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On the Limitations of Michel Foucault's Genealogy of Neoliberalism

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The methodology of Michel Foucault's genealogy of neoliberalism in *Naissance de la biopolitique* deviates from his other genealogies. In previous works, Foucault's genealogical method explored the messy process by which particular discourses intermesh with power-relations inflecting and sometimes subverting these discourses. *Surveiller et punir*, for instance, describes how disciplinary rationality diffuses itself throughout the prison-system in a variegated and diffuse manner. Not even the panopticon is ever truly implemented anywhere in its pure form. At the beginning of the book, Foucault immediately specifies that actually-existing methods of punishment are not mere expressions of theoretically pre-established legal prescriptions, but are techniques of power always already inserted into pre-existing fields of forces that influence these methods' efficacy and form.¹ Genealogy is not a history of discursive rationalities under laboratory conditions but of political tactics in continuous transformation. Foucault's personal activism certainly helped in acquiring this localised perspective from within institutions themselves.² His critique of disciplinary power communicates not only the intentions of disciplinary authorities but also the experience of the disciplined. Foucault denaturalises disciplinary discourses by revealing the subjective effects of disciplinary power on the disciplined.

Naissance de la biopolitique, on the other hand, focuses on neoliberal rationality in an almost pristine condition, without the messy history of its implementation or the opposition of the governed. The lectures articulate the views of neoliberal economists but do not consider the impact or side-effects of neoliberal governmentality has had on the governed. The main reason for this absence is that Foucault presented this lecture series in 1979, months before the electoral victories of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Foucault simply could not have known how neoliberal rationality would be exercised in government. He was mainly describing the contours of an increasingly vocal group of maverick economists marginalised in the

scientific community of Keynesian economics, and critical of the government interference normalised during the *Trentes Glorieuses*. There was hardly any genealogy of actually-existing neoliberalism to be written at that time.

Taking Foucault's lectures as gospel for the critique of neoliberalism consequently comes with significant downsides. There is, firstly, a problem of descriptive inadequacy. Foucault's brief survey of especially American neoliberal rationality is sometimes wrongfully put forward as an easily applicable, definitive framework for all actually-existing neoliberalisms in their quasi-infinite variety.³ The popularity of Foucault's lectures, however, also creates a problem of critical methodology. Without the perspective of the governed to oppose neoliberal governmental discourses, *Naissance de la biopolitique* seems surprisingly uncritical of neoliberalism.⁴ Even loyal Foucault scholars admit that the "normative stakes" of these lectures are unclear.⁵ Foucault predominantly describes neoliberalism's rise to prominence in a neutral fashion, which makes his lectures seem remarkably void of critical distance.⁶ Foucault's texts are, moreover, regularly punctuated by appreciative remarks. Without a focus on those who suffer from neoliberal power, analogous to how Foucault highlighted the unfortunate fate of prisoners in *Surveiller et punir*, one can be excused for wondering whether Foucault opposed neoliberalism at all. Something is missing in Foucault's genealogy of neoliberalism.

This interpretation problem has led some to accuse Foucault of having been converted to neoliberalism.⁷ In section 1, I argue that the "neoliberal conversion"-thesis in its most radical format overstates Foucault's interest in neoliberalism. It misleadingly presents a methodological problem as a biographical shift in Foucault's philosophy. In section 2, I explain the contours of the methodological limitations of Foucault's genealogy of neoliberalism in *Naissance de la biopolitique*. Foucault voiced the talking points of neoliberal discourse without highlighting how actually-existing neoliberalism would later inflect and alter those discourses. Foucault's goal of this historical exercise was to show the contingency of neoliberalism and foster among his audience a 'critical attitude', a will to resist imposed governmental norms and to affirm the subjective creativity to reinvent one's own subjectivity.⁸ However, this stance is insufficient for tackling actually-existing neoliberalism, as the latter is fully capable of integrating libertine practices of self-experimentation. In the final section, I therefore argue that the genealogy of neoliberalism needs to be supplemented with an immanent critique of neoliberalism. The latter promises a post-disciplinary and minimally invasive form of government that guarantees subjects' freedom to experiment with their own conduct. However, the reality of actually-existing neoliberalisms, viewed from the perspective of the governed, shows neoliberalism to be a negative biopolitics. Neoliberalism is a governmental regime that thrives on precarity and "a savage sorting of winners and losers".⁹ Those who cannot compete or refuse to become entrepreneurs of their own lives are sacrificed

for the prosperity of the population as a whole. A sufficiently critical genealogy of neoliberalism must hence not only show the historical contingency of neoliberal governmentality, but it must also reveal the collateral damage of neoliberal governmentality from the viewpoint of the governed.

Did Foucault convert to neoliberalism?

Interpreters of Foucault's oeuvre have regularly expressed astonishment at Foucault's unexpectedly mild assessment of neoliberalism.¹⁰ When François Ewald and Bernard Harcourt invited Gary Becker himself to respond to Foucault's lectures, the American economist admitted, to his own surprise, that he found no explicit criticisms.¹¹ Some interpreters have even hypothesised a biographically motivated conversion in Foucault's philosophy.¹² Nonetheless, I will show that any strong version of the "neoliberal conversion"-thesis does not stand the test of historical scrutiny. I argue for a weaker version of the "neoliberal conversion"-thesis, which no longer focuses on Foucault's personal biography but on a methodologically motivated elective affinity between Foucault's ethics and neoliberalism. By ignoring how actually-existing neoliberalism would affect subjective conducts, Foucault professed an ethics of self-experimentation unduly assimilable to neoliberal governmentality. To properly formulate this position, one first needs to grasp why the strong "neoliberal conversion"-thesis is wrong. The latter relies on (1) biographical evidence about Foucault's political allegiances, but also on (2) textual evidence of Foucault's appreciation of neoliberal talking points.

(1) The biographical evidence is mostly circumstantial and highly dependent on tendentious readings. Foucault never explicitly aligned himself with neoliberalism, so the evidence often relies on anecdotes indicative of allegedly hidden neoliberal sympathies. Most of these can be given other, equally plausible explanations. For example, Foucault's close collaboration with François Ewald, the later representative of the French employer's organisation MEDEF,¹³ does not prove Foucault himself was neoliberal, since scientific collaborators often hold different political views.¹⁴ The same applies to Foucault's association with the *nouveaux philosophes* and *le deuxième gauche*, two philosophical movements frequently connected to French neoliberalism.¹⁵ Foucault was enthusiastic about almost all appropriations of his work across the political spectrum. He preferred others to *use* his philosophical concepts like tools rather than repeating and defending his insights as if they were fixed doctrine.¹⁶ Foucault was thus happy with instrumentalisations of his thought as distinct as Pierre Rosanvallon and André Glucksmann, on the one hand, and Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand. A third frequently mentioned factor is Foucault's staunch anti-Marxism, which would have led him to support other anti-Marxist

movements.¹⁷ His anti-Marxism, however, more plausibly derives from his difficult relationship to the *Parti Communiste Français* and his negative experiences from living in communist Poland at the end of the 1950s.¹⁸ Also philosophically, Foucault was critical of Marxist strategic thought. Leninist appraisals of the vanguard party allegedly glorified hierarchical submission to party leadership and lacked the political imagination to think beyond the Leninist model of revolution, according to Foucault.¹⁹ He was interested in alternative forms of political organisation that connected new, horizontalist social movements into transversal political forces.²⁰

(2) The textual evidence for a full conversion focuses on *Naissance de la biopolitique* itself and a 1983 interview about the welfare state.²¹ These texts allegedly show Foucault giving in to neoliberal temptations in exchange for forms of government beyond disciplinary power.²² Foucault, for instance, sympathises with Becker's economic approach to criminal conduct in *Naissance de la biopolitique* insofar as it effectuates an "anthropological erasure of the criminal".²³ In *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault had documented how the criminal was gradually encapsulated in disciplinary institutions that produce docile subjects through meticulous surveillance and normalisation. Disciplinary institutions understood crime as the expression of socio-psychological deviance hidden in the criminal's deep self. The task of disciplinary institutions was subsequently to unearth, decipher, and forcefully normalise this self. Disciplinary power articulates pre-established behavioural norms, which it imposes on individual bodies in order to produce supposedly normal subjects. It identifies the criminal as psychologically deviant to subsequently invade criminals' private affairs and drill a new identity into their subjective conduct.

In Becker's criminology Foucault discerns a less invasive crime-fighting strategy.²⁴ It abdicates any attempts to unravel the criminal's deep self. Criminals are rather *homines oeconomici* like anyone else; they enact their personal preferences on the basis of rational calculations of the expected benefits and costs. According to Becker, criminal activity results from individuals weighing off the benefits of crime against the risks of getting caught. If the return on investment from crime pays off, *homines oeconomici* engage in criminal conduct. Though Becker's economic approach to human behaviour is remarkably superficial,²⁵ it signals a welcome departure, for Foucault, from the psychologistic hermeneutics of the self.²⁶ The economic analysis of crime remains agnostic about criminals' inner motivations or psychological abnormalities. It sticks to the surface of criminal conduct. Becker's solutions are also less invasive: he does not advocate panoptic surveillance but suggests indirect changes to individuals' private calculations.²⁷ Neoliberalism allegedly governs by economic incentives alone. Becker wishes to alter individuals' incentive structures to increase the chances and costs of getting caught, though he simultaneously reminds governments that the costs of crime-fighting must stay below the benefits.²⁸ As Newheiser

summarises, "neoliberal economics allows behaviour to be governed with a light touch, by manipulating the range of choices available",²⁹ while individuals' inner selves are off limits for government interventions. Unlike the invasive techniques of disciplinary power, neoliberal governmentality regards individuals and their private desires as black-boxed, forbidden terrain for top-down interference. To reduce crime, governments can only indirectly manipulate environmental factors that influence individuals' choice architectures.³⁰

Foucault understands this approach to crime as an opportunity for a governmentality more tolerant vis-à-vis minority identities and non-conformist practices of governing oneself.³¹

On the horizon of [Becker's] analysis we see instead the image, idea, or theme-program of a society in which there is an optimisation 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.³²

Disciplinary institutions paternalistically impose a pre-established form of life on all individual bodies alike. Subjects that fail or refuse to conform to these top-down standards of conduct are forcefully institutionalised and rehabilitated into docile bodies. Neoliberalism ostensibly leaves individuals free to conduct themselves as they please. Supposedly 'abnormal' lifestyles are hence more easily tolerated.³³

The 1983 interview about the welfare state reveals a similar suspicion about the paternalism of disciplinary institutions, but it takes Foucault to a critique of social security measures eerily similar to neoliberal refrains of welfare dependency:³⁴

There is in certain marginalisations what I would call another aspect of the phenomenon of dependency. Our social security systems impose a determinate form of life to which they subject individuals. Each person or group that, for some reason, is unwilling or unable to conform to this form of life, will be marginalised by the play of institutions.³⁵

Foucault accuses the welfare state of using social security measures to impose social conformism. Though social welfare is arguably welcome for people in need, Foucault fears that it instills a structural dependency on state assistance among the needy, that facilitates the normalising power of disciplinary apparatuses.³⁶ Welfare institutions impose a dichotomy between deserving poor, with a right to assistance, and undeserving poor, who are unwilling or unable to conform to disciplinary norms. The latter are subsequently excluded from government aid, while the former remain closely monitored and normalised. Foucault warns that excessively docile welfare recipients

gradually lose the capacity to autonomously determine their conduct. They become dependent on paternalistic bureaucratic care. According to Foucault, the demand for state assistance subsequently increases, despite limited public budgets.³⁷ The welfare state's culture of dependency thereby fosters a contradiction between infinite demand for assistance and finite systems of social support.³⁸ Foucault thereby echoes neoliberal tropes about welfare dependency. Chicago School economist Thomas Sowell, for instance, similarly argues that welfare institutions disincentivise individuals from taking care of themselves.³⁹ Because income from state benefits is guaranteed, individuals are discouraged from taking personal initiative to improve their lot. The projected benefits from staying on welfare are too high compared to the effort of taking control and responsibility over oneself.⁴⁰

One can imagine why the neoliberals and Foucault were interested in Milton Friedman's negative income tax.⁴¹ This system would replace any financial support linked to specific misfortunes, like unemployment benefits or state-subsidised health insurance, with a guaranteed minimum income for all. Those who have earnings below the pre-established threshold receive money from the government rather than paying taxes. Friedman's taxation system guarantees citizens' minimal subsistence without granting the state a mandate to determine what people should do with their government subsidies or how they should conduct their lives. Individuals' economic security would be salvaged, while their personal decision-making would remain black-boxed for governmental interference. Friedman's proposal hence signals a significant departure from the invasive practices that Foucault identified in the welfare state.⁴² As Foucault was exploring options for a socialist governmentality, steering away from welfare state paternalism could have looked attractive to reinvigorate a post-disciplinary leftist politics.⁴³ Neoliberalism potentially appeared as an interesting source for inspiration in that project, which would have brought Foucault close to 'progressive neoliberalism', i.e., a neoliberalism that justifies itself in the eyes of the governed by claiming to promote progressive values, like diversity, minority rights, and inclusivity.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, even the textual evidence is insufficient to support the strong "neoliberal conversion"-thesis. In an overall oeuvre spanning thousands of pages, three passages never meant for publication is a meagre basis for such a controversial interpretation, especially if Foucault explicitly says in *Naissance de la biopolitique* that he is not interested in making any value judgments about liberal or neoliberal governmentality.⁴⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique* or Foucault's interviews only look like published work for us today. Foucault was testing some ideas that he eventually never published himself. Especially for his lectures, one gets the impression of reading a work-in-progress rather than a definitive argument.⁴⁶ In 1979, neoliberalism was not yet the dominant governmental rationality of today, but an emerging counter-knowledge that was steadily displacing the dogmas of Keynesianism.⁴⁷

Foucault hence does not articulate any final judgments on neoliberalism, but provokes his (often Marxist) students to entertain the possibility of an alternative and somewhat counter-intuitive governmental rationality. Contrary to appearances, *Naissance de la biopolitique* is not a book outlining the complete genealogy of neoliberalism, but a collection of public performances meant to encourage students to think differently about economic government.

Furthermore, quotes showing analogous opposition to the disciplinary welfare state between Foucault and the neoliberals only suggests that both had a common enemy, not that they shared the same politics. Foucault is not a neoliberal simply because he similarly dislikes welfare state discipline. The same type of criticism was fairly common among the New Left during the 1970s.⁴⁸ Foucault's worries about welfare dependency are almost identical to Ivan Illich's critique of dependency on public healthcare in *Medical Nemesis*,⁴⁹ while Herbert Marcuse writes in *One-Dimensional Man* that

with all its rationality, the welfare state is a state of unfreedom because its total administration is systematic restriction of (a) 'technically' available free time; (b) the quantity and quality of goods and services 'technically' available for vital individual needs; (c) the intelligence (conscious and unconscious) capable of comprehending and realising the possibilities of self-determination.⁵⁰

Many critical theorists attacked the welfare state's normalising power, but does that make them all closeted neoliberals?

A critical attitude is not enough

One explanation for Foucault's readers' disappointment vis-à-vis his stance on neoliberalism is Foucault's unconventional approach to critique in the late 1970s and early 1980s. When the lectures were published in the 2000s, many readers hoped for a frontal attack on neoliberalism. They expected a variation on Marxist ideology critique, in which Foucault would unmask neoliberalism as a malicious *dispositif* defended by illusory discourses of entrepreneurial wealth and competitive growth.⁵¹ They wanted Foucault to reveal the false consciousness of neoliberal rationality and uncover the unjust realities underneath. For Marxists, this hidden reality would be exploitation and economic dispossession,⁵² but non-Marxists today often use similar argumentative strategies. Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos*, for example, uses Foucault to unmask neoliberalism's democratic pretences as illusions covering up the real erosion of citizenship. However, Foucault stages no frontal attack on neoliberalism and rejects the strategy of ideology critique in general. Foucault's own method of critique even makes him excessively mild vis-à-vis neoliberalism and defend a politics unhelpful in combatting neoliberalism today. He lacks a clear counter-history of neoliberalism written from the viewpoint of those governed under neoliberalism. I call this the weak

“neoliberal conversion”-thesis. Foucault did not actually convert, but his methodology in *Naissance de la biopolitique* leaves gaps that make his ethics easily assimilated by neoliberalism.

According to Foucault’s *Naissance de la biopolitique*, genealogy does not condemn the *status quo* to subsequently propose its own reforms or superior moral standards. It refuses to directly answer the Leninist question of what is to be done with an alternative political project. For Foucault, ‘critique’ constitutes an historical investigation into the conditions of possibility of specific regimes of veridiction and subjection.⁵³ As Foucault argues in *Naissance de la biopolitique*,

Undertaking the history of regimes of veridiction—and not the history of truth, the history of error, or the history of ideology, etcetera—obviously means abandoning once again that well-known critique of European rationality and its excesses [...] The critique I propose consists in determining under what conditions and with what effects a veridiction is exercised, that is to say, once again, a type of formulation falling under particular rules of verification and falsification.⁵⁴

Genealogy explores the historical developments that have made the rise of neoliberalism as an effective governmental rationality possible. *In casu*, Foucault traces the diffusion of neoliberal arguments for free market competition in Germany, the US, and France from the 1930s to ‘70s. It means Foucault is uninterested in proving neoliberal rationality wrong.⁵⁵ Neoliberalism is a ‘truth regime’ and hence emphatically true. Foucault does not question neoliberalism’s claim to rationality but articulates the standpoint of neoliberal economists at face value. Becker hence gladly notes in the discussion with Harcourt and Ewald that, while many humanists have criticised human capital theory for reducing human beings to objective capital, Foucault did not.⁵⁶ He interprets human capital theory not as a faulty anthropology but as a strategic rationality, a ‘principle of intelligibility’ aimed at effectively governing populations.⁵⁷ He treats the identification of human beings with capital not as an affront to human dignity but as an historical fiction of which the *Entstehung* can be explained by the particular historical events that made it into an effective tool of government.⁵⁸ Whether those tools ultimately correspond to reality is not Foucault’s concern.⁵⁹ Jason Read correctly infers that, for Foucault, “any criticism of neoliberalism as governmentality must not focus on its errors, on its myopic conception of social existence, but on its particular production of truth.”⁶⁰

The purpose of genealogy is not to tell what is to be done or unmask neoliberal falsities. If there is a normative stake at all in the genealogical method, it has to be located elsewhere. In a round table discussion in 1978, Foucault clarifies that genealogy should convince people that they do not know what is to be done.⁶¹ It should defamiliarize them from the self-evident truths of the present. What people hold for universal and natural, is ultimately

contingent and historically variable. Foucault champions the genealogical method to systematically destabilise the expertise of dominant governmental rationalities.⁶² Exploring the accidents of history that brought a particular governmentality to prominence highlights the contingency of the present, despite how familiar it might seem from the perspective of those immediately involved.⁶³ History could have gone differently and other governmentalities are possible.⁶⁴ In the case of neoliberalism, genealogical critique shows how accidental its emergence was – centred as it was on the careers of individual economists, like Hayek, Becker, and the Ordoliberalists, in Foucault's rendition – and how contingent its current hold on the truth is. Counter-conducts can purportedly generate new subjugated knowledges and regimes of subjectivation that combat the neoliberal conduct of conducts.⁶⁵ Foucault thus ends *Naissance de la biopolitique* stating that politics ultimately amounts to a struggle between different governmentalities: "What is politics, in the end, if not both the interplay of these different arts of government with their different reference points and the debate to which these different arts of government give rise? It seems to me that it is here that politics is born."⁶⁶

Thanks to the defamiliarization of the neoliberal present, subjects engaged in genealogical critique should develop a new perspective on their own subjectivity. In late writings, Foucault calls this subjective self-transformation "the critical attitude."⁶⁷ According to Foucault, governmental regimes make individuals governable by processing their conduct through specific regimes of subjectivation. In the case of American neoliberalism, individuals are considered *homines oeconomici* that rationally calculate the costs and benefits of their actions in order to maximise the value of their human capital. Showing the contingency of these regimes of subjectivation discloses the fragility of such subjective constructs. Subjects can always relate to themselves differently. In *Le sujet et le pouvoir*, Foucault summarises,

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. [...] The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state's institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualisation which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.⁶⁸

Genealogy denaturalises not only the dominant mode of governing populations, but also the dominant mode of governing oneself.⁶⁹ By estranging individuals from their current subjective identity, Foucault hopes to encourage them to refuse who they are in the eyes of governing authorities. He counts on a will to resist the current regime of subjectivation.⁷⁰ Subjective conduct is purportedly weighed down by regimes of subjectivation that produce only particular subjectivities while discouraging others. Foucault, on the other hand, encourages practices of desubjectivation that allow subjects to

differ from themselves, to reinvent themselves and their relations to themselves.⁷¹ The critical attitude constitutes a refusal of governmentally readymade identities. It is “not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as an object of a complex and difficult elaboration”.⁷² This friction between subjects’ will to resist and the regimes that shape their identity creates opportunities to refuse governmentally sanctioned subjectivities and foster alternative subjectivities. The hold of governmental regimes on subjective conduct is temporarily suspended and subjects are subsequently reverted back to a state of absolute potentiality where they can autonomously refashion their subjectivity.⁷³ The critical attitude does not affirm any *actual* subjective identity but the subject as a creative force for an indefinite range of *potential* subjectivities.⁷⁴ As Foucault writes, “we should not only defend ourselves, but also affirm ourselves. We should not merely affirm ourselves as an identity, but as a creative force”.⁷⁵ The critical attitude estranges subjects from who they are to make them experience the full abundance of who they could become. Ultimately, Foucault defends a libertine ethics of self-experimentation,⁷⁶ “the indefinite work of liberty.”⁷⁷

As previously mentioned, Foucault accuses the welfare state and disciplinary institutions, like the prison-system, of excessively determining subjective conducts according to pre-established, disciplinary norms. Subjects have to conform to strict behavioural standards to merit positive disciplinary sanctions. That approach disserves subjects’ experimental explorations of themselves. Opposed to the overbearing surveillance of the welfare state, Foucault pleads for “a security that opens the way for richer, more numerous, more diverse, and more flexible relations with oneself and the environment, while still guaranteeing the real autonomy of everyone”.⁷⁸ The welfare state should abstain from abusing social security systems to impose a particular form of life on welfare recipients. It should guarantee subjects’ real autonomy to explore more diverse and flexible forms of conduct, an aim that arguably the negative income tax promises to fulfil. It is here that a weak version of the “neoliberal conversion”-thesis appears.

Foucault did not literally convert to neoliberalism, but his own project for an ethics of self-experimentation resonates with the neoliberal attempt to limit the state’s mandate to determine individuals’ subjective choices. In *The Last Man Takes LSD*, Dean and Zamora correctly observe that, at the end of the 1970s, Foucault is searching for “the transgression of the normalised self that is produced by the institutions of the modern welfare state”.⁷⁹ Policies like the negative income tax or Becker’s anthropological erasure of the criminal self would provide the governmental context Foucault desires for the ethics of self-experimentation. The subject’s identity is off limits for governmental interference, according to neoliberalism, which allows for subjective experimentations. There is hence an elective affinity between Foucault’s ethic of libertinism and the spirit of neoliberal capitalism. Though Foucault did not

mean for his ethics of self-experimentation to support a neoliberal conduct of conducts, the two are *de facto* compatible and even mutually reinforcing. The paternalistic government of the Keynesian welfare state or the invasive regimentation of the disciplinary prison-system purportedly erode subjective possibilities for self-experimentation, while neoliberalism promises to support subjects in their endeavour to become flexible works of self-reinvention. One can question the extent to which neoliberalism delivers on this promise (see *infra*), but in the political conjuncture of 1970s Western Europe, Foucault and the neoliberals indeed turn out to be odd bedfellows. Neoliberalism seemingly offers an opportunity to enact the critical attitude in a governmental framework more tolerant of flexible selves and minority forms of life. I am not arguing that Foucault himself consciously believed this, but that the methodology of his genealogical ethics in *Naissance de la biopolitique* leads to a form of conduct for which neoliberalism provides fertile ground.

The immanent critique of neoliberalism

Foucault's genealogically established critical attitude reveals an interesting source for potential resistance against governmental regimes, but it ultimately fails to specifically oppose the governmental rationality of neoliberalism. The question is hence how Foucauldian critique can be supplemented with new resources to take more oppositional distance from neoliberalism. As mentioned, what is missing in Foucault's lectures is a thorough investigation of the effects of actually-existing neoliberalism on populations. In 1979, Foucault was investigating neoliberalism as an up-and-coming governmental rationality that promised to institute a post-disciplinary, hands-off approach to the conduct of conducts. He could thus not have anticipated the viewpoint of those suffering under neoliberal governmentality. However, we have information at our disposal that Foucault had not. We have had experience with the concrete implementations of actually-existing neoliberalism.⁸⁰ Neoliberalism is not merely a governmental rationality expounded among economic experts anymore. It has infiltrated governmental institutions and is actively reshaping people's lives. Apart from neoliberalism as a manner of speaking the truth about government, there are hence also concrete 'neoliberalisations', i.e., variegated and unstable attempts to introduce neoliberal rationality into pre-existing institutions.⁸¹ This creates the possibility of comparison and hence of immanent critique: one can start from the neoliberal promise of a post-disciplinary governmentality and explore what actually-existing neoliberalisms have done with this promise. Immanent critique does not need to posit its own normative standards or legislate what is to be done, yet it does more than simply reveal neoliberalism to be contingent and hence open to change and contestation. It shows that neoliberalism is not just a fragile regime of government but also a disappointment in the eyes of the governed.

Did neoliberalism institute the post-disciplinary governmentality it promised in Foucault's rendition? Do actually-existing neoliberalisms only use economic incentives to steer subjective conducts? In practice, neoliberal governmentality aligns itself with disciplinary power rather than displacing it. Actually-existing neoliberal institutions often divide the population into different segments with each their own form of management, some centred on economic incentives alone, others more invasive and disciplinary.⁸² Successful entrepreneurial subjects are often allowed to govern themselves. Governments sometimes steer their conduct with economic incentives like tax deductions or government subsidies, but these subjects have sufficiently internalised the logic of neoliberal conduct to spontaneously behave like neoliberal entrepreneurs. Less successful individuals, however, are often the target of intensive disciplinary surveillance.⁸³ Those who fail or refuse to render themselves governable to neoliberal steering, are disciplined into entrepreneurial lifestyles. Disciplinary power thus remains part of neoliberal governmentality as a tactic of last resort to educate recalcitrant subjects into docile neoliberal individuals. Rather than a government of indirect incentives, neoliberalism enacts a more differentiated governmental strategy that combines indirect incentives with other forms of power, like disciplinary power.

If one compares the governmental rationality Foucault assessed with actually-existing neoliberalism in the welfare state, one observes that Friedman's negative income tax has never been truly implemented. Nor has the neoliberalised prison-system become any less disciplinary.⁸⁴ Welfare state institutions have indeed been dismantled in several countries, but they have more importantly been repurposed to discipline welfare recipients into neoliberal forms of conduct.⁸⁵ Workfare regimes, for instance, forcibly stimulate the unemployed to manage their unemployment as a business.⁸⁶ They use not mere non-binding economic incentives but disciplinary interventions like compulsory job training or non-compliance penalties to closely monitor the integration of individuals on the labour market. The purpose is still to produce docile subjects, only the criteria have changed.⁸⁷ Today, a 'good' unemployed person is not a docile manual worker but a creative and entrepreneurial one-person businessowner. The disciplinary framework to produce this subjectivity remains.

More prescient neoliberals, like Friedrich Hayek, were well-aware that not all subjects would voluntarily embrace neoliberal lifestyles and that harsh disciplining would become unavoidable:

Man has been civilised against his wishes [...] The indispensable rules of the free society require from us much that is unpleasant, such as suffering competition from others, seeing others being richer than ourselves, etc. [...] And it is the discipline of the market which forces us to calculate, that is, to be responsible for the means we use up in the pursuit of our ends.⁸⁸

According to Hayek, human beings are not instinctively drawn to neoliberal competition. Acquiring the entrepreneurial ethos is a refractory process of reshaping subjectivities to fit market demand.⁸⁹ Individuals have to make themselves competitive and adaptable to ever-shifting market expectations. Those who fail or refuse to find their niche in the market have to be disciplined into becoming more docile entrepreneurs.⁹⁰

Rather than classifying actually-existing neoliberalisms as post-disciplinary orders of experimental selfhood, it might be better to identify neoliberalism as what Roberto Esposito calls 'negative biopolitics'.⁹¹ Admittedly, the link between neoliberalism and biopolitics is enigmatic in Foucault's own work. Foucault even apologises in *Naissance de la biopolitique* for failing to clarify the connection.⁹² But if we define 'biopolitics' broadly as any strategy that stimulates the biological and economic vitality of populations, then neoliberalism is a biopolitical regime encouraging the economic productivity of populations through the stimulation of free market competition and entrepreneurship. A helpful reminder is Foucault's own description of the 18th-century police sciences, precursors to liberal and neoliberal governmental rationalities, as a truth regime focused on managing 'the living' (*le vivant*).⁹³ The police sciences most clearly combine a biopolitical and governmental dimension by aiming to strengthen the state apparatus by enhancing simultaneously the health and productivity of populations. The police "*va du vivre au plus que vivre*".⁹⁴ One could analogously argue that neoliberalism steers the population toward enhanced living, but this time not to increase the state's financial or military capabilities, but to strengthen 'the economy' or 'the market'.⁹⁵ Neoliberalism stimulates the vitality of the population in order to generate market growth.

However, neoliberalism constitutes a *negative* biopolitics insofar as it sacrifices the lives of some to enhance the vitality of the population overall.⁹⁶ As Hayek writes, "we may be free and yet miserable. Liberty does not mean all good things or the absence of all evils. It is true that to be free may mean freedom to starve, to make costly mistakes, or to run mortal risks".⁹⁷ Foucault notes that already the police sciences deal with 'indispensable, useful, and *superfluous* life'.⁹⁸ Governmentality requires not only the promotion of life on the level of the collective, but also the concomitant acceptance of suffering and collateral damage on the level of individuals.⁹⁹ Lives unproductive, who drag down the overall prosperity of the population, are better cast aside from the police's perspective. Neoliberal competition as well purportedly promotes the prosperity of the population, but also installs a strict sorting of winners and losers. Some 'losers' might be rehabilitated through disciplinary interventions. Workfare regimes, for instance, invest in the unemployed to render them useful again to the labour market. Others, however, might not be worth this investment.¹⁰⁰ They are condemned to enjoy 'the freedom to starve'. If the reshaping of people's subjectivity is costlier than the contribution to economic growth that these people promise to deliver,

neoliberal rationality advises to abstain from interference. Some individuals' human capital is too low-value to be worthy of being governed.¹⁰¹ These people are subsequently abandoned to their fate. Workfare regimes, for instance, filter between the 'deserving poor', who can attain a lucrative job with sufficient disciplinary coaching, and the 'undeserving poor', the unemployable population left to fend for itself.¹⁰² As Saskia Sassen writes,

There is a *de facto* redefinition of 'the economy' when sharp contractions are gradually lost to standard measures. The unemployed who lose everything – jobs, homes, medical insurance – easily fall off the edge of what is defined as 'the economy' and counted as such. [...] The reality at ground level is more akin to a kind of economic version of ethnic cleansing in which elements considered troublesome are dealt with by simply eliminating them.¹⁰³

By confronting the promises of neoliberal rationality with the subjective effects of actually-existing power-relations at play in neoliberal institutions, one discovers a new critical perspective missing in Foucault's brief, survey-like genealogy of neoliberalism. One can do more than simply show the contingency of neoliberal rationality to provide space for subjugated knowledges to flourish. Taking the perspective of the governed in actually-existing neoliberalism fosters an immanent critique that shows the emptiness of neoliberalism's promise to establish a post-disciplinary order. Once a governmental rationality confronts the subjects whose conduct it is supposed to govern, the latter respond and force governmental agencies to shift gears. In order to render the population governable, neoliberal institutions cannot just govern by economic incentives alone. Neoliberalism has had to adapt to the friction coming from subjects deviating from neoliberal conduct. Neoliberal governments consequently require disciplinary interventions and even the outright abandonment of the unproductive. Actually-existing neoliberalism morphs the promise of a post-disciplinary order into a negative biopolitics. The more friction comes from neoliberalised subjects, the harsher actually-existing neoliberalism must intervene to enforce entrepreneurial norms of conduct.

The perspective of immanent critique comes to the fore when the pressure to become flexible and adaptable becomes harder to bear for ever more subjects.¹⁰⁴ Actually-existing neoliberalism often operates as a regime of precarisation: it makes people vulnerable to market fluctuations in order to impose marketized adaptability.¹⁰⁵ This requires, for instance, dismantling and repurposing welfare institutions to undermine the safety nets that allegedly make individuals live too comfortably in unemployment.¹⁰⁶ This economic precarisation often intersects with other social vulnerabilities to produce a variegated system of differential precarities in the population. The human potentiality to experiment with different conducts and reinvent oneself is thereby subsumed under neoliberal governmentality and transformed into adaptability to market imperatives.¹⁰⁷ The potential to refuse

one's identity and explore new subjectivities is reduced to the generic ability to adapt to changing market demands. People subsequently lose the freedom to determine their own conduct, as this would diminish the subject's flexibility to market forces. Neoliberal governmentality demands subjects to become elastic and malleable bundles of human capital that can be instantly deployed at any point the free market desires. This regime of subjectivation demands significant work on the self.¹⁰⁸ Individuals are engaged in a permanent cycle of self-optimisation where they have to repurpose their human capital to fit ever-changing market expectations. Since they are, moreover, in constant competition with others, there are no limits to how much can be demanded of individual subjects. When the latter's energy has been exhausted, they simply drop out and are discarded. The people suffering from mental burn-out, the dissolution of social bonds, or mere physical exhaustion from constant self-managing are subsequently the collateral damage neoliberalism expels in the name of further economic growth.¹⁰⁹

While Foucault might thus have been worried about an overbearing paternalistic welfare state, the immanent critique of neoliberalism shows how neoliberalism itself is a more serious problem. After decades of actually-existing neoliberalism, the political conjuncture looks starkly different from Foucault's in the 1970s. People long not for more freedom from welfare state surveillance but from the discipline of free market competition. Now that the welfare state is more concerned with reshaping subjectivities to fit market expectations than with providing a safety net from the uncertainties of free market competition, state paternalism is no longer the main obstacle to freer subjective conducts. From the perspective of immanent critique, the reduction of human potentiality to precariously obedient, generic adaptability to market demands is a more urgent concern. Neoliberalism thereby fosters its own culture of dependency: precarious individuals have become dependent on ever-fluctuating markets and on the instances that guard access to economic survival under competitive conditions. Workers, for instance, have to accept decreasing pay, worsened labour protections, and diminished social rights in order to hold on to temporary jobs.¹¹⁰ Haunted by the spectre of becoming superfluous life, these workers agree to the erosion of the social systems that used to protect them from precarity.

In sum, the immanent critique of neoliberalism as a negative biopolitics builds on Foucault's genealogical critique of neoliberalism, but also steers it into a different direction. It presumes the genealogical exploration of the historical conditions of possibility that have allowed neoliberal rationality to emerge as an effective mode of speaking the truth about government. But it also investigates the subjective effects of implementing this governmental rationality in concrete institutions responsible for the government of populations. Actually-existing neoliberalism emerges from the variegated and conflictual interplay between governmental agencies and the subjective conducts they aim to manage. They have thereby instituted a negative

biopolitics that puts excessive weight to perform on the shoulders of individual subjects to conform to entrepreneurial norms of conduct. With the threats of disciplinary interventions and ultimately abandonment, neoliberal agencies often enforce entrepreneurial conducts on subjects that would rather conduct themselves differently.

Conclusion

This essay has highlighted a methodological weakness in Foucault's genealogy of neoliberalism often mistaken for a biographical shift in his philosophy. *Naissance de la biopolitique* is sometimes interpreted as evidence for Foucault's conversion to neoliberalism, whereas its lack of critical acuity stems rather from its methodological limitations. Through a discussion of the "neoliberal conversion"-thesis, I have highlighted those limitations. Though Foucault's appreciative tone in his neoliberalism lectures is surprising, his aim is mainly to defamiliarize readers from the dominant mode of neoliberal rationality so that they can affirm the creative potential to foster new conducts, new identities, and new rationalities. Foucault did not convert to neoliberalism, but sought to destabilise it by revealing its historical contingency. However, as Foucault's surprisingly positive tone shows, this strategy is insufficient for combatting neoliberalism. There is an elective affinity between Foucault's own politics of creative self-reinvention and neoliberalism's promise of a non-invasive, post-disciplinary government by indirect economic incentives alone. Foucault's libertine stance toward subjectivity hence seems easily integrated into a neoliberal conduct of conducts.

I propose to supplement Foucault's genealogical method as he deploys it in *Naissance de la biopolitique* with an immanent critique of neoliberalism from the perspective of the governed. Rather than investigating neoliberal rationality as a promising endeavour for the future, we can study the real-life implementations of neoliberalism and their effects on subjective conducts. Neoliberal rationality is involved in a permanent struggle to shape the conduct of conducts along entrepreneurial and competitive lines, but subjects are refractory living beings whose conducts are not so simply transformed. Neoliberalism has had to give up its post-disciplinary aspirations and turn to the power of discipline and abandonment to enforce neoliberal norms of conduct. Neoliberalism has transformed into a negative biopolitics that sacrifices the lives of unproductive subjects as collateral damage to the overall welfare of the population. Immanent critique thereby reveals how subjects are pushed beyond their limits until neoliberal norms of conduct become unbearable. This intolerability of neoliberalism cannot be directly deduced from the writings of Becker, Friedman, or Hayek.¹¹¹ It becomes manifest in the confrontation between neoliberal rationality and the material living bodies of finite human beings unable to be stretched in the ways neoliberalism requires.

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- ¹ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de La Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 28.
- ² Jacques Rancière, *Chronicles of Consensual Times*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 127.
- ³ Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste* (London: Verso, 2013), 93-101; Tim Christiaens, 'The Entrepreneur of the Self beyond Foucault's Neoliberal Homo Oeconomicus', *European Journal of Social Theory* 23, no. 4 (2020): 493-511.
- ⁴ Patrick Gamez, 'Did Foucault Do Ethics? The "Ethical Turn," Neoliberalism, and the Problem of Truth', *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2018): 108.
- ⁵ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 55.
- ⁶ Dotan Leshem, 'Foucault, Genealogy, Critique', in *Foucault, Neoliberalism, and Beyond*, ed. Stephen Sawyer and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 104.
- ⁷ Daniel Zamora, ed., *Critiquer Foucault* (Bruxelles: Aden, 2014); Daniel Zamora, 'Peut-on Critiquer Foucault?', *Revue Ballast*, 3 December 2014, <https://www.revue-ballast.fr/peut-on-critiquer-foucault/>. An exemplary critical response is Gavin Walker, 'Introduction: The Late Foucault and the Allegories of Theory', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 121, no. 4 (2022): 645-53. and the other articles in the same special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*.
- ⁸ Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que La Critique?', in *Qu'est-Ce Que La Critique? Suivie de La Culture de Soi* (Paris: VRIN, 2015), 37.
- ⁹ Saskia Sassen, 'A Savage Sorting of Winners and Losers: Contemporary Versions of Primitive Accumulation', *Globalizations* 7, no. 1-2 (2010): 23-50.
- ¹⁰ Michael Behrent, 'Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976-1979', *Modern Intellectual History* 6, no. 3 (2009): 539-68; Michael Behrent, 'Accidents Happen: François Ewald, the "Antirevolutionary" Foucault, and the Intellectual Politics of the French Welfare State', *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 3 (2010): 585-624; Geoffroy de Lagasnerie, *La Dernière Leçon de Michel Foucault: Sur Le Néolibéralisme, La Théorie et La Politique* (Paris: Fayard, 2012); Serge Audier, *Penser Le 'Néolibéralisme': Le Moment Néolibéral, Foucault et La Crise Du Socialisme* (Latresne: Le Bord de l'eau, 2015).
- ¹¹ Gary Becker, Bernard Harcourt, and François Ewald, "'Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker": American Neoliberalism and Michel Foucault's 1979 Birth of Biopolitics Lectures', *University of Chicago Institute for Law & Economics Olin Research Paper*, 2012, 10.
- ¹² Michael Behrent, 'A Liberal despite Himself: Reflections on a Debate, Reappraisals of a Question', in *Foucault, Neoliberalism, and Beyond*, ed. Stephen Sawyer and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 1-7.
- ¹³ Behrent, 'Accidents Happen'; Mitchell Dean and Kaspar Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society: The Political Legacy of Michel Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 145.
- ¹⁴ Daniele Lorenzini, 'Governmentality, Subjectivity, and the Neoliberal Form of Life', *Journal for Cultural Research* 22, no. 2 (2018): 4.

- ¹⁵ Michael Scott Christofferson, 'Foucault et La "Nouvelle Philosophie": Pourquoi Foucault Soutient Les Maîtres Penseurs d'André Glucksmann?', in *Critiquer Foucault*, ed. Daniel Zamora (Brussels: Aden, 2014), 14; Dean and Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society*, 162.
- ¹⁶ Michel Foucault, 'Prisons et Asiles Dans Le Mécanisme Du Pouvoir', in *Dits et Écrits I. 1954-1975*, n. 136 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1391.
- ¹⁷ Christofferson, 'Foucault et La "Nouvelle Philosophie": Pourquoi Foucault Soutient Les Maîtres Penseurs d'André Glucksmann?', 27.
- ¹⁸ Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution* (London: Verso Books, 2021), 40-41.
- ¹⁹ Michel Foucault, 'Méthodologie Pour La Connaissance Du Monde: Comment Se Débarrasser Du Marxisme', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 235 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 595-618.
- ²⁰ Maurizio Lazzarato, Tim Christiaens, and Stijn De Cauwer, 'How to Think a War Machine: Interview with Maurizio Lazzarato', in *Critical Theory at a Crossroads*, ed. Stijn De Cauwer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 134-45; Behrent, 'Liberal despite Himself'; Luke Iltot, 'Generalizing Resistance: The Coalition Politics of Foucault's Governmentality Lectures', *The Review of Politics*, 2022, 1-25.
- ²¹ Michel Foucault, 'Un Système Fini Face à Une Demande Infinie', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 325 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1186-1202.
- ²² Behrent, 'Liberalism without Humanism', 565; Becker, Harcourt, and Ewald, 'Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker', 6; Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 150.
- ²³ Michel Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2004), 265.
- ²⁴ David Newheiser, 'Foucault, Gary Becker and the Critique of Neoliberalism', *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 5 (2016): 7; Dean and Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society*, 160.
- ²⁵ Andrew Dilts, 'From "Entrepreneur of the Self" to "Care of the Self": Neo-Liberal Governmentality and Foucault's Ethics', *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011): 136.
- ²⁶ Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 99.
- ²⁷ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 261.
- ²⁸ Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 50.
- ²⁹ Newheiser, 'Foucault, Gary Becker and the Critique of Neoliberalism', 4.
- ³⁰ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 273.
- ³¹ Trent H. Hamann, 'Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethics', *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 53; Lois McNay, 'Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics', *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (2009): 60.
- ³² Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 265. English translation from Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 259-60.
- ³³ Serge Audier, 'Neoliberalism through Foucault's Eyes', *History and Theory* 54 (2015): 413.

- ³⁴ Daniel Zamora, 'Foucault, Les Exclutés et Le Dépérissement Néolibéral de l'état', in *Critiquer Foucault*, ed. Daniel Zamora (Brussels: Aden, 2014), 96.
- ³⁵ Foucault, 'Système Fini', 1190-91. My translation.
- ³⁶ Zamora, 'Foucault, Les Exclutés et Le Dépérissement Néolibéral de l'état', 105; Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 5.
- ³⁷ Foucault, 'Système Fini', 1196.
- ³⁸ It is remarkable that Foucault hereby repeats another neoliberal talking point, the finitude of state budgets and the need for austerity in state spending. Foucault has made similar claims in other public performances (Behrent, 'Liberal despite Himself', 24-25.), which made him predict in *Naissance de la biopolitique* that "what is presently at issue in our reality, what we see emerging in our twentieth century societies, is not so much the growth of the state and of *raison d'état*, but much more its reduction (*décroissance*)" (Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 197). [Translation from Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 191.] The proponents of the strong "neoliberal conversion"-thesis have yet to discuss this similarity.
- ³⁹ Thomas Sowell, *Race and Economics* (New York: Longman, 1977), 224.
- ⁴⁰ Sowell, 203-4; Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* (London: Verso Books, 2013), 165.
- ⁴¹ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 208-13.
- ⁴² Michel Foucault, "'Omnes et Singulatim": Vers Une Critique de La Raison Politique', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 291 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 963.
- ⁴³ Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 40.
- ⁴⁴ Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013), 219.
- ⁴⁵ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 197.
- ⁴⁶ Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, and Morten S. Thaning, *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 313.
- ⁴⁷ Jean-Claude Vuillemin, *Foucault l'intempestif* (Paris: Hermann, 2019), 190.
- ⁴⁸ Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 314; Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, 6.
- ⁴⁹ Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).
- ⁵⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2007), 52.
- ⁵¹ Terry Flew, 'Michel Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics and Contemporary Neo-Liberalism Debates', *Thesis Eleven* 108, no. 1 (2012): 46; Hamann, 'Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethics', 49.
- ⁵² David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ⁵³ Ute Tellmann, 'Foucault and the Invisible Economy', *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 22; Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning, *Michel Foucault*, 296; Gamez, 'Did Foucault Do Ethics?', 125.
- ⁵⁴ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 37. English translation from Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 35-36.

- ⁵⁵ Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning, *Michel Foucault*, 329.
- ⁵⁶ Becker, Harcourt, and Ewald, 'Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker', 10-11.
- ⁵⁷ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 249.
- ⁵⁸ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality: A Critique of Political Reason* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 358. Compare this with, for instance, Brown (*Undoing the Demos*, 37.) who deploys exactly the humanism Becker and Foucault avoid, in order to criticise human capital theory.
- ⁵⁹ Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que La Critique?', 48.
- ⁶⁰ Jason Read, 'A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity', *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 34.
- ⁶¹ Michel Foucault, 'Foucault Étudie La Raison d'Etat', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 280 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 851.
- ⁶² Ben Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 35; Lars Cornelissen, 'On the Subject of Neoliberalism: Rethinking Resistance in the Critique of Neoliberal Rationality', *Constellations* 25, no. 1 (2018): 141.
- ⁶³ Michel Foucault, 'L'intellectuel et Le Pouvoir', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 359 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1569.
- ⁶⁴ Saul Newman, "'Critique Will Be the Art of Voluntary Inservitude": Foucault, La Boétie and the Problem of Freedom', in *Foucault and the History of Our Present*, ed. Sophie Fuggle, Yari Lanci, and Martina Tazzioli (Cambridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 62.
- ⁶⁵ Carl Death, 'Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest', *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010): 235-51; Daniele Lorenzini, 'From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude: Michel Foucault and the Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much', *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016): 7-21.
- ⁶⁶ Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 317. English translation from Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 313.
- ⁶⁷ Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que La Critique?', 34.
- ⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, 'Le Sujet et Le Pouvoir', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 306 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1051. English translation from Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 785. See also Michel Foucault, *Histoire de La Sexualité II: L'usage Des Plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 15.
- ⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que Les Lumières?', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 339 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1393.
- ⁷⁰ Daniele Lorenzini, 'The Emergence of Desire: Notes Toward a Political History of the Will', *Critical Inquiry* 45, no. 2 (2019): 448-70.
- ⁷¹ Razvan Amironesei, 'La Déprise de Soi Comme Pratique de Désubjectivation: Sur La Notion de "Stultitia" Chez Michel Foucault', *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2014): 105; Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 120-21.
- ⁷² Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que Les Lumières?', 1389. English translation from Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michael Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 312.

- ⁷³ Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que Les Lumières?', 1393.
- ⁷⁴ Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 154.
- ⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Michel Foucault, Une Interview: Sexe, Pouvoir et La Politique de l'identité', in *Dits et Écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 358 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1555. My translation.
- ⁷⁶ Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, 308.
- ⁷⁷ Foucault, 'Qu'est-Ce Que Les Lumières?', 1393.
- ⁷⁸ Foucault, 'Système Fini', 1187-88. My translation.
- ⁷⁹ Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 5.
- ⁸⁰ See, among others, Dardot and Laval, *New Way of the World*; Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*; Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Maurizio Lazzarato, *Experimental Politics: Work, Welfare, and Creativity in the Neoliberal Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016); Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).
- ⁸¹ Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xi.
- ⁸² Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Neoliberalism in Action: Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social', *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (2009): 118; Tim Christiaens, 'Financial Neoliberalism and Exclusion with and beyond Foucault', *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 4 (2018): 100.
- ⁸³ McNay, 'Self as Enterprise', 64.
- ⁸⁴ Loïc Wacquant, *Punir Les Pauvres: Le Nouveau Gouvernement de l'insécurité Sociale* (Marseille: Agone, 2004); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- ⁸⁵ Lazzarato, 'Neoliberalism in Action', 128.
- ⁸⁶ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, 144; Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: SAGE, 2010), 159-60; Dean and Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD*, 214.
- ⁸⁷ Dardot and Laval, *New Way of the World*, 189.
- ⁸⁸ Friedrich Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2012), 500.
- ⁸⁹ Jörg Spieker, 'Defending the Open Society: Foucault, Hayek, and the Problem of Biopolitical Order', *Economy and Society* 42, no. 2 (2013): 315.
- ⁹⁰ Dardot and Laval, *New Way of the World*, 279.
- ⁹¹ Roberto Esposito, *Immunità Comune: Biopolitica All'epoca Della Pandemia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2022), 6.
- ⁹² Foucault, *Naissance de La Biopolitique*, 191.
- ⁹³ Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim', 976; Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population: Cours Au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2004), 331.
- ⁹⁴ Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 333.
- ⁹⁵ Antoon Braeckman, 'Neo-Liberalism and the Symbolic Institution of Society: Pitting Foucault against Lefort on the State and the "Political"', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 41, no. 9 (2015): 945-62.

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- ⁹⁷ Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 68-69.
- ⁹⁸ Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim', 976 My emphasis.
- ⁹⁹ Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 43; Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning, *Michel Foucault*, 288.
- ¹⁰⁰ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, 167-68; Christiaens, 'Financial Neoliberalism and Exclusion', 106.
- ¹⁰¹ Becker, Harcourt, and Ewald, 'Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker', 9; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 37.
- ¹⁰² Lazzarato, 'Neoliberalism in Action', 118.
- ¹⁰³ Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014), 36.
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- ¹⁰⁷ Dario Gentili, *Crisi Come Arte Di Governo* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), 113.
- ¹⁰⁸ Dardot and Laval, *New Way of the World*, 274.
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- ¹¹⁰ McRobbie, *Be Creative*, 153-54.
- ¹¹¹ Rancière, *Chronicles of Consensual Times*, 127.