are differentiated according to the type of social intervention which they call for and justify by becoming the centre of a particular concern: *The Will to Knowledge* thus indicates, as the direction for future research (research that Foucault will however set aside), the necessity to describe the process of the “hysterisation of women’s bodies”, the “pedagogisation of children’s sex”, the “socialisation of procreative behaviour”, and the “psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure”,²⁵ as so many forms within which modern bodies are forced to be distributed and through which they acquire their individual definition.

There is therefore (and this should be enough to prevent any “liberal” interpretation of Foucault as a defender of the sovereign-individual) an essential disparity in the ways in which the individuality of men is formulated through the insertion of the body in social relations of a certain type. There follows from this one consequence and one problem. The consequence is that this individuality of the body cannot be given the support of rights opposed to all political intervention, for this individuality cannot be considered as an entity anterior or exterior to the intervention itself. Nor can the latter be exerted without conflict or resistance, without something resisting its development, but we cannot play with the categories of the individual, in order to qualify this “something”, without remembering that these categories are behind the type of normalisation that this point of resistance holds in check. This is what Foucault clearly indicates in his lecture course *Abnormal*, concerning the figure of “the individual to be corrected”: a figure born in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in order to qualify those who escape the “new procedures of training

of the body, of behaviour, and of aptitude”; but a figure whose characterisation as an individual has the aim of reinserting him within the social game, “in [this] play [...] between the family and the school, workshop, street, quarter, parish, church, police, and so on.”²⁶ The goal will not then be, from a critical and practical standpoint, to withdraw the individual body from the hold of power, classically defined under State Sovereignty, but “to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualisation linked to the state.”²⁷ The problem is then: what consistency can we give to this “us”, if it must at the same time be distinguished from a collection or an association of individuals and also remain anchored in the reference to the body which regulates, from start to finish, the genealogical critique?

4. *The Body: Towards an Ethics of Heterogeneity*

In order to find an answer to this question it is necessary to introduce a third register of reference to the body. It is a register whose recurrence within Foucault’s work follows another rhythm and another periodisation than that which we have already come across. Neither a question exerting its influence from a work which takes it as an explicit object (as is the case in the relation between one’s own body and the living body in *The Birth of the Clinic*), nor a method singling out a precise period in the work (as is the case with “the microphysics of power” of 1973), it is instead an ancient and an erratic counterpoint, introduced in the texts without much explanation or justification. This is indicated by a sibylline declaration from the inaugural lecture of 1970 at the Collège de France:

The result is that the narrow gap which is to be set to work in the history of ideas [...] this narrow gap looks, I’m afraid, like a small (and perhaps odious) piece of machinery which would enable us to introduce chance, the discontinuous, and materiality at the very root of thought.²⁸

This materialist claim could seem surprising within a text essentially devoted to the elucidation of the category of discourse (to the point where Foucault feels compelled, in order to qualify his approach, to call it a curious “materialism of the incorporeal”²⁹). However, this claim teaches us a lesson that is two-fold. Firstly, it indicates that the concern with materiality precedes the moment in the work when Foucault refers to the destiny of the body so as to demystify the legal and idealist approach to society. At the very beginning of its critical function, beyond the sole enquiry into human individuality, the model of material bodies influences the view Foucault takes of historical objects, regardless of their discursive nature. Secondly, this “odious machinery” does not aim at providing a “real basis” to history such as, for example, a determined, stable and solid cause comparable to matter itself. On the contrary, materiality is merely invoked here to be immediately associated with “chance” and “discontinuity” as if it were a matter of dispersing the foundation of things, of frustrating every search and every promise of sense and unification, a little like

the way in which, for Epicurus and Lucretius, the forms offered to the experience and imagination of men turn out eventually to be nothing more than momentary combinations of atoms without profound significance and born from the necessary laws of the movement and the forever inexplicable event of the clinamen. The pregnancy of such a “corpuscular” model occasionally shows itself at the very surface of the texts, in order to characterize the final term in the analysis of power: “I have gone in search”, Foucault writes, “of these sorts of particles endowed with an energy all the greater for their being small and difficult to discern.”³⁰

Following this track allows us to detect in Foucault the presence, in the background of the analysis, of a reference to the body which could be said, without paradox, to be essentially plural. Regularly, Foucault inserts at the very place where philosophers normally locate the founding and unitary authority of an essence, an irreducible multiplicity from which individualised figures emerge (but which for this very reason they are also varying and precarious). This affirmation, as we have just seen, precedes the adoption of the genealogical paradigm and its attention to the physical dimension of power: we find traces of it as early as the *History of Madness*, where what Foucault calls ‘unreason’ sometimes takes on the features of a force which, as in Goya, challenges the unity of the body and the face.³¹ But above all it will provide the support lacking in the history of the processes of individualisation, developed by Foucault in the 1970s, by locating “the bodies” in their innumerable plurality at the core of a political history of the body and of the individual forms it successively adopts. Therefore, we can read in *Discipline and Punish*: “[disciplinary power] ‘trains’ *the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces* into a multiplicity of individual elements – small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments.” (DP 170, my emphasis)

However, with this kind of reference, do we go beyond the “happy positivism”³² which Foucault calls for, towards a metaphysics praising, at the core of the real, a power of metamorphosis where the human body would only be one manifestation amongst others? In the comparison he makes of Foucaultian and Marxist materialisms, Etienne Balibar points to this suspicion, noting that “the question cannot fail to be addressed of what in Foucault’s materialism and historicism lead to the immediate proximity of vitalism, not to say biologism.”³³ One could add that the reinterpretation by Toni Negri of Foucaultian biopolitics, the sense of its integration within a philosophy of life as the multitude’s power of self-affirmation, has subsequently provided a frank answer to this question.³⁴ We will not discuss here the political fecundity of this reading; it seems to us that it does not correspond to Foucault’s intention when he talks of “the body.” For our purposes, this reference does not aim at opening the historical enquiry to a more fundamental horizon, which would both establish its ontological basis and its teleological orientation. On the

contrary, the body's preliminary function forbids any determination, in the final analysis, of what is actually transformed and individualised through the game of power relations, that is to say any designation of a common measure which the different historical configurations could result in. To be more precise, one could say that this mention of "the body" plays two distinct roles: it has to make any historical definition of the body appear as singular and also bring to light its problematic dimension.

1) *Singularisation*. As we have said, what is at stake in Foucault's genealogical approach is to bring into question the progressive vision of political modernity, by relating the history of its legal and institutional forms to the succession of the various techniques involved in ensuring the mastery of the body. This attempt could however be subjected to an objection: would it not be possible, on this new terrain, to both retrace a continuity of history by establishing filiations between various techniques and reestablish the possibility of a teleological reading by noting how the modes of management of bodies have gained more and more precision and efficiency, etc.? If, for instance, the very peculiar political rationality which Foucault calls "governmentality" is born, as he claims, from a reflection undertaken in the eighteenth century regarding the ways in which the costs of power could be reduced,³⁵ can we not at least argue that there has been an economical improvement on this plan? After all, the notion of progress would certainly find clearer criteria in the technical domain than in the political or moral domain and there could indeed be a contradiction between Foucault's refusal of the teleology and materialism of his approach.

It is on this point that the account of "the body" and of the unpredictable exteriority of events that traverses it finds a strategic function. The way in which Foucault regularly calls for the history of the diverse epidemics of the Middle Ages and of the Classical Age is typical: the examination of the deserted space of medieval leprosariums, soon reoccupied by the insane, opens the *History of Madness*;³⁶ the contrast between the ancient model and the surveillance measures invented in the seventeenth century in order to control the plague throws light upon the disciplinary mechanisms in *Discipline and Punish*.³⁷ This duality between exclusion and discipline is itself later put into play when Foucault opposes to the plague and leprosy, smallpox as the crucible of statistical rationality and entirely new practices, predating new forms of governmentality.³⁸ Hence, at each moment, the conceptual distinctions made in order to account for the practice of power are reinvested within this history of disease. Consequently, the evolution of political techniques is thus exposed to the exterior intervention of events whose irruption challenges any attempt to produce a linear history. To turn the plague into the trigger for a series of innovations regarding the control of the body, and then to turn these innovations into a paradigm which, two centuries later, major social institutions will

generalise so that they become the normal circumstances of collective life, is equivalent to the implication within the history of disciplines, of what the *Order of Discourse* calls chance, continuity and materiality. It does not slip a metaphysical base under the random parameters of history, but forbids, on the contrary, the regressive movement which would lead from the continuity of history to the exhibition of its foundations and its permanent objectives. In other words, Foucault makes use of what he calls “the body” as an operator aiming to multiply the cause of each historical fact, and making singularity emerge, an operation which he calls “eventalising.”³⁹

2) *Problematization*. We would, however, reduce the scope of Foucault to limit his concern with the body to the effects it induces in the objective consideration of history. The fact that the events emerge from the “heterogeneous” in the literal sense of the term (i.e. what emerges within difference and diversity)⁴⁰ is doubtlessly what the genealogist needs to bear in mind if he wants to avoid, after the dissolution of the idealities of “sex” or of “reason”, betraying his nominalism by turning the body into a new absolute. But it is also without doubt the ethical point of view which he forces himself to observe, as it needs to be preserved, defended and affirmed against any claim to definitively determine the body. “The body and pleasure”, which Foucault turns into the basis of the counter-attack in *The Will to Knowledge* (itself being the point from which we started) can certainly not play the role of a principle, for the body and pleasures’ evocation remains deliberately undetermined. Instead they are charged with reminding us of the precarious, contestable and potentially violent nature of every true characterisation of the body by making us value what exceeds and disturbs it.

This critical role is particularly prevalent in the narrative which Foucault advances concerning the case of Herculine Barbin, a hermaphrodite brought up in an almost exclusively feminine environment before being forced to change her legal sex, an event which would lead her to suicide. The whole analysis that he proposes of Herculine’s written memoirs is traversed, in effect, by an opposition between sexual difference, the guarantee of self-identity to which Herculine is assigned, and the experience of corporeal differences (as per the memoir she writes) which were permitted life within a mono-sexual community.

Most of the time, those who tell of their sex change belong to a strongly bisexual world. The uneasiness of their identity is expressed by the desire to pass to the other side [...] Here, the intense mono-sexuality of religious and scholarly life serves as revelation of the tender pleasures which reveal and provoke the sexual non-identity when it gets lost in the middle of all the similar bodies.⁴¹

We see the role that the reference to monosexual communities plays here: not one of a model to be defended but one of a “point of problematisation” with respect to the claim of turning sexual difference into the sole truth of the individual body and its identity. It is significant, by the way, that Foucault finds

the traces of this experience not directly, but through a text reporting afterwards what it took for someone to renounce it: far from staging it in a Rousseau-esque way, bodies frolicking freely about in order to denounce the way in which power oppresses them and shuts them down, Foucault only detects the former through the latter like its shadow or its scruple. Everything happens as if (to parody Kant) the medical, legal and normative definition of the body was the “ratio cognoscendi” of a multiplicity of bodies older than itself, a multiplicity thus forbidding the consideration of the diverse versions of modern individuality as obvious, satisfying and definitive. It is there for all to see that through this incitement to not forget “the body”, there emerges an empty incarnation (overwhelming the definition of all possible objectification) and an irresponsible dream (so ignorant of the suffering of others that the body resists every identification, in the ethical figure of a young and desperate hermaphrodite). It seems, however, important to indicate here the distance between the forms of social or discursive ordering of the body and the disorder which resists them: as a reminder to not neglect what gravely envelops the gesture of restoring plurality back to unity.

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3. See Butler's Preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble*, pp. xvii-xviii.
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5. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 30. Henceforth abbreviated DP.
6. “On a chez Foucault une théorie du corps comme condition illisible des fictions, et une théorie des fictions de corps”, M. de Certeau, “L'histoire une passion nouvelle”, *Le Magazine littéraire*, April 1977, 123, pp. 22-23.
7. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 314. Henceforth abbreviated OT.
8. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 157. Henceforth abbreviated HS 1.
9. The essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” is held to support this view. See Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 2. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 369-391.
10. This is the reading defended by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Ch. 5.
11. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 242. Hereafter abbreviated BC.
12. “[Mon corps] est lié à tous les ‘ailleurs’ du monde, et à vrai dire, il est ailleurs que dans le monde ; car c’est autour de lui que les choses sont disposées, et c’est par rapport à lui, comme par rapport à un souverain, qu’il y a un dessus, un dessous, une droite, une gauche, un avant, un arrière, un proche, un lointain [...] Le corps est au coeur du monde, ce petit noyau utopique

- à partir duquel je rêve, je parle, j'avance, j'imagine, je perçois les choses en leur place." Michel Foucault, "Le corps utopique", Radio conference from December 21st 1966, available on France-Culture CD, coll. "INA / Mémoire vive".
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 14. Michel Foucault, "Lecture 1, 7/11/1973," *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), pp. 12-13. Hereafter abbreviated PP.
 15. On the "ideality" of disciplinary rationality, see Foucault's remarks in "La Table ronde du 20 mai 1978" in *Dits et écrits*, T. IV, p.28. The double status, both material and ideal, of what Foucault calls "discipline" obviously poses particular problems. On this subject, see P. Artières and M. Potte-Bonneville, *D'après Foucault* (Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2007), Ch. IV.
 16. On this double relation of opposition and complementarity, see notably the connection between juridical law and disciplinary forces of opposition in DP 222.
 17. See in particular DP 73-103.
 18. On "the incorporation" of perversions, see HS 1, 42-44.
 19. H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chs.7 & 8.
 20. On examination, see DP 184-94.
 21. On confession, see HS 1, 58-67.
 22. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 410.
 23. An instance of such epistemological alternatives is the rivalry between the models of the machine and the organism to which George Canguilhem devoted his attention, a fact not ignored by Foucault. See G. Canguilhem, "Machine et organisme" in *La Connaissance de la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 1952).
 24. On these various techniques constituting discipline, see "Docile Bodies" in DP 135-69.
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 28. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", trans. I. McLeod in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. R. Young (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 69. Foucault's emphasis.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
 30. Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men" in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 3*, p. 161.
 31. See Foucault, *History of Madness*, pp. 530-32.
 32. Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", p. 73
 33. "La question ne peut pas ne pas être posée de ce qui, dans le matérialisme et l'historicisme de Foucault, amène au voisinage immédiat du vitalisme, pour ne pas dire du biologisme", E. Balibar, "L'enjeu du nominalisme", in *Michel Foucault philosophe – Rencontres internationales*, Paris 9, 10, 11 janvier 1988 (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p.74.
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39. On “eventalization” as “causal multiplication”, see “Table ronde du 20 mai 1978” in *Dits et écrits, II, 1976-1988* (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001).
40. P. Loraux, “Le souci de l’hétérogène”, in *Au risque de Foucault* (Paris, ed. Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997) pp. 31-39.
41. “La plupart du temps, ceux qui racontent leur changement de sexe appartiennent à un monde fortement bisexuel ; le malaise de leur identité se traduit par le désir de passer de l’autre côté (...). Ici, l’intense monosexualité de la vie religieuse et scolaire sert de révélateur aux tendres plaisirs que découvre et provoque la non-identité sexuelle, quand elle s’égare au milieu de tous ces corps semblables”., “Le vrai sexe” in *Dits et Ecrits, II, 1976-1988*, No. 287.

POWER IN NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY

TODD MAY

The publication of Foucault's two sets of lecture series from the *Collège de France* concerning governmentality, *Security, Territory, Population*, and especially *The Birth of Biopolitics*, have generated an outpouring of interest.¹ This interest is rooted in at least three areas. First, the latter lectures offer the only extended discussion in Foucault's corpus of twentieth century history. Usually, Foucault's histories/genealogies end near the close of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. The lessons he draws for our contemporary situation, then, emerge from a certain historical distance. By contrast, *The Birth of Biopolitics* focuses on a history that is still unfolding, one that is more difficult to grapple with because Foucault was living at its outset. By the same token, it is a history that is more relevant to us. This is both because, nearly thirty years after his death, we inhabit a historical situation that is distinct from that which he spends much of the energy of his "history of the present" understanding – the 1970s and early 1980s – and yet because of the suggestions he makes about neoliberalism in *The Birth of Biopolitics* this history turns out to concern the present we find ourselves inhabiting.

The second arena of interest generated by these lecture series concerns the fact that Foucault articulates in them an operation of power distinct from that of the normalizing power of discipline. It is a power that concerns itself not with the formation of the individual but instead with a certain work on populations. This second arena is closely tied to a third, which in fact may be seen as an extension of the second. The terms *bio-power* and *biopolitics*, which are first suggested near the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, again make an appearance and, from one angle, can be seen to be the entire concern of these lecture series. Biopolitics, of course, is a concept that has been appropriated, not to say stretched beyond all recognition, by a number of recent thinkers, perhaps mostly notably Giorgio Agamben. However, if we want to understand Foucault's use of the concept, we must focus on these two sets of lecture series.

The approach of this article is to bring all three motivations together. My intention is to canvass Foucault's two lectures series by showing how biopolitics, as a new concept of power that operates on populations, has issued out into the neoliberalism which is the ether of our age. In other words, my reading will see these two lecture series as offering a genealogy of neoliberalism. This reading is a bit against the grain of the lecture series themselves. After all, at the outset of *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault notes that he is going to "jump ahead"² in his history from the eighteenth to the twentieth

century. Moreover, Foucault offers at least one gesture at that outset suggesting that before he can return to biopolitics he must discuss liberal and neoliberal governmentality when he says:

it seems to me that the analysis of biopolitics can only get under way when we have understood the general regime of this governmental reason I have talked about, this general regime that we can call the question of truth, of economic truth in the first place, within governmental reason (BB 21-22)

Nevertheless, I believe there is a clear through-line in the lecture series that allows us to see the biopolitical themes of both volumes as constituting a preliminary discussion of the emergence of a new form of power, one that Foucault rightly saw as tied to neoliberalism, which in turn he rightly saw as a set of practices that might (and indeed did) become dominant in our time. In short, the two lecture series to be discussed here offer us a trenchant history of the present, a present that was only beginning to dawn at the time Foucault delivered these lectures.³

The distinction between the individualizing power of discipline and biopolitics is first suggested at the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where Foucault writes:

starting in the seventeenth century, this power over life evolved in two basic forms [...] One of these poles [...] centered on the body as a machine [...] all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second [...] focused on the species body [...] a *biopolitics of the population*.⁴

On the one side, Foucault places the studies he performed in *Discipline and Punish* and much of the discussion of the history of sexuality itself. These studies concerned themselves with how individuals are normalized through practices of surveillance and intervention that both saw them as and created them as (i.e. in a complex of power/knowledge) what might be called psychological personalities. In the case of *Discipline and Punish*, the focus was on the psychological profile of those to be studied and rehabilitated, whereas in the history of sexuality the focus turned toward the more psychoanalytic theme of the sexual constitution of the individual. For both, however, the underlying theme was that of normalization. Where does the individual stand with respect to the normal? How might he or she be intervened upon to make them more normal? These were the questions that at once helped constitute fields of studies and the people who were the object and product of those fields of study, that is, us.

By contrast, biopolitics works on populations, “species,” rather than individuals. It does not survey or intervene upon particular people, but instead sets general conditions or frameworks or rules that are expected to generate general results. Its concern is less psychological or psychoanalytic than economic, in the traditional (rather than, say, Derridean) sense of the term. Although people might want to use the term *biopolitics* to refer to work upon both individuals and populations (after all, discipline works directly on the body), in Foucault’s usage biopolitics is concerned with the latter rather than the former.

This article will proceed in three stages. First, I will recount Foucault's discussion of biopolitics in the two lecture series, but do so in a particular way. That recounting will seek to show the continuity between the early discussion of biopower in *Security, Territory, Population* and the later discussion of neoliberalism. It is not the nature of biopower per se that I am interested in, but its relation to economics and specifically the economic approach of neoliberalism. Second, I will follow Foucault in distinguishing neoliberalism and neoliberal subjects from discipline and disciplinary subjects, highlighting the latter distinction more than Foucault does and offering, in passing, an additional neoliberal subject. Finally, I will discuss the complicated normative view of history this change from discipline to neoliberal power involves. Rather than seeing it as progress away from discipline or descent into something worse, I will argue that, from a Foucaultian perspective, we should see that history as neither progressive nor regressive, but instead as normatively complex.

At the outset of *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault offers a definition of biopower (which he hyphenates as bio-power):

By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that humans are a species.⁵

As it stands, this definition could refer to discipline and its normalizing power as well as any operation on more general populations. One might, for instance, argue that training the body in the most efficient form of handling a gun, as the Prussian army did, was based upon the fact that human bodies operate in a particular way.⁶ However, if we read these words in light of the earlier definition of biopolitics from the *History of Sexuality*, we can understand that at issue is not normalization but the operation of power upon larger populations. Moreover, in these lectures Foucault offers a distinction and several examples that highlight the idea of this new political strategy as being a more "general strategy of power" rather than one directed specifically at individuals.

The distinction is a tripartite one between the old juridical power, disciplinary power, and a different type of power that he labels *security*. In regard to theft, Foucault offers this summary view of security:

Putting it in a still absolutely general way, the apparatus of security inserts the phenomenon in question, namely theft, within a series of probable events. Second, the reactions of power to this phenomenon are inserted into a calculation of cost. Finally, third, instead of a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, one establishes an average considered as optimal on the one hand, and, on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must not be exceeded. (STP 6)

One can see that that view is neither juridical nor disciplinary, but instead economic. It is not juridical because it is not concerned, or at least not primarily concerned, with the permitted and the forbidden. Although there may be laws

prohibiting theft, the enforcement of those laws – the real action taken upon them – relies not on the bare existence of the laws but instead on the prevalence or degree of theft. One acts not on the existence of theft but upon its incidence. If security is not juridical, neither is it disciplinary. It does not seek to create individuals who, as normal, will not engage in theft. Nor does it seek to monitor those individuals, the delinquents Foucault describes at the end of *Discipline and Punish*, who resist techniques of normalization.

Instead, security is economic. It recognizes that there will be theft, and seeks to orient policy around minimizing the threat which theft will constitute for a society. This involves calculating both the benefits derived from various alternative policies, but also the costs of those policies. Those costs can be monetary, but they can also be calculated as opportunity costs – the cost of not engaging one's money or energy or time elsewhere. As Foucault sums it up regarding crime: "[t]he general question basically will be how to keep a type of criminality, theft for instance, within socially and economically acceptable limits and around an average that will be considered optimal for a given social functioning." (STP 5) We can already see how security is aligned with governmentality. If governmentality concerns the practices by which populations are governed, then policies designed to maximize the performance or minimize the disutility of those populations will be the concerns of a type of governmentality that operates in broadly economic terms. Although we will be less directly concerned with Foucault's conception of governmentality in these lectures, we should note that for him the concept of security and the later but related concept of neoliberalism are both asked within a broader reflection that concerns itself with governmentality, i.e. not with the structure of government itself but within practices of power that pass through and constitute governmental functioning. "Is it possible," he asks, "to place the modern state in a general technology of power that assured its mutations, development, and functioning?" (STP 120)

How, then, does security work, and what is its relation to neoliberalism? Foucault sees the origins of security in the rise of physiocratic thought and its replacement of mercantilism in the eighteenth century. Broadly, the story runs like this. For the mercantilists, the key objective for any state was the accumulation of wealth. Wealth was considered to be a zero sum game: the wealth of one nation could only be had at the expense of another. Therefore, the project of a state was to maximize the wealth of its nation in competition with those of other nations. That involved both the exploitation of other nations where possible and also the development of the internal resources of the nation. The problem mercantilism faced was one of scarcity. Foucault focuses on scarcity of grain. If there is a scarcity of grain, then the internal resources of a country, for example the labour power of those living in it, could not be developed. This happened because the scarcity of grain drove prices up, which

in turn led to the inability of people to buy food. How, then, to deal with the problem of scarcity? Trade with other countries was out of the question, since that required wealth to leave one's own country. The solution was to be found in prices: prices must be kept low so that as many people as possible could afford grain. The difficulty here is manifest. If prices are forced lower, then peasants are getting less for their grain. This means they now lack the resources to plant enough grain, leading to greater scarcity. The problem is not cured but instead exacerbated.

The approach offered by the physiocrats did not focus on scarcity or on prices but on trade. During periods of abundance peasants should be allowed to export their grain, which will give them the resources to plant more grain and to avoid going to ruin during periods of bad harvests. The idea of the free circulation of grain, anathema to the mercantilists, was embraced by the physiocrats. But to embrace this solution involved not only a change in policy, but a change in an entire way of looking at governmental practices. This change involves at least three related elements: a focus on movement rather than stasis, a shift of focus from individuals to populations, and a recognition of the eliminable character of uncertainty. In short, it required the embrace of an economic governmentality.

The first shift required the state to abandon what might be called a synchronic view of governmentality. Of concern was not only a particular situation at a particular moment, for example scarcity of grain during a bad harvest, but the entire circulation of grain throughout the country, and its potential circulation in a wider sphere. Only by looking at the wider network of circulation over time could it be argued that selling grain abroad during periods of abundance would be good for those in the country from which the grain was exported.

The second shift is bound to the first. If one is looking at circulation across a region, the view one must take is macro- rather than micro-scopic. It is not what particular individuals are doing or how they fare that matters, but instead what happens to an entire population:

[W]ithin the economic technology and management, there is this break between the pertinent level of the population and the level that is not pertinent, or that is simply instrumental. The final objective is the population [...] individuals, the series of individuals, are no longer pertinent as the objective, but simply as the instrument, or relay, or condition for obtaining something at the level of the population. (STP 42)

Third, any intervention or set of policies must recognize that there is a level of uncertainty attaching to the macroscopic level that does not obtain at the microscopic one: "The specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space." (STP 20) When one intervenes on individuals, as with discipline, one has a greater degree of assurance of success. Not that success is guaranteed – recall Foucault's discussion of the delinquent in *Discipline and Punish*. However, there is both a greater chance of success and

a greater degree of immediate feedback that would allow adjustment for success and for failure than there is at the level of circulation and population. Moreover, even where there is success with the latter, one does not know in advance *for whom* one's policies will be successful. Not everyone in a population will benefit, even if the population as a whole will be better off. Success at the macro level carries with it uncertainty at the micro level.

As Foucault points out, one does not see the economic approach at work only in what might be called economic arenas, such as grain. It involves an entire way of thinking, one that abandons the project of suppressing deleterious phenomena (or producing normalized ones), seeking instead to regulate or utilize them in a larger whole. For instance, the vaccination of smallpox requires introducing a bit of smallpox into the body, and risking it taking hold of particular individuals, in order to marginalize it in an entire population:

With the support of this kind of first small, artificially inoculated disease, one could prevent other possible attacks of smallpox. We have here a typical mechanism of security with the same morphology as that seen in the case of scarcity. (STP 59)

Just as the physiocrats sought not to suppress scarcity but to place it in a larger economy in which it could be utilized, so vaccination does not suppress the smallpox virus, but utilizes it in a larger economy of population health.

At several points in the early chapters of *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault discusses the difference between security and discipline as modes of the operation of power. In the second chapter, he describes discipline as centripetal, controlling, and regulatory, in contrast to security, which is centrifugal, laissez-faire, and requiring oversight. We have seen these distinctions already at work in the examples we have canvassed here. For instance, the physiocratic approach to grain is centrifugal (looking outward toward trade rather than inward toward the internal production of grain), laissez-faire (counting on trade rather than price policy to foster optimal grain production), and oversight (intervening, if at all, at the level of populations rather than regulating individual behaviour). As the lectures unfold, Foucault turns back the historical clock in order to trace the pre-history of security as a form of governmentalization, starting from the pastoral power of the ancient world, running through debates around Machiavellian conceptions of power and then the rise of a science of police associated with discipline, and ending back with the physiocratic approach we have just discussed. Our interest lies not in the emergence but in the contemporary impact of security, and so we will turn the clock forward toward neoliberalism as Foucault discusses it in the following lecture series, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

Foucault finds the roots of the neoliberalism of the Chicago School, especially of such economists as Milton Friedman and Gary Becker, in the ordoliberalism arising in Germany at the end of World War II. For the ordoliberals, who were overwhelmingly German and Austrian, Nazism did not

represent an aberration but instead an exemplary formation of state control. It was the culmination of a movement toward state centralization, one that had strong roots in Keynesian economics and the state interventions that accompanied responses to the Great Depression, including the New Deal. According to the ordoliberals:

what Nazism finally contributed was the strict coalescence of these different elements, that is to say, the organization of an economic system in which protectionist economics, the economics of state aid, the planned economy, and Keynesian economics formed a firmly secured whole in which the different parts were bound together by the economic administration that was set up. (BB 109)

What worried the ordoliberals was the coalescence of power in the state, and the cure for this coalescence was a competitive, decentralized, market economy.

As Foucault points out, the ordoliberal embrace of a market economy had a complex relationship to the physiocratic proposals for *laissez-faire* discussed in the earlier lecture series. Central to both is the operation of what Foucault calls *security*: the operation of governmental power by way of intervening at the level of a dynamism of populations in a situation of necessary uncertainty. However, a key element of the earlier classically liberal theory goes missing in ordoliberalism. This is the supposition that markets naturally tend toward equilibrium. The experience of the previous two centuries, and in particular of the early twentieth century, convinced the ordoliberals that a pure *laissez-faire* approach to market economies will not naturally lead toward the decentralization necessary for their operation. The state must be involved: “Neo-liberalism should not therefore be identified with *laissez-faire*, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention.” (BB 132) This leads to the central conundrum: how to intervene so that markets remain competitive without accreting power to the state.

The answer they offered, one that would be carried into neoliberal theory and practice, was that the state would have to operate on the framework of the market in order to ensure competition without intervening into the market mechanisms themselves. The goal would be to ensure competition, and thus the decentralization of power. But, since this decentralization is not natural, it would have to be ensured by a “vigilance” that operated in such a way as to ensure that a competitive market was maintained. Foucault offers several examples of this intervention, including anti-monopolistic practices, tax policy, and training and education. What binds these various interventions is that the government is not directing the market but seeking to ensure its operation, replacing the discredited *laissez-faire* with an active role that nevertheless does not prejudice market operations.

American neoliberalism, especially in its influential incarnation in the Chicago School, adopts the ordoliberal program, but expands it in an important way. This expansion is crucial for us, since it displays the operation of power

in the neoliberal period and its distinction from the more disciplinary operation of the welfare state. Foucault explains:

American liberalism is not – as it is in France at present [note that this is before the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy], or as it was in Germany immediately after the war – just an economic and political choice formed and formulated by those who govern and within the governmental milieu. Liberalism in America is a whole way of being and thinking. It is a type of relation between the governors and the governed much more than a technique of governors with regard to the governed. (BB 218)

A whole way of being and thinking is what American neoliberalism contributes to ordoliberalism: a particular form of subjectification. And this is why Foucault discusses the American neoliberal Gary Becker more than any other member of the Chicago School. It was Becker who defined the subjectification characteristic of neoliberalism: *homo æconomicus*, the person of enterprise. For Becker, people see their lives in terms of investments and returns. These investments are not only those of money, but, perhaps more important, that of time. People choose to invest their temporal and material resources in ways that will yield them the most return. As Becker put the matter in his 1992 Nobel Prize lecture, his: “analysis assumes that individuals maximize welfare *as they conceive it*, whether they be selfish, altruistic, loyal, spiteful, or masochistic. Their behaviour is forward-looking, and it is also consistent over time.”⁷

In essence, neoliberalism creates a new figure, in the sense of the term *figure* as Foucault uses it in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* to categorize the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult.⁸ Recall that for Foucault power is not simply repressive; it is also creative. It serves not only to stop something from happening, but in addition to bring into reality something that was not there before. As Foucault says of the modern soul in *Discipline and Punish*:

[i]t would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, with the body by a functioning of power on those punished. (DP 29)

Neoliberal power is also creative. What it creates is the figure of modern *homo æconomicus*.

Who is *homo æconomicus*? In the liberal analyses of the eighteenth century, *homo æconomicus* was the person of exchange. Under neoliberalism, it is the person of enterprise:

In neo-liberalism – and it does not hide this; it proclaims it – there is also a theory of *homo æconomicus*, but he is not at all a partner of exchange. *Homo æconomicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself [...] The man of consumption, insofar as he consumes, is a producer. What does he produce? Well, quite simply, he produces his own satisfaction. (BB 226)

Homo æconomicus, as entrepreneur, is the figure who creates himself or herself through a series of investments whose return is the other end of the circuit of self-definition (the first end being the investing itself). Foucault offers a telling

example of *homo æconomicus* when he appeals to Becker's analysis of crime and punishment. For Becker, punishment is not a matter of normalizing individuals. Instead, it is a matter of a government's using its resources in the most efficient manner to deter crime, recognizing that every use of resources also involves an opportunity cost in regard to other policies it might pursue. And the goal of deterrence is to make the cost of committing crimes high enough relative to the benefit so that the criminal, as entrepreneur, sees it as a bad investment. Foucault himself contrasts this neoliberal view with that of discipline as he analyzed it in *Discipline and Punish*. Rather than an "exhaustively disciplinary society" or one of "general normalization":

On the horizon of this analysis we see instead the image, idea, or theme-program of a society in which there is an optimization of systems of difference, in which the field is left open to fluctuating processes, in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated, in which action is brought to bear on the rules of the game rather than on the players, and finally in which there is an environmental type of intervention instead of the internal subjugation of individuals. (BB 259-60)

We will return to the normative elements of this passage at the end of this article. Before that, however, we have two tasks. The first is a quick note. Foucault posits *homo æconomicus* as the figure produced by neoliberalism. He contrasts this figure with the consumer, and articulates it as productive. I have argued elsewhere that both of these elements may be contested. First, it seems to me that neoliberalism produces at least two figures: the entrepreneur and the consumer. The consumer acts without regard to investment, but instead in with regard to what will be momentarily entertaining, amusing, or enjoyable. He or she is the shopper rather than the entrepreneur: passive rather than active, focused on the present rather than the future. Second, thinking of the entrepreneur in terms of production may be a bit anachronistic. Industrial capitalism was characterized by production. Finance capital, by contrast, and in ways we have seen recently, is characterized by investment and return that is not tethered, or at least not in any direct way, to production. The entrepreneur seeks maximization of return, but this maximization is probably better considered in terms of the return than in terms of any type of production. A full consideration of these ideas is beyond the scope of this article, and I have considered them elsewhere.⁹

The second task is to recognize the contrast between *homo æconomicus* as the central figure of neoliberalism and the figures of the previous period: the four figures of sexuality (the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult) and the figure, from *Discipline and Punish*, of the delinquent. The previous figures are bound to the disciplinary project of normalization. Recall that for Foucault, discipline, as the particularly modern form of power, replaces the binary distinction between the permitted and the forbidden. It creates a space in which almost everyone is subject to surveillance and intervention, because almost nobody is normal (except the

vanishingly small number of people who incarnate the figure of the Malthusian couple). Discipline justifies and indeed encourages individual diagnosis and treatment. In a disciplinary regime, the goal would be the regulation of each and every one of its members.

Although Foucault does not discuss the period of the welfare state – roughly the 1930s to the 1980s – it is during this period that one can see the full flowering of the disciplinary regime. His colleague François Ewald has, however, and has demonstrated, at least in France, its intimacy with a disciplinary regime. Ewald shows how responsibility for social health evolved from private charity into a public duty:

the proliferation of insurance institutions and the birth of Social Security, the appearance of the welfare-state, one of the processes of socialization that characterize the contemporary history of our societies: *the socialization of responsibilities*.¹⁰

Roughly, during the nineteenth century, accidents, particularly worker accidents, were thought of as the responsibility of the worker. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, accidents came to be considered inevitable. Given certain working conditions, it was likely that a certain number of accidents would occur during a certain period of time. When and to whom those accidents would occur could not be predicted. But the overall probability of their occurring could. In this thinking, accidents were no longer individualized to those to whom they occur. They were socialized into a more general metric of *risk*.

“Risk,” Ewald tells us, “serves not only to assess dangers, to locate or to localize them; it is at the same time, in the same gesture, a moral category: starting from which society prescribes to its members what can and cannot be done, behavior that is profitable to all and to each, as well as conduct that is harmful because it is socially costly.”¹¹ Risk, then, does more than shift responsibility to the social body. At the same time, it allows the social body to intervene upon the individual in order to lower the general incidence of risk:

The project of Social Security [by which Ewald means the entire apparatus of social guarantees, not simply the particular program for the elderly as in the US] is no longer solely that of covering individual risk, of guaranteeing a minimal security for individuals, of freeing them from need, Social Security wants to be and is a new practice of the *social contract*: Social Security is the institution across which is realized this contract of solidarity which constitutes the veritable relationship between individuals in society.¹²

This contract of solidarity, although Ewald does not give it a Foucaultian name, is discipline. The state and the institutions and practices aligned with discipline converge in a project that is at once one of security and normalization. There is support for the individual through various social services, human resource and personnel departments, etc., but in turn these services act to normalize individuals. The disciplinary society whose elements Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* comes to its full flowering during the course of the dominance of the

welfare state. One might argue that the reason Foucault sees normalization so clearly in the mid-1970s is that it is at that moment at its zenith, and that in a few years the neoliberalism Foucault sees on the horizon by the time of the lectures will begin to form a new arrangement of power that will eclipse the disciplinary regime, as economic motifs replace psychological ones.

In order for discipline to thrive, it needs the dedication of resources for surveillance and intervention. The neoliberal regime, by contrast, needs far fewer resources. For neoliberalism, individuals, as such, are left alone to pursue their own projects. This does not mean that they are immune from formation by power. Far from it. However, as we have seen, the power to which they are subject is not an individualizing power. It is not a power that intervenes on each and every one. Instead, it is a power applied to the population as a whole. This power operates by encouraging people to think of themselves as entrepreneurs, as individual enterprises like companies. This encouragement arises from a number of sources, as one might suspect from a genealogical history. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault cites the role that governmentality and especially neoliberal theories of governmentality played in its emergence. There are other factors as well.

One of the most important of these other factors is the effect on people of the withdrawal of public resources. In a neoliberal society, individuals are on their own, in competition with one another in much the same way that companies are in competition. If one fails, there is very little in the way of a safety net to catch one, in contrast to the period of the welfare state. Therefore, one had better make the best use one can of one's resources. There is, as we have seen increasingly over the past thirty years, very little room for error in a neoliberal society. Company employment is far more contingent on ongoing performance. Academic employment is characterized more by short-term contracts, and the tenure system is under constant attack. In all, people are in a position that is far more tenuous than they were in the welfare state. As a result, not only are they encouraged by the ethos of neoliberalism to think of themselves as entrepreneurs; they are also so encouraged by the material fragility of their own situation.

The distinction between neoliberalism and discipline can easily be obscured by another current phenomenon which should be mentioned at least in passing: that of terror and security. One might point out that the neoliberal state is hardly smaller than the welfare state. Moreover, it is characterized at certain points by increased and increasingly intrusive surveillance. Given this, how can one justify the idea that neoliberalism operates by leaving individuals as such alone and operating primarily at the level of environmental influences? We can only gesture at what must be a twofold response to this challenge. First, the mechanisms of security characteristic of anti-terror campaigns are not themselves neoliberal mechanisms. They are a distinct set of phenomena,

arising from a distinct set of concerns. Second, however, their operation does not bring us back to a disciplinary regime. The surveillance characteristic of anti-terror campaigns and their aligned governmentalities have nothing to do with normalization. Instead, they have to do with creating an atmosphere of imminent threat. There is nothing the individual is asked to be. There is no normalizing power at work. In fact, it could be argued that anti-terror campaigns are, at least in one way, convergent with neoliberalism. Both operate to make the individual feel alone and vulnerable, and thus to seek to shore up his or her own domain rather than to act in solidarity with others.¹³

We are now, by way of conclusion, ready to turn back to the normative implications of the neoliberal story Foucault tells in the lectures. Recall that for Foucault, neoliberalism permits “an optimization of systems of difference, in which the field is left open to fluctuating processes, in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated...” (BB 259) This would seem like an advance over the previous disciplinary regime, and in several ways it is. Normalization is oppressive in many ways, some of which Foucault discusses, and others of which are discussed by people writing in his wake.¹⁴ But to say that Foucault endorsed the neoliberal regime or was sympathetic with it would be to misunderstand his analyses of power. What Foucault’s lectures suggest is not an advance upon discipline but instead a historical emergence that is normatively complex. In this sense, the emergence of neoliberal power in contrast to disciplinary power is in analogous to the emergence of disciplinary power in contrast to the earlier juridico-discursive or binary power. Foucault’s description of the torture of the attempted regicide Damiens at the beginning of *Discipline and Punish* is enough to cure anyone of the temptation to think that Foucault thought we needed to return from disciplinary power toward a more pre-modern binary power arrangement. The book on the prisons does not tell a story of normative regression from a better form a punishment to a worse one. Instead, it shows us that what looks like a pure advance from barbarism to a more civilized practice of punishment is actually more complicated than that. The abandonment of torture is surely a normative advance, but its cost in terms of the rise in normalization has been a steep one.

Similarly, the marginalization of certain psychological practices of surveillance and intervention is surely a good thing. But its costs, costs that are borne not only economically but in the constraints that attend to having to think of oneself as an enterprise, are similarly steep. And, as with discipline, the project of resistance is not a project of return. We ought not to look longingly back on the normalizing practices of the welfare state and the types of practices and governmentalities that led to it. Rather, Foucault’s recounting of the rise of neoliberalism and neoliberal subjectification should encourage us to think and live otherwise. It is not nostalgia but experimentation that Foucault’s genealogies encourage. Foucault and others have demonstrated the deleterious

effects of discipline to the point where, even from the perspective of neoliberalism, it should not tempt us to a return. Instead, as with all forms of oppressive power, we should seek to understand what it is and how it operates, and then ask how else we might approach our lives, both individually and collectively. What *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* have accomplished is to offer analytic signposts to our understanding of where we are and how we arrived here. The task of further understanding, and, more important, of resistance and change, is up to us.

How might we envision this resistance? Foucault, as is well known, was reluctant to offer specific suggestions regarding political change. In keeping with his view that he was only offering tools of analysis, and that the change should be up to those who struggle, Foucault rarely offered political suggestions. (The most famous case of such an offering is perhaps his claim in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that “bodies and pleasures” were a source of resistance to the current regime of sexuality. (HS 1 157) It is as famous for being cryptic as for its being a suggestion in the first place.) However, we might, by way of conclusion, sketch quickly an idea that might point the way toward contemporary resistance.

The idea might be called *solidarity from below*. By this I mean the development of resistance organizations that do not rely upon the state, but rather upon a common recognition of oppression that motivates people to act in their own collective name. That name, whether *proletariat* or *students* or *women* or *undocumented workers*, would not be a matter of an identity politics but rather a politics of equality in the sense discussed in the recent writings of Jacques Rancière.¹⁵ That is to say, solidarity from below as a resistance to neoliberalism would consist in collective action under the presupposition of the equality of everyone. If neoliberalism focuses on the idea of freedom as the ability to choose what one desires, solidarity from below focuses instead on the idea of an equality that is denied by the structures of oppression characteristic of neoliberalism.

Neither neoliberalism nor the welfare state shows any concern for solidarity in this sense. Neoliberalism focuses upon the individual, and part of its ability to sustain itself derives from keeping individuals focused on their own needs and desires rather than on their commonality with others. Welfare state policies, while they have, as we have seen in Ewald’s work, a conception of solidarity, do so from the top down. It is the state, rather than the people, who are the arbiters and dispensers of social solidarity. The kind of solidarity that emerges from collective action is, while not nearly as anathema to the welfare state as it is to neoliberalism, nevertheless foreign from its conception of proper social and political intervention.

Movements founded on solidarity from below are, by their very nature, challenges to neoliberalism. They envision people and their relationships

differently from the way they are envisioned in the neoliberal order. There are, no doubt, many other forms of experimentation that could stem from a Foucaultian approach to neoliberal power. Solidarity from below is only one. What is crucial is, as Foucault would have it, that we recognize where we are and how we got here, and that we begin on that basis to envision whom else we might be.

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References

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3. *The Birth of Biopolitics* lectures were delivered in 1979, the year Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of Great Britain and a year before Ronald Reagan was elected President of the U.S.
4. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 139. Hereafter *HS 1*.
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6. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 154. Hereafter *DP*
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8. Cf. Foucault, *HS 1*, p. 105: "Four figures emerged from this preoccupation with sex..."
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11. *Ibid.*, p. 384.
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13. I discuss this isolating effect of neoliberalism in *Friendship in an Age of Economics*.
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FOUCAULT'S TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: BETWEEN CONTROL AND CREATIVITY

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The main interest in Life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning.¹

In Foucault's late work his research turned towards providing a genealogy of the subject. To this end for Foucault: "[i]t seemed appropriate to look for the forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject."² Foucault therefore begins to explore technologies or practices which make up the care of self, and which are carried out on the self by the self. Such practices allow the self to purify, correct and transform itself.³ This project, focusing on thought from Classical to Late Antiquity, and early Christian literature, while marking a change in the topic and period of Foucault's research, is a development of his previous research. Foucault had already explored the practices of government exerted on the self by others, which included the constitution of a particular kind of subject.⁴ He subsequently began to explore the practices of self-government which allow self-constitution. The possibility, therefore, arises of whether an understanding of ancient technologies of the self can provide a resource for resisting the constitution of our subjectivity according to the power strategies of our contemporary disciplinary society. However, given Foucault's recognition that technologies of the self, whilst concerning our relationship to ourselves, involve relationships with others, the problem also presents itself as to how forms of self-creation that do not reproduce a subjugated subject are possible in the context of the power strategies that constitute our interactions with others. In this article, I will argue that if technologies of control are creative, as Foucault understands them to be, there exists the possibility for self-creation within a network of power relations, and there is thus scope to establish a non-subjugated self. Technologies of the self play an important role in the critical process which creates the space for the formation of new subjectivities that in turn contribute to the critical process of destabilisation. It is possible to transform who we are in ways which challenge existing power orders from inside these orders. I will show that harnessing technologies of the self in these ways depends on a critical awareness of the operation of power strategies which we can never be entirely liberated from.

Various discussions of the subject's self-constitution through technologies of the care of the self overlook the problem of how self-creation is possible given the subject's constitution through power strategies.⁵ Alan Schrift, C. Colwell, and Benda Hofmeyr clearly present this problematic, and have an awareness

that the space for self-creation within this nexus of strategies of control resides in Foucault's recognition that this constitution is never a purely passive effect of power on the subject but involves the subject's own activity.⁶ More work is needed however, on how the actual technologies of the self, which Foucault discusses in the final volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, and in further detail in his lectures at the Collège de France, navigate this tension and operate in a way that allows for creative resistance. I will focus here on examples offered in the lecture series from 1981-1982, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

Kevin Thompson suggests that the possibility of creative resistance depends on a shift in Foucault's view of power; this seems however to exaggerate the discontinuity involved in Foucault's enrichment of his concept of power and sidestep rather than confront the problem of how self-creation that does not replicate patterns of domination can occur in the context of power relations.⁷ Technologies of the self allow the subject to achieve some independence within the network of power strategies, but the subject still emerges from the context of these strategies. What is needed, therefore, is first to clarify Foucault's mature understanding of the operation of power and the subject's relation to power, before exploring how particular technologies of the self allow for the creation of a self that as a form of resistance provides an alternative model of existence, rather than merely redistributing the balance of domination.

Foucault emphasises that he is not setting out to provide a theory of power; rather, he is engaged in observing how it operates.⁸ This observation requires an account of power as a tool of analysis, allowing him to bring to light power operations that might otherwise be overlooked. Foucault never understands power as a thing that one has, but as something which exists only in its exercise. By *Discipline and Punish*, he is self-consciously involved in an exploration of how power strategies structure our field of experience. In *Discipline and Punish* the focus is on the tactics of domination. Subsequently Foucault is keen to emphasise that such power strategies are insufficient to capture the diverse operations of power.⁹ In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, he develops a broader understanding of power as a tool of analysis. Here he stresses that "power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations." (HS 1, 94) Hence, power is not simply exercised on a subordinate group by a dominant group. Not only are these roles mobile such that there is "no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled." (HS 1, 94) One can be both dominated and dominate at different times and in different contexts, but even when we are dominated by others this is not a purely passive relationship. Rather, being dominated still involves our active engagement in power relations. These power relations are implicated in all of our social relations. Relations of power are immanent to, and productive of, our other relationships. (HS 1, 94) Power acts as much through the creation of relationships and practices as through

their suppression. Power is therefore everywhere for Foucault. While its exercise is not always the result of a conscious choice by a particular subject, the exercise of power implies an objective. Power relations can therefore be understood as relations of strategies: “where there is power”, Foucault writes, “there is resistance.” (HS 1, 94) We constantly operate in the context of power strategies and counter-strategies with various aims, including resisting the aims of strategies that operate on us.

With the notion of government Foucault further develops this complex view of power. As John Protevi puts it, Foucault moves from the model of war, or confrontation, which characterises the grid of intelligibility applied to the analysis of punishment, to that of government, or the conduct of conduct. On this new model of government, however, different tactics and relations are still understood to emerge from a grid of power strategies.¹⁰ Governmentality is another form which power relations take.¹¹ Governmental power relations occur at the intersection between “the technologies of domination of others and those of the self.”¹² Thus, governmentality introduces the notion that we act not just to influence the conduct of others but to control our own conduct, and to control how others will control their own conduct. This emphasises a key aspect of Foucault’s view of power, which is that the exercise of power implies that the agent on whom power is exercised could have acted otherwise.¹³

Kevin Thompson argues that the move to governmentality marks a shift in Foucault’s understanding of power from the strategic view still operating in the *History of Sexuality Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*. Thompson suggests that the strategic view depicting a “process of continual struggle immanent within a variety of different sorts of social relations,” is inherently negative and reactive.¹⁴ This strategic account, Thompson suggests, does not allow for the creative character of resistance or leave any space for the self to work on and create itself.¹⁵ This narrative concerning Foucault’s view of power, however, suggests rupture where in fact there is development. Foucault’s view of power was never entirely negative. He is explicit in the *Will to Knowledge* that power relations are productive, and the substance of his account in *Discipline and Punish* includes the creation of a new kind of subjectivity, a process in which the subject is not purely passive. If by reactive Thompson means operating in response to and interaction with various strategies, there is no evidence to suggest that Foucault abandons this view of power. Thompson merely asserts that this must be the case because it is necessary for the practices of the care of the self, in which the self acts on the self. In fact, in the lecture series on *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault suggests: “we understand governmentality as a strategic field of power relations.”¹⁶ Techniques of government are themselves power strategies. For Foucault all new forms, structures and relations are produced within a mobile network of power strategies, the operation of which presupposes the freedom to resist.¹⁷ The self

is free to act on the self within the context of power strategies, which induce it to do so for particular objectives.

For Thompson, the problem is how to configure the relationality of power such that it allows for the existence of practices of self-formation.¹⁸ But the real problem is how, given the relationality of power that Foucault observes in the world within which the self is formed and operates, self-formation can be employed to resist the particular forms and structures of dominance that are formed by the same network of power strategies. That there is self-formation does not imply agency outside the field of power relations. The self can act on the self, given it is a presupposition of the operation of power strategies that agents have the freedom to act in different ways, but this operation is still influenced by and reacting to the power strategies of others. A genuine question therefore remains of whether, as reactive power strategies, technologies of the self can still be creative and form the basis for ongoing resistance against subjugation.

For Foucault, there is no a-historical subject. Looking back at his research he suggests that he was always engaged in a history of the subject, and his various histories of institutions and practices work “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture human beings are made subjects.”¹⁹ In *Discipline and Punish*, for example, the account of the Panopticon describes not just an architectural solution to an economic problem of supervision, but the formation of a disciplinary subjectivity. “[T]he major effect of the Panopticon”, Foucault writes, is “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” (DP 201) By placing the prisoner in a position where they cannot tell if they are being watched, and therefore know they are always potentially visible, they censor their own behaviour. This process involves an active development on the part of the prisoner of a sense of themselves as responsible agents. In a society that orders itself according to the Panoptic structure, such that we have a sense of being always monitored, we come to monitor ourselves, and thus create a watchful interiority. Thus, a particular kind of subject is actively constituted in the context of disciplinary strategies.

In the *Will to Knowledge* we see this historicity of the subject in relation to the subject of desire. We configure ourselves as sexual subjects as part of the development of biopower, a force that is at once individualising and totalising and thus controls the intimate details of the reproductive behaviour of an entire population. In doing so we accept that we have a sexuality that requires investigation, and we enter into relationships of confession and extraction, involving resistance and surrender, deriving pleasure in revealing the secrets of sexual subjectivity to others or demanding that they reveal themselves to us. (HS 1, 45) A subject of desire is thus developed in the context of biopower both in terms of a particular understanding of desire but also in terms of developing patterns of experiencing pleasure.

In both these analyses power relations produce subjectivity. There is no prior subject that wields or is affected by power, standing outside of power relations. According to Foucault: “In order to conduct a concrete analysis of power relations we must”:

[...] study power not on the basis of the primitive terms of the relation but starting from the relation itself, in as much as the relation is what determines the elements on which it bears: instead of asking ideal subjects what part of themselves or what powers of theirs they have surrendered, allowing themselves to be subjectified [*se laisser assujétir*], one would need to enquire how relations of subjectification can manufacture subjects.²⁰

Thus, it is possible to decipher in the history of the subject the operation of power strategies. At the same time if we are to understand power strategies, it is necessary to pay attention to the constructions of particular kinds of subjects with particular kinds of self-awareness.

In Foucault’s writings and lectures from the early 1980s, we see an emphasis on practices of care of the self. Contrasting to the production of a disciplined subject that fits the needs of contemporary government, these practices explore the possibility of self-government. They have as their end self-mastery and involve the self acting on itself with its self as its object. Foucault is interested in the existence of practices where the aim is to establish supremacy over oneself. This is a continuation, however, of his exploration of how different strategies produce different kinds of subjects. The self as an end in the practice of the care of the self is defined through its own self-mastery:

It is then a matter of forming and recognizing oneself as the subject of one’s own actions, not through a system of signs denoting power over others, but through a relation that depends as little as possible on status and its external forms since this relation is fulfilled in the sovereignty that one exercises over oneself. (CS 85)

The self thus constitutes itself through practices of self-control, and self-examination, as that which masters itself, as opposed to allowing itself to be constituted as a subjugated subject defined through surrender and revelation to another. Hence, implicit in the historicity of the subject, as something formed by power relations, is also the possibility for different kinds of self to be formed.

The self-constituting self, however, is still constituted within a nexus of power relations. There is no prior self that acts on itself. The self is constituted through its actions and these occur in interaction with various power strategies. Both power and the subject, as Colwell emphasises “arise within a field of relations”,²¹ and this is the case even if the way this occurs in ancient and modern society is radically different. We still, therefore, need to demonstrate how particular technologies of the self that contribute to the care of the self allow a non-subjugated self to emerge from within the field of power relations, as there is no pre-existing agency that asserts itself from outside these relations.

What do these technologies of the self consist in? Foucault claims that there are various groups of constantly interacting technologies: technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power (clarified in

this context as technologies determining the conduct of individuals according to certain ends or domination), and technologies of the self. The latter,

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (TS 18)

Examples of technologies of the self can take the form of physical and mental exercises. They may serve a critical function, in which one unlearns bad habits; involve practicing and developing the capacity to succeed in the struggles of life; or they may act therapeutically to cure one from sickness of the body or the soul. (HoS 495) Foucault indicates that such technologies span a wide range of spheres, and include cultivating the ability to have at our ready disposal theoretical knowledge, developing the capacity to listen appropriately, the habit of self-reflection, abstinence from physical indulgence, envisaging the worst possible circumstances which might befall us, and deciphering and meditating on one's thoughts and representations. (HoS 498-505)

Technologies of the self served as a means of developing independence. They allowed the self to protect itself from the onslaughts of the outside world and to escape "domination or enslavement". (HoS 184) In Foucault's discussion of Seneca (ca. 4 BCE – 65 CE) what is important above all is to escape the most unremitting of all servitude: "servitude to the self." (HoS 272) It is to this end that various "testing procedures" can be employed, as found in the writings of,

Plutarch and Epictetus alike. But it is important to note that the purpose of these tests is not to practice renunciation for its own sake; it is to enable one to do without unnecessary things by establishing a supremacy over oneself that does not depend on their presence or absence. (CS 58)

Feasting only one's eyes on delicious foods after heavy exercise, for instance, cultivates one's independence from the need for a rich and plentiful diet. While these practices function differently in different philosophical schools, such as the Stoic and Epicurean, they typically share the goal of rendering the self master over itself and cultivating a security of the self against the vicissitudes of the world.

What relation do these technologies of the self, which form and strengthen an independent self, have to power? Foucault indicates that such practices are an essential form of resistance, and thus a necessary requirement for the self not being subjugated to the exercise of power by others. While we may not today be able "to constitute an ethics of the self", to attempt such a task is urgent "if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself." (HoS 252) Technologies of self are necessary as strategies of resistance and are implicit in the strategies of power:

If we take the question of power, of political power, situating it in the more general question of governmentality understood as a strategic field of power relations in the broadest and not merely

political sense of the term, if we understand by governmentality a strategic field of power relations in their mobility, transformability, and reversibility, then I do not think that reflection on this notion of governmentality can avoid passing through, theoretically and practically, the element of the subject defined by the relationship of self to self. (HoS 252)

If contemporary power strategies form a subjugated self, then technologies of the self will be crucial in resisting the current power order, challenging the subjectivities it circumscribes through the formation of alternative subjectivities. New subjectivities can disrupt an existing order of domination within a network of power relations by articulating identities that a given order is unable to account for, or by the exclusion of which it defines itself, thus placing in question the conceptual framework with which it operates. Beyond particular identities, the very being of a non-subjugated self may challenge the modern disciplinary society to the extent that this society relies on our being convinced of the necessity of subjugation. If the formation of subjectivities is a central part of power strategies, then self-formation is a central part of the resistance that these strategies provoke.

While Foucault's view of power as implying a choice of conduct always allows the theoretical possibility of resistance, how self-formation can be effected in a way that does not reproduce existing patterns of interaction remains a real problem. The problem is implied by the same view of power that makes self-formation necessary to resistance, namely that power strategies are implicit in self-formation. This is a problematic we can examine according to three angles. First, the activity of self-formation occurs in relation with others, and therefore can always be viewed as a power strategy reacting to the power strategies of others. Second, the resources of this activity of self-formation are drawn from existing culture or society and thus from the existing power order. Finally, there is no self prior to its historical construction, so any agency that initiates transformation is also formed within the existing power order. I will explore how each of these dimensions constrains but does not eliminate the possibility for resistance to such existing orders through creative self-transformation.

The activity of the care of the self while aimed at the cultivation of a relation of self-mastery towards the self involves relationships with others.²² As Foucault says with reference to his lecture series *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* in the following year:

[...] we saw how, from the classical epoch of Antiquity to Late Antiquity, and particularly in the first two centuries C.E., a certain culture of the self developed which assumed such dimensions that we could talk of a veritable golden age of the culture of the self. In this relationship to the self we saw the development of a whole technique, an art that was taught and practiced. We saw that this art of oneself required a relationship to the other. In other words: one cannot attend to oneself, take care of oneself, without a relationship to another person. (GSO 43)

Indeed, it is precisely in the act of defining oneself in relation to oneself that the other is viewed as necessary: the self "has to constitute himself as a subject,

and this is where the other comes in.” (HoS 129) The other is “the mediator in the individual’s relationship to his constitution as a subject.” (HoS 130) In this instance, Foucault is talking about the spiritual master or teacher, who helps one realise the need to pay attention to the self, but other social relationships, such as that between spouses, figure in technologies of the self. (CS 71) Hence, socially framed relationships to others are central to the ancient technologies of the self under discussion. As Frédéric Gros puts it: “[c]are of the Self, as Foucault effectively tried to show, was exercised in a largely communal and institutional framework.”²³

Given that technologies of the self operate in the context of our social relationships they operate in the context of power strategies. For Foucault, power is implicit in and productive of all our relationships:

In human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication such as we are engaged in at this moment, or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other.²⁴

Foucault finds power everywhere in his analysis of the context in which subjects, institutions, and meaning emerges. “I do not think”, he reflects, “that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others.”²⁵ This is contra Thompson’s claim that self-formation is possible because actions that are not reactions to power strategies are possible. As technologies of the self operate through relationships with others, power is immanent in such relationships and Foucault still asserts in 1984 that “power is games of strategy, self-formation still has to be understood in the context of power strategies.”²⁶

The interaction of strategies, however, always implies the possibly of resistance. Even where an individual cannot reverse the structures of domination they are able to take different strategies in response to the strategies of domination.²⁷ The space, therefore, exists for creative strategies, including self-formation along novel lines that might weaken and eventually reverse these structures, or, going beyond mere reversal, contribute to a radically different structure. As Schrift emphasises, that one is unable to escape relations of power does not mean that we cannot challenge particular forms of these relations.²⁸ For Foucault, there always exists the possibility that any technology, including technologies of the self, can both be a strategy of power and operate as a strategy of resistance. Even if these strategies are reactive to the strategies of others, creativity is not excluded because “to the same situation people react in very different ways.”²⁹ Foucault does not, therefore, think that because power strategies react to other strategies they cannot be creative, our reactions are not fully determined by what they react to.

The notion of creativity at play here, however, is never one that operates in a vacuum. Foucault is clear that the technologies of the self he discusses were derived from the social context in which their performers live: “they are not

something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed, upon him by his culture, his society, his social group”.³⁰ The second way of viewing the constraints on the possibilities of technologies of the self therefore leads to the question of how, if these technologies emerge from the relational context of our strategic interactions with others, they could be employed to challenge these interactions.

Just as critique can, and has to, employ the tools available in the context of the society and culture under critique, technologies of the self, which can operate as a form of critique, emerge out of the context that they at the same time allow us to go beyond. As Nietzsche makes clear, what allows something to be surpassed or overcome is that which is surpassed or overcome: “going beyond faith in morality”, “the *self-sublation* [*Selbstaufhebung*] of morality”, will be “*Out of morality!*”³¹ The existence of change testifies to the possibility that existing resources can be employed in ways that create novelty. That the technologies of the self are drawn from an existing social order is not in itself a barrier to their being employed in ways that might disrupt this order. What matters is rather how they are employed and this confronts us with the final facet of the problematic.

Not only do technologies of the self operate in and emerge out of the strategies of power that form our network of relationships, any agency that undertakes them also emerges from this network. On the abstract level the problem is how an agency can direct a change that undermines its own conditions of emergence. This is a re-formulation of the problem discussed above of how technologies of the self can work to undermine the context out of which they emerge, and again we need not assume in advance the position that an agency formed within a particular context cannot come to criticise and even destroy that context, overcoming its own conditions of existence, and therefore itself in its current form. Paul Patton observes the Nietzschean tenor of Foucault’s model of transformation: “Following Nietzsche, he allows that new human capacities may come into existence as effects of forms of domination, only to then become bases of resistance to those same forms of domination.”³² As Gilles Deleuze expressed it, for Foucault, the idea is that the subject may be derived from power relations without being entirely dependent on them.³³ Whether there are technologies that allow the subject to achieve this independence in practice remains to be seen, but it is not necessarily the case that the conditions that produce agency completely dictate, rather than merely influence, all of its possible acts. The conditions ground the possibility of agency without foreclosing its possibilities, and while they determine its current form this form is not static.

On a concrete level, however, the problem is whether the contemporary subjugated subject is capable of employing technologies of the self in a sufficiently creative and critical way, to allow him or her to overcome his or her

existing subjectivity and disrupt the power order that he or she emerges from and currently sustains. Are we existing in such a subjugated state that we are no longer able to fully exploit the range of technologies available to us? This is perhaps the reason that Foucault turns in his late work to ancient technologies of the self which by offering an alternative model of the self already work to loosen the structures in which our own subjectivity is formed, in so far as they illustrate their very contingency through providing a contrast. There remains the problem, nonetheless, of whether the modern subject can harness these technologies. Foucault is not suggesting, however, that we take up these exact technologies. We cannot return to the Greeks and Romans and Foucault does not want us to. The discussion of the Ancients reveals the possibility of our being other than we are, of our constituting a different relation to the self, and provides a resource for developing contemporary technologies of the self; it does not provide us with a readymade template to take up exactly in the development of our own autonomy.

I will turn now to an example that Foucault discusses at length both in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and elsewhere, the practice of the examination of one's conscience in Stoic practices of the self, to consider both how it functions as a means to cultivate independence within Stoic thought and what elements could be incorporated into a practice of resistance for the modern subject.

Foucault observes the importance in Stoic practices of examining one's conscience in the evening and morning. The former involved assessing one's day and taking notice of the progress one was making in the cultivation of one's self. Seneca discusses how Sextius, who he viewed as a Stoic, engaged in this practice:

When he had retired for the night, Sextius would question his soul: "What bad habit have you cured today? What fault have you resisted? In what respect are you better?"³⁴

Seneca describes his own process as "sifting" through the day. Foucault explores this practice through Marcus Aurelius' (121-180 CE) letters to his tutor Fronto. In these letters, Marcus Aurelius provides: "an account of the self through an account of the day." (HoS 159) He writes about the minutiae of his day down to exactly what he ate for lunch. By doing this he carries out an assessment of whether he is taking appropriate care of himself and the extent to which he is achieving self-mastery over himself. The Stoic activity of self-examination, therefore, offers a model for a different way of constituting the self to the modern subjugated self who is constituted through a dependent relation to another. The constitution occurs in the activities of the day, the examination of which is aimed at focusing on these activities directed towards the goal of self-mastery.

While Marcus Aurelius' letter is addressed to his tutor Fronto, it is distinct from the Christian practice of confession that shapes our own activities of communication, and involves a different form of the examination of conscience. Firstly, the aim in the subsequent Christian, Monastic practice of self-

examination is no-longer self-mastery but rather the purity required to become acquainted with God. For this reason Monastic confession focuses more on thoughts than on one's actions.³⁵ It is not the usefulness or accuracy of one's thoughts that comes to matter but the purity of their origins.³⁶ Here, the relationship to the other that one confesses to is not aimed at one's ultimate autonomy but is based on continual and total obedience.³⁷ Within Christian practices there is both the idea of self-manifestation in public confession and self-discovery through an interpretative practice of confession. It is the latter, "epistemological form" that Foucault thinks came to dominate.³⁸ The other is given the privileged role of interpreter of our thoughts and desires, revealing our nature and thus establishing our subjectivity. This is a subjectivity defined through its relation to the powerful other. Foucault argues that in the Christian technologies of the self that eclipsed Greek and Roman practices, an "exegesis of the self" is required. (HoS 256) The gaze is turned on the self in order to reduce it to the analysis and interpretation of another, and ultimately is a renunciation of the self in obedience to the other. It is this lineage that continues in the secular forms of confession, which contribute to the formation of the subjugated self. Science and medicine have adapted "this technology of the self oriented towards the permanent verbalisation and discovery of the most imperceptible movements of our self."³⁹

Ancient technologies of the self stand in contrast to the monastic model; turning one's gaze on oneself, away from the scrutiny of others, is not, insists Foucault, a question of placing our darkest corners under the spotlight of examination, or listing and confessing ones weaknesses, but is, rather, directed at strengthening our future conduct. It is never, therefore, concerned with the revelation of a hidden self, shining the light on any impure thoughts, but rather with constructing a firm hold over oneself:

It is not a matter of deciphering oneself. [...] this demand for a reversal of the gaze, as opposed to unhealthy curiosity about others does not lead to the constitution of oneself as an object of analysis, decipherment, reflection. It involves rather a teleological concentration. It involves the subject looking closely at his own aim. (HoS 222)

Thus the focus on the self's active constitution of a relation to themselves is markedly different from the focus in our own society and its immediate history on the human subject as an object of knowledge. Ancient technologies of self-examination, including the Stoic examination of the day, are aimed at the self: "the Hellenistic model, unlike the Christian model, far from moving in the direction of self-exegesis or self-renunciation, tends, rather, to make the self the objective to be obtained." (HoS 257) What is examined is how well our activities conform to the cultivation of a secure self.

In ancient thought, not only the process of self-examination, which may be facilitated by dialogue with another, but the act of speaking or writing is also crucially different from the Christian confessional model in which there is an

abnegation of self to the authority of another. In confession, developed out of Christian practices, speaking to another is revealing oneself to them and prostrating oneself before their expert analysis and judgement. The activity of speaking and writing for Marcus Aurelius, Foucault argues, is not about revelation but is an activity of self-cultivation contributing to the project of self-mastery. Repeating certain beliefs or truths involves the incorporation of principles such that they are ready to hand. This incorporation contributes to the development of self-mastery, allowing truths to become part of the constitution of the self. These principles are then within us, ready to be put into action, rendering us secure against circumstances:

Constituting oneself through an exercise in which truth-telling becomes the subject's mode of being: what could be further from what we, in our historical tradition, now understand by an "ascesis", an asceticism which renounces the self according to a true Word spoken by an Other? (HoS 327)

Marcus Aurelius' letters, serve to make the principles he asserts part of who he is, and are thus an action of the self on the self. The Christian model of the confessional offers our innermost thoughts to be interpreted by another, ceding the definition of the self to the other. Ancient practices aim at the self and take pleasure in the self, where Christian practice renders our pleasure, along with the constitution of subjective identity, over to a powerful other who dominates us. (CS 66) The point here is not that Stoic self-creation is entirely autonomous; as Foucault makes clear the practices used are drawn from society and are social practices, and the idea of the self which they are working towards is also, therefore, drawn from this shared context. The point is that they offer an alternative model to a self for whom the very possibility of constitution, of being a self, implies subjugation to a powerful other.

The ancient model thereby shows us that there is space to use technologies of the self to develop one's autonomy in place of participating in one's own subjugation. What is required is to see the activities of examining the self, and of articulating one's principles, both of which are present in the letter writing of Marcus Aurelius, as constitutive of oneself. This allows self-constitution to proceed according to a variety of strategic goals. It suggests a self-constitution that resists the strategies of those whose power depends on their authority as interpreters of our hidden self.

There remains, however, the danger that ancient technologies of the self, while offering space for independence that the confessional model of the self excludes, will be co-opted into strategies of domination. This concern seems to be present when Foucault suggests that the comparatively autonomous practices of the self in Greek and Roman civilisation "were taken over to a certain extent by religious, pedagogical, medical, or psychiatric institutions."⁴⁰

What emerges as crucial, therefore, to the possibility that technologies of the self can be harnessed as strategies of resistance which challenge the disciplinary

order bound up with the form of subjectivity constituted through its subordination to an other, is the analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and power which Foucault's work provides. We need to cultivate a critical awareness of how technologies of the self can be co-opted into the power strategies of others if they are to be used to loosen our dependence on the social order and ultimately to create alternative subjectivities that may challenge this order. What is crucial is to remain aware that any agency, while able to critically reflect and react in a multitude of ways, emerges from and operates within the network of power strategies. Agency, therefore, can never be seen as entirely autonomous even while it works towards autonomy. This critical analysis can also be applied to the Stoic practices in which Foucault seeks inspiration. In so far as the teleological concept of the self they work towards is given any content, this may be determined by the power strategies of others. What Foucault is interested in doing is taking the model of the cultivation of a self defined through its self-mastery, as opposed to a self defined through another's interpretation, and applying it with a critical awareness of the operation of power strategies, which guards against allowing the content of this goal to be fixed in ways that close down creative exploration.

To think that there is a self that can be once and for all liberated from the network of strategies in which our current subjugation has been constructed "runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of representations."⁴¹ This is to once more allow the other to tell us what this nature is, defining ourselves not in relation to ourselves but in relation to the demand that we allow ourselves to be investigated and discovered by variously guised experts. Foucault's analysis of the process of our subjugation, therefore, needs to be distinguished from the activity of deciphering our hidden nature. Whether or not there is an essential self that is advanced towards, and in some sense returned to, in the Stoic technologies of the self under discussion here, is not, Foucault claims, made explicit in their writings: "I do not think it is ever completely clear or resolved in Hellenistic and Roman thought whether the self is something to which you return because it is given in advance or an objective you must set for yourself". (HoS 213) For Foucault, however, the uptake of such practices leaves the nature of the self that is advanced towards open to various constitutions. This openness is crucial to resistance, because as soon as we fall back into a definition of an underlying self we once more allow ourselves to be constituted through the relation to the other(s) who reveal this essential nature.

The various analyses of Foucault's work continuously expose all such claims to hold the secret to human nature as power strategies. This encourages us to remain vigilant and aware of the need to constantly engage in resistance in

which we cultivate our autonomy through the active, and creative constitution of the self, rather than accepting any claims to have revealed human nature. For Marcus Aurelius, there is also a process of freeing ourselves from our preconceptions, through the cultivation of a distance on the world in which we are absorbed:

What is it we do by applying this method, by recalling that copulation is a friction of nerves with spasms and excretions, and that the robe is sheep's wool tinted with the bloody purple of a shellfish? We get to grips with the things themselves, we get to the heart of them and completely penetrate them so that they can be seen as they are. Thanks to which, he says, we will be able to lay them bare (*apogumnoun*: strip things bare) and get to the bottom of them (*kathoran*), see their *euteleian* (that is to say their scarce value, their cheapness). In this way we will be able to free ourselves from the bombast (*tuphos*), from the bewitchment with which they are in danger of capturing and captivating us. (HoS 305)

Genealogical analysis does not reveal the way things are in themselves, but it reveals the operations of power that try to establish the way things, and subjects, are in themselves. It brings a new perspective to bear on our everyday experiences. This works to challenge the idea that the subject as we know it is fixed, creating the space to employ technologies of the self towards the constitution of different subjectivities. It also works against our falling back into configuring these new subjectivities in subordination to the knowledge claims of others, allowing the possibility that we can form a sense of self in terms of how we relate to ourselves and not in terms of our dependence on a confessor, interpreter or scientific expert.

This has the potential to disrupt the existing order of power relations first, because the current power strategies of the state are so bound up with a particular notion of subjectivity, in which the subject's own sense of self depends on it being subjected to monitoring and examination. Thus, alternative subjectivities that are not co-dependent on the procedures of analysing and categorising the subject will have the space to refuse to cooperate with disciplinary strategies that is currently unavailable. Second, in so far as entirely new subjectivities are created, the conceptual order that formerly excluded them is destabilised because its definition of possible subjectivities is directly challenged. Hence, the distinction which Thompson draws between tactical reversal, where resistance within the strategic model of power reverses the structures of dominance within the same network of power relations, and the later aesthetics of existence as forms of resistance is a false dichotomy.⁴² The aesthetics of existence can effect a tactical reversal and a tactical reversal can create greater space for creative development of the aesthetics of existence and the creation of new selves and thus new structures of relationships between selves.

The strategic uptake of technologies of the self is not a pure autonomous act. It occurs within, and in reaction to, the network of power relations, which it simultaneously works to disrupt and reshape. The agency that undertakes this

process is created but not defined by the context of power relations in which it operates. It is possible for such an agent to use technologies of the self creatively because they are capable of critical reflection, which reveals to them their own contingent and constructed nature. This frees the space for the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, but these subjectivities still take form in strategic interactions with others. Self-formation as a form of resistance, therefore, operates between control and creativity.

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FOUCAULT'S BIOPOLITICS: A CRITIQUE OF ONTOLOGY

MAXIME LALLEMENT

One must escape the alternative of the outside or the inside. One must be at the borders.¹

The aim of this article is to insist on the coherence of Foucault's philosophical enterprise by focusing on the notion of biopolitics and its scope in relation to the rest of his work. My point is to show that when this notion is introduced in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*,² the reader does not face a radically new problem but the genuine unfolding of a philosophical problematic which follows from, and at the same time extends the analysis of, what Foucault calls "disciplinarity." It is for this reason that when Foucault offers a lecture course at *Le Collège de France* intended to explore the notions of population and biopolitics,³ he gets caught-up in thinking about the notions of security and government. Contrary to both those who invoke the uncertainties and shifts within Foucault's oeuvre, or to those who read biopolitics as a modern avatar of some biological and transcendental state of nature,⁴ I would like to suggest that what Foucault provides is a diagnosis of the state of our modernity in relation to an ontological questioning which does not target the essence of things but the conditions of possibility of their historical constitution. Therefore, my intention is to produce a reading which challenges what Foucault himself calls "the empirico-transcendental doublet"⁵ and that consequently prevents the reduction of Foucault's philosophy to phenomenology. Thus, this article will fall into four parts. The first one will focus on the misleading interpretation Giorgio Agamben has made of the notion of biopolitics by intrinsically linking it to sovereign power and erecting it as an *a priori* condition of politics. The second part will show how the question of biopolitics relies on an ontological critique which undermines the concept of essence and in its place puts forward the historical, contingent and relational dimension of existence. The third part will link this ontological approach to a specific form of nihilism which questions biopolitics in relation to norms and normativity. Finally, the last part will establish a connection between normativity and what Deleuze, commenting on the line traced by Foucault's work, has called "societies of control."⁶

1. From Power to Being: An Approach to Life as Immanence

There is an approach to biopolitics which posits, at its very basis, a conceptual distinction between *living* and *life* (*zoē* and *bios*): life as a biological state of existence in opposition to life as a series of events. This is the case with Agamben whose concept of bare life, defined as biological existence at the margin of the *polis*, and whose account of modernity as the absorption of *bios*

(life as a set of temporal possibilities) by *zoē* (animal life and biological persistence) reinforces this distinction, and does not do justice to the actual problem underlying the question of biopolitics.

Agamben bases his analysis on what he calls an archeology of power, positing an essential link between power, sovereignty and biopolitics. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, he explains his point as follows:

The present inquiry concerns precisely this hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power. What this work has had to record among its likely conclusions is precisely that the two analyses cannot be separated, and that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original – if concealed – nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power (SP, 11).

According to Agamben, there is no proper distinction between the way political power was exerted up to the Classical Age and thereafter. Indeed, for Agamben political power always needs to be understood in relation to the concept of the *bare life* incarnated in the figure of the *Homo Sacer*. His account of political power relies on a concept of sovereignty implying the notion of sacred life, “life that may be killed but not sacrificed,” (SP, 53) at the border of the political field. This reading of politics embraces both the Aristotelian definition of man as *zōon politikon* – a living being with a political disposition⁷ – and the notion of *oikos*, according to which the biological reproduction and subsistence of Greek citizens is assured strictly outside the political field. If, according to Agamben, “the production of the biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power”, that is to say if biopolitics and sovereign power work together, then the particularity of modern politics relies on the fact that *zoē* and *bios* come to strictly coincide. In other words, Agamben’s understanding of biopolitics relies on a generic and ahistorical concept of political power, and the notion of sacred life as mere biological existence has come to be an exclusive target of modern politics. In the same book he writes:

The Foucauldian thesis will then have to be corrected or, at least, completed, in the sense that what characterizes modern politics is not so much the inclusion of *zoē* in the *polis* – which is, in itself, absolutely ancient – nor simply the fact that life as such becomes a principal object of the projections and calculations of State power. Instead the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction (SP 12).

This gesture, which consists in reducing the question of biopolitics to a new distribution of ever-existing and never-changing historical categories, contributes to link the analysis of sovereign power to a reality that concerns Western politics since its very beginnings. Thus, Agamben neglects the very temporal and historical dimension of politics, positing sovereign power and bare life as transcendentals in the sense that they always already determine the framework within which our experience takes place.

This tendency to posit transcendental prior to politics seems to be pursued with his current work where he undertakes an archeology of command. In a recent conference given at the *Collège International de Philosophie* in Paris in April 2011,⁸ Agamben argued that, right from the beginning, there is an intrinsic link between power as command and being. Therefore, he tries to establish a difference in kind between two forms of ontology: the ontology of command (*esto*) which precedes the ontology of being (*este*). According to this distinction, the imperative verb comes before its indicative form, and this very fact is illustrated by the performative nature of many of the sacred texts which prescribe behaviors and modes of being. In other words, Agamben tries to make his understanding of power (as a coercive influence) coincide with being, and modernity would be marked by a recurrence of the primacy of the *esto* over the *este*. Here again, we face a conceptual gesture aiming at the definition of *a priori* ontological categories framing the nature and thus the very possibility of experience.

This archeology of command appears as a misunderstanding of Foucault's analysis. According to Foucault, there is no such thing as "power" in itself referring to a preexisting ontological and coercive instance. No matter what its manifestations are, what we call power always corresponds to a set of relations. When, in the last part of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes the emergence of bio-power as a shift from sovereign power (the sovereign's exertion of the right to take life or let live) to the power to make live, he refers to a shift within a set of relations which does not refer to any ontological preexistence. He writes:

Since the classical age the West has undergone a very profound transformation of these mechanisms of power. 'Deduction' has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them.⁹

In contrast to Agamben, Foucault's approach is to argue that there is no unchanging ontological determination, and that it is the relation which determines and constitutes its terms. Thus, power is not a never-changing transcendently grounded entity according to which a coercive influence is exerted through dominant-dominated structures. Even though historical paradigms do not change overnight, there is a real difference in the way power relations are actualized since modernity (the end of the eighteenth century onwards).

In the same way, the critique of the concept of *bare life*, rephrased and explicated by Judith Revel, provides an interesting starting point to claim that the Foucaultian understanding of biopolitics refers to a question that must be linked to immanence:

The resistance of life cannot be the naturalness of life. Resistance is always already political because life is always already within history, because it is the product of determinations which make it what it is. Bare life does not exist".¹⁰

The way in which Revel overcomes the notion of “bare life” by stressing the historicity of the living, clearly shows that there is no level of pre-constructed reality that could be called “life” or a “natural state of being” at the margin of political life. In other words, there cannot be a conceptual hierarchy between *zōē* and *bios*, and right from the beginning the problem of biopolitics needs to be reinserted within its temporal, historical, ontical and political dimensions. Claiming that bare life does not exist is another way of saying that life, as ontical existence, is always already a temporal and political matter linked to a process of becoming. There cannot be any transcendentals applied to the notion of life.

2. A Philosophy of Relations

Revel’s account of the historical and political dimensions of life is faithful to Foucault’s method, which dismantles the structure of sovereign power and permits us to think of power as an ongoing repetition of relations. She writes: “Power does not invent anything but applies itself. It does not create but manages. It does not produce but reproduces.”¹¹ Power is nothing more than a series of ways in which relations between beings are established. Insofar as power is not productive but merely reproductive, insofar as it is the relation which determines its composing terms, power does nothing more than fix existence.

When Foucault criticizes the tendency to subsume the field of experience under preexisting paradigms, he is, first and foremost, interested in relations as configurations of possibilities. As Deleuze insightfully puts it in his *Foucault*, experience is neither really on the side of the subject nor on the side of the object; it is on the side of the relation which has a tendency to constitute itself. He writes:

We must break things open. Visibilities are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather forms of luminosity which are created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer.¹²

What Deleuze expresses here is that the determination of things does not depend on a thinking subject and its perspective towards an object but on the very conditions of possibility of their relation, which is historically rooted.

Therefore, what defines the possibility of experience is not a *Lichtung* or an opening in the Heideggerian sense. Foucault’s enterprise is not a phenomenology and its approach to ontology differs from the critique of the forgetting of being, which occurs with, or as, the departure from the Greek *aletheia*, which is found in *Being and Time*. Contrary to Heidegger’s concern with a plurivocity of being which has been forgotten with Platonism and the emergence of *tekhnē*, the truth of being cannot be reinterpreted through the problem of concealment and unconcealment precisely because there is nothing to conceal before its actual existence. The question for Foucault is not: “what are the technics that emerged and determined the truth of beings?” but rather

“from which practices did the truth about subjects and objects emerge as forms of beings?”¹³ There is therefore a way in which Foucault’s standpoint lies above the Heideggerian notion of clearing. There is no relation of necessity between experience and the emergence of a system through which this experience is understood. There is nothing more than contingent and accidental configurations which are later absorbed by the mechanism of repetition. Foucault makes this point clear when he writes:

For Heidegger [...] it is from out of the Occidental *tekhnē* that the knowledge of the object has sealed the forgetting of being. Let us reverse the question and ask from which *tekhnai* is the Occidental subject formed and the games of truth and error opened, and the freedom and coercion that characterizes them.¹⁴

Henceforth, Foucault’s genealogical method does not target the revelation of essential aspects of the progress of history or of a *logos* which would have been hitherto unnoticed, but demonstrates how history is constituted and used *a posteriori* by our understanding of various contingent events. For example, as he shows in “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century”,

the eighteenth-century problematisation of noso-politics [the emergence of the body as a political concern] does not correlate with a uniform trend of State intervention in the practice of medicine, but rather with the emergence at a multitude of sites in the social body of health and disease as problems requiring some form or other of collective control measures. Rather than being the product of a vertical initiative coming from above, noso-politics in the eighteenth century figures as a problem with a number of different origins and orientations, being the problem of the health of all as a priority for all, the state of health of a population as a general objective policy.¹⁵

In short, the clinic did not emerge as a logical consequence of the reformation of the hospital, and the emergence of population as a medical object does not find its logical source in the clinic. Rather, it is the historical constitution of a problem and its interpretation which allows the clinic to appear. As François Delaporte writes:

With a medical gaze which is turned towards [...] an assistance which compensates poverty, the idea of suppressing the hospital could not but impose itself. That will not prevent the reversal of this theme from a new institutional spatialization of disease [i.e. the clinic]. One could say that before *The Birth of the Clinic*, its history did not exist because nothing could disappear.¹⁶

What can be said, then, is that for Foucault each historical formation works in a limited historical space and is therefore linked to a limited realm of visibilities. Thus, Foucault’s archeological and genealogical methods, challenging the way beings are understood, are a direct development of the Nietzschean critique of history which endeavours to rehabilitate a genuine concept of becoming based on the accidental character of what occurs in the field of immanence. Indeed, Nietzsche stresses that between the historical parameters which cause realities to emerge and their social integration within various systems (or “*dispositifs*” to use Foucault’s term) there remains an unbridgeable gap. He writes:

It is much rather the case that for all forms of history there is no more important principle than that one which we reach with such difficulty but which we also really should reach— namely that what causes a particular thing to arise and the final utility of that thing, its actual use and arrangement in a system of purposes, are separate *toto coelo* from each other, that something existing, which has somehow come to its present state, will again and again be interpreted by the higher power over it from a new perspective, appropriated in a new way, reorganized for and redirected to new uses, that all events in the organic world involve overpowering, acquiring mastery and that, in turn, all overpowering and acquiring mastery involve a new interpretation, a readjustment, in which the “sense” and “purpose” up to then must necessarily be obscured or entirely erased. No matter how well we have understood the usefulness of some physiological organ or other (or a legal institution, a social custom, a political practice, some style in the arts or in a religious cult), we have still not, in that process, grasped anything about its origin.¹⁷

According to this approach, instead of being the mere reciprocal absorption of *bios* by *zoē* as Agamben claims, biopolitics would be the forgetting of the “eventfulness” of the real, of the strictly contingent dimension of what occurs and of the possibilities of variation.

It follows that the “ontico-ontological doublet” does not cause the forgetting of being, but fixes a particular organization of concepts and visibilities. It is an intrinsic mechanism of repetition which corresponds to the ongoing integration of difference, deprived of any spontaneous variation. In this sense, the only ontology to be found in Foucault would be an ongoing critique of ontology itself. Thus, François Delaporte asking in what sense the critique of the invariant is an ontology argues:

Foucault’s aim is not to describe how clinical medicine manifests itself but how it is constituted. The archeologist refuses the search for an ontological foundation which hides itself behind the discourse of historians [...] By focusing on history rather than on metaphysics, Foucault is led to show that things are without an essence.¹⁸

In this respect, Foucault’s relation to history is not concerned with its objectively grounded univocity or truth, but rather with showing how, as our understanding of a so-called objective history is based on a *a posteriori* constructions, this very history may be, if not undone, at least done *otherwise*. Foucault writes a history of problematizations [*problématisations*],¹⁹ a history of the mechanisms by virtue of which heterogeneous events are subsumed under the same concern (for example, the health of the population) and which thereby allow historical formations (such as the clinic) to be understood as being imbued with an apparently essential function. However, this very function is not intrinsically inscribed in what appears historically.

3. *The Nihilistic Dimension of Biopolitics: From “Normation” to Normalization*²⁰

This is the reason why, in order to come back to the preliminary critique of Agamben, the analysis of biopolitics cannot be linked to a notion of bare life at the margin of the political field. To every statement, to every spatial organization, to every building, to every management of time, there corresponds a realization of the virtual which is built upon regulated variations of normality

constituting the real. Ontology is not only enlightening or revealing; it is visibility itself. It is then not related to essences but to movement, thereby allowing repetition and integration.

What matters is no longer the individual and the way he measures up to an ideal projection (i.e. the “normal” and “ideal” man, which corresponded to discipline), but the institution of this man as a condition of possibility of what is to be. In this respect, every event and every being always already corresponds to something established and codified to the extent that it integrates an acceptable degree of variation. Routes are traced, movements and rhythms are repeated: the virtualities and possibilities of human life taken as a becoming process can be reduced to an ongoing interplay between the individual and the social levels, a principle of freedom as the necessity for a fixed horizon of possibilities, and the process of normalization as the repetition of difference where novelty is integrated and reduced to existing paradigms. As Foucault himself puts it in “*Theatrum Philosophicum*”:

Take difference. It is generally assumed to be a difference *from* or *within* something; behind difference, beyond it – but as its support, its site, its delimitation, and consequently, as the source of its mastery – we pose, through the concept, the unity of a group and its breakdown into species in the operation of difference (the organic domination of the Aristotelian concept). Difference is transformed into that which must be specified within a concept, without overstepping its bounds.²¹

What Foucault describes here corresponds to his account of the way in which the norm works within a biopolitical society. By accepting and integrating a certain degree of difference, concepts perform a limitation of possible variations. For instance, there is, in our societies, many acceptable ways to act as man or as a woman, and specific words correspond to them (“single”, “married”, “student”, “employed”, “unemployed”, “heterosexual”, “homosexual”). We need to understand that norms build themselves on the basis of an intrinsic relation determined by the subjected individual and his or her beholder. Thus, the production of madness works alongside the production of mental health as two co-constitutive realities, two sides of the same coin. This is the reason why Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, with regard to the *History of Madness*, writes: “in this history, it is not the constitution of madness as an object which comes first but, on the contrary, the construction of its beholder.”²² The spatial partition of the so-called “mad” works alongside the correction of the mad together with the consciousness, on the outside, of “not being mad.” In short, it is not the constitution of the subject as a “mad” person which takes place in the first instance, but the emergence of the conditions of possibilities of his or her appearance.

Consequently, when the realm of possible variations is being fixed, difference can only be understood negatively, being itself an empty concept. To a certain extent, the conceptual gesture at the core of biopolitics lies in this very negation of difference which subordinates becoming to a *a priori* space of

representation and reduces the concept of difference to the one of identity. This idea can be found in Deleuze when he writes:

It is not difference which presupposes opposition but opposition which presupposes difference, and far from resolving difference by tracing it back to a foundation, opposition betrays and distorts it. Our claim is not only that difference in itself is not “already” contradiction, but that it cannot be reduced or traced back to contradiction, since the latter is not more but less profound than difference. On what condition is difference traced or projected onto a flat space? Precisely when it has been forced into a previously established identity, when it has been placed on the slope of the identical which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it to where identity wants to go—namely into the negative.²³

If we come back to Potte-Bonneville’s example, it is easy to understand that the historical constitution of madness does not determine a specific object of study in its difference with mental health, but introduces a concept of madness which frames both the idea of madness and its possible oppositions and differences. The opposition between madness and mental health veils their co-constitutive relation. Therefore, in *History of Madness*, the “flat space” of madness would correspond to the designation of “mad people”, “healthy people” and the possibility of both their relation and opposition through a whole set of social practices. In short, the real problem of madness is not the emergence of an opposition but the effect of a conceptual correspondence through which madness is thought negatively.²⁴

This reading of Foucault through a Deleuzian optic is itself clearly later repeated and developed by Deleuze when, in his *Foucault*, he links statements [*énoncés*] to a specific spatial determination. He writes: “A statement always represents a transmission of particular elements distributed in a corresponding space.”²⁵ A statement is not mere discourse. It is always already an organization, a mapping, of the said and the unsaid, words and blanks, the visible and the invisible, the actual and the virtual. This question of mapping and the existence of statements within an historical period of time is fundamental when one comes to rethink biopolitics. If it is agreed that instead of being a generalized state of exception involving biological life from end to end, biopolitics is the modern political paradigm which frames life and its possibilities as a whole, then the role of statements and the effect of their mapping appear to be of utmost importance inasmuch as these statements determine the *a priori* possibility of the emergence of new concepts. Therefore, a distribution of singularities appears to be a projection, the stabilization of relationships over the field of possibilities, a stable and stabilizing way of understanding the world and providing answers to its needs. Again, we find here the “flat space” of representation which reduces difference to identity and determines it beforehand. A close analysis of this determination is directly pointed out by Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero in their reading of Foucault. They write:

It is important also to explain that for Foucault, [...] every assemblage of such practices is an assemblage of ‘truth telling’ which not only seeks to regulate life but also reflects and enacts a

certain understanding of 'the real' as it does so. In the process, what Foucault calls a grid of intelligibility is established, which grids of intelligibility simultaneously also become the means by which life is weighed, distributed, valued and found wanting, as well as good. A grid of intelligibility is in short an accounting and a valuing machine. [...] It is for these, among other reasons, that Foucault referred to the regional ontologies employed by such truth-telling practices, for example those of 'Life', 'Labour' and 'Language' in *The Order of Things*, as 'quasi-transcendentals.' Although Foucault does not directly address them in this way, 'the event', 'the contingent', 'population' and, as we will see, 'circulation', do all figure more or less prominently as such in his account of biopolitics.²⁶

It is for this reason that Foucault's task can be called a genuine critique of ontology itself. A statement operates a distribution and allows an organization of discursive and non-discursive practices which tend to become figures of the real. In the end, what one sees are not pre-constituted atemporal forms or essences in the Platonic sense, but the continuation of a dated historical production. Foucault describes this game of visibility in a passage from *The Birth of the Clinic*:

An absolutely new use of the scientific discourse was then defined: a use involving fidelity and unconditional subservience to the coloured content of experience – to say what one sees; but also a use involving the foundation and constitution of experience – showing by saying what one sees. It was necessary, then, to place medical language at this apparently superficial but in fact very deeply embedded level at which the descriptive formula is also a revealing gesture.²⁷

Significantly, this passage finds a parallel in Agamben's archaeology of command, where language itself seems to acquire an immediate performative dimension. Indeed, what is uttered (*logos*) becomes what exists and these words are both the law and the norm (*nomos*). In the same way, "showing by saying what one sees" appears as the formal mechanism by virtue of which the recognition of what is seen becomes the norm. Henceforth, this correspondence between *logos* and *nomos* prevents the very possibility of a distance between words and things, and it is intrinsically nihilistic as it deprives existence of meaning. Indeed, if anything which comes to existence always already corresponds to what exists (i.e. if nothing new emerges), existence itself loses its goal and its value. As long as a statement [*énoncé*] is not simply mere discourse but an interplay of seen and said which sets specific relations within the field of experience, biopolitics does not deal with the sacralization of life as biological persistence (*zoē*) but with life as a becoming and ontologizing process (*bios*). In short, we face here the immanence of the norm, in its propensity to be both actualized and pursued by the very fact of its existence and adaptation. Pierre Macherey sheds an interesting light on this when he writes:

The norm includes the possibility of a margin of tolerance: it is therefore an essentially dynamic concept which does not describe fixed forms but the conditions for the invention of new forms. Thus the concept of the norm calls for the following question: how to describe a movement in the sense of the adaptation to new conditions, that is, of an answer provided to unplanned conditions?²⁸

Thus, it would seem that biopolitical power cannot exist without a certain number of unknown parameters which, far from undermining it, will constitute its condition of possibility.

Therefore, the nihilism of the modern age corresponds to the progressive and relentless connection of determined realities and possibilities to a preceding established truth (*logos*). Thus we are not dealing with the annihilation of difference, but with the loss of its meaning. This is a negation of a positive and differentiating difference [*la différence qui va différenciant*]. As Maurizio Lazzarato writes:

What is enclosed is the virtual, the power of metamorphosis, becoming. Disciplinary societies exert their power by neutralizing difference and repetition and their potential for variation (the differentiating difference), by subordinating it to repetition. The training of bodies acts as a way to prevent any bifurcation, to deprive action and conduct every possibility of variation, all unpredictability.²⁹

Consequently, nihilism, on this understanding (drawn from the a Deleuzian reading of Foucault), would be closer to an exhaustion of the possible than to the prevention of it. To take up the issue of the intrinsic logic and progression of Foucault's work, which I mentioned at the beginning of this article, it is no surprise then that the question of biopolitics follows the one of discipline and announces the problem of the self. Nor is it a surprise that the lecture courses supposed to deal with biopolitics at *Le Collège de France* started with the question of security and government. To a certain extent it is plausible to understand biopolitics as but a specific moment in the development of government as defined by Foucault as "an action over actions."³⁰ It was a moment that had to deal with the constitution of a new object: the population.

4. From Normalization to Practices of Control

In all fields of existence, biopolitics seems to perform a limitation of the possible in order to make it manageable. From the individual to the population there corresponds a move which goes from manifold individualities to broader general groups. Insofar as the population as a whole, in contrast to delineated groups of individuals, cannot be assigned to a specific place, walls no longer constitute a satisfying limit. For example, in contrast to the management of the leper as described in *Discipline and Punish*, which works through the principle of exclusion, the management of the plague works through the strict codification of space. Thus the management of the population as a changing existent has to be associated with movement and the organization of space, rather than with the attribution of fixed places. This is then a movement which, when repeated and codified, allows a regulation through time.

As paradoxical as it seems, the nihilistic gesture made by modern politics does not eradicate novelty but requires it in order to integrate it to an understanding of the world which is reproduced. In this respect, *Security, Territory, Population* takes this problem of repeated relations to an ontological

level by linking it to the question of security. At its core lies the notion of predictability, which sets the basis of an ontology that needs to deal with a multiplicity undergoing a relentless evolution (i.e. the population). The problem at stake is, therefore, not to annihilate becoming but to master it through codified repetition. As Dider Bigo writes:

It is not about drawing boundaries, isolating a space, marking extremities and enclosing, as was the case for discipline and sovereignty, but about constituting a 'living milieu' for populations by opening, integrating and enlarging, and this posits beforehand a principle of freedom which connects to a probabilistic calculation so that the government manage the event in order to make the milieu exist in a dynamic way.³¹

This is why, according to Foucault, nothing appears to be definitely fixed in essence, for there is no essence and the critique of the historical invariant locates Foucault's work on an ontological level. There is no progression, no ideal, no teleology, but instead a mapping of the ontical, a reduction of individual singularities to a set of acceptable normalities. This specific task is achieved by what can be called "normalization", which is not an external and coercive transcendental rule but an expanding temporal process. Indeed, rather than a mere fixation of what is, modern societies reclaim the very possibility of a manageable evolution. Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero express this idea well when they write:

Biopolitical security discourses and techniques deal with an object that is continuously undergoing transformation and change through the manifold circuits of production and reproduction which comprise the very eventfulness of its biological existence. Biopolitics thus secures by instantiating a general economy of the contingent throughout all the processes of circulation which impinge upon species existence.³²

From the disciplined individual to the population managed on the scale of becoming there corresponds what Deleuze called the passage from discipline to control.³³ This takes us back to the epigraph of this article, and introduces the need to rethink the notions of border, frontier or wall so that they can manage the multiplicity of the population. Biopolitics needs to establish "a general economy of the contingent" and a general minimization of lethal risk. In other words, there is a way in which *zoē* and *bios* are relentlessly tied together. However, they are not tied through the displacement and extension of Agamben's concept of bare life, but through the attempt to deduce the possibility of new events on the basis of regular habits, behaviours and bodily necessities. The population is understood according to a proper historical naturalness which sets the basis of a mastered freedom and circulation. In a recent study, Alexandre MacMillan corroborates this idea. He writes:

Whereas discipline structures a closed space that could be watched over and ruled in its slightest details, biopolitics locates itself within a space of circulation. 'Freedom' will therefore be a necessary principle for the functioning of biopolitics.³⁴

Therefore, one of the implicit tenets of biopolitical normalization (or of the *laissez-faire* of liberalism) is to let the population live and thus set the normal

rhythm from which normalities will be derived. Modernity tends to alter the role of buildings, walls and fixed structures by letting emerge a game of ongoing circulation where borders and frontiers no longer merely separate people or link them to a fixed and determined place, but act much more as checkpoints marking the routes people have to follow. In other words, biopolitics sees the emergence of a new set of problems regarding space where its management is no longer a mere historical heritage, but a very condition of political action. The management of space appears as one of the manageable conditions according to which contingency within time will be potentially controlled. Foucault writes:

It is surprising how long the problem of space took to emerge as a historico-political problem. Space used to be either dismissed as belonging to 'nature' – that is, the given, the basic conditions, 'physical geography', in other words a sort of 'prehistoric' stratum; or else it was conceived as the residential site or field of expansion of peoples, of a culture, or a language or a State.³⁵

However, as soon as space gets politically rationalized, the border no longer separates the inside from the outside but contributes to tracing the path which one has to go down. During a conference given at *La Fémis* in Paris on March, 17th 1987,³⁶ Deleuze uses the image of the highway to illustrate the deployment of what he calls "societies of control" which are described by him as the historical development of disciplinary societies. He points out that one can drive on a highway within an open space, but one still needs to take specific routes which define a limited realm of repeated circulation. This account of space needs not only to be understood literally, for it is also an accurate metaphor of the ways in which norms operate on a conceptual level. Nowadays, the proliferation of online social networking systems and of geo-localization tools appears as the paroxysmal concretion of the mechanism thanks to which people's movements, as well as their intentions, are absorbed as soon as they are expressed. Absorption here designates the process by which individualities and multiplicities are reduced to the profiles and series of statistical data involved, for instance, in the constitution of databases (through what is called "data mining") which serve to influence further choices. In this respect, every profile is normalized and offers a way to predict, on the basis of tendencies derived from observed regularities, the possible choices of people. On this intricate intermingling of the actual and the possible, Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns write:

"Statistical government" no longer aims at mastering the actual, at overcoming the savagery of facts, but at structuring the possible, eradicating the virtual [...] with the result that the actual always slightly trembles in a becoming "otherwise" which precisely constitutes its singularity and its power.³⁷

Thus, the appearance of "control societies", characteristic of our age, does not mark the suppression of borders and imprisonment (of spatial limits and conceptual contours), but the displacement of them and a change in their nature.

They no longer merely forbid or limit; they incite to behave. In short, they perform the conceptual move thanks to which discipline gets extended by control and control is always already possible, thanks to discipline. This point is developed by Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, when he observes that,

what Foucault calls 'discipline' is a political technology which combines the inclusive norm and the excluding division: a combination in which one will neither observe the contingent encounter of two contradictory processes nor the ephemeral intersection of a novelty and a remainder, but a real functional and stable correlation. Between control and the wall, between visibility and the secret, a game of coming and going is played out: control permits exclusion and subjects division to rigorous criteria. Exclusion allows better control in areas the enclosure of which makes available to the reach of the gaze.³⁸

In other words, by joining both spatial and temporal dimensions, biopolitical societies achieve the greatest homeostasis, the most radical "economy of the contingent", the most implicit conjunction between *zoē* and *bios*, and the most effective reduction of unforeseeable risk which corresponds to a literal negation of contingency itself, or to what I have defined as modern nihilism. As Foucault himself puts it:

The norm is an interplay of differential normalities. The normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it, or the norm is fixed and plays its operational role on the basis of this study of normalities. So, I would say that what is involved here is no longer normation, but rather normalization in the strict sense.³⁹

The very fact that events and contingency are always integrated within a paradigm of acceptable variations shows that limits are no longer at the margins but at the center of practices. The limit is the very condition thanks to which concepts, practices and beings are defined, the very reason why difference gets repeated and emerging difference (or genuine individuality) ignored. Thus the outside, understood as the virtualities and possibilities of being, is itself enclosed within the very field of possibilities, within the regional ontologies evoked by Foucault in *The Order of Things*. What is ultimately sought, then, within control societies, is the generation of behaviours that correspond to a predetermined system where the repetition of difference engenders a leveling of existence allowing the perdurance of the population as a whole. Consequently, if a conjunction of *zoē* and *bios* is to be observed in modern biopolitical societies, it is not because the very notion of bare life is made explicit and exclusive within the political field, as Agamben argues, but rather because the perdurance of the population prevails within a logic of relentless circulation.

5. Conclusion

The analysis undertaken in this article has aimed at understanding the place and role that the notion of biopolitics occupies in relation to the rest of the Foucault's work. This approach has endeavoured to show that this notion cannot serve the analytics of an ontological or transcendental conception of power over

life, as Agamben wants. Insofar as biopolitics concerns life, it implies an understanding of it, which requires an account of the problems of time and becoming. If, according to Agamben, the emergence of modern biopolitics achieves the reunion of, and thus reveals the indistinction between, the Greek notions of *zoē* and *bios*, then it is not for the sake of an *a priori* “naturalness” of life as he suggests, but because biopolitical power has to deal with an object which is constituted through temporal and non-finite processes. Ultimately, biopolitics needs to administer the virtual and what is to come. In the search for stability it deals with the place and role of the individual within the population, and thus it requires flexible ontological foundations. In response to this need, the unveiling of control processes which were latent within disciplinary societies (correcting individual behaviours according to a certain idea of the “normal man”), reveals the landscape of political modernity where the codification of movement, as acceptable variations of the norm, establishes the basis for a dynamic form of nihilism.

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References

1. “On doit échapper à l’alternative du dehors ou du dedans; il faut être aux frontières.” Michel Foucault, *Philosophie: Anthologie*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p. 875.
2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, (New York: Random House, 1980).
3. See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, trans. G. Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), and Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. G. Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
4. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Hereafter referred to as SP.
5. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (London: Routledge, 1994), where Foucault uses the phrase to designate the distance between things as they are empirically experienced and the transcendental and conceptual construction to which they refer within the social realm.
6. Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies” in *Negotiations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 177-82.
7. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a, 4.
8. See Giorgio Agamben, “Archéologie du commandement et de la volonté”, available at <http://www.franceculture.com/plateformes-archeologie-du-commandement-et-de-la-volonte-archeologie-du-commandement-et-de-la-volont>.
9. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, p. 136
10. Judith Revel, “The Materiality of the Immaterial: Foucault, against the return of idealisms and new vitalisms” in *Radical Philosophy*, No. 149, p. 37.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 38
12. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Séan Hand (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 45.
13. For more exhaustive considerations on Foucault and Heidegger, see Pascal Michon, “Foucault était-il heideggerien?” in *Foucault dans tous ses clats* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), pp. 15-45.
14. “Pour Heidegger [...] c’est à partir de la *tekhne* occidentale que la connaissance de l’objet a scellé l’oubli de l’être. Retournons la question et demandons à partir de quelles *tekhnai* s’est formé le sujet occidental et se sont ouverts les jeux de vérité et d’erreur, de liberté et de

- contrainte qui les caractérisent". Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, 2001, p. 505, cited in P. Michon, "Foucault était-il heideggerien?", p. 25.
15. Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 167-168.
 16. "Avec un regard médical qui se pose sur [...] une assistance qui compense la pauvreté, l'idée de supprimer l'hôpital ne pouvait que s'imposer. Ce qui n'empêchera pas l'inversion de cette thématique, mais à partir d'une nouvelle spatialisation institutionnelle de la maladie. On peut dire qu'avant *Naissance de la clinique*, son histoire n'existe pas puisque rien ne peut disparaître." François Delaporte, "Foucault, l'histoire et l'épistémologie" in *Foucault* (Paris: Editions de L'Herne, 2011), pp. 336-337.
 17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Ian Johnston, (Arlington: Richer Resources, 2009), p. 60.
 18. "Pour Foucault, il s'agit de décrire, non pas comment se manifeste la médecine clinique, mais comment elle se constitue. L'archéologue refuse la recherche du fondement ontologique qui se dissimule derrière le discours des historiens. [...] A écouter l'histoire plutôt que la métaphysique, Foucault est conduit à montrer que les choses sont sans essence." F. Delaporte, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
 19. Foucault uses the phrase "histoire des problematisations" literally in an interview given at Leuven's Université Catholique on May, 7th 1981.
 20. On the notion of 'normation' see Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 56-58.
 21. Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum" in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 2. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 356.
 22. "[...] dans cette histoire, ce n'est pas la construction de la folie comme objet qui prime; c'est, au contraire, la construction de son observateur" in Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, *Michel Foucault, l'inquiétude de l'histoire*, (Paris: PUF, 2004), p. 35.
 23. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 62-63.
 24. Foucault's *Doctorat d'Etat* (which later gave birth to *History of Madness*), was entitled *Folie et Déraillement, Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. The choice of "unreason" [*déraillement*] shows the lexical move with which madness is expressed negatively.
 25. Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 5.
 26. Michael Dillon & Luis Lobo-Guerrero, "Biopolitics of Security in the 21st century: An Introduction" in *Review of International Studies* n°34, 2008, pp. 272-273.
 27. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. A. M. Sheridan, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 242.
 28. "La norme implique la possibilité de faire jouer une *marge de tolérance*: c'est donc un concept essentiellement dynamique, qui ne décrit pas des formes arrêtées, mais les conditions pour l'invention de nouvelles formes. Le concept de norme renvoie ainsi à la question: comment décrire un mouvement au sens de l'adaptation à des conditions nouvelles, c'est-à-dire de réponse organisée à des conditions imprévues?" Pierre Macherey, *De Canguilhem à Foucault: la force des normes*, (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2009), p. 65.
 29. "Ce qui est enfermé est le virtuel, la puissance de la métamorphose, le devenir. Les sociétés disciplinaires exercent leur pouvoir en neutralisant la différence et la répétition et leur puissance de variation (la différence qui va différer), en la subordonnant à la reproduction. Le dressage des corps a pour fonction d'empêcher toute bifurcation, d'enlever à l'acte, à la conduite, au comportement, toute possibilité de variation, toute imprévisibilité". Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les Révolutions du Capitalisme*, (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004), p. 67.
 30. Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003).
 31. "Il ne s'agit pas de fixer des frontières, d'isoler un espace, de marquer des extrémités et d'enfermer comme dans la souveraineté et la discipline, mais de constituer 'un milieu de vie'

- pour les populations en ouvrant, en intégrant, en élargissant et cela suppose en amont un principe de liberté qui va se brancher sur le calcul probabiliste afin que le gouvernement puisse gérer l'événement pour faire exister le milieu de manière dynamique". Dider Bigo, "La sécurité en jachère" in FHE, pp. 326-333, 327.
32. Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, "Biopolitics of Security in the 21st century", pp. 283-284.
 33. See "Postscript on Control Societies", pp. 240-247.
 34. "Tandis que la discipline architecture un espace clos qu'elle pourrait surveiller et régir dans ses moindres détails, la biopolitique se place dans un espace de circulation. La 'liberté' sera donc un principe de fonctionnement indispensable à la biopolitique". Alexandre MacMillan, "La biopolitique et le dressage des populations" in *Biopolitique et gouvernement des populations. Cultures et conflits* No. 78. (Paris: L'Harmattan), pp. 39-53, p. 45.
 35. Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power" in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 149.
 36. See Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parinet et Pierre-André Boutang, *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, DVD, (Editions Montparnasse, 2004).
 37. "Le 'gouvernement statistique' vise non plus à maîtriser l'actuel, à dompter la sauvagerie des faits, mais à structurer le possible, à éradiquer le virtuel [...] d'où provient que l'actuel tremble toujours un peu d'un devenir 'autre' qui constitue, justement, sa singularité et sa puissance." Antoinette Rouvroy & Thomas Berns, "Le nouveau pouvoir statistique", in *Multitudes*, No. 40, 2010, pp.88-103, p. 93.
 38. "Ce que Foucault appelle 'discipline', c'est une technologie politique qui combine la norme intégratrice et le partage excluant: combinaison en laquelle on ne verra pas la rencontre contingente de deux procédures contradictoires, ou le croisement éphémère d'une nouveauté et d'une survivance, mais bien une corrélation fonctionnelle et stable. Entre le contrôle et le mur, entre la visibilité et le secret, s'opère un jeu de renvois: contrôler permet d'exclure, de soumettre le partage à des critères rigoureux. Exclure permet de mieux contrôler, dans des milieux que la clôture rend disponibles à la mesure du regard." Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, "Actualité de la prison" in *Vacarme*, No. 10, 2010 available at <http://www.vacarme.org/article870.html>.
 39. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 63.

FOUCAULT'S NIETZSCHE: A 'LOFTY' SIGN WHEN PUTTING POWER INTO QUESTION

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(Translated by Mark Sinclair and Keith Crome)

What is at stake in the will to truth, in the will to utter this 'true' discourse, if not desire and power? 'True' discourse, freed from desire and power by the necessity of its form, cannot recognise the will to truth which pervades it; and the will to truth, having imposed itself on us for a very long time, is such that the truth it wants cannot fail to mask it. Thus all that appears to our eyes is a truth conceived as richness, fecundity, a gentle and insidiously universal force, and in contrast we are unaware of the will to truth, that prodigious machinery designed to exclude. All those who, from time to time in our history, have tried to dodge this will to truth and to put it into question against truth, at the very point where truth undertakes to justify the prohibition and to define madness, all of them, from Nietzsche to Artaud and Bataille, must now serve as the (no doubt lofty) signs for our daily work.

Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse"¹

The will to truth, on the basis of a diverse history that one could attempt to reconstruct, has "imposed" itself on us. Yet it is not possible for us to apprehend this active will with the true discourse by means of which we most often speak. This inability is grounded, first of all, in the form of true discourse. Analysing such a form will have been the sense of the "horizontal" reading of the discursivities proper to any age: this is the practice of archaeology, which operates by means of the "systematic erasure of all given unities."² But archaeology cannot yet enunciate the condition of the emergence, the source, of discourses. The question, henceforth, will be one of understanding the constraint, the imposition that makes the form both possible and necessary.

What imposes itself on us in such a way that we constantly actualise this form? The form involves ignorance in two senses. We become ignorant of the conditions as soon as we are conditioned by them – we make what constitutes the form unknowable in that we produce an appearance, constitute a mask. What is this appearance? It presents itself as freed from desire, liberated from power. But this is possible only if desire and power are its conditions. Consequently, if archaeology cannot pose this type of question to the forms of true discourse, we will have to go back down to these conditions. This is what genealogy does. No longer horizontal, but vertical, it has to make possible the explanation of the conditions of the imposition of the will to truth. This implies the possibility of displacing oneself in relation to this imposition. History is involved in this as a possibility of undoing what was once done or constructed.

From Foucault's perspective, we can see that seeking to go beyond this will to truth amounts to changing ourselves, and, more precisely, to displacing ourselves in relation to its imposition. Such a displacement is possible only if it is possible to undo at least partially the relations of knowledge and power

(since truth is, firstly, a mask, an appearance, the form of something other than knowledge, and, consequently, a possible obstacle for knowledge). In the passage cited as an epigraph to this article, the archaeological and the genealogical come together, and this articulation, having to account for a constraint, for an imposition, will soon have to arrive at an analysis of power relations. In order to take up this task, the necessity of following Nietzsche is plain; the Nietzsche here inscribed as a sign – a sign of work to be undertaken, perhaps more than Bataille and Artaud, since he becomes the object of several of Foucault's analyses in the following years. An obvious sign, certainly, given that he is the thinker of genealogy, and because, as Foucault says: "I think that the whole Nietzschean analysis of desire, of instinct, of the will to knowledge, all irreducible to knowledge itself, is taken over by the work allowing for the disentangling of truth and knowledge."³ Yet because he is the thinker who prepares for this disentanglement, he is also the one with whom truth finds itself surpassed by a mode of knowing that no longer belongs to it alone, and which responds to an alteration that is a matter of *experience*. Is this not what Foucault will state, when thinking about the ideas of imposition and constraint, and that is to say, of objectivation and the mechanisms of subjectivation? Evoking the reception of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault indeed says that:

the book makes use of true documents, but in such a way that through them it is possible not only to arrive at an establishment of truth, but also to experience something that permits a *change*, a transformation of the relation we have with ourselves and with the world where, up to then, we had seen ourselves as being without problems – in short, a transformation of the relationship we have with our knowledge.⁴

This is why, summarising his relation to politics, Foucault will be able to declare that it is a matter of "experience in a Nietzschean sense."⁵

Consequently, understanding the questioning that Foucault constructs from the 1960s amounts to establishing how genealogy enables the conjoining of an alteration, and thus of an experience, with a critique that accounts for an imposition. The principal difficulty, however, in forming such a "Nietzschean hypothesis"⁶ is that Nietzschean experience, for Foucault, cannot be exhausted by theorisation: "If I had to recommence this book [i.e. *The Order of Things*], which was finished two years ago, I would try not to give to Nietzsche that ambiguous, *utterly* privileged, meta-historical status I had the *weakness* to give him."⁷

In accepting historical sense but in refusing what already no longer wholly belongs to it and probably surpasses it, does not one risk producing necessarily a profound *ambiguity*? Is this not a tension that is bound, in turn, to generate, precisely, a meta-history or an *absolute* privilege (and describing it thus amounts to making of this meta-historicity the result of one thing: *metaphysics* – and its search for the unconditioned), which is precisely what Foucault rejects? Consequently, does one not also risk understanding the result of this tension as a *weakness*? About this latter, dedicatory phrase, we have to ask: is

every meta-history only another form of metaphysics? Yes, of course, if metaphysics is understood on the basis of *Human all too Human* – and it is this that Foucault will retain before anything else – as an un-historicised or de-historicised “*Nachtrieb*,” and that is to say as the *a posteriori* magnification of the *Entstehung*, of what has emerged. History has to dive back into the heart of this metaphysics in order to exhibit its moral provenance and the authoritarian seizure involved in it. But, on the other hand, does a meta-history remain simply metaphysical if it is history *itself* that becomes a modality of what cannot be entirely withdrawn from metaphysics? For it is quite possible that what Foucault names “meta-historical” relates not to an attempt to push historicisation towards former metaphysics (the stabilising magnification occurring in and by the forgetting of the process of emergence) – with this metaphysics able not to notice the former – but rather to go beyond this historicisation itself to the conditions of genealogy, to the displacement that makes its exercise possible and that justifies its strategic intention which is not simply truth.

1. Foucault and the Death of God as the Space of Experience

If Foucault comes to consider as “regrettable” the privilege enjoyed by Nietzsche in his work, then we have to retrace the genesis of this privilege. As Ernst Behler writes: “Nietzsche was without any doubt the central figure in Foucault’s discourse and he penetrates it in such a decisive manner that his presence cannot be limited to particular objects, such as power. It is much rather the case that the whole Foucauldian corpus can be seen as a re-enacting of Nietzsche in our own epoch, a re-actualisation of Nietzsche at the end of the twentieth century.”⁸ The presence of Nietzsche – whose name designates, let us remember, “the sole true intellectual rupture”⁹ in Foucault’s work – shines out from the very beginnings of his *œuvre*.¹⁰

Foucault extends the sense of the event of the death of God to the point of identifying it with experience itself. The death of God is the *milieu* at the heart of which everything unfolds. He writes that one should not understand the death of God “as the end of his historical reign, nor as the finally delivered judgement of his non-existence, but as the now-constant space of our experience.”¹¹ It is “not merely an “event” that gave shape to contemporary experience as we now know it: it continues indefinitely tracing its great skeletal outline.”¹² In other words, Nietzsche’s proclamation has realised itself in our experience, it has made the absence of ground resonate throughout our language. More: this event disjoins our affectivity from language, which, without a ground, appears as such.

Nietzsche’s meta-historical status, his status as an exception in relation to a whole – here the one ordering, at the end of the eighteenth century, and in the same place and space as the classical age, biology, philology, economy – had been prepared for by the conclusion to the introduction of Foucault’s translation

of Kant's *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*. In the *Anthropology* Kant added to transcendental reflection forms of empirical knowledge.¹³ Situating the empiricity that determines anthropology on the basis of *a priori* conditions of knowledge (thus on the basis of *Critique* – which the *Anthropology* allows us, for Foucault, to understand retrospectively), and in accordance with the limits of the critical project, Foucault indicates how finitude, as a character of knowledge, was what the *Critique* conceived as belonging to the structure of truth, the phenomenon and experience. Having to limit transcendental illusion, this finitude will become the nature of man on which a transcendental philosophy has to operate. Consequently, while, after Kant, due to this empiricity, one believed in the opening of a field of positivities, what has dominated since then is described as an anthropological illusion. It amounts to the transposition of finitude (“What can I know?” – first question) to the essence of man (“What is man?” – fourth and last question, the one synthesising all the others). Consequently, the anthropological illusion became the “retreat of truth.” But here, Nietzsche would figure as a model for the critique of anthropological illusion: “The Nietzschean enterprise could be understood as finally blocking the proliferation of questioning about man.” Why? Foucault's response indicates the sense of his inflexion:

Is not the death of God manifest in a gesture that is murderous in two ways, for in brining the absolute to an end, it assassinates man himself? For man, in his finitude, is not separable from the infinite of which he is at once the negation and the herald; it is in the death of man that the death of God is realised”.¹⁴

Nietzsche is thus the “model” that we have to adopt. What allows him to be this?

2. *Nietzsche's Madness (Experience) and Interpretation*

If man dies – that is, if with the death of the infinity of God, man's own finitude folds back on itself – then in the final analysis the language of man says nothing other, refers to nothing other than to language itself: pure or brute language. Yet, who is the Nietzsche here that is such a distinguished prophet of this happening? What confers this right on Nietzsche is that he has brought interpretation to its highest point, and consequently led us to an experience of language implying, on the one hand, the discovery that there is nothing properly original, and that there is always and already interpretation; and, on the other hand, that the form of *experience* most proper to this epoch borders on madness. For madness is what sanctions this ever reiterated movement of interpretation, a movement of concentric sifting down into the depths, which “approaches its centre at infinity.” (NFM 275)

In his lecture on ‘Nietzsche, Freud, Marx’, Foucault, in relation to the ideal of a grammar of methods of interpretation, comes back to the question of the transformation of interpretation in the nineteenth century. Signs enter into it

within the domain of depth, a depth that is not interiority. The interpreter has to descend the length of a vertical line in order to show that the depth is not in fact a depth, and that it is something other than what it presents itself to be, namely an ideal interiority. (NFM 273-74) What the interpreter discovers in descending into the lower depths is therefore a mask. Nietzsche would accomplish just such a movement, and this indefinitely:

[With Nietzsche], it is clear that interpretation is always incomplete. What is philosophy for him if not a kind of philology continually in suspension, a philology without end, always further unrolled, a philology that would never be absolutely fixed? Why? As he says in *Beyond Good and Evil*, it is because “to perish from absolute knowledge could well form part of the basis of being”. And yet he has shown in *Ecce Homo* how near he was to this absolute knowledge that could well form part of the basis of Being. [...] What is in question in the point of rupture of interpretation, in this convergence of interpretation on a point that renders it impossible, could well be something like the experience of madness. An experience against which Nietzsche fought and by which he was fascinated [...]. This experience of madness would be the sanction of a movement of interpretation that approaches its centre at infinity and that collapses, charred. (NFM 275)

It is therefore the first characteristic of interpretation that is the “most decisive in modern hermeneutics”. (NFM 277) But this primacy cannot be separated from:

this experience [...], so important to modern hermeneutics: the further one goes in interpretation, the closer one comes at the same time to an absolutely dangerous region where interpretation not only will find its point of return but where it will disappear as interpretation, perhaps involving the disappearance of the interpreter himself. The existence that always approached the absolute point of interpretation would be at the same time that of a point of rupture. (NFM 274)

In other words, interpretation is here “something like the experience of madness”, undergone by a “fascinated” Nietzsche. (NFM 275) This is a fascination that is articulated in the “lower depths” that Nietzsche will always have sought, as Foucault claims. Foucault will come to use the phrase to describe his own approach.¹⁵ Foucault can thus conclude by situating Nietzsche outside of the twentieth century as he delimits it: “[In opposition to Marxism], a hermeneutics that wraps itself in itself enters the domain of languages which do not cease to implicate themselves, that intermediate region of madness and pure language. It is there that we recognise Nietzsche.” (NFM 192)

The approach that inflects Nietzsche’s death of God (the unique space of *our* experience) into the joint revelation of the death of man and the appearance of the being of language (which Nietzsche begins to make present in folding interpretation back onto itself, in *experiencing* its absence of ground) is therefore opened up here by this form of interpretation enveloped in itself, and that is to say, in this middle-region of madness and of pure language. If pure language involves its own absence of ground, if the fascination for vertical depth meets only the continuation of the interpretation and – again, as always – of language itself, then this is revealed in Nietzsche’s experience, which becomes most acute in Turin, of being on the edge of and within madness. The

joined movements of “poetic conversion and psychological evolution” (that could apply to Hölderlin, and after him to Artaud, another “lofty” sign that can engage genealogical work on the will to truth) have no causal relation, but rest on a common ground, which is the essence of unreason [*dérason*] (unreason that results from the splitting of reason constituting its other). Yet, as Foucault writes in the *History of Madness*:

It is impossible to remain in a decisive and indefinitely resolved fashion at the distance specific to unreason. For it must be forgotten and abolished no sooner than it is measured, in the vertigo of the sensible or the confinement of madness. Van Gogh and Nietzsche in different ways were evidence of this. Fascinated by the delirium of the real, by its scintillating appearance, and by time abolished and absolutely re-found in the justice of light, ensnared by the immutable solidity of the most fragile of appearances, they thus were rigorously excluded and trapped within the suffering beyond all exchange, and which figured, not only for others but for them as well, in their own truth, which had once more become immediate certitude, madness itself. The moment of the *Ja-sagen*, of the embrace of the lure of the sensible, was also the moment they retreated into the shadows of insanity.¹⁶

Only if both the experience characteristic of our experience (that is, the space of the death of God), and the point where it converges in order to present itself as the deployment of the being of language beyond man – man here understood as the refuge of the subject of knowledge and of the anthropological illusion – confines or condemns to madness, will it come about that this experience annuls itself in an absence. It would then be possible to suppose that gradually experience would come to exhaust itself. It is indeed a matter of “one of the fundamental traits of our culture” that it “petrifies all those who dare look upon its face, condemning to *madness* those who have tried the test of *Unreason*.”¹⁷ And Nietzsche would be precisely this point where there is nothing to say about the experience because there is no-one to constitute it, to have it, or to undergo it. This is because the division of reason and unreason *silences* the discourse which could take place about madness, insofar as it cannot understand what has been excluded, whilst the exclusion itself is the condition of discourse. Foucault had already said this in the conclusion of *Mental Illness and Psychology*, originally written in 1954, before the *History of Madness*, but which he reworked in 1962 so as to accord with it:

And when in lightening flashes and cries, it reappears, as in Nerval or Artaud, Nietzsche or Roussel, it is psychology which remains silent, speechless, before this language which borrows a meaning of its own from that tragic split, from that freedom, that, for contemporary man, only the existence of ‘psychologists’ allows him to forget.¹⁸

But if madness – and thus experience as it opens upon what has been divided and consequently forgotten – leaves wordless the discourse that takes place *on* it, then it too is the absence of work. Yet it is only with the risk of the disappearance of the subject of knowledge that the being of language can begin to appear. Thus when we reach the conclusion of *The Order of Things*, it is no surprise that Nietzsche is, in a certain way, outside of history, to the extent that he permits it to be constituted.

Foucault therefore declared in 1966, at the end of *The Order of Things* that “man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon.” (OT 386) Consequently, the interrogation of language “is once more of the greatest urgency.” (OT 382) Now, in this newly possible interrogation of language what was required of the event is found transposed, because here “[man] arrives not at the very heart of himself but at the brink of that which limits him; *in that region where death prowls*, where thought is extinguished, where the promise of the origin interminably recedes.” (OT 383, my emphasis) It is neither Hölderlin, nor Hegel, nor Feuerbach who have announced this; they are preoccupied with “establish[ing] for man a stable sojourn upon this earth from which the gods had turned away or vanished.” (OT 385) Rather, it is “once again Nietzsche [who has] indicated the turning-point from a long way off.” (OT 385) It is a turning point to which man no longer responds, and thus which does not belong to past history, or in other words, it is a turning towards a future thought, whose history is not yet made.

This *declaration*, which sounded across the epoch, was thus coherent with Foucault’s writings from as early as his thesis on madness. Its annunciative character, by virtue of its place in the text, is a sign of the great radicalisation of this *turning point* that had marked Foucault’s work since the Nietzsche years.¹⁹ Is it not the case that by including a Nietzsche exterior to the *episteme* Foucault admitted to the hiatus which persists between experience and history as the “mode of being of all of that which is given us in experience”? If so, this would require a new reflection on Nietzsche, and would perhaps even necessitate a new foreclosure of experience.

Thus Foucault declared that “if I had to recommence this book, which was finished two years ago, I would try not to give Nietzsche that ambiguous, *utterly* privileged, meta-historical status I had the *weakness* to give him.”²⁰ We have to trace how Foucault, regretting this privilege, has attempted to reverse it. For it is precisely here that the “rupture” is produced. Foucault will reinsert into the intrinsic groundlessness of history that which is the “lofty” sign of its condition. Thus Foucault here recognises that there is a hiatus between experience and history. In effect, this recognition calls for a new evaluation: it is a matter of absorbing the residual experience, which is expressed in this meta-historical character; all the more so since Foucault has himself taken responsibility for it inasmuch as he has declared it. Consequently, the alternative that offers itself to Foucault is either that of fastening Nietzsche to history, making experience mute, renouncing the dimension of the declaration, or of unfastening himself from history.²¹ Indeed, experience comes here to be reduced to history, but not without a noisy and decipherable silence, nor perhaps without influencing at bottom the final path of Foucault’s thought.

In order to justify the contestable place that he had attributed to Nietzsche, Foucault explains it as the result of his debt to genealogy. What is owed to

genealogy, then, is to explain it, to explain with it, and that is what Foucault had to do: provide an account of what Nietzsche accomplished, and by virtue of that make possible its reintegration without remainder or exteriority. At the same time as he assimilates Nietzschean genealogy in order to think power, he silently moves away from the properly Nietzschean domain of experience.²² At this point, Foucault effectively changes his “problematic”, abandoning the attempt at a theory of knowledge centred on or limited to the factuality of linguistic events; instead, he turns towards an analysis of power inspired by Nietzsche.²³

Both this explanation and this turning are effectively inscribed in the long essay from 1971, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, where it is, perhaps, the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human* who is privileged. To restore Nietzsche entirely to the groundlessness of history will, in Behler’s terms, be a matter of “re-enacting” the Nietzschean gesture. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” begins by showing that Nietzsche’s genealogical effort is directed against origins in order to re-describe them with the help of two concepts: *Herkunft*, descent, and *Entstehung*, emergence. Genealogy opposes itself to the metahistorical deployment of meanings, to the search for origins, because it shows that the origin is fortuitous;²⁴ that, constructed, it is already history. It is not history which recovers an origin, but on the contrary, it is history which ceaselessly assigns new origins. *Herkunft* means descent, and this descent is not a category of resemblance which allows regrouping and assimilation; on the contrary, it is a matter of revealing the multiplicity and intertwining of descents. Moreover, descent is always low.²⁵ It is this descent which comes to constitute the problem of legacy: “Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.” (NGH 375-76) Genealogy is designated as *wirkliche Historie*.²⁶ There is no other origin than history, and consequently the project of destruction, of the negation of reality (that is, of the *Wirklichkeit*, which as such is nothing other than the whole of that which has “*gewirkt*” and has become something – namely, interpretation – and therefore the forces that are captured by it) in order to re-sediment it, is pointless if it aims to destroy an illusion by making an origin appear, or in order to make one appear. Thus, following from this, the critical project could be the historical reconstitution of the strata of meanings that constitute values, the moral interpretations of phenomena, without there being any question of the truth of an origin. There is no “thing”, there is that which “*wirkt*” things; things are the products of operations. It could be said, then, that to know a thing is to know its history, that is, the history of its interpretations and evaluations, the forces which are exerted upon it (the sum of these *wirken*), and this without presupposing that we could get out of the interpretative dimension (or that we would want to). Thus there is a primacy of interpretation, and by virtue of this,

parody and masks. Here we find the first sense of Foucault's affirmation: "genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival." (NGH 386) Moreover, what emerges from Foucault's Nietzsche is the irony of the parodic character. It is an irony towards ourselves as well, in which we situate our knowledge, which is no longer merely a means, but which proves infinite, conforming to interpretation and the absence of origins: "It is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of a truth that only we can possess in the present, but of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge, in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge." (NGH 388-89)

However, that which both principally directs and results from Foucault's reading of Nietzsche, and upon which he insists in this period, is the destruction of the subject of knowledge, a destruction which goes along with the infinite becoming of this knowledge:²⁷ "Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge."²⁸ Foucault indeed stops his critique in the place where the will to knowledge, itself indefinite, would be infinite, retaining the conclusion of paragraph 123 of the *Gay Science*: "It is something new in history that knowledge wants to be more than a mere means."²⁹ Thus Foucault's Nietzsche is the one who destroys the subject of knowledge: "Necessarily, we must dismiss those tendencies which encourage the consoling play of recognitions. Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery," and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves." History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being." (NGH 380)

By identifying genealogy and *wirkliche Historie*, Foucault, who elsewhere distinguishes them, identifies the *Second Untimely Meditation*, and what is said much later in both *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals*, through an insistence on *Human, All Too Human*:³⁰

In fact, Nietzsche's criticism, beginning with the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, always questioned the form of history that reintroduces (and always assumes) a suprahistorical perspective: a history whose function is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself; a history that always encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past; a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development. The historian's history finds its support outside of time and claims to base its judgements on an apocalyptic objectivity. (NGH 379)

To characterise the role of both genealogy and history in Nietzsche's work in this way is to insist on putting to one side the question of origins. History is then incontestably a practice of liberation.³¹ And Foucault has reason to say, conforming to the Nietzsche who makes philosophy the greatest extension of the notion of "history": "Its task is to become a curative science." (NGH 382) The history described by Foucault would be placed between two limits: it is no longer only a malady, but it is not effaced or diminished in the beyond of health.

3. *The Return of the Masks*

The *Herkunft* of history is of a base extraction, and the *Entstehung* of history is the nineteenth century, which suffers from mixing and from an absence of identity to which to fix itself. It is necessary, then, to take control of this emergence in order to use it genealogically. Consequently, Foucault's use of genealogy is both parodic (offering masks to contemporary humanity thanks to history), and ironic. In paragraph 223 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes:

The hybrid European – a tolerably ugly [*hässlicher*]³² plebeian, all in all – definitely requires a costume: he needs history as his storeroom for costumes [...] we are the first studious age *in puncto* of “costumes”, I mean those of morality, articles of faith, artistic tastes and religions, prepared as no other age has been for the carnival in the grand style, for the most spiritual Shrovetide laughter and wild spirits, for the transcendental heights of the most absolute nonsense and Aristophanic universal mockery. Perhaps it is precisely here that we are discovering the realm of our *invention* [*Erfindung*], that realm where we too can still be original, perhaps as parodists of world history and God's buffoons – perhaps, even if nothing else of today has a future, precisely our *laughter* may still have a future!³³

Laughter and the return of masks go together. This buffoonery and this invention which capture Foucault's attention, evidently allow him to insist on our contingency – *Erfindung*, invention – opposing it directly to *Ursprung*, origin, as is shown in the first lecture of “Truth and Juridical Forms” from 1974 (whilst in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, from 1971, it was not “invention” that Foucault opposed to “origin”, but *Entstehung*, emergence, birth, extraction). Thus, it is possible once again to develop the hypothesis that the character of determination and contingency is accentuated, notably in view of always separating the question of legacy from what is acquired, (even if this acquired legacy has, in effect, been “created”), and from that which also implies an historical continuity and which is always present in Nietzsche. Now, that is what matters here; Foucault (in part by parodying, by paraphrasing, and by citing without citing – and also by redoubling the operation that he thus accomplishes) frees one of the uses of the historical sense as farce:

First, the parodic and farcical use. The historian offers this confused and anonymous European, who no longer knows himself or what name he should adopt, the possibility of alternative identities, more individualised and real than his own. But the man with historical sense will see that this substitution is simply a disguise. Historians supplied the Revolution with Roman prototypes. Romanticism with a knight's armour, and the Wagnerian era was given the sword of a German hero – ephemeral props whose unreality points to our own. No one kept them from venerating these religions, from going to Bayreuth to commemorate a new afterlife; they were free, as well, to be transformed into street vendors of empty identities. The good historian, the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade. He will not be too serious to enjoy it; on the contrary, he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing. No longer the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, but our “unrealisation” through the excessive choice of identities – Frederick of Hohenstaufen, Caesar, Jesus, Dionysus, and possibly Zarathustra. Taking up these masks, revitalising the buffoonery of history, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of God, who started the charade. (NGH 385-86)

And he continues by citing: “Perhaps we can discover a realm where originality is again possible as parodists of history and buffoons of God.” (NGH 386) Foucault could then legitimately conclude in summing up the general sense of this passage by saying: “Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival.” (NGH 386)

Now, Foucault’s emphasis is important to the extent that it is a matter much later, in the historical ontology of ourselves, of using the critique of genealogy in order to “separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do, or think”,³⁴ that is, “seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.”³⁵ It is not so much Foucault’s interpretation that matters here, but rather the emphasis and limits of his reading. Because this separation from contingency, this reading which insists and promotes the carnival, this vindication of parody, implies a certain closure of the question of experience. In effect, when Nietzsche takes over these “masks”, is it only a question of masks? If he has *been* these men, if he collects them, is it only a matter of a parodic return? And since Zarathustra figures in this list as a representative of what Foucault takes to be buffoonery, is it only parody? If, at its summit, the historical sense is incorporation, a transformation of the historian who hauls himself up to the height of these different souls, and can *accommodate* and *shelter* them in himself, if more than unreality [*irréalité*] and unrealisation [*irréalisation*], the historical sense leads to becoming divine – which it is not possible to explain here – is parody, the return of masks, the exhaustion of meaning? Thus, in describing it first in terms of poverty, of lack, of conformity to the “ugliness” of the man of the nineteenth century, does not Nietzsche imply, on the one hand, that the parody which the historical sense accommodates is indebted to that which it mocks (beginning with the history of God)? But, on the other hand, does he not also imply that the historical sense emerges from a dimension which is not the historical sense? Is it not the case, then, that Foucault joins together two operations by driving parody back on itself (by making masks what returns, and by making what returns, masks)? On the one hand he closes that to which parody – despite everything – attempts to respond (which is not the historical sense), and on the other, he gives up on constituting a superior continuity. From this point of view, the Foucaultian “limit” would consist in the folding back of what Nietzsche understood also as a becoming-sentiment, an incorporation, and consequently a becoming superior of the historical sense, a supersession of its “ignoble” character by a nuance of its thematisation, exactly as in the economy of the trial that implies *tolerating* it – tolerating being the verb which indicates the limit of incorporation.

Folding back the historical sense on itself, then, is not so much to dedicate ourselves to parody as to constrain ourselves in the limits of our current,

apparent, impotence. Yet it is that which we become if antiquarian history is *only* parody,³⁶ and critical history the precondition to an infinite historicisation:

Nietzsche, however, reproached critical history for detaching us from every real source and for sacrificing the very movement of life to the exclusive concern for truth. Somewhat later, as we have seen, Nietzsche reconsiders this line of thought he had at first refused, but he directs it to altogether different ends. It is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of a truth that only we can possess in the present, but of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge, in the *endless deployment* of the will to knowledge. (NGH 388-89)

Here, Nietzsche is henceforth the one who can break the link between truth and knowledge.

Consequently, two questions can be addressed to Foucault. Firstly, if what is retained from Nietzsche is the dimension of *Versuch* – the attempt, the trial, which Foucault understands as the infinitisation of the will to know – why is history not concerned by this sacrifice, why would it be protected? How does it have this exceptional status? And secondly, does not the pursuit of *Versuch* and knowledge for its own sake lead, little by little, to the formation of a relation to history? Is there not necessarily an alteration of the one who knows, in order to know in a new and limitless fashion? In other words, even if one supposes that this knowledge destroys the “subject of knowledge”, is it possible simply to destroy? Such a question is not merely an accusation, and perhaps it would find no problem in mere destruction; it asks simply but seriously if mere destruction is at all possible? Or, conversely, and as Nietzsche has affirmed, it asks if only the creators have the possibility and the right to destroy. It would mean that the point of view which only sees destruction – if not the sole horizon of commentary – overlooks the new configuration, and is consequently a limited vision.

Conclusion

Foucault’s regret with regard to Nietzsche’s meta-historicity comes to mark a significant ‘choice’ and is not at all anecdotal. Foucault’s questioning of this ‘meta’, this excess, marked by the reiterated attempt to interpret Nietzsche (but also with him) addresses only partially the problems of his ‘positivism’ or of the genealogical and more particularly nominalist turn that is realised at that point in his thinking.³⁷ These problems concern much more the withdrawal of experience – a withdrawal that is involved in the articulation of archaeology and genealogy. It seems that Foucault clarifies and accepts the situation from which he reads Nietzsche: the death of God and the space in which the contemporary unfolds, a space structured by ruins. In order to confront this, we have to pursue experience so that it reopens itself, and at the same time record with nostalgia that what is unfolding is principally the age of “commentary.” It is probably in this sense that we have to understand Foucault’s account of his political experience: “For me politics has been an opportunity to carry out a Nietzschean or Bataillean experiment”. He adds: “are there not experiences in which the subject can

dissociate itself, break the relation with itself, and lose its identity? Was this not Nietzsche's experience of the eternal return?"³⁸ Does not this declaration consist in referring one silence (defining political experience) to another silence (Nietzschean experience), and thus in constructing one interpretation upon another (interpretations having reached their silent terminus). This also means that there is no longer anything to say about experience. What was first of all madness, carrying in this way the weight of experience, is henceforth silent. It seems, therefore, that every 'problematization' has to be prepared to see experience retreat from it, at the very moment that alteration is the genealogical condition since it is the condition on the basis of which the imposition can be perceived – at the very moment that alteration is the strategic aim in that it is supposed to allow for a politics that no longer struggles in the horizon of either globality or sovereignty alone. Consequently, we have to be prepared to force this experience to become a historical experience (that counts as or for a history of being: on this point see the *Use of Pleasure*), and a limit-experience – thought first of all in madness, and in language – that will gradually be reduced to silence, or else, and this is perhaps only its inversion and revival, to returning to the questions of the Greeks in order to attempt to define or to constitute an *ethos* proper to the philosopher, to take over the 'know thyself' of truth with a care of the self which no longer belongs wholly to truth itself.

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References

1. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", trans. I. McLeod in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. R. Young (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 56. Translator's note: wherever possible we have used English translations of Foucault's texts, otherwise all translations are our own.
2. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 28. See also Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 2. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 433-58.
3. Michel Foucault, *Leçons sur la volonté de savoir, Cours au Collège de France, 1970-1971* (Paris: Seuil Gallimard, 2011), p. 27.
4. Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault" in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1. Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. P. Rabinow, (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 244, my emphasis. The term 'alteration' is referred to by all the terms relating to 'crossing' (*franchissement*) understood as "put[ting] itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality", as Foucault puts it in "What is Enlightenment?", in *ibid*, p. 316.
5. See "Interview with Michel Foucault", pp. 239-48, *passim*.
6. Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. D. Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 16.
7. Michel Foucault, "On the Ways of Writing History" in *Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 2*, p. 293-94, my emphasis.
8. Ernst Behler, "Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century" in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 281-322, p. 317.
9. See Judith Revel, "La pensée verticale : une éthique de la problématisation" in *Foucault, Le courage de la vérité*, ed. F. Gros (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), p. 66: "It is

- without doubt significant that Foucault has indicated the breaking point of the only true intellectual rupture he himself recognised in his reading of Nietzsche in 1953.” See also “Le retour de la morale (entretien avec G. Barbedette et A. Scala, 29 mai 1984)” in *Dits et écrits II, 1975-1988* (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001), p. 1522). And Judith Revel, *Michel Foucault, Expériences de la pensée*, (Paris, Bordas, 2005), p. 66ff. Finally, in “‘To do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis’”, Jacques Derrida inscribes the *History of Madness* in “the gallery of all those who, from one end of the book to the other, announce, like heralds of good tidings, the very possibility of the book; above all Nietzsche and, most frequently.” *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. P. Kamuf, P-A Brault, and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 82.
10. Foucault will go on to dedicate several texts to Nietzsche. Analyses by Foucault taking Nietzsche explicitly their subject are: a discourse at the Royaumont conference entitled “Nietzsche, Freud. Marx” (1964) in *Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 2*, pp. 269-78 (Hereafter referred to as NFM); the conclusion of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) (London: Routledge, 1994) (Hereafter referred to as OT); the article “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (1971) in *Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 2*, pp. 369-91 (Hereafter referred to as NGH); and finally the second lecture of a series bearing the title “Truth and Juridical Forms” (1973) in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3. Power*, ed. J. D. Faubion, (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 1-89.
 11. Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression” in *Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 2*, p. 71.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. “The epistemological configuration proper to the *Anthropology* mimics the *Critique*; but it was a matter of not being taken in by this trick, and of giving back to this resemblance a rational order. This order consisted in making the *Anthropology* gravitate around the *Critique*. And this order established was for the *Anthropology* the authentic form of its liberation, the bringing to light of its true sense; it could thus appear as that in which the passage from the *a priori* to the fundamental, from critical thought to transcendental philosophy was announced.” E. Kant, *Anthropologie d’une point de vue pragmatique*, preface by Michel Foucault, *Introduction à l’anthropologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2008), p. 79.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. In the lecture of 1964 Foucault already identifies Nietzsche as “the good excavator of the lower depths;” see NFM, p. 273. This is a title that he will much later come to claim for himself: “I myself am always interested in the lower depths of the lower depths, so to speak. An excavator of the lower depths, as Nietzsche said.” See “Radioscopie de Michel Foucault” in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975*, p. 1652
 16. Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 351.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 351-52.
 18. Foucault, M. *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. A. Sheridan, (New York: Harpers and Row, 1976) p. 88
 19. See OT 386: “In our day, and once again Nietzsche indicated the turning-point from a long way off, it is not so much the absence or the death of God that is affirmed as the end of man”. Recall Nietzsche’s declaration of the “death of God”, and its conjunction with the increasing existence of the last man, the last man who stands in the “between-two” where the event is found: too old and too young.
 20. Michel Foucault, “On the Ways of Writing History” in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 2*, p. 293-94
 21. We cannot show it here, but this latter alternative is also indicated. One can understand the concern with space as a result of this tension, and as another sign of it. See the essay “Different Spaces” (from 1967 and thus nearly contemporaneous with *The Order of Things*), which begins with the celebrated declaration according to which “the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history [...] The present age may be the age of space [...]” in *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 2*, p. 175.

22. It is in relation to the depoliticisation of Nietzsche's work after the war (by way of his rehabilitation after his assimilation by the Nazi's and against the mythologisation of his work by his sister), of which Walter Kaufmann's *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist and Antichrist* would be a good example, that Keith Ansell-Pearson situates the importance of Foucault's reading of Nietzsche. He being the first to take seriously the works of Nietzsche in relation to the stakes of political theory. See "The Significance of Michel Foucault's Reading of Nietzsche: Power, the Subject and Political Theory" in *Nietzsche-Studien*, Vol. 20, 1991, p. 267-284. Nietzsche's importance here would be to have not subscribed to any of the political options of modernity, and consequently of being able to disengage the essence of modern politics. On this point see also William Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1988); Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1988); Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Nietzsche: 'A Radical Challenge to Political Theory'" in *Radical Philosophy*, 54, Spring 1990, pp. 10-19.
23. This is, in any case, how Axel Honneth understands it when he recalls that, and with reference to Nietzsche, Foucault loved to present himself as a "happy positivist." Axel Honneth, "Foucault et Adorno" in *Critique* 471-2, pp. 800 – 816, p. 803. Cf. Axel Honneth, *Kritik der Macht*, (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2000), Chapter 5.
24. See NGH.
25. And inscribed in the body: Descent attaches itself to the body. Thus we have here the interesting of seeing Foucault thematising *dispositifs*: "It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets, in the debilitated and prostrate bodies of those whose ancestors committed errors. Fathers have only to mistake effects for causes, believe in the reality of an 'afterlife' or maintain the value of eternal truths, and the bodies of their children will suffer [...] the body maintains, in life as in death, through its strength or weakness, the sanction of every truth and error, as it sustains, in an inverse manner, the origin – descent." (NGH 375)
26. In order to get a sense of "*wirken*" for Nietzsche, in the sense that Foucault uses it, see, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), § 58.
27. If we say "in this period", it is because the subject of knowledge will subsequently come to pose greater problems for Foucault. See for example the short text entitled "Foucault" written in 1984, by Foucault under the pseudonym Maurice Florence, in *Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 2*, pp. 459-63.
28. NGH, 388, referring to *Daybreak*, §501.
29. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. See also *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), §39: "It could pertain to the fundamental nature of existence that a complete knowledge of it would destroy one." Except that cutting the quotation here, as Foucault does, is problematic, because what follows qualifies it in terms of the measure of truth that one could tolerate, or incorporate. Cf. also Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, ed. Maudemarie Clarke and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §§ 429 and 501.
30. "Nietzsche's positivism is not a moment of his thought that it is a matter of overcoming; it is not a superficial level of which it would be necessary to grasp the profundity and perhaps the excess: it is a critical act according to two orthogonal directions: one which addresses itself to the outside of knowledge; the other which addresses itself to the non-place of knowledge and truth. It is not a matter of treating this positivism by omitting it or with 'modesty'. It is on the interior of this positivist critique that the essential will occur". Michel Foucault, *Leçons sur la volonté de savoir*, p. 27.
31. This is even more the case if history includes the body. Then one finds it in these texts that which enables the analysis of prisons or even the "deployment of sexuality." See in particular, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980), Part 4, pp. 75 – 131.
32. "Hideousness" indicates a reactive character and the actualisation of a Christian heritage.

33. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §223.
34. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 1*, p. 315-16
35. *Ibid.*, p. 316
36. See NGH 386: "The parody of his last texts serves to emphasize that [antiquarian history] is itself a parody. Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival."
37. Cf. Beatrice Han, "L'*a priori* historique selon Michel Foucault: difficultés archéologiques" in *Lectures de Michel Foucault*, 2 (Paris: ENS Editions, 2003), pp. 23-38.
38. Michel Foucault, "Conversazione con Michel Foucault" in *Dits et écrits II, 1976-1988*, pp. 862-69.

BOOK REVIEWS

FOUCAULT: HIS THOUGHT, HIS CHARACTER, Paul Veyne, trans. Janet Lloyd, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010, 216 pp., £15.99 (pbk.) £50.00 (hbk.).

Paul Veyne's *Foucault* is as interesting and detailed as we would hope for in a book written by the friend of a philosopher. It reads less like a systematic monograph about a philosopher's theories than it does a casual and intimate conversation with someone talking about his friend's beliefs and personality. Though, this is not to say that it is not scholarly or thorough. Veyne covers a wide range of topics including the attempt to articulate Foucault's theoretical and methodological position, how his philosophy is to be compared with that of Heidegger, and he offers us insights into the thinker's political and personal life.

Despite this book's value, however, there are some problems with its interpretation of Foucault's theoretical stance. According to Veyne, Foucault was a "sceptic thinker who believed only in the truth of facts, the countless historical facts that fill the pages of his books, never in the truth of ideas."¹ If a historian is to study democracy in the manner of Foucault, he cannot start from the abstract idea of "Democracy" and search our history for particular instantiations of it. Rather, he must assume "that Athenian democracy has nothing in common with modern democracy apart from its name" because that is what the facts tell us. (F 20) They show us that every discursive event is singular, unique, and different to those preceding it. That is, throughout history there is nothing the same, even if it appears that way.

While this account does grasp something of Foucault's project, it is contentious. As Foucault says himself, if he is attempting to isolate the singularity of "the occurrence of the statement/event, it is not in order to spread over everything a dust of facts."² In other words, while it is not incorrect to say that Foucault has recourse to facts, this is not a search for facts simply for the sake of facts or a more reliable history of events. Indeed, it would be a strange if this was his aim. Foucault was, as Veyne says himself,³ a Nietzschean, and Nietzsche says to those who lust after facts, "you are advocates of the devil, namely by making of success, of fact, your idol: while a fact is always stupid and has at all times resembled a calf more than a god."⁴ Foucault's interest in historical facts is not because they are trustworthy and ideas are not. Rather, facts are tools for making an adequate critique of contemporary practices:

To put it in concrete terms if you like, it was certainly not a semiology of life in the asylum or a sociology of delinquency that made an effective critique of the asylum or the prison possible; it really was the appearance of historical contents. Quite simply because historical contents alone allow us to see the dividing lines in the confrontations and struggles that functional arrangements or systematic organizations are designed to mask.⁵

Discipline and Punish, for example, is not the attempt to provide a more factual account of the birth of the prison. It is a tactical deployment of historical content in order to make critique possible. We could, however, put Veyne's account of Foucault as a sceptic interested in facts down to a problem of emphasis rather than a real problem of understanding. Yet, this thesis becomes still more problematic when he tries to explain how what Foucault says differs from what has been said before. He notes that when the

History of Madness was first published, many historians, including himself, had “failed to appreciate the scale and significance of the book.” (F 5) Veyne had “thought Foucault was simply showing that our conception of madness has varied greatly in the course of the centuries.” However, this was “nothing new”; it had already been known that “human realities betray a radical contingency.” Where Veyne and the others had gone wrong on this issue was that they had interpreted this contingency as the slow progress from our ancestors’ “strange ideas about madness, sexuality, punishment and power”, to our own modern ideas that have discovered the truth. Veyne asks, in contrast, “was our modern idea of love any better than theirs?” (F 5)

For Veyne, what Foucault teaches us is that our ideas about these matters are no more informed than that of our predecessors. This is because “Foucault was taking part in one of the great debates in modern thinking: does truth, or does it not, correspond to its object, does it or does it not resemble what it states, as common sense supposes?” (F 5-6) Foucault’s answer to this question, according to Veyne, is that we will never have a point of reference that will allow us to judge it:

To be sure, our idea of sexuality or of madness [...] together with its “discourse”, assuredly does relate to the “thing in itself” (if I may take advantage of Kantian vocabulary), namely, the reality it claims to represent. However, we are not in possession of a truth that corresponds to things, since we can only reach a ‘thing in itself’ by way of the idea that we have constructed of it in each different epoch. (F 11)

For Veyne, the reason that we cannot claim that our ancestors’ concepts are deficient compared to our own is that we have no direct access to the “thing in itself” and so cannot know which concept is more adequate to it. This is not, however, true to what Foucault says. For him, the reason that we cannot compare historical discourses with our own in this way is that *objects themselves* cannot be traced back very far:

all the objects of psychopathological discourses were modified from Pinel or Esquirol to Bleuler: it is not the same illnesses that are at issue in each of these cases; we are not dealing with the same madmen. (AK 35)

There is no ahistorical “thing in itself” that is found at every point in history that is interpreted differently at each stage, “the object does not await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not pre-exist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light.” (AK 49) Instead, Foucault argues, objects are actually constituted by discourses. Our “madness” simply does not refer to the same object as the Ancient Greek *hubris*. Nor does our “sexuality” refer to the same object as the Greek *aphrodisia*.

So, on this issue, Veyne is misleading. But, if the reader can bracket out the philosophical errors, they will be able to appreciate the many good things that this book has to offer. As a historian, Veyne can marshal historical examples that Foucault did not himself give in a way that purely philosophical authors would not be able to do easily. The book also contains many interesting first-hand accounts of Foucault. These include conversations Veyne had with Foucault on topics ranging from what the latter saw in the 1979 uprising in Iran and answers to theoretical questions posed to him to personal anecdotes, such as his fascination with a cat that would visit him in his apartment block (“He understands everything!”). (F 67) Of particular value is the final chapter, “Portrait of a Samurai”, which is fitting a tribute to Foucault’s character that is as interesting as it is moving.

In conclusion, though this book will not help someone with the specific intent of trying to understand Foucault’s philosophical position, I would recommend it to anyone with a wider interest in Foucault’s politics and character. Indeed, it would be unfair to put too much emphasis on the theoretical problems of the book. I do not think their

explanation was its primary purpose. Rather the book is meant to encourage historians to write in the manner of Foucault. As Veyne puts it:

What I am saying is prompted purely by my love for history. When we were students, in the early 1950s, we used to read Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Marcel Mauss too, with passionate interest; and we listened to what Jacques Le Goff, our senior by only a few years, had to say. We dreamed of one day writing history as they wrote it. Today, I dream of young historians who dream of writing like Foucault. (F 25)

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References

1. P. Veyne, *Foucault*, trans. J Lloyd (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p.1. Hereafter referred to as F.
2. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 31. Hereafter referred to as AK.
3. F 147, Note 3: [Concerning Foucault's reading of Heidegger:] "[...] in my own humble opinion, he had read little more than Heidegger's *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* and the big book on Nietzsche, which was indeed important for him as its paradoxical effect was to make him a Nietzschean, not a Heideggerian."
4. F. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. P. Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), p. 48
5. Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. D. Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p.7.