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Forum: Foucault and Neoliberalism

3.

FOUCAULT MUST NOT BE DEFENDED

MITCHELL DEAN

ABSTRACT

This paper responds to and comments on many of the themes of the book under consideration concerning Foucault and neoliberalism. In doing so, it offers reflections on the relation between the habitus of the intellectual and the political contexts of action and engagement in the case of Foucault, and the strengths and weaknesses of his characterization of his work in terms of an "experimental" ethos. It argues that it is possible to identify his distinctive views on neoliberalism as a programmatic ideal, as a language of critique of the postwar welfare state, and as an element within actual political forces such as the French "Second Left" of the 1970s. It examines the legacy of Foucault in "governmentality studies" and argues for attentiveness to the different intellectual positions, and their potentially divergent political consequences, within this school of thought. It concludes by suggesting that the discussion currently taking place, and in part inaugurated by this book, might signal a change of his status in the humanities and social sciences today from "unsurpassable horizon" of critical thought to acknowledged classical thinker, with strengths and limitations, and a series of problems that might not be our own.

Keywords: Foucault, neoliberalism, Marxism, governmentality, politics, critique, ethos, habitus

It is not a matter of being for or against Foucault, as Daniel Zamora makes clear in his Introduction to *Foucault and Neoliberalism*.[1] Nor is it a matter of attacking or defending him, at least any longer. It is possible today to learn from Foucault while arguing that it is necessary to go beyond him, as scholars and thinkers as diverse as Philip Mirowski, Wendy Brown, and Maurizio Lazzarato have recently shown in major works.[2] It has now become a matter of understanding him within the intellectual and political field in which he operated, and registering the effects in terms of what he made more possible and less possible. Above all, it is a matter of what we are today, those of us who profess a theoretical and critical vocation in the humanities and social sciences, and how Foucault has contributed to our formation.

We have an extraordinary situation with regard to Foucault and neoliberalism that makes this book and the discussion it initiates or continues absolutely

1. Daniel Zamora, *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, ed. Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Polity Press, 2015).

2. Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (London: Verso, 2013); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015); Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, transl. Joshua David Jordan (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015).

necessary, whether we agree or disagree with parts of it. The vast bulk of Foucauldian commentary and analysis would reject the idea of an affirmative relationship between Foucault and neoliberalism. Yet arguably his most influential follower, François Ewald, has claimed that Foucault had offered an "apology of neoliberalism."[3] Moreover, Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism have now been positively received by the two most important schools they discuss: Freiburg and Chicago.[4] It is time then to move beyond the alternatives of unsympathetic critique or reactive defense. The question of Foucault's relationship to neoliberalism cannot be avoided.

My viewpoint here is from the "present," which is a perspective Foucault himself adopted when he spoke of an "ontology of the present" and an "ontology of ourselves."[5] Unlike Foucault's situation, a part of our present is the extraordinary reach and depth that the concept of "neoliberalism" has attained in the noneconomic part of the social sciences and humanities as a critical tool, and its resultant complex and contradictory uses. As a recent critic of the concept has noted, the term is often used rhetorically to denote an eclectic bundling of "morally devolved referents about markets, economics, subjectivities, state authority, globalization or neo-colonialism."[6] In contrast, there have been convincing attempts to turn the concept toward an effective and investigable empirical domain in intellectual history that regards neoliberalism as a particular and definite "thought collective" whose genealogy, membership, conflicts, boundaries, and impacts can be mapped, and that can address the much-observed point that "neoliberalism" is a term abandoned by those held to be its representatives.[7] In retrospect, Foucault himself can be read as something of a pioneer of this approach, given his focus on the different schools of neoliberalism, and on some of its major individual thinkers and organizations. His own interpretation of neoliberalism and liberalism as an "art of government" can, moreover, help constitute an important perspective on the contributions of the varying individuals and schools of the neoliberal thought collective.

It is an obvious point that Foucault's neoliberalism is not our own and that he could not have anticipated the shifts in public policy, forms of government, and the economy that have occurred in the thirty-odd years since his death. This means that we should be careful about specifying his relationship to something called "neoliberalism," and be precise about what we mean by the latter. He cannot be held responsible for the vagaries of critical political and social thought

3. Ewald, in Gary S. Becker, François Ewald, and Bernard Harcourt, "Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker: American Neoliberalism and Michel Foucault's 1979 'Birth of Biopolitics' lectures." Coase-Sandor Institute for Law and Economics Working Paper No. 614 (Chicago: University of Chicago Law School, 2012), 4.

4. See Gary Becker's comments in Becker *et al*., "Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker, 3. For the Ordoliberals, see Nils Goldschmidt and Hermann Rauchenschwandtner, "The Philosophy of Social Market Economy: Michel Foucault's Analysis of Ordoliberalism," Freiburg Discussion Papers on Constitutional Economics, 07/4 (Freiburg: Walter Eucken Institute, 2007).

5. Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983*, transl. G. Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21.

6. Rajesh Venugopal, "Neoliberalism as Concept," *Economy and Society* 44, no. 2 (2015), 183.

7. *The Road from Mont Pelèrin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

over the last quarter century, and we must also take care not to engage in a kind of denunciation of Foucault through suspicion. Yet this should not stop us from trying to construct his orientation toward the political field, even if we accept his own oft-stated refusal to be located within it. To do so makes clearer some of the potential strengths and weaknesses that have entered our own intellectual formation to the extent we have been influenced by his work.

My contribution to this forum then draws on some thoughts provoked by this book to consider Foucault within his intellectual-political field and the implications for us. It moves from Foucault himself as an intellectual, to his context and the historical events and concrete politics he was located in and engaged with, to the study of governmentality, and finally to his legacy. I seek simply to offer some notes toward understanding Foucault's intellectual and political orientation and hence his relation to neoliberalism and the meaning of that relationship today.

THE INTELLECTUAL

How should we think about the lives of intellectuals, and particularly ones who gain fame and recognition for their work and ideas in and beyond academic circles? Some will say that this is a profoundly un-Foucauldian question, but we should note that, unlike some of his followers, he was not bound dogmatically to method when it came to his own account of neoliberalism and its progenitors, announcing that he "would break a bit from my habits and give a few biographical details."[8] Of course, there is the question of how should we maintain the correct distance between life and work. If we propose to read the intellectual's contribution in terms of biography, then we are in danger of missing the contribution itself. If we separate them too far, then we are in danger of universalizing a thought that was specific to the heat and light of particular debates, and of mistaking local insight for global truth. Both extremes also miss the problem of the intellectuals themselves, and what might be called their persona or habitus.[9]

In this collection, Michael Scott Christofferson approaches this latter problem when analyzing the unqualified endorsement Foucault gave André Glucksman's *The Master Thinkers* in a review also included in this collection. Glucksman's identification of critical theory (of Hegel, Fichte, Marx, and Nietzsche) with Reason, and Reason with domination located in the binary logic of State and Revolution, neither acknowledged the dispersed character of power relations uncovered by Foucault nor the specificities of forms of rationality and science in his genealogies. Why then was Foucault moved to write so laudatory a review of a writer who would offer only a vulgar interpretation of his own work? Christofferson indicates the "cultural celebrity" at stake and "Foucault's use of the mass media in his strategy of intellectual consecration." This analysis reminds us that

8. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, transl. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 102.

9. I use these terms broadly to refer to an articulated ensemble of comportments, affects, and dispositions, characteristic of members of social groups, and acknowledge inspiration from their very different theoretical uses in the work of sociologists such as Marcel Mauss, Norbert Elias, and Pierre Bourdieu.

academic and intellectual activity is firmly rooted in matters of status or honor and the desire for recognition, as Max Weber would have pointed out. In a relatively short time, Foucault was able to parlay cultural celebrity in France—along with his training and capacities, of course—into formal academic status (a Chair at the *Collège de France*) and via the United States to global fame by the time of his death at the age of fifty-seven. Even he, I suspect, would not have guessed at the extent of that fame today.

Status-seeking is neither a positive nor negative feature of the habitus of the intellectual. Rather, it defines it. Although an intellectual and academic career might lead to greater material reward, its main ambition is to gain access to the very outward symbols of status—prestigious posts, awards and honors, high-level fellowships and invitations, and so forth—and the personal, emotional, and even erotic benefits that accrue from fame and hosts of followers. It may also strive to play the hazardous game of leading political leaders. The other side of the coin of status-seeking is a resentment of all those who represent obstacles to this recognition and honor.

In respect to the latter, we should mention Foucault's remarkable and persistent animus toward the French Communist Party, many of its intellectuals, and to a lesser extent, certain forms of Marxism. He speaks in an interview from April 1978, made available only recently, of the absence of a Marxist review or reaction to his *History of Madness*, published almost two decades previously.[10] Somewhat later that year, there is a more nuanced account of this reception: here the Marxist psychiatrist Lucien Bonnafé and the *Evolution pyschiatrique* group are said to show initial interest but decide to "excommunicate" the book after 1968, and to place it "on the 'index', as though it were the gospel of the devil.'"[11] This self-narrative of the failure of Marxist psychiatry to welcome his own work and then to violently reject it perhaps explains little except a sense of personal injury. It does indicate an important site of inquiry about his relation to a movement he claims had some potential to pose those problems later dubbed "antipsychiatry" but that reached an "impasse" due to the "Marxist climate."[12] It also fits in with a larger personal narrative he often gave. In the same interviews, he recounts his two-year membership in the Communist Party in the early 1950s, and the discovery that the so-called "doctors' plot" against Stalin was a fraud that French apparatchiks refused to explain or condemn, leading him to leave the Party. "The fact is from that moment on I maintained my distance from the P.C.F."[13] A stronger version of the same affect is captured in Christofferson's citation of Foucault's biographer, Didier Eribon, who suggests that "since he quit the communist party and especially since he lived in Poland, Foucault developed a ferocious hatred

10. Michel Foucault, Colin Gordon, and Paul Patton, "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power: Interview with Michel Foucault," *Foucault Studies* 14 (2012), 103.

11. Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, transl. R. James Goldstein and James Casciato (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 79, 82. Lucien Bonnafé is referred to in the English text as "Bonafé."

12. Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 80-81. Michael Behrent provided a detailed account of Foucault's relationship to Marxist psychiatry of the 1950s in a seminar, "Foucault, Governmentality, Context," Copenhagen Business School, October 27-29, 2014.

13. Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 53.

of everything that evokes communism, directly or indirectly."[14] Where Foucault seems most hostile to Marxism is toward its "totalizing" theoretical status manifest in its claims to scientificity and, most particularly, its institutionalization and effects on intellectual culture. He speaks, for example, of the "odious character" of the diffusion of a "Soviet model" of denunciation and enmity through French political groups and intellectual life.[15]

Status-seeking is closely related to distinction, and one way of gaining that distinction is by avant-gardism. As Christofferson again notes, Foucault was something of a master at participating in the *avant-garde* without acceding to its ideologies or trying to offer a philosophical justification for them. Witness his use of *marxisant* vocabulary and sympathy for the revolutionary left in the early 1970s, at the time of his association with the Maoist *Gauche prolétarienne* in the *Groupe d'information sur les prisons*. We can perhaps gloss this as a canny philosophical approach. Rather than looking for a practice that was consistent with his own theoretical position, Foucault adopts an "experimental attitude" that consists of participating in a practice, or starting with an "experience," as he would put it, or adopting a position that appears on the horizon, and then working out the conceptual, theoretical, and philosophical implications.[16] He can thus participate in and explore the new without identifying himself wholly with it.

The key choices and decisions intellectuals make are of course irreducible to any one or even several factors. Yet the structure of the intellectual habitus, with its status-seeking and resentment, can be found in more than one case. So too is the willingness to play with and even embrace the new and attempt to find a way of conceptualizing it. The case of Carl Schmitt, assiduously charted by Reinhard Mehring's recent biography,[17] demonstrates a far more extreme and egregious set of personal decisions and political experiments than that of Foucault—undertaken of course in an entirely different and more hazardous political context. Yet the willingness to embrace and experiment with the new, an attraction to the literary and aesthetic *avant-garde* and transgressive demi-monde, an intense desire for recognition, and a strong cluster of resentments indicate some key and unexpected parallels. Schmitt describes his own habitus as that of an "intellectual adventurer" when under interrogation; Foucault has been described by Colin Gordon as a "man of action in a world of thought."[18]

There are costs and benefits to this adventurous and experimental ethos. At the same time as his lectures on neoliberalism, Foucault would undertake his quite extensive journalism on the Iranian revolution based on two journeys to Iran. His observations here would yield early insight into the global ramifications of political Islam, while at least initially underestimating the repressive impacts of the

14. Eribon, cited by Michael Scott Christopherson, "Foucault and New Philosophy: Why Foucault Endorsed André Glucksmann's *The Master Thinkers*," in Zamora, *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 16.

15. Foucault *et al*., "Considerations on Marxism," 107.

16. *Ibid*., 27. Here Foucault considers himself "more an experimenter than a theorist."

17. Reinhard Mehring, *Carl Schmitt: A Biography*, transl. Daniel Steuer (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014). The biography of Foucault that foregrounds the transgressive and the erotic is James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

18. Schmitt, in "Interrogation of Carl Schmitt by Robert Kempner (I-III)," *Telos* no. 72 (1987), 103. Colin Gordon, "Man of Action in a World of Thought," *Times Literary Supplement* 21 (June, 21 1996), 9-10.

mullahs' regime for women, religious and ethnic minorities, and homosexuals.[19] Not unlike the case of his relation to neoliberalism, the willingness to embrace and experiment with the new within the political field, and to derive new intelligibilities and theoretical positions and concepts from it, often has another side: a reluctance or slowness to acknowledge the forms of domination it installs and the violence it engenders. Broadly, then, we can say that Foucault's anti-communism and his experimental attitude are lenses with which to view his relation to neoliberalism.

CONTEXT

Michael Behrent's work, both in this book and in a companion piece on Ewald,[20] has lucidly forced into focus not only the world that Foucault worked in but also his forms of action in it. To grasp that world is something like peeling the layers of an onion. The outer layers include the end of the *trente glorieuses*, France's equivalent of the Long Boom, in the early 70s, the ensuing economic and fiscal crisis, and the beginnings of the breakdown of the state-led settlement that followed the Second World War. This is accompanied by the reception of American economic ideas and policy in France. Domestically, there is the long-delayed coming to power of the Left and the program of the Union of the Left between the Socialists and Communists. Internationally, there is the Cold War, the division of Europe, and the Soviet Union's interventions in Eastern European politics from Hungary and Czechoslovakia to Poland.

A more inner layer would be the history of French militancy from May '68 to Maoism, the worker experiments with "self-management" such as at the Lip factory at Besançon, and the critique of Soviet "totalitarianism" condensed by the figure of the Gulag with the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1974. Closer to the core are Foucault's own commitments and political actions: collaboration with the Maoists in prisoners' actions; support for Soviet "dissidents"; the Kroissant Affair and the European Left terrorism of the Red Army Faction; and his journalism on the Iranian Revolution.[21]

At the core of all this, we find Foucault the political militant and activist pursuing his ideas and research in public, through his lectures, interviews, and newspaper articles, and often with key interlocutors, which included his peers and colleagues, his audiences, his assistants and research students, and participants in his seminars. To say that the language in which this discussion took place is not immediately transparent to us is not to say that it was deliberately obfuscatory,

19. See the texts by Foucault in Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

20. Michael C. Behrent, "Accidents Happen: François Ewald, the 'Antirevolutionary Foucault,' and the Intellectual Politics of the French Welfare State," *Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 3 (2010), 585-624.

21. On Maoism, see Mads Peter Karlsen and Kaspar Villadsen, "Foucault, Maoism, Genealogy: The Influence of Political Militancy in Michel Foucault's Thought," *New Political Science* 37, no. 1 (2015), 91-117. On dissidence and the Kroissant affair, see Michel Sennelart, "Course Context," in Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978* (London: Palgrave, 2007), 369-401. On Iran, see Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*.

although Foucault admits to "secret citations" on at least one occasion.[22] Rather it is to say that it is not possible to understand this idiom without understanding the kinds of action that were performed with words, to what they were a response, what reception they received, and how they were interpreted. And yet it would be wrong to assume that all this was univocal. Even among politically mainstream or even conservative interpreters of Foucault, there would be some disagreement. Consistent with Foucault's engagement with Glucksmann and the *nouveaux philosophes*, Ewald would understand Foucault as replacing the revolution/state couple with the question of power. This would form at least part of the story of Ewald's own long trajectory from Maoist militancy to the advocacy of the restructuring of the welfare state in the name of the forces of civil society. In contrast, Blandine Kriegel, an earlier student and assistant of Foucault, would read Foucault's lectures of 1976 as reasserting the importance of sovereignty and law on her way to a republican statist position.[23] We can more broadly say that Foucault's lectures would be interpreted and used by French neoliberals and autonomist Marxists, several varieties of anti-statists, and those who would endorse a state-focused politics.

I have already noted Foucault's animus toward official Marxism and communism as a recurring theme. But I think we perhaps should be careful in specifying Foucault's relationship to Marxism and to Marx. Foucault engages with many Marxisms and in different discussions and contexts. As Etienne Balibar put it, this engagement "is rather like an X-ray of the tissues of Marxist thought and an evaluation of Marxism in contemporary knowledge."[24] A consistent focus on Foucault's relation to thinkers such as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Althusser, and to the Frankfurt School, Freudo-Marxism, phenomenological Marxism, and structural Marxism, would yield interesting results, not all of which are critical or negative. Moreover, Foucault professes an admiration for Marx's historical analyses on more than one occasion, and both *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* try to link his power analyses to the accumulation of capital and formation of capitalist production and class hegemonies.[25] Christofferson describes a Marxist turn around 1970 in which Marxist references begin to enter his vocabulary. Balibar has again recently noted a trace of Althusser in the 1971 course, and we know that the *Archaeology of Knowledge* name-checks that thinker in its Introduction.[26] Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish between

22. Foucault *et al*., "Considerations on Marxism," 101.

23. See Blandine Kriegel, *The State and the Rule of Law*, transl. M. A. LePain and J. C. Cohen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and Blandine Barret-Kriegel, "Michel Foucault and the Police State," in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, ed. T. J. Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1991), 192-197.

24. Etienne Balibar, "Foucault and Marx: The Question of Nominalism," in *Michel Foucault Philosopher*, ed. Timothy J. Armstrong (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 39.

25. Foucault *et al*., "Considerations on Marxism," 100-101. Michel Foucault, "The Mesh of Power," *Viewpoint Magazine* 2, 2012, https://viewpointmag.com/2012/09/12/the-mesh-of-power/ (accessed August 6, 2015). See Balibar, "Foucault and Marx," for an excellent analysis of the relation of the latter book to forms of Marxism and Marxist argument.

26. Cited in Stuart Elden, "Peasant Revolts, Germanic Law and Medieval Onquiry," *Berfois*, June 2, 2015. http://www.berfrois.com/2015/06/foucaults-politics-of-truth-stuart-elden/ (accessed August 6, 2015); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, transl. Alan Sheridan (London, Tavistock, 1972), 5.

Foucault's consistent attitude to "institutional" and "official" forms of Marxism and his engagement with the various intellectual currents aligned with it.

Although neither the affective and acting individual nor the political and intellectual context allow us to explain anything, including his relation to liberalism, they do circumscribe the space in which the emergence and reception of "neoliberalism" would occur for Foucault. There is an enduring open hostility to communism and institutional forms of Marxism. Related to this are his reservations about the Union of the Left (of the Socialist and Communist Parties) and thus the Mitterand government, particularly at the time of the government's accusation of a "silence of the intellectuals" in the early 1980s and the Polish Solidarity uprising.[27] There is also his continued skepticism toward socialism as a body of thought: for its inherent racism when it stresses the problem of struggle in 1976, and presumed inability to generate an autonomous governmentality in 1978.[28] These are all the surfaces on which the question of the renovation and the revival of liberalism came to be posed and the framework of governmentality developed.

NEOLIBERALISM

Behrent's discussion of neoliberalism and the "Second Left" is perhaps the most instructive recent addition to our knowledge of these contexts of Foucault's thought. The early moves toward eliminating longstanding price controls under Prime Minister Raymond Barre, the academic and publishing inroads made by economic liberalism during the crisis, and the popularization of quite a bit of the American neoliberal canon by Henri Lepage, cited throughout *The Birth of Biopolitics*, all form part of a broad picture. However, Foucault's active engagement with these themes and literatures comes via another trajectory, more firmly located on the Left and descended from the legacy of '68. The Second Left, as Behrent tells us, was a faction of socialists and unionists, under Michel Rocard, that sought a new approach to socialist politics based on the decomposition and distribution of the state into a voluntary association according to the principle of "self-management," *autogestion*. Their main concern was to free the Socialist Party, on the verge of forming a government for the first time, from its "social statism." But the key here for Foucault's relation to neoliberalism is that *autogestion* is not a movement of the economically liberalizing Right attacking the welfare state but of a Left interested in a post-individualistic, collective autonomy. It has its lineage in the cultural elements of '68, the struggles against social institutions and the state of post-68 Maoism and militancy, such as in the prisoners' movement, and the themes of a politics of everyday life posed by the women's and gay movements. Most directly, the term emerges from workers' occupation and collective takeover of workplaces such as occurred at Lip in 1973–1974.

Behrent points out that Foucault participated in Second Left conferences and mobilizations and praised the work of its major theorist, Pierre Rosanvallon, who

27. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, transl. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 296ff.

28. Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*, transl. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 262; Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 92.

would later join his seminars. His view finds confirmation in the course summary of *The Birth of Biopolitics*. There Foucault credited Rosanvallon with the discovery of liberalism as a critique of government that deploys the market as a site of truth production or "veridiction."[29] This admission is so striking because it is close to the core of Foucault's own perspective on liberalism and neoliberalism. The Second Left would have shared Foucault's astonishing claim that there is no "autonomous socialist governmentality" and that the only alternatives were to latch socialism onto a liberal or police-state governmentality.[30] In this sense, Foucault's engagement with, and at times affirmative reading of, aspects of American neoliberalism in his lectures is not then a simple "seduction" by neoliberalism argument.[31] It is about how certain currents on the Left, defining themselves in opposition to the mainstream "social statism" of the large Socialist and Communist parties, and consciously adopting an experimental ethos, came to appreciate the opportunities provided by new ways of governing associated with market rationalities.

One objection to this argument would be that not all "anti-statisms" are equivalent and that an economic-liberal critique of the state is not identical to anarchist, Maoist, and other workerist anti-statisms. This should again qualify any overidentification of Foucault with neoliberalism. What, we might ask, is the nature of his anti-statism? Does his persistent analytical anti-statism translate into a normative and political anti-statism? And what are we to make of his theme of "state-phobia" and his attempt to defuse it by tracing its genealogy?[32] Foucault's critique of the discourse of the state tries not simply to pose the problem of how to limit the Leviathan but also to remove "the state" altogether from the center of political analysis and discourse, repurposing the concept as "nothing but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities."[33] Perhaps we have to find a way to describe a certain "elective affinity" that obtained between Foucault's own political-intellectual trajectory and neoliberalism. Behrent's "strategic endorsement" suggests an affirmative relation but within a political field. By contrast, Andrew Dilts's "sympathetic critique and indebtedness" at first sight might appear more nuanced.[34] If one accepts his argument that Becker and his colleagues' theory of human capital formed a key pathway to Foucault's later work on the "care of the self," however, then neoliberalism enters the very core of Foucault's intellectual trajectory. Dilts would thus appear to confirm Ewald's own diagnosis of this shift in Foucault's work.

Zamora focuses on Foucault's rejection of the right to health care in an interview in a Second Left collection and his exploration of taxation policy in the lectures. He shows parallels between specific arguments regarding health care by

29. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 320.

30. *Ibid*., 92.

31. As proposed by Magnus Paulsen Hansen, "Foucault, Neoliberalism and the Workfare State: Mythologies and Clues in the 'Seduction Thesis'," *Foucault Studies*, forthcoming (October 2015).

32. A theme explored in Mitchell Dean and Kaspar Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society: The Political Legacy of Michel Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

33. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 77.

34. Andrew Dilts, "From 'Entrepreneur of the Self' to 'Care of the Self': Neo-Liberal Governmentality and Foucault's Ethics," *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011), 133, note 11.

Foucault and certain theses of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. He further traces the "negative income tax" proposal from Friedman, via Lionel Stoléru in France, to Foucault's account in his lectures. He views Foucault in the context of the rejection of conventional working-class politics in favor of the "marginals" by post-Marxist figures such as André Gorz. These are provocative and important theses that demand discussion. They again offer us contextualization of the shifts on both the French Left and in Foucault's thought. Yet, at a somewhat more modest level, it is the very language by which Foucault problematizes the welfare state that is most striking to a student of millennial social policy. Again the cost of the experimental ethos is revealed: the critique of welfare "dependency" and the demand for a thoroughgoing "restructuring" of the welfare system may have suggested positive alignments with demands for greater autonomy and self-management, but they also became the mainstay of neoliberal critiques of the welfare state. Moreover, this is combined with a kind of confidence in Foucault's lectures that the neoliberal government of unemployment and poverty, for example, can go beyond what he elsewhere describes as "dividing practices," with their disciplinary normalizations and inquisitions. This would lead him to anticipate a somewhat benign form of neoliberal regulation that Loïc Waquant interprets as a complete misjudgment of the role of punitive practices and workfare in neoliberal social welfare regimes.[35]

If we are prepared to adopt a certain modesty, we can at least provisionally resolve this question of the relationship between Foucault and neoliberalism that is at the core of the current debate. One way would be to break down this relationship into three elements: the programmatic claims of neoliberalism, its policy diagnosis, and its concrete political manifestations. First, then, although somewhat critical of its reductive elements, Foucault found certain attractive features in the ideal or programmatic form imagined by American neoliberalism, namely, that it envisages a kind of regulation outside sovereign, disciplinary, and biopolitical forms, that it regulates without the fabrication of subjectivities and in a manner that optimizes difference and tolerates minority groups and practices.[36] Second, from a policy perspective, Foucault showed a certain acceptance of a neoliberal diagnosis of current problems of the welfare state as creating dependency, as unresponsive and costly, without offering an explicit endorsement of its reconstructions of health and social services as a series of markets. Finally, from the perspective of concrete political alignments, he displays an affinity with the "Second Left," those elements within French social democracy that opposed the statism of the "First Left" and displayed a willingness to adopt neoliberal ideas and solutions.

At the start of this piece, I mentioned some of the problems with the inflationary critique of everything as a form of "neoliberalism." One can imagine, as a consequence, an obvious objection to the observations I have just made. This would be that the term is so nebulous and overblown that its application to Foucault can only take the form of a denunciation. Although we can accept the general point

35. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 205. See also Hansen, "Foucault, Neoliberalism and the Workfare State."

36. Foucault's clearest statement of this argument is in *Birth of Biopolitics*, 259-260.

about current uses and abuses of the term "neoliberalism," its use is rather more precise in the three theses I have just proposed. Intellectually, Foucault expresses most affinity with American neoliberalism of the Chicago School. From a public policy perspective, he offers critiques of the welfare state found in the work of the principals of that School and explores technologies, such as the negative tax, that are sourced from such critiques. And from a concrete political perspective, he most clearly aligns himself with specific factions of the French Left open to ideas and solutions borrowed from American neoliberalism. To note this threefold, affirmative relationship is not to denounce Foucault as a neoliberal. It is simply to indicate his much more serious and fundamental engagement with a contemporary form of economic liberalism than is usually allowed in Foucauldian commentary.

GOVERNMENTALITY

The question of "governmentality" and "governmentality studies" is difficult to approach as a whole. This is partially the result of the vagaries of the publication process. For one, the primary development of the concept and its applications—what Michel Sennelart dubbed "*governmentality studies*" in 2004[37]—occurred prior to the French and English publications of Foucault's lectures of 1978 and 1979. The development of governmentality as a field of study in Anglophone countries from the early 1990s then was based on a limited number of Foucault's texts and major secondary accounts of unpublished lectures, especially Gordon's "Introduction" to *The Foucault Effect* that sought to offer a coherent overview of the 1978 and 1979 lectures.[38]

Governmentality studies, if we accept the term, therefore did not take the primary form of textual exegesis but the development of an analytical framework—what I sought to suggest could best be called an "analytics of government."[39] Let's call that development Governmentality One. Since the publications of these lectures in French in 2004 and in English in 2007 and 2008, there has been a renewed industry that might be called Governmentality Two. Here there is somewhat less analytical development, although the concept has still been used as an empirical tool. There is much more exegetical work and interpretation. Jan Rehman's contribution to *Foucault and Neoliberalism* does not discuss Governmentality One but, rather, parts of the German literature that falls more properly under Governmentality Two. I think we need, however to be careful not to underestimate the diversity of views that Governmentality One engendered with respect to Foucault's legacy and its development.

Many of the critical points that are now being claimed as novel had already been raised within the literature of Governmentality One. These would include its critical orientation, its limited conceptions of politics, its "thinning" of social life, its use of textual evidence to the exclusion of other kinds, and its failure to take

37. Michel Sennelart, "Course Context," in Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 390.

38. Colin Gordon, "Introduction," to Graham Burchell *et al*., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 1-51.

39. Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 20-27.

into account resistance and on-the-ground contestation and negotiation.[40] There were also broad concerns expressed about the fragments of Foucault's work and history of governmentality then available. Some readers of these fragments, particularly the so-called "governmentality lecture" of February 1, 1978, published first in Italian and then translated into English in 1979, discovered teleological elements and a dialectical character in Foucault's narrative of governing from very different perspectives.[41] One series of such observations received a strongly worded, detailed rebuttal from Gordon. The point here is not to revisit these arguments but simply to suggest that governmentality studies might not be the monolith some would like.

In my own view, the best understanding of governmentality was as a perspective on how to investigate diverse practices and regimes of government, the latter understood in the broadest sense as the "conduct of conduct." This then is an "analytics of government." Such an analytics proved extremely empirically productive, but it had its own limitations. There was the danger that the analyses of the forms of reasoning and modes of intervening became little more than a "thick description" of existing practices, and that, as a consequence, they would simply reproduce much of the self-understanding of liberal and neoliberal ways of governing.[42] I proposed two ways of avoiding these problems. The first was the recognition that an analytics of government does not exhaust the entirety of the domain of the analysis of relations of power and forms of domination. In particular, it is necessary to resituate the analysis of practices of government within different relations of power and domination, including discipline, biopolitics, and especially sovereignty and the state. For example, one must be mindful at those points at which welfare government's emphasis on activation and empowerment of the individual is articulated with coercion, sanction, humiliation, and threat. Those practices that at first sight might appear as "technologies of the self" could also be read as disciplinary technologies or technologies of domination. This articulation of governmentality with different forms of power and domination can be elaborated within a Foucauldian vocabulary but could also go further afield. Maurizio Lazzarato, for example, has recently linked the governmentality–sovereignty nexus to an understanding of financial capitalism and debt in a series of important publications, and Giorgio Agamben has uncovered the theological signatures that bind reign and governing, and sovereignty and economic management.[43] The second problem is

40. Lorna Weir, Pat O'Malley, and Clifford Shearing, "Governmentality, Criticism, Politics," *Economy and Society* 26, no. 4 (1997), 501-517. Barry Hindess, "Politics and Governmentality," *Economy and Society* 26, no. 2 (1997), 252-272.

41. Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality," *I & C (Ideology and Consciousness)*, no. 6 (1979), 5-21; Ian Hunter, "Uncivil Society: Liberal Government and the Deconfessionalisation of Politics," in *Governing Australia: Studies in Contemporary Rationalities of Government,* ed. M. Dean and B. Hindess (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 242-264; Daniela Dupont and Frank Pearce, "Foucault contra Foucault: Re-Reading the Governmentality Papers," *Theoretical Criminology* 5, no. 2 (2001), 123-158. See the response to the first by Colin Gordon in "Under the Beach," *UTS Review* 5, no. 1 (1999), 156-177.

42. Mitchell Dean, "Powers of Life and Death beyond Governmentality," *Cultural Values: Journal of Cultural Research* 6, no. 1-2 (2002), 119-138.

43. See, for instance, Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, and Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, transl. Lorenzo Chiesa with Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

the identification of the explicit governmentalities—the different rationalities of government found in the texts of policymakers, experts, and theorists—with the actual logic of governmental practices. Again the Foucauldian conception of strategy as nonsubjective intentionality embedded in the logic of practices indicates a way beyond the problem. But there is also the possibility of articulating Foucault's work with more elaborate ways of understanding practice.

Rehman identifies another set of Foucault's resources in moving beyond some of these dilemmas: his emphasis in *Security, Territory, Population* on "counter-conducts" and revolts or insurrections of conduct. He shows that a Gramscian reading of Foucault is possible here that might allow us to reconnect an analytics of government with the critique of ideology. I might add that an incipient one had already appeared in other Foucault works: the methodological discussion of power in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* and the discussion of the "nation" as a universal that transcended the particularity of the race wars in *Society Must Be Defended*.[44] If Governmentality One sought to distinguish an analytics of government from ideology critique and the analysis of the processes of the formation of major hegemonies, this was to try to specify the originality of the former contribution, rather than build a wall between it and other, existing critical analyses.

The question of Foucault's own lectures represents another set of problems. In many ways, Governmentality One, with its insights, innovations, and analyses, was more interesting than our current situation, which is overburdened by textual debate and commentary, but of course we can hardly lament the situation in which we have access to the lectures themselves. These lectures are a kind of philosophical use of history that doesn't fully answer to the protocols of the historian and they have a provisional and somewhat more context-dependent character as lectures. In this sense, it seems somewhat churlish to focus on what Behrent in his conclusion to the book calls "fact checking."

Nevertheless, among the most problematic elements in these lectures are the tendency to de-theologize the history of governmentality, of which the denial of the theological sources of Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is perhaps the most tendentious, and the unconvincing account of the secularization of pastoral power. There is also a tendency for liberalism and neoliberalism to lose their substantive character and become identified with an ethos of criticism crucial to the accomplishment of the rendering immanent of government and other forms of power. More significant still, there is the analysis of American neoliberalism that may not be a kind of absolute *telos* of governing basing itself on the rationality of the governed but which seems like a provisional end not only to the history of governmentality but also to the search for a form of regulation that minimizes internal subjectification and tolerates difference and minority groups. No doubt the history of neoliberalism as a regime of nation-state governing was only just beginning as Foucault's studies of relations of power were coming to an end, but the affirmation of the possibilities inherent in American neoliberalism is an

44. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 93-94, and *"Society Must Be Defended*," 215ff.

unfortunate place to conclude the narrative of contemporary governmentality and of relations of power.[45]

The message of Wacquant's piece in this collection is that it is wrong to underestimate the punitive and coercive character of neoliberal regimes. I think that is absolutely correct. However, we should not draw the conclusion that Foucault's concept of "governmentality" necessarily prevented those who used it from grasping the coercive side of neoliberal governing. Whereas one influential reading stressed the primary focus on what it called "advanced liberalism" as "governing through freedom," another current of governmentality studies emphasized not simply the contingent nature of the relationship between (neo)liberalism and coercive practices but also the necessary relationship between governing through freedom for some and authoritarian and paternalistic forms of governing for other, often much larger populations, such as the poor, the aged, the disabled, and colonial and indigenous peoples.[46]

There is of course much to be criticized in "governmentality studies." However, it would be a mistake to imagine that there have not been and do not continue to be counter-currents within this field. These counter-currents contest those points at which governmentality accounts start to reproduce dominant descriptions of the practices and modes of government under analysis and where they become indistinguishable from self-descriptions of liberalism and neoliberalism themselves. They reject the idea that contemporary liberalism can best be understood as a "governing through freedom" and seek to indicate the interlacing of such a claim and the "empowering" technologies on which it is based with the use of punitive, coercive, disciplinary, and sovereign instruments of rule for a variety of populations. At an epistemological level, moreover, one of these counter-currents has recently proposed a "realist" approach to governmentality to correct the prevailing social constructionist one.[47] It is thus deeply problematic to typecast governmentality studies as inherently neoliberal, or as displaying a necessary affinity with neoliberalism. The existence of this literature suggests that Foucault's work on governmentality does not force its users onto a particular intellectual-political track. Most important, those who criticize the framework of "governmentality studies" would do well to explore its diverse analytical positions and the different political implications they might have. The alternative is to give up on the struggles within this field and to hand "governmentality studies" over to their most conservative appropriation and use, and thus accept a position that no doubt is already in danger of becoming hegemonic.

45. As I have argued in Mitchell Dean, *The Signature of Power: Sovereignty, Governmentality and Biopolitics* (London: Sage, 2013).

46. For the most affirmative description in the literature of contemporary governing's relation to freedom, see Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On the authoritarian and illiberal sides of liberal and neoliberal styles of rule, see Barry Hindess, "The Liberal Government of Unfreedom," *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Human Governance* 26, no. 1 (2001), 93-111, and Mitchell Dean, "Liberal Government and Authoritarianism," *Economy and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002), 37-61. See also Dean, *Governmentality*, 132-138.

47. Randy Lippert and Kevin Stenson, "Advancing Governmentality Studies: Lessons from Social Constructionism," *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 4 (2010), 473-494.

CONCLUSION

Where does that leave us with Foucault today? He will remain enormously influential at the theoretical end of the humanities and social sciences but perhaps his influence is changing in form. We might, however, have finished with the (ironic or not) "Saint Foucault" who could do no wrong and who mysteriously appeared as the grad school icon on the correct side of every political debate and who stood, as Sartre would have put it, as the "unsurpassable horizon" of a certain critical and radical thought. We are moving to a much more detailed understanding of how Foucault acted in and responded to the world in which he lived and the strengths and the downsides of his experimental ethos. For a multitude of important thinkers he has become the starting, not the end, point for coming to grips with the problems and problematizations of our present. Foucault's engagement with forms of economic liberalism, and his triple affirmation, however qualified, of ideals, policies, and positions associated with different aspects of what he himself called "neoliberalism," was an important moment in his work and perhaps even a step in its trajectory. This does not mean that Foucault was a card-carrying member of the Neoliberal Thought Collective, or that the entirety or essence of his work is tainted with neoliberalism. Nor does it mean that the use of his work necessarily carries the assumptions of neoliberalism with it behind our backs. When we use Foucault today we can no longer imagine, however, that we have entered a position of safety or that his name invokes an intellectual insurance policy against analytical missteps and naïve political enthusiasms. We should also be aware that there is a struggle going on over Foucault's legacy, including by those who would give us a Foucault consistent with economic liberalism.

There are those who will tell us that Foucault drew the lesson from '68 that the Revolution was over and that a politics of the state, parties, and class was henceforth permanently displaced by one of multiple relations of power, local struggles, and the politics of everyday life. In doing so, they open us to a Foucault entirely compatible with the narrative of the end of history, as Ewald himself argued. It is up to us to reclaim the political from its economic neutralization by neoliberalism and to reconnect what Foucault called the "technologies of governmentality" and "pragmatics of the self," to an analysis of state and sovereignty, of changing forms of capital, and their consequent modes of domination and hegemony.

Perhaps this collection signals that we have entered a new environment for the ongoing reception of Foucault today. In this environment, he will act less as an unsurpassable icon for radicals and more as a classical thinker whose problems are no longer quite our own and whose strengths and limitations can be properly understood only if we are willing to situate his work and engagements within their singular intellectual history.

Copenhagen Business School