# A Foucault for the 21$^{st}$ Century

# A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium

Edited by

Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo

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# PREFACE

This collection gathers selected works presented at the Fifth annual meeting of the Social Theory Forum at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, in April of 2008. The Social Theory Forum has a long history at this institution. Organized jointly by the Sociology and other departments and institutes, as well as interested faculty and students, the Social Theory Forum aims at the creative exploration, development, promotion and publication of cross-disciplinary social theory in an applied and critical framework. This tradition of engaged and critical scholarship was reflected in the Fifth annual meeting, for which Professor Sam Binkley of Emerson College was invited to join the Forum's traditional organizing committee, consisted of Professors Jorge Capetillo, Siamak Movahedi and Glenn Jacobs. Titled *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*, the conference sought to expand scholarly understanding of Foucault's central theoretical legacy, but also to apply his ideas to a range of contemporary empirical phenomena. While originally envisioned in the tradition of the Social Theory Forum as an intimate one day event, the overwhelming response to the initial conference announcement led the organizers to expand it to a two day conference, including 18 panels, 4 keynote speakers and 64 participants. From the conference proceedings emerged a plethora of engagements and reflections on Foucauldian thought and practice, a representative selection of which is constituted in this volume.

The editors of this anthology are grateful to the organizers of the Social Theory Forum, as well as the Forum's supporters at the University of Massachusetts, Boston: the Office of the Dean (Donna Kuizenga) of the College of Liberal Arts, the office of the Provost (Winston Langley), the William Monroe Trotter Institute, the Mauricio Gaston Institute, and the Honors Program. We are also grateful to the Departments of Anthropology, Applied Linguistics, Sociology, Women's Studies, Political Science, Africana Studies, Philosophy and American Studies. We are particularly grateful for the immense support shown for this conference by UMass Boston graduate students Samita Bhattarai and Elena Engle, and especially to Allyson Quinn, who was the coordinator of the conference. Another UMass graduate student, Jay Byron, worked as Assistant

Editor in the final stages of the editing process. We also send our thanks to Richard Koenigsberg, Mei Ha Chan, Orion Anderson and Richard G. Klein, of the Library of Social Science for pulling together an outstanding book exhibition, and especially to Richard Koenigsberg for his remarkable support in publicizing the conference's initial call for papers. An enormous debt of gratitude is owed to Christopher Rand for his eagle-eyed editorial and proof reading work on all manuscripts, and also to George Lazar for his assistance in pummeling these works into shape. Most importantly, we are grateful to the national and international scholars who traveled great distances to present their works at the Fifth Annual Social Forum, for without their efforts, none of this would have come to pass. It is our sincere hope that this anthology captures the spirit and integrity, as well as the scope and vibrancy of their individual works, if only through a selective sample.

Sam Binkley
Jorge Capetillo-Ponce

# INTRODUCTION

## SAM BINKLEY

How relevant is Foucault's thought to the world we inhabit today? Such is the question to which this anthology is addressed, reflected in the title of this volume, as well as the conference from which it contents were chosen: *A Foucault for the 21st Century.*

Such a question, posed here as a provocation to thought which necessarily runs the risk of reduction, can be taken in many ways. One might interpret it as inquiring after the specific relevance of Foucault's studies to the changing conditions we encounter in our historical present, as if to ask: is Foucault, who did so well with 18th Century penality and 19th Century sex, really up to the challenges of globalization, media saturation and unstable financial markets? Is Foucault now old hat, better suited for the study of Greeks, Enlightenment reformers and sexologists than 21st century yuppies, shoppers, facebook, financial speculators and the global poor. Moreover, this question seems to invite others: if a truly 21st Century Foucault does exist, is it a Foucault distinct from the ones we have known in the past? Have changing times required that we discard our old Foucaults and invent new ones, or are there parts we can save, parts we should revise, or previously neglected parts we should draw to the fore and emphasize? What new objects (economies, institutions, subjectivities, practices) have emerged or are likely to emerge for which the Foucault of the 20th Century is ill prepared, and how shall we fashion a Foucault better adapted to these tasks? There is a strong sense among the articles that follow that such a 21st Century Foucault exists, and that this new Foucault is a Foucault poised to address a range of trends characteristic of our contemporary predicament: the intensifying commodification of personal and social life, the infusion of genetic science into a range of contemporary discourses and activities, the increasing diffusion of surveillance technologies, the "responsibilization" of individual economic conduct and the more general embrace of market rationalities as the penultimate model for all social forms. As these essays demonstrate, the Foucault for the 21st Century is as primed to interrogate these phenomena

today as he was in the last Century, where he dealt so handily with prisons, sexologists and the like.

Yet to imagine that the question of the contemporary relevance of Foucault is exhausted by changing empirical conditions alone is to reduce Foucault to precisely the kind of historicism he rejected, and to ignore the animating principle driving his work. For Foucault, the "happy positivist" whose nominalist genealogies of modern institutions and subjectivities cut unlikely paths across and through the epochal schemes of grey-bearded social theory, the charge of obsolescence is a more complex proposition than it might be for other canonical authors. While it might be possible, for example, to claim the obsolescence of Marxism on the basis of the subsumption of 19th century capitalism by more contemporary economic forms, or the failure of Weber to see past the iron cage to the expressive lives we live today, it is difficult to pin Foucault's work down to a periodizing scheme by which we might then declare him to be superceded by some unanticipated development. Foucault can never be passé, if for no other reason than his assertions were never meant to project distinct teleologies or designate historical periodizations. While at times he may have gestured toward "great ages" (the classical age, the modern age, the age of sovereignty or discipline), what was central to his analysis was not the unfolding sequence of distinct world-historical stages, but the overlapping constellations of forms and technologies through which societies constitute themselves through the production of distinct subjects. Foucault's oft cited assertion of the triangulation of the power formations associated with sovereignty, discipline and biopower affirms the distance he placed between his own approach and that of those who traffic in tidy, sequenced "ages." Absent such a claim, it is difficult to charge him with having been surpassed by the present in any strong sense.

This fact, however, has not prevented recent critics from declaring Foucault "over," particularly those who link his legacy to the analysis of disciplinarity as a general form of power. Indeed, it is fair to suppose that Foucault is best known in the mainstream of social science literature for his historical inquiries into the origins of disciplinary society, in a period extending from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Today, however, under the conditions of global modernity, with the increasing ubiquity of markets, the break up of centralized states and the dissolution of national boundaries, the bounded, disciplinary societies Foucault described seem a thing of the past. Far from disciplinary, society today is "post panoptic," as Nancy Fraser has argued — subject to and conditioned by flows of bodies,

power and capital that exceed the territorializing boundaries of the disciplinary dispositif. (Fraser 2003) Fraser's critique echoes similar objections from Gilles Deleuze in his "Post-script on Societies of Control," which notes the obsolescence of the totalizing control mechanisms associated with the relatively distinct disciplinary worlds of the school, the family, the factory and the prison. (Deleuze 1992) Deleuze describes the passage from the segmented enclosures of the disciplinary society to the continuous networks of power that characterize the present: "In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything—the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation." Indeed, one can even find these epochal challenges to the relevance of Foucault circulating before his death: it was Jean Baudrillard who, in the 1970s, famously came forward with the proposal that we "Forget Foucault," on the grounds that his analyses of power remained wedded to a moribund logic of production, one long since displaced by one of commodity seduction. (Baudrillard, 1987)

Such challenges err on two assumptions, the first (already mentioned) is the belief that Foucault intended his critiques as totalizing theories of an age: that the age of sovereignty gave way to the age of discipline which later gave way to the age of biopower and governmentality. The second error, however, goes more to the heart of his wider critical enterprise as defined by his methods, whether applied to ancient Greece, early modern incarceration, $19^{th}$ century sexology or post-war liberalism. In all these cases, Foucault's aim was to enlist the study of the past in a critical program centered on the destabilization of the categories that organize our (or any) present. Foucault's concern was never to explain any particular present only in terms of its evolution out of a given past: his aim was to demonstrate the uses of the past for the transformation of any given present, to explore the ways in which the taken-for-granted forms of the present depend, in largely unacknowledged ways, on suppressed ruptures, contradictions, events and fissures within the past. Foucault summarizes the critical thrust of this project in his essay on Nietzschean historiography, as one that "deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is

because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting." (Foucault 1977: 88)

By this token, a new slant on the question of Foucault's contemporary relevance is raised. Rather than asking after the timeliness of Foucault's work for the comprehension of a new, empirical present (is Foucault still up to it? Can he still explain our present, or has it surpassed him?), perhaps a better question is: how can we, within the horizons of a present Foucault may never have addressed, reintroduce his project and destabilize the categories through which we live by uncovering the hidden events, ruptures and contradictions in a past that the present prefers not to discuss? In short, how can we recover, with Foucault, the historical sense that knowledge is for cutting?

For Foucault—who never presented his work as a systematic or normative theory of history, but instead as a tool-box for the historical critique of the present—the question of contemporary relevance can only be one of the adaptability and usefulness of his tools to the undermining of the unthought foundations that support the present. In this regard, Foucault's toolbox for the 21st Century continues to hold something for everyone: his analysis of disciplinary societies proves particularly helpful in studying the most contemporary features of the prison-industrial complex as well as current manifestations of the surveillance society; his archaeologies of discourse help explain the most novel efforts of moral reformers; his studies of ethics fit nicely with contemporary lifestyle movements, and his work on governmentality is well suited to recent changes in the professional lives of workers in a flexible labor force. While preferred tools may have changed and been brought to bear on new objects, it is undeniably the case that in the present century, as in the last, Foucault's knowledge continues to cut.

Yet there are other ways in which the contemporary relevance of Foucault might be discussed. In testing this new Foucault, one might appeal not as much to changing historical conditions as to the increasing availability of new works by the author himself, as well as newly translated and published lectures and research. In this respect, the Foucault for the 21st Century might be one culled from entirely different sources than that of the 20th Century, less from the books and monographs to which previous generations of his readers have been confined. Most obvious are the lecture courses given by Foucault at the Collège de France from the early 1970s until his death (courses that are now being read and discussed

widely and whose imprint on contemporary Foucault scholarship is increasingly unmistakable, if equally controversial). These lectures promise to deliver a Foucault with considerably more to say on a range of topics than his books led us to believe. With detailed excurses on the Christian pastoral, the political framing of race through the life sciences, the origins of economic liberalism and the hermeneutics of the subject, this new Foucault might be one with a richer theoretical tool-box than the one we had previously known. The availability of these lectures in English over the past decade has set in motion intellectual currents that are reflected in sections of this collection, dealing with governmentality, biopolitics, and practices of subjectivation. In addition to the publication of his lectures, the recent translation and publication of Foucault's journalistic correspondences from Iran (where he covered the events of the Iranian revolution) have suggested new applications of Foucault scholarship to spirituality and religion. In both cases, there are rewards but also tremendous hazards in piecing together a new Foucault from sources not typically recognized in his official dossier: the obvious advantage of deriving new critical instruments brings with it the risk of distorting the trajectory of his thought, submerging his best works in a sea of off-hand comments and abandoned experiments.

Thus far, the dimensions of the question with which we began have been (perhaps rather rhetorically, and at the risk of schematization) considerably expanded: a new Foucault could be judged against the backdrop of changing historical conditions and the emergence of new empirical objects, or through the emergence of new scholarly materials which ask us to deepen and reevaluate the Foucault we already knew. With this scale in mind, it is possible to describe the works that compose this volume in terms of the spirit in which they respond to this question. However, it quickly becomes clear than this scheme is of only limited service, as most articles variously engage new objects of contemporary life, as well as new perspectives on Foucault's works, derived from an evolving debate in which the emergence of new materials is key. Nonetheless, it was with this distinction in mind that contributions to this volume were organized.

As described in the preface to this collection, the articles composing this volume were drawn from presentations at the 5th Annual Social Theory Forum, at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. When the Call for Papers for this conference, publicized early in 2008, drew more than 200 submissions, the organizers saw the opportunity to expand the conference itself into a wider event, one that could effectively take the temperature of

international Foucault Scholarship with a concerted overview. What emerged was a range of applications of Foucault to new empirical phenomenon (consumption, genetic science) as well as more engagements with themes more familiar to Foucauldian analyses (incarceration, surveillance, state formation, pedagogy). We also observed a powerful interest in topics less familiar to the Foucauldian tradition (race, religion, consumption, economic life). Particularly striking in the sample of submissions we received was the volume of interest in two key themes: governmentality and biopolitics, and the noted under-representation of what had traditionally been for decades a topic that had drawn droves of scholars and activists to Foucault's work: discipline and sexuality. In particular, the presence of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France loomed large, particularly those of 1978-79—a presence confirmed in the overwhelming number of papers bearing the terms "governmentality," "biopolitics" or "neoliberalism" in their titles. The selection and organization of this volume, as with the conference itself, is meant to reflect what we perceived to be the concerns represented in this sample.

Toward this end, the present volume begins with a series of sections engaging developments in Foucauldian scholarship, variously attributable to new perspectives introduced by the publication of his lectures at the Collège de France. Section I: Neoliberalism and Economic Conduct, brings together four contributions that variously draw from Foucault's provocative commentary on post-war neoliberalism. Foucault's discussion of this topic, in his course *Birth of Biopolitics* offered in 1978-79, represents perhaps the most direct extension into the contemporary field of any of his genealogical studies. In it he provides not only an insightful mapping of the economic domain onto the matrix of disciplinarity and governmentality, but also an analysis to the formation of uniquely economic subjectivities—the entrepreneurial self, who undertakes her own self-government as an economic enterprise. These themes are taken up by Read, McGushin, Behrent and Wilson in a series of inquiries into the place of the neoliberal economy in Foucault's wider analysis of power, and the production of unique subjectivities this entails. Indeed, this theme is carried over into Section II: Subjection, Subjectivation and the Government of the Self, wherein the specific practices by which individuals assume the government of their own conducts is explored by Rosenberg & Milchman, and Bonnafous-Boucher. What is perhaps most relevant in these two sections is not only the novelty of encountering in Foucault's own oeuvre an extended discussion of topics of such uniquely contemporary significance (writing before the elections of Margaret

Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, the term neoliberal was on few of the radars of the French academic left), but the manner in which he frames processes of subjectivation viewed as an effect of economic, rather than institutional, practices. Where under the disciplinary motif, readers had perhaps become used to a Foucault for whom power acted upon relatively passive subjects, what we discover here is a relation in which considerable agency and autonomy is exercised by the subject in the practice of her own subjectivation.

Section III presents a series of engagements with what is undoubtedly another significant theoretical thread to emerge in contemporary Foucault scholarship. The idea of biopower, first offered to readers in the final chapter of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, and later presented in his lectures of 1975-76, *Society Must Be Defended*, has now taken on great importance, not only for Foucault readers and scholars, but in an activist political discourse identified with the anti-globalization movement, and associated with the Italian left, in particular with the recent work of Giorgio Agamben. In a general sense, the uniquely contemporary relevance of biopower stems from what is perceived to be the more thorough satiation of the power relations associated with global capitalism, which differently penetrates subjects when contrasted to the instrumentalizing techniques of disciplinary power. Where power today touches not just upon what subjects do (their labor) but what they might do (their livelihood), one can say that power becomes biopower, extending to life itself. Contemporary perspectives on the meaning of biopower are explored in four articles by Kirshner, Bussolini, Karskens and Nealon. Together, sections I-III are meant to establish key theoretical developments reflected in contemporary Foucault scholarship, which we take to gravitate around, on the one hand, concepts of governmentality and neoliberalism, and on the other, biopolitics and biopower. Both of these themes develop from new readings of Foucault's intellectual development in the late 1970s' gleaned from his lectures from that time, and both resonate with their relevance to developments coming into play well after his death.

The sections that follow present a series of works that are perhaps more responsive to the empirical and concrete challenges of the changing conditions of the present than to the revisions or expansion of Foucault's original thought (although, as I have pointed out, this distinction is ultimately only of limited value). Section IV provides papers by Dennis and Lewis that reflect the classically Foucauldian concern with education

and pedagogy as institutional practices deeply implicated in the production of disciplinary subjects, albeit through practices and forms that have undergone radical revision over the course of time. In Section V: Governing National Populations, Pyykkönen, Alderson and Malette offer varying perspectives on the production and maintenance of nation states through operations variously targeting the life of populations, the borders confining the space of the nation, and the genealogy of outsiders. Perhaps the section most resonant with the Foucault of the disciplinary society comes with Section VI: Control and the Prison Industrial Complex, although contributions from Staples and Pemberton clearly problematize the reductionism associated with the traditional disciplinary model in favor of new technologies which disseminate surveillance and control mechanisms deep into the fabrics of everyday life, and analyses of new economies in which incarceration assumes a unique status as a new industrial force.

With Section VII: Religion and Political Spirituality, a theme that has in recent years occasioned much discussion is addressed by Ghamari-Tabrizi and Posadas, specifically Foucault's provocative and problematic engagement with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. While writings reflecting Foucault's early enthusiasm for what quickly turned out to be an oppressive regime have been discussed for years by Foucault scholars, their recent publication sparked new interest in this period, and in the wider implications of Foucault's work for theology, spirituality and religious studies more generally. Another area in which Foucault's work has drawn considerable attention is in the study of the emerging scientific research fields of genetics, and in its relationship to discourses on race and racial difference. In Section VIII: Genetics, Genomics and Racialized Life, Levina, Bliss and Han offer analyses, variously drawn from Foucault's claims concerning biopower, of the manner in which the life sciences have reshaped much contemporary practice around race and racial identity. And Finally, an unlikely field to emerge within Foucault studies, yet one that shows considerable promise for future research, comes with Section IX: Consumption as a Way of Life. While consumer culture has long endured as an object of research for many working in the tradition of Cultural Studies, surprisingly little of this work has drawn from Foucault, perhaps—if we accept Baudrilliard's argument mentioned earlier—because Foucault's emphasis on a productivist notion of power has blinded him to the fields of seduction in which consumption operates. However, turning to the later work of Foucault, Zevnik and Finn discover a trove of writings on self-care and the ethics of the self whose relevance to

contemporary consumer lifestyles provides a new perspective on consumption as a practice of self-formation.

This plan, we believe, captures the spirit in which the Fifth annual meeting of the Social Theory Forum was convened at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and that the Conference, *A Foucault For the 21st Century* was presented. While many distinguished works were by necessity not included in this volume, we are grateful to offer this selection to readers in the hope that it advances their own engagements with the contemporary relevance of Foucault's work.

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# SECTION I:

# NEOLIBERALISM AND ECONOMIC CONDUCT

# A GENEALOGY OF HOMO-ECONOMICUS: NEOLIBERALISM AND THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

JASON READ

In the opening pages of David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* we find the following statement "Neoliberalism . . . has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2005: 3). While Harvey's book presents a great deal of research on neoliberalism, presenting its origins in such academic institutions as the "Chicago School," its spread in the initial experiments in Chile, and its return to the countries of its origin through the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher, as well as its effects on China and the rest of the world, the actual process by which it became hegemonic, to the point of becoming common sense, is not examined. While it might be wrong to look for philosophy in a work which is primarily a work of history, a "brief" history at that, aimed at shedding light on the current conjuncture, it is worth pointing out this lacuna since it intersects with a commonly accepted idea about "neoliberalism," that it is as much a transformation *in* ideology as it is a transformation *of* ideology. Neoliberalism, in the texts that have critically confronted it, is generally understood as not just a new ideology, but a transformation of ideology in terms of its conditions and effects. In terms of its conditions, it is an ideology that is generated not from the state, or from a dominant class, but from the quotidian experience of buying and selling commodities from the market, which is then extended across other social spaces, "the marketplace of ideas," to become an image of society. Secondly, it is an ideology that refers not only to the political realm, to an ideal of the state, but to the entirety of human existence. It claims to present not an ideal, but a reality; human nature. As Fredric Jameson writes, summing up this connection and the challenge it poses: "The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time." (Jameson, 1991: 263)

A critical examination of neoliberalism must address this transformation of its discursive deployment, as a new understanding of human nature and social existence rather than a political program. Thus it is not enough to contrast neoliberalism as a political program, analyzing its policies in terms of success or failure. An examination of neoliberalism entails a reexamination of the fundamental problematic of ideology, the intersection of power, concepts, modes of existence and subjectivity. It is in confronting neoliberalism that the seemingly abstract debates of the last thirty years, debates between poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault and neo-Marxists such as Antonio Negri about the nature of power and the relation between "ideologies" or "discourses" and material existence, cease to be abstract doctrines and become concrete ways of comprehending and transforming the present. Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism do not only extend his own critical project into new areas, they also serve to demonstrate the importance of grasping the present by examining the way in which the truth and subjectivity are produced.

## Homo Economicus: The Subject of Neoliberalism

The nexus between the production of a particular conception of human nature, a particular formation of subjectivity, and a particular political ideology, a particular way of thinking about politics is at the center of Michel Foucault's research. As much as Foucault characterized his own project as studying "…the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects," this process has always intersected with regimes of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1982: 208). Thus, it would appear that Foucault's work takes up exactly what writers on neoliberalism find to be so vexing: the manner in which neoliberalism is not just a manner of governing states or economies, but is intimately tied to the government of the individual, to a particular manner of living. However, it is well known that Foucault's research primarily views this relation from ancient Greece through the nineteenth century, leaving modern developments such as neoliberalism unaddressed. While this is the general pattern of Foucault's work, in the late seventies he devoted a year of his lectures at the *Collège de France* to the topic of neoliberalism. These lectures, published as *The Birth of Biopolitics,* are something of an anomaly in part because of this shift into the late-twentieth century and also because unlike other lecture courses, at least those that have been published in recent years, on "abnormals," "psychiatric power" and "the hermeneutics of the subject," the material from these lectures never made it into Foucault's published works.

In order to frame Foucault's analysis it is useful to begin with how he sees the distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism. For Foucault, this difference has to do with the different ways in which they each focus on economic activity. Classical liberalism focused on exchange, on what Adam Smith called mankind's tendency to "barter, truck, and exchange." It naturalized the market as a system with its own rationality, its own interest, and its own specific efficiency, arguing ultimately for its superior efficiency as a distributor of goods and services. The market became a space of autonomy that had to be carved out of the state through the unconditional right of private property. What Foucault stresses in his understanding, is the way in which the market becomes more than just a specific institution or practice to the point where it has become the basis for a reinterpretation and thus a critique of state power. Classical liberalism makes exchange the general matrix of society. It establishes a homology: just as relations in the marketplace can be understood as an exchange of one good for another, the state, or the social contract, can be understood as an exchange of certain freedoms for a set of rights and liberties.[1] Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, extends the process of making economic activity a general matrix of social and political relations, but it takes as its focus not exchange but competition (Foucault, 2008: 12). What the two forms of liberalism, the "classical" and "neo" share, according to Foucault, is a general idea of "homo economicus," that is, the way in which they place a particular "anthropology" of man as an economic subject at the basis of politics. What changes is the emphasis from an anthropology of exchange to one of competition. The shift from exchange to competition has profound effects: while exchange was considered to be natural, competition is understood by the neo-liberals of the twentieth century to be an artificial relation that must be protected against the tendency for markets to form monopolies and interventions by the state. Competition necessitates a constant intervention on the part of the state, not on the market, but on the conditions of the market (Foucault, 2008: 139).

[1] As Foucault writes on this point: "The combination of the savage and exchange is, I think, basic to juridical thought, and not only to eighteenth century theories of right—we constantly find the savage exchange couple from the eighteenth century theory of right to the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both the juridical thought of the eighteenth century and the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the savage is essentially a man who exchanges."(Foucault, 2003: 194)

What is more important for us is the way in which this shift in "anthropology" from "homo economicus" as an exchanging creature to a competitive creature, or rather as a creature whose tendency to compete must be fostered, entails a general shift in the way in which human beings make themselves and are made subjects. First, neoliberalism entails a massive expansion of the field and scope of economics. Foucault cites Gary Becker on this point: "Economics is the science which studies human behavior as relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternate uses" (Foucault, 2008: 235). Everything for which human beings attempt to realize their ends, from marriage, to crime, to expenditures on children, can be understood "economically" according to a particular calculation of cost for benefit. Secondly, this entails a massive redefinition of "labor" and the "worker." The worker has become "human capital". Salary or wages become the revenue that is earned on an initial investment, an investment in one's skills or abilities. Any activity that increases the capacity to earn income, to achieve satisfaction, even migration, the crossing of borders from one country to another, is an investment in human capital. Of course a large portion of "human capital," one's body, brains, and genetic material, not to mention race or class, is simply given and cannot be improved. Foucault argues that this natural limit is something that exists to be overcome through technologies; from plastic surgery to possible genetic engineering that make it possible to transform one's initial investment. As Foucault writes summarizing this point of view: "Homo economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself" (Foucault, 2008: 226).

Foucault's object in his analysis is not to bemoan this as a victory for capitalist ideology, the point at which the "ruling ideas" have truly become the ideas of the "ruling class," so much so that everyone from a minimum wage employee to a C.E.O considers themselves to be entrepreneurs. Nor is his task to critique the fundamental increase of the scope of economic rationality in neo-liberal economics: the assertion that economics is coextensive with all of society, all of rationality, and that it is economics "all the way down." Rather, Foucault takes the neo-liberal ideal to be a new regime of truth, and a new way in which people are made subjects: *homo economicus* is fundamentally different subject, structured by different motivations and governed by different principles, than *homo juridicus,* or the legal subject of the state. Neoliberalism constitutes a new mode of "governmentality," a manner, or a mentality, in which people are governed and govern themselves. The operative terms of this governmentality are no longer rights and laws but interest, investment and

competition. Whereas rights exist to be exchanged, and are some sense constituted through the original exchange of the social contract, interest is irreducible and inalienable, it cannot be exchanged. The state channels flows of interest and desire by making desirable activities inexpensive and undesirable activities costly, counting on the fact that subjects calculate their interests. As a form of governmentality, neoliberalism would seem paradoxically to govern without governing; that is, in order to function its subjects must have a great deal of freedom to act—to choose between competing strategies.

> The new governmental reason needs freedom; therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It must produce it, it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom, not in the sense of the imperative: "be free," with the immediate contradiction that this imperative may contain…[T]he liberalism we can describe as the art of government formed in the eighteenth century entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship with freedom. Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercian, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera. (Foucault, 2008: 63).

These freedoms, the freedoms of the market, are not the outside of politics, of governmentality, as its limit, but rather are an integral element of its strategy. As a mode of governmentality, neoliberalism operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions. Thus, neoliberal governmentality follows a general trajectory of intensification. This trajectory follows a fundamental paradox; as power becomes less restrictive, less corporeal, it also becomes more intense, saturating the field of actions, and possible actions.[2]

Foucault limits his discussion of neoliberalism to its major theoretical texts and paradigms, following its initial formulation in post-war Germany through to its most comprehensive version in the Chicago School. Whereas Foucault's early analyses are often remembered for their analysis of practical documents, the description of the *panopticon* or the practice of

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[2] Jeffrey Nealon has developed the logic of intensification in Foucault, arguing that this can be seen in the transition from disciplinary power to biopower; the former operates through specific sites and identities, while the latter operates on sexuality that is diffuse throughout society, coextensive with subjectivity (Nealon, 2008: 46). A similar point could be raised with respect to neoliberalism.

the confessional, the lectures on neoliberalism predominantly follow the major theoretical discussions. This is in some sense a limitation of the lecture course format, or at least a reflection that this material was never developed into a full study. Any analysis that is faithful to the spirit and not just the letter of Foucault's text would focus on neoliberalism not just as a theory but as a practice, diffused throughout the economy, state, and society. As Thomas Lemke argues, neoliberalism is a political project that attempts to create a social reality that it suggests already exists, stating that competition is the basis of social relations while fostering those same relations (Lemke, 2002: 60). The contemporary trend away from long term labor contracts, towards temporary and part-time labor, is not only an effective economic strategy, freeing corporations from contracts and the expensive commitments of health care and other benefits, it is an effective strategy of subjectification as well. It encourages workers to see themselves not as "workers" in a political sense, who have something to gain through solidarity and collective organization, but as "companies of one." They become individuals for whom every action, from taking courses on a new computer software application to having their teeth whitened, can be considered an investment in human capital. As Eric Alliez and Michel Feher write: "Corporations' massive recourse to subcontracting plays a fundamental role in this to the extent that it turns the workers' desire for independence…into a 'business spirit' that meets capital's growing need for satellites." (Alliez and Feher, 1986: 349) Neoliberalism is not simply an ideology in the pejorative sense of the term, or a belief that one could elect to have or not have, but is itself produced by strategies, tactics, and policies that create subjects of interest, locked in competition.

Because Foucault brackets what could be considered the "ideological" dimension of neoliberalism, its connection with the global hegemony of not only capitalism, but specifically a new regime of capitalist accumulation, his lectures have little to say about its historical conditions. Foucault links the original articulation of neoliberalism to a particular reaction to Nazi Germany. As Foucault argues, the original neo-liberals, the "Ordo-liberals," considered Nazi Germany not to be an effect of capitalism. But the most extreme version of what is opposed to capitalism and the market—planning. While Foucault's analysis captures the particular "fear of the state" that underlies neoliberalism, its belief that any planning, any intervention against competition, is tantamount to totalitarianism. It however does not account for the dominance of neoliberalism in the present, specifically its dominance as a particular

"technology of the self," a particular mode of subjection. At the same time, Foucault offers the possibility of a different understanding of the history of neoliberalism when he argues that neoliberalism, or the neo-liberal subject as *homo economicus,* or *homo entrepreneur,* emerges to address a particular lacunae in liberal economic thought, and that is labor.

In this sense neoliberalism rushes to fill the same void, the same gap, that Marx attempted to fill, without reference to Marx, and with very different results (Foucault, 2008: 221). Marx and neo-liberals agree that although classical economic theory examined the sphere of exchange, the market, it failed to enter the "hidden abode of production" examining how capital is produced. Of course the agreement ends there, because what Marx and neo-liberals find in labor is fundamentally different: for Marx labor is the sphere of exploitation while for the neo-liberals, as we have seen, labor is no sooner introduced as a problem than the difference between labor and capital is effaced through the theory of "human capital."[3] Neoliberalism scrambles and exchanges the terms of opposition between "worker" and "capitalist." To quote Etienne Balibar, "The capitalist is defined as worker, as an 'entrepreneur'; the worker, as the bearer of a capacity, of a human capital" (Balibar, 1994: 53). Labor is no longer limited to the specific sites of the factory or the workplace, but is any activity that works towards desired ends. The terms "labor" and "human capital" intersect, overcoming in terminology their longstanding opposition; the former becomes the activity and the latter becomes the effects of the activity, its history. From this intersection the discourse of the economy becomes an entire way of life, a common sense in which every action--crime,

[3] In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault argues that Marx filled this void with an "anthropology" of labor. This is similar to the critique that Foucault develops in "Truth and Juridical Forms," in which he argues that Marx posited labor as the "concrete essence of man." As Foucault writes: "So I don't think we can simply accept the traditional Marxist analysis, which assumes that, labor being man's concrete essence, the capitalist system is what transforms labor into profit, into hyperprofit or surplus value. The fact is capitalism penetrates much more deeply into our existence. That system, as it was established in the nineteenth century, was obliged to elaborate a set of political techniques, techniques of power, by which man was tied to something like labor—a set of techniques by which people's bodies and time would become labor power and labor time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyper profit" (Foucault, 2000: 86). This idea, of "capillary power relations" that turn man into a subject of labor, is an idea which Foucault sometimes develops as a critique and at other times attributes to Marx, see for example "Les Mailles du pouvoir" and less explicitly *Discipline and Punish.*

marriage, higher education and so on--can be charted according to a calculus of maximum output for minimum expenditure; it can be seen as an investment in human capital. Thus situating Marx and neoliberalism with respect to a similar problem makes it possible to grasp something of the politics of neoliberalism, which through a generalization of the idea of the "entrepreneur," "investment" and "risk" beyond the realm of finance capital to every quotidian relation, effaces the very fact of exploitation. Neoliberalism can be considered a particular version of "capitalism without capitalism," a way of maintaining not only private property but the existing distribution of wealth in capitalism while simultaneously doing away with the antagonism and social insecurity of capitalism, in this case paradoxically by extending capitalism, at least its symbols, terms, and logic, to all of society. The opposition between capitalist and worker has been effaced not by a transformation of *the mode of production*, a new organization of the production and distribution of wealth, but by the mode of subjection, a *new production of subjectivity*. Thus, neoliberalism entails a very specific extension of the economy across all of society; it is not, as Marx argued, because everything rests on an economic base (at least in the last instance) that the effects of the economy are extended across of all of society, rather it is an economic perspective, that of the market, that becomes coextensive with all of society. As Christian Laval argues, all actions are seen to conform to the fundamental economic ideas of self-interest, of greatest benefit for least possible cost. It is not the structure of the economy that is extended across society but the subject of economic thinking, its implicit anthropology (Laval, 2007: 17).

## Resisting the Present: Towards a Criticism of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is thus a "restoration" not only of class power, of capitalism as the only possible economic system, it is a restoration of capitalism as synonymous with rationality. Thus, the question remains, why now, or at least why over the last thirty years has capitalism taken this neo-liberal turn? If Foucault's invocation of the specter of Nazi Germany is insufficient to account for the specific historical formation of capitalism, the opposition to Marx does little to help clarify the dominance of neoliberalism now. Somewhat paradoxically this question can be at least partially answered by looking at one of the few points of intersection between Marx and neoliberalism.

In the *Grundrisse,* Marx does not use the term "human capital," but fixed capital, a term generally used to refer to machinery, factories, and other investments in the means of production to refer to the subjectivity, the subjective powers of the worker. In general Marx understood the progression of capital to be a process by which the skills, knowledge, and know-how of workers were gradually incorporated into machinery, into fixed capital, reducing the laborer to an unskilled and ultimately replaceable cog in a machine. This is "proletarianization" the process by which capitalism produces its gravediggers in a class of impoverished workers who have nothing to lose but their chains. In the *Grundrisse,* however, Marx addresses a fundamentally different possibility, capital's exploitation of not just the physical powers of the body, but the general social knowledge spread throughout society and embodied in each individual. This is what Marx refers to as the "general intellect"—the diffused social knowledge of society. This knowledge, the capacity to use various languages, protocols, and symbolic systems, is largely produced outside of work. As Marx writes: "The saving of labor time is equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labor as itself the greatest productive power. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of *fixed capital,* this fixed capital being man himself" (Marx, 1973: 712). Marx's deviation from the standard terminology of his own corpus, terminology that designates the worker as labor power (or living labor), the machine or factory as fixed capital, and money as circulating capital, is ultimately revealing. It reveals something of a future that Marx could barely envision, a future that has become our present: the real subsumption of society by capital. This subsumption involves not only the formation of what Marx referred to as a specifically capitalist mode of production, but also the incorporation of all subjective potential, the capacity to communicate, to feel, to create, to think, into productive powers for capital. Capital no longer simply exploits labor, understood as the physical capacity to transform objects, but puts to work the capacities to create and communicate that traverse social relations. It is possible to say that with real subsumption capital has no outside, there is no relationship that cannot be transformed into a commodity, but at the same time capital is nothing but outside, production takes place outside of the factory and the firm, in various social relationships. Because of this fundamental displacement subjectivity becomes paramount, subjectivity itself becomes productive and it is this same subjectivity that must be controlled.