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FOUCAULT'S ANALYSES OF NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY. PAST INVESTIGATIONS AND PRESENT APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT
This essay seeks to elucidate if and to what extent Foucault's analyses of governmentality and neoliberalism *as* a form of governmentality in his 1978-1979 Collège de France lecture series can justifiably be used to come to a critical understanding of present-day neoliberalism(s). This has been a hotly debated issue among Foucault scholars based on what they consider to be ambiguities related to the normative status as well as the methodology of these lectures. In an attempt to contribute to this debate and to settle some of these concerns, I start by explicating how neoliberalism has variously been interpreted and specify what I understand "neoliberalism" to mean. Foucault's notion of "governmentality" and his analyses of the mid-20th C versions of German and American neoliberal governmentalities presented in these lectures are contextualized in terms of his general thinking in the late 70s and early 80s specifically his insistence on the critical attitude as virtue and his methodological specifications of philosophical-historical research. I contend that although Foucault's neoliberal governmentality lectures might be value-neutral, methodologically they remain a strategics of power/knowledge configurations imbued with the "critical attitude" that asserts the right not to be governed *like that.* It is therefore both justifiable and instructive to critically engage contemporary neoliberalisms through the lens of governmentality.

KEYWORDS
Foucault; neoliberalism; governmentality; critique; critical attitude; strategics; power/knowledge.

The present essay is a component part of a larger investigation, which is animated by the following question: what are we today in relation to our present understood as the globalizing neoliberal governmentality in which life is reduced to constant work under conditions of strict control? This essay seeks to elucidate to what extent Foucault's 1978-1979 analyses of governmentality and neoliberalism as a form of governmentality can justifiably be used to come to a critical understanding of present-day neoliberalism(s). I proceed by explicating how neoliberalism has variously been interpreted and specify what I understand "neoliberalism" to mean. I contextualize Foucault's analyses of neoliberal governmentality in terms of his general thinking of the late 70s and early 80s and specifically his insistence on the critical

attitude as virtue and his methodological specifications of philosophical-historical research. I contend that considering it against this backdrop, returning to his analyses of the mid-20th C versions of German and American neoliberalisms to critique contemporary neoliberalisms – broadly understood – through the lens of governmentality prove inherently justifiable and instructive. In addition, it draws inspiration – and I would aver, is licenced, by the fact that Foucault's own historiographical ventures were never for the sake of the past, but explicitly a revisitation of the past for the sake of a crticial understanding of the present. As he said, concluding the lecture of 24 January 1979:

> "I will start with the way in which the elements of this crisis of the apparatus of governmentality have been set out and formulated over the last thirty years and I will try to find in the history of the nineteenth century some of the elements which enable us to clarify the way in which the crisis of the apparatus of governmentality is currently experienced, lived, practiced, and formulated" (Foucault 2008: 70).

1. NEOLIBERALISM: MY UNDERSTANDING

I want to set out by explaining what exactly I refer to when I speak of neoliberalism. Far too often, the term is mobilized as a vague blanket descriptor of our economic present in the developed and in some parts of the developing world, which offers little or no critical purchase. Flew (2014: 49), for example, attempts to specify neoliberalism, which he describes as an "oft-invoked but ill-defined" concept, by taxonomizing the uses of the term in terms of: "(1) an all-purpose denunciatory category; (2) 'the way things are'; (3) an institutional framework characterizing particular forms of national capitalism, most notably the Anglo-American ones; (4) a dominant ideology of global capitalism; (5) a form of governmentality and hegemony; and (6) a variant within the broad framework of liberalism as both theory and policy discourse". He further argues that these sprawling definitions are not mutually compatible, and more specifically, that neoliberalism's more recent status as a variant of dominant ideology or hegemony theories is not particularly compatible with Foucault's uses of the term in his 1978-1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics.* I diverge from Flew therein that, contrary to his own contention, I find too much overlap in specifically the last four definitions to serve as an instructive taxonomy. Neoliberalism, as I try to specify, is a historical variant of liberalism and the political development of capitalism that has been implemented on an increasingly global scale, which indeed makes of it a hegemonic politico-economic programme. To be sure, at the time of Foucault's analyses of German and American neoliberalisms, they were in their infancy, but he shows that what sets neoliberal governmentality apart from its liberal predecessor is its infiltration into spheres of human existence previously separate and apart from political and economic rule. While Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism may justifiably be interpreted to be "value-neutral" as

such, I contend they should be understood against the backdrop of his contemporaneous conceptualization of "critique", which as I shall argue, validates utilizing Foucault's analyses of neoliberalism as *governmentality* as a heuristic tool to critique contemporary neoliberal technologies in an incisive and instructive way. Put differently, Foucault's analyses of specific incarnations of neoliberalisms in terms of *governmentality* uncovers key structural elements of neoliberalism generally, which unlocks the secret to neoliberalism's global "success" – its voracious global implementation – , as well as to how it operates to create a perculiar brand of subjectivity. By way of introduction, let me first briefly specify what I understand under the rubric "neoliberalism".

Classical liberalism, as we know, is a political philosophy that propounds the maximization of individual liberty while restricting the use of force to achieve this end. With neoliberalism the emphasis shifts from a political philosophy to a political *programme*. Neoliberalism may be understood as the globalized and globalizing political programme[1] that espouses economic liberalism or 'laissez faire economics' as the only means of promoting economic development and securing political liberty. As the dominant mode of contemporary discourse and thought – also in growing parts of the developing world thanks to mobile technologies and the Internet – it has infiltrated not only our politics and our economy, but also our common-sensical way of interpreting, understanding and relating to the world encompassing every sphere of life – the private as well as the public.

Importantly, this global and globalizing political programme should not be understood as *one* neoliberalism with one definitive form and content that holds sway wherever it is implemented. Widely divergent incarnations, hybrid forms and interpretations are found across the globe. But as I have stressed, sweeping general definitions invariably prove vacuous and unenlightening. To be of any use, analyses need to be distinct, local studies that are context- and time-specific.[2] What may, however, be said about neoliberalism – like its predecessor, liberalism – in general, is that the central value that it propounds is *individual freedom*. A noble ideal indeed, which inspired both the American and French revolutions. For the American revolutionaries, freedom was understood negatively (freedom *from)* as something that needed protection by laws (Locke)[3], whereas for the French revolutionaries

[1] Slobodian (2018) offers a convincing argument in support of this depiction of neoliberalism.

[2] Based on the Foucaultian notion of 'governmentality', many subsequent scholars have undertaken what is known as governmentality *studies*. Governmentality studies do not refer to a sweeping social theory, but rather to an angle of view or analytic perspective. It is not a distinct methodological inventory. Its focus is on technologies and rationalities of (self-)government in distinct fields; how these practices and thinking about these practices translated into each other. It entails a local and specific cartography. Importantly, such knowledge of "government" is always failing and inadequate because it is aimed at the insistence and resistant "Real".

[3] Locke's theory of freedom is contained in Book II, Chapter XXI of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

freedom was a positive thing, the freedom of the people liberated from the rule of the sovereign (Rousseau).[4] What, then, is 'new' about neoliberal freedom? Briefly revisting the history of neoliberalism as recounted by David Harvey (2005) proves instructive here.

It was in the name of our unquestionable right to freedom and against "all its age-old foes"[5] that neoliberalism with its fervent defence of free markets rose to power in 1970s and 80s, the era of Thatcherism and Reaganomics. The restructuring of state forms and of international relations after WO II was designed to prevent a return to the catastrophic conditions that had so threatened the capitalist order in the Great Depression of the thirties. However, by the end of the sixties the post-war social consensus was breaking down, which led to a serious crisis of capital accumulation everywhere, ushering in a global phase of "stagflation" or the simultaneous and unchecked occurrence of inflation and economic stagnation that lasted throughout the 1970s. Neoliberalism offered a potential antidote. Renowned Austrian political philosopher and economist, Friederich von Hayek along with an exclusive group of passionate advocates – including the economists Milton Friedman and Ludvig von Mises – founded the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947. They depicted themselves as "liberals" (in the traditional European sense) because of their fundamental commitment to ideals of freedom. The *neo*-liberal label signalled their adherence to the free market principles of neo-classical economics that emerged in the second half of the 19th century to displace the classical theories of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx. According to Hayek, author of the bedrock neoliberal text, *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), it was a question of displacing an entrenched ideology – that of Marxism, socialism, state planning and Keynesian interventionism[6] – a battle that would take at least a generation to be won (Harvey 2005: 19-22).

So neoliberalism was a scientifically engineered proposed solution to a global economic crisis. I want to frame this development in terms of important rhetorical question Foucault asked in 1978 in a lecture titled, "What is Critique?", presented at the same time as his governmentality lectures at the Collège de France: "for what excesses of power, for what governmentalization, all the more impossible to evade as it is reasonably justified, is *reason* not itself historically responsible?" (Foucault 1978: 37-38, my emphasis). Here Foucault reminds us that even that which is not

[4] Rousseau's formulation of social contract theory argued against the idea that monarchs were divinely empowered to legislate. In *The Social Contract* (1762) Rousseau argues that laws are binding only when they are supported by the general will of the people.

[5] On the first anniversary of 9/11, President George W. Bush (2002) wrote: "Humanity hold in its hands the opportunity to offer freedom's triumph over all its age-old foes" (Bush, G. W. 2002. "Securing Freedom's Triumph", *New York Times* (September 11, 2002), quoted in Harvey (2005: 5-6).

[6] The well-known state interventionist theories of John Maynard Keynes, which rose to prominence in the 1930s in response to the Great Depression.

irrational – even supremely rational, devised by the most brilliant minds humanity spawned – may be or turn out to be unreasonable. What is more, the very reason it becomes so pervasive, and indeed hegemonic, is because it is "reasonably justified" – as are so many measures to which we have grown accustomed post 9/11 and in our present reality of COVID-19. As we shall see below, Harvey makes this very same point in 2005.

Even though neoliberal theory gained in academic respectability by the award of the Nobel Prize in economics to Hayek in 1974 and to Friedman in 1976, it was not until the end of the 1970s that neoliberalism was consolidated as new economic orthodoxy regulating public policy at the state level in the advanced capitalist world (specifically in the United States and Britain) (Harvey 2005: 22). In fact, since then we have witnessed a decisive turn to neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking everywhere. According to Harvey (2005: 3) almost all states, from those rising from the ashes of the Soviet Union to entrenched old-style social democracies and welfare states such as New Zealand and Sweden have succumbed – either voluntarily or in response to coercive pressures – to the neoliberalizing trend. One can therefore indeed refer to neoliberalism as the *dominant* mode of contemporary discourse and thought, which is not limited to politics and the economy, but also characteristic of our commonsensical way of interpreting, understanding and relating to the world encompassing both the public as well as the private spheres of human existence. After the 2007-8 global economic crisis, rather than a decline of neoliberalism, we have witnessed what might be termed its "un-death", i.e. its remarkable transformative capacity that defies demise evident in the post-crisis [re]configuration of neoliberal rationalities and practices of legitimization.[7]

David Harvey (2005: 5) explains the reason for the pervasive global implementation of variegated incarnations of neoliberalism as follows:

> "[f]or any way of thought to become dominant, a conceptual apparatus has to be advanced that appeals to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit. If successful, this conceptual apparatus becomes so embedded in common sense as to be taken for granted and not open to question. *The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as 'the central values of civilization'.* In so doing they chose wisely, for these are indeed compelling and seductive ideals. These values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose" (my emphasis).

What does this freedom of choice amount to under neoliberalism?

(1) First and foremost, the conviction that individual freedom is guaranteed by *freedom of the market and of trade*. While classical liberals insisted upon a strict

[7] This point is convincingly argued by Price in his 2014 study titled, *Interregnum? Understanding the Non-death of Neoliberalism.*

division between the state and society, neoliberals subordinate the state to the 'free' market. 'Free' in inverted commas, because this is a freedom that requires intensive maintenance to secure its unfettered operations. Hence, the state as subordinate to the market is charged with the responsibility to promote and facilitate the market's unhindered functioning by way of legislative intervention. As we shall see, the predominance of the market and the logic informing it becomes not merely a fact of life, but a *way* of life. What we see is that the freedoms attached to profitable capital accumulation – the fundamental goal of neoliberal regimes – reflect the interests of capital, i.e. private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital – considered to be the primary sources of wealth creation (ibid., p. 7). "The interests of the community" is only represented indirectly by way of the belief in the so-called 'trickle down effect', which I use very loosely here to refer to the conviction that the enrichment of the few will eventually filter down to also improve the lives of the poorest of the poor. While the wealth of the system increases *in toto,* this line of reasoning does not prove to contain any inherent logic making provisions for how the concentration of wealth would be dispersed throughout the system. Consequently, as the total wealth increases, so does the disparity between rich and poor.

(2) Neoliberalism sees *competition* as the defining characteristic of human relations. On the one hand, freedom is the necessary condition of possibility of competition. The triumph of one competitor tolls the death knell of competition as such. On the other hand, increased competition should in theory optimize market performance and hence contribute to increased freedom. Neoliberalism defines citizens as rational, self-responsible, entrepreneurial consumers competing for financial security and success against all others. Their profitable entrepreneurial undertakings finance their consumption; their democratic choices are the rational weighing of cost-benefit options; and any failure to obtain and retain financial security is the sole responsibility of the citizens themselves on account of their 'irrational' and hence imprudent decision-making. Any lack of profit generation, i.e. wealth accumulation or distribution is hence attributed to the irresponsible actions of citizens, organizations and businesses themselves. Again, this line of reasoning does not account in and of itself for the fact that optimal profit generation is dependent upon wealth already accrued. As a result, there has never been a greater disparaity between rich in poor in the history of humankind than under neoliberal dominion.[8]

In the service of freedom and competition, distinctive features of neoliberal policy include the limitation of state intervention in the market (deregulation) except in the form of protecting the freedom of the market and fostering unbridled

[8] See for example, https://nonprofitquarterly.org/highest-inequality-human-history-societies-ripe-social-change/: "A recent article in *Nature* reveals the results of the largest study on inequality in human history, which found that while degrees of inequality have been high in historical societies, they have never been as high as they are now".

competition; the minimization of tax and social provisions (social safety net); the privatization of public services; and the limitation of the organization of labour and collective bargaining of trade unions.

It should therefore be clear that my understanding of neoliberalism is modelled on Harvey's penetrating Marxian analyses,[9] which show neoliberalization to be fundamentally an elite project concerned first and foremost with the (re)constitution of class power.[10] Harvey backs up this claim by likewise pointing out the importunate rise in social inequality under neoliberalism, which he regards as structural to the entire project. I am cognizant of the fact that Foucault disassociated himself from Marxism, and am not here suggesting that Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism can in any way be read as a Marxist critique of neoliberalism. The neoliberalisms of the post-war German *Ordoliberal* School and of the 'Chicago School' that Foucault analysed in 1979 was clearly not the neoliberalism that Harvey explicated in 2005. As will become clear, however, Foucault's incisive analyses throw structural elements of neoliberal governmentality in general into relief that can be recognized to be operative in present-day incarnations of neoliberalism, without falling into the trap of projecting an anachronistic critique of the neoliberalisms of the 21st C into Foucault's 1979 lectures.

As a politico-economic programme, I have often referred to neoliberalism as the peculiar form that present-day capitalism takes (cf. e.g. Hofmeyr 2011). While this is arguably true, one should be mindful not to merely conflate neoliberalism and capitalism, as pointed out by Jason Michael McCann.[11] From its inception, capitalism has been a social and economic mode of living born from the Protestant work ethic and its associated belief in personal responsibility (cf. Weber 1992 [1905]). It is premised on the conviction that people should to some extent be socially and economically free to pursue their own interests, which includes their commercial and financial interests. Most favourably defined, one might say that it affords people the freedom to trade and accumulate wealth subject to the wider restrictions of a state, which safeguards against the risks that come with capitalist ambition and greed.

Neoliberalism, for its part, is the political development of capitalism. As such, as we have seen, it is a political and economic ideology that seeks to maximize the

[9] Other similar analyses are presented by Duménil and Lévy (2011) and Overbeek and Van Apeldoorn (2012).

[10] I am aware that such theories of neoliberalism as dominant ideology, such as Harvey's are open to three criticisms, i.e. (1) functionalism or attributing widely divergent phenomena to one causal factor; (2) instrumentalization or reducing all social and political institutions to instruments that merely further ruling-class interests; and (3) the reduction of the state to a mere cipher, i.e. a passive mechanism controlled from outside the formal political sphere (cf. Flew 2014: 58). It is my contention, as will become clear in the course of this essay, that interpreting neoliberalism as *governmentality* explains neoliberalism as dominant ideology without falling into these traps.

[11] Source: https://randompublicjournal.com/2016/04/25/capitalism-and-neoliberalism-whats-the-difference/.

freedom of the market by removing all barriers to the private accumulation of wealth. It therefore becomes a kind of power onto itself, not subject to state-regulation but rather a force that mobilizes the state to further its primary objective of unmitigated profit accumulation irrespective of consequence. Neoliberalism is therefore not against regulation per se, but against regulation over which it has no control and which inhibits its objectives. As a socio-economic paradigm in its purest form, the ruling ethic of capitalism is prudence, i.e. circumspection that results in the increase of wealth. The neoliberal pursuit of wealth as an end in itself and which leads to political power may be described as a politico-economic means of social control. The way in which McCann here distinguishes between capitalism and neoliberalism throws a number of features of Michel Foucault's own 1978-1979 analyses of neoliberalism as 'governmentality' into relief.

Foucault's 1978-1979 Collège de France lecture course, published in English under the title, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 2008), provide a highly nuanced account of the permutation of liberal thought into neoliberalism. Drawing on the notion of "governmentality" as a combination of political rationalities of governing and techniques of governmental practice, which he introduced in his 1977-1978 lecture course, *Security, Territory, Population* (published in English in 2007), Foucault identified the rise of neoliberalism in terms of an intellectual reaction to Keynesian economics and the welfare state, on the one hand, and the priority given to market-enabling and market-conforming economic policies in post-Second World War Germany, on the other. While such ideas, associated with the German *Ordoliberal* School of economists and historians, and authors such as Friedrich von Hayek, were relatively marginal for much of the 1940s and 1950s, they gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s. Of particular significance was the intellectual alliance formed with the work being undertaken by the 'Chicago School' of economists in the United States, who proposed a more thorough "generalization of the economic form of the market . . . throughout the social body" (Foucault 2008: 243), and whose key concepts, such as human capital theory, monetarism, and the public choice theory of government action, had gained significant international influence (Flew 2014: 59). Although I will be revisiting Foucault's account of neoliberalism in select detail, my interest here is not in offering a full elucidation (see Guala 2006; Gane 2008; Hindess 2009; Tribe 2009; Behrent 2009; Flew 2012b), but to reassess to what extent Foucault's analyses of neoliberalism as *governmentality* may be utilized to critically engage contemporary neoliberalism.

This has been the subject of fervent debate among Foucault scholars over the last decade or so (see, for example, Dean 2015; Zamora 2014; Behrent 2009; Audier 2015a; 2015b).[12] Although there is mention of Foucault's "neoliberal

[12]For an archive of this growing body of debate and commentary, see http://foucaultnews.com/category/neoliberalism/

temptation" (Zamora 2014; Dean & Zamora 2019), some of these scholars are careful to avoid a simplistic for or against stance, or more precisely, "they eschew the extremes of presentist and historicist reduction to which it [the debate] has been prone" (Specter 2015: 368). The presentist temptation would consist in developing a Foucaultian critique of contemporary neoliberalism out of his 1979 lectures, conflating or ignoring the differences between the contexts of 1979 and the (recent) present. Wendy Brown (e.g. 2003; 2014) is known for utilizing Foucault in her critique of neoliberalism but concludes that Foucault's assessment of neoliberalism in 1979 is of very limited utility for her purposes, i.e. for present-day critical democratic theory: "Foucault's relative indifference to democracy and to capital constitutes the major limitation in his framework for my specific purposes" (Brown 2014: 50 cited in Specter 2015: 368). To be clear, the argument is not that a Foucaultian critique of neoliberalism is not possible, but rather that the 1979 lectures not only lack an incipient critique, but may in fact have been describing very different terrain from a very different set of perspectives. The controversy around these lectures concern both Foucault's normative perspective as well as his methodology, which may be attributed precisely to the fact that they were his public lectures, which were not systematic but rather experimental, exploratory and provisional. What drew Foucault to his comparative study of German *Ordoliberalism*, American neoliberalism, and French neoliberalism was "the essential epistemological transformation" of these neoliberal analyses:

> "their claim to change what constituted in fact the object, or domain of objects, the general field of reference of economic analysis. In practice, economic analysis, from Adam Smith to the beginning of the twentieth century, broadly speaking takes as its object the study of mechanisms of production, the mechanisms of exchange, and the data of consumption within a given social structure, along with the interconnections between these three mechanisms. Now, for the neo-liberals, economic analysis should not consist in the study of these mechanisms, but in the nature and consequence of what they call *substitutable choices*, that is to say, the study and analysis of the way in which scarce means are allocated to competing ends" (Foucault 2008: 222, my emphasis).

It is this epistemological shift of neoliberalism that captured Foucault's attention, I argue, which opens one of the most important fault lines along which these lectures may justifiably be utilized towards a critical engagement with contemporary neoliberalism without simplistically reducing Foucault's own analyses to an overt rejection of neoliberalism *tout court*. The linchpin that holds together Foucault's analyses of neoliberalism in 1979 and the present incarnation(s) of neoliberalism is neoliberalism's novel object of economic analysis: labour or the "strategic programming of individual's activity": "to bring labor into the field of economic analysis, we must put ourselves in the position of the person who works; we will have to study work as economic conduct practiced, implemented, rationalized, and calculated by the person who works". In short, "[w]hat does working mean for the person who

works?" (ibid., p. 223). It is beyond to scope of the present essay to delve into this specific epistemological "intrigue" in any detail. Instead, in what follows the focus will be on ascertaining the status of Foucault's lectures on neoliberal governmentality *as critical toolkit in the present* by contextualizing them in terms of his thought in the late 70s and early 80s more generally by revisiting some of his key lectures and essays of this period. I will proceed by first focusing on the meaning of "governmentality" as concept.

2. GOVERNMENTALITY: THREE SENSES OF THE TERM

Foucault's work in the latter half of the 70s and early 80s displays a seemingly disparate two-pronged interest. While his lecture series at the Collège de France, related articles and interviews investigate political rationalities and the "genealogy of the state", his multi-volume *Histoire de la sexualité* book project (especially Volumes II (*L'usage des plaisirs)* and III (*La souci de soi))* displays a paradigm shift away from state-devised strategies of domination towards the "genealogy of the subject". From 1970 until his death in 1984, Foucault held the Chair of "History of Systems of Thought" at the Collège de France. Key to the argument pursued here are the two series of public lectures presented during this time already referred to: the lectures held in 1978 ("Sécurité, territoire et population") and in 1979 ("La naissance de la biopolitique"). In his 1978 lectures, Foucault traces the genealogy of governmentality from Classical Greek and Roman days via the early Christian pastoral guidance through to the notion of state reason and the science of the police.[13] In the 1979 lectures, he focused on the study of liberal and neoliberal forms of government, concentrating in particular on two forms of neoliberalism: German post-war liberalism (*Ordoliberalism* or the Freiburg School), and the liberalism of the Chicago School, which takes it a step further, and gives it a more radical form. Herein Foucault deploys the concept of government or "governmentality" as a guideline for the analysis he offers by way of historical reconstructions embracing a period starting from ancient Greece through to modern neoliberalism. In these lectures one finds the key to bridging the gap between the state and the subject.[14] What connects the constitution of the subject and the formation of the state is the problem of government. In an oft-quoted passage from a 1980 Dartmouth lecture, Foucault explains it as follows:

> "if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self

[13] Also see the second section of "What is Critique?" (Foucault 1978: 36-47).

[14] Graham Burchell's English translations of the 1977-1978 lectures, "Security, Territory, Population" are cited as Foucault 2007, and the 1978-1979 lectures, "The Birth of Biopolitics" are cited as Foucault 2008). Lemke (2001) also offers a detailed reconstruction of the content of these lectures.

> ... He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call... government" (1993: 203-204).

Foucault therefore associates the formation of the state with technologies of domination, on the one hand, and the constitution of the subject with technologies of the self.[15] He defines technologies of domination as those practices that determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends. Technologies of the self, on the other hand, permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on themselves so as to transform themselves. He qualifies this binary association though by stressing that even technologies of the self is associated with a certain type of domination (Foucault 1982a: 18). The individual, according to Foucault, would both be the product of power imposed and internalized *as well as* the potential embodiment of resistance. He thus in part opposes the state to the individual and describes the point of contact between the technologies of domination of others [the state] and those of the self, "governmentality" (ibid., pp.18-19). What Foucault's genealogy of governmentality uncovers, then, is the fact that the state and the self do not, in fact, constitute two opposing forces – of domination, on the state-side, and (relative) freedom from domination, on the self-side. Rather, the emergence of the "autonomous" individual and the "sovereign" state are intricately linked as the twin projects extending along one and the same axis.

The analytical perspective of "governmentality" does not represent a break in Foucault's work with regard to his earlier analysis of power, but covers a specific type of power, which, he terms "biopower", as we shall see – the state's power over life or the practice of modern states and their regulation of their subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (Foucault 1976: 140). Hence, the focus on governmentality enables him "to tackle the problem of the state and population" (Lecture 8 February 1978 (Foucault 2007: 116)). In his efforts to get to the very heart of the nature of power, Foucault always endeavoured to

> "free relations of power from the institution [the army, hospital, school, prison, ect.], in order to analyze them from the point of view of technologies; to distinguish them also from the function, so as to take them up within a strategic analysis; and to detach them from the privilege of the object, so as to resituate them within the perspective of the constitution of fields, domains, and objects of knowledge" (ibid., p. 118).

[15] On the subject of neoliberal subject-formation also see the well-known Foucaultian inspired study by Dardot & Laval (2009).

The point, for Foucault, is to uncover the specific technology of power – the "governmentality" – that operates through the state. For "do not these general technologies of power, which [Foucault have] attempted to reconstruct by moving outside of the institution [and beyond its function and object], ultimately fall under the global, totalizing institution that is, precisely, the state?" (ibid.). Do we not find beyond the hospital, the prison, the family, the army, etc. yet another institution – an all-encompassing, totalizing institution, the state?

> "Is it possible to move outside? Is it possible to place the modern state in a general technology of power that assured its mutations, development, and functioning? Can we talk of something like a 'governmentality' that would be to the state what techniques of segregation were to psychiatry, what techniques of discipline were to the penal system, and what biopolitics was to medical institutions? These are the kinds of questions that are at stake [in these lectures]" (Lecture 8 February 1978 (Foucault 2007: 120).

Apart from being the connective thread linking the constitution of the subject and the formation of the state, the notion of governmentality also needs to be understood etymologically and historically to fully grasp its innovative potential for understanding the workings of contemporary neoliberal power. First, the semantic linking of governing (*gouverner*) and modes of thought (*mentalité*) in govern-mentality points to the fact that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning it.[16] The concept of governmentality therefore embodies Foucault's belief in the reciprocal constitution of power techniques and forms of knowledge. This means governmentality is two-sided: (1) the knowledge-side consists in representation; and (2) the power-side

[16] Lemke's argument that the notion of govermentality has to be understood etymologically has been criticized by Michel Senellart in his "Course Context", in Foucault 2007: 399-400, note 126. Senellart's argument hinges on the fact that "govern" in "governmentality" does not derive from "government" "like "musicality" from music". He contends that Lemke's translation of the word in German by "Regierungsmentalität" is a therefore a mistranslation. The authoritative German-English dictionary, *Langenscheidt,* translates *Regierung* as government, reign, rule, and administration. In various lectures presented in English cited in this essay, Foucault qualifies his understanding of "government". His conceptualization of "government" obviously does not conform to our present-day commonsensical understanding of the term, since no alternative term is available to account for the historically encompassing meaning of the term. Like most philosophical concepts, commonsensical understandings cannot suffice to comprehend what a term means within the context of a specific philosopher's work. German scholars could possibly have opted to use the verbal form of *Regierung* – *regieren* – translated by *Langenscheidt* as govern, rule, and reign, which mirrors the different meanings of the noun and the verb in English. The English translators opted for the verb by translating it as "governmentality" as opposed to "governmentmentality". However, neither the noun nor the verb encompasses the meaning Foucault attributed to the term. Given Lemke's qualification of his understanding of "Regierungsmentalität", which I find to reflect the meaning intended by Foucault, I find Senellart's critique somewhat pedantic and, as such, not to be considered as a fundamental critique of Lemke's understanding of Foucault's work.

entails intervention. Representation refers to a specific discursive field defined by government, which does not simply "re-present" the governing reality in the form of a pure, neutral knowledge, but "rationalizes" the exercise of power (a pragmatics of guidance). The form in which a problem is represented determines its perception, strategy and solution. Representation, therefore, structures specific forms of intervention, the power-side of government. Political rationality interprets and processes reality in a way that already predetermines the way in which it will be tackled by political technologies (Lemke 2001: 191).

The third sense in which governmentality needs to be understood relates to the fact that Foucault explicitly harks back to the older and more comprehensive meaning of the term, which emphasizes the close connection between forms of power and processes of subjectification. Foucault's analyses testify to the fact that up to and well into the 18th century the problem of government extended far beyond the political sphere and was conceived as philosophical, religious, medical and pedagogical issue. "Government" did not only refer to the management by the state or the administration but also included managing the self, directing the soul, the family, children, the household and the community (Lecture 1 February 1978 (Foucault 2007: 93)). "It did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault 1982b: 220-221). Foucault consequently defines government as conduct or "the conduct of conduct". To "conduct" means both to "lead" others, which entails mechanisms of coercion, and a way of behaving or conducting oneself within a more or less open field of possibilities. "The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (ibid.). Crucial in this context, then, is the fact that Foucault endeavours to show in his history of governmentality how the modern autonomous individual and the modern sovereign state co-determine each other's emergence (Lemke 2000: 2-3; 2001: 191). Lemke rightly contends that the concept of governmentality plays a decisive role in Foucault's analytics of power, which he sums up as follows:

> "it offers a view on power beyond a perspective that centers either on consensus or on violence; it links technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state; finally, it helps to differentiate between power and domination" (Lemke 2000: 3).

From the aforegoing the critical purchase of conceiving of neoliberalism *as* a form of governmentality appears evident, yet the concerns around the normative status and methodology of Foucault's neoliberal governmentality lectures still need to be addressed.

3. FOUCAULT'S LECTURES CONTEXTUALIZED: HIS CONTEMPORANEOUS CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CRITIQUE

In the first part of his 1978 lecture presented to the French Society of Philosophy, Foucault defines critique as "an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be; it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate" (Foucault 1978: 25). This definition suggests critique is a means to an end. However, this end is a future or a truth that remains beyond its grasp, since it is unable to regulate the domain it oversees. It suggests that critique is inherently a responsibility vis-à-vis the future that exceeds its powers. What this means, explains Foucault, is that critique is a function that is subordinated to what philosophy, science, politics, ethics, law, literature, etc. positively constitute. For him, the critical attitude is a *virtue* supported by some general *imperative.* Foucault specifically brings this conceptualization of critique to bear on a historical reconstruction of the art of governing men starting from the Christian pastoral to the veritable exponential growth of this art in the 15th C along a two-pronged trajectory: beyond the religious sphere, expanding into civil society, on the one hand; and its proliferation into a variety of areas, such as how to govern one's mind and body, children, the poor and beggars, a family, armies, cities, and states, on the other (ibid., pp. 25-26). We are here reminded of the wide scope of activities and areas that 'government' referred to in the 15th and 16th centuries – precisely the encompassing sense that Foucault draws on when theorizing "governmentality". He contends that this "governmentalization" cannot be dissociated from the question, "how *not* to be governed?" (my emphasis). To be clear, this does not imply that the critical attitude implies a wholesale rejection of governmental rule, i.e. that one does not want to be governed *at all.* Rather, it is to be understood as a perpetual question: "how not to be governed *like that,* by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (ibid., p. 28). What Foucault does here is he postulates a necessary partnership between the movement of governmentalization of both society and individuals and the critical attitude. This alliance entails distrusting and defying the various regimes of governmentalization that are brought to bear on society and on individuals so as to *develop* the arts of governing. The critical attitude as a way of thinking with a cultural, political and moral dimension, is "the art of not being governed like that and at that cost" (ibid., p. 29). Foucault goes on to flesh out this fluid or general definition more precisely:

Critique is a legal issue: it means "putting forth universal and indefeasible rights to which every government ... will have to submit" (ibid., p. 30). Critique is a necessary and certain confrontation of authority: it means not accepting as true "what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so." This brings us to the oft-quoted core of this lecture, which is instrumental to

the argument being pursued here. The core of critique is a bundle of connected relationships between power, truth and the subject. Foucault explains:

> "And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then!: critique will be *the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability*. Critique will ensure *the desubjugation of the subject* in the context of what we could call ... the *politics of truth* (Foucault 2007: 32, my emphasis).

Here Foucault explicitly echoes Kant's call for courage to dare to use one's reason without someone else's direction. In his 1784, *What is Aufklärung?*, Kant contended that it is precisely this "direction" or exercise of authority that maintains humanity's incapacity to use its own understanding and its lack of decision, i.e. its dependence and subordination. For Kant, as we know, critique meant interrogating the limits of what we can know. Critique is the reflective examination of the validity and limits of human rational capacity. Enlightenment or autonomy – in the original Greek sense of not involuntarily subordinating oneself to externally imposed laws, but of giving laws or rules to oneself – is located at the point where one has obtained an adequate idea of one's own knowledge and its limits. Only there can obedience be founded on autonomy itself (ibid., pp. 34-36).

The critical attitude as virtue and imperative therefore conjoins the subject of governmentality, and the necessary technologies of power and rationalities of 'truth' that it entails, in a conflictual relationship that requires immense courage, but serves as necessary condition of possibility of liberty or desubjugation. Foucault's 1978-1979 lectures on governmentality and specifically on neoliberal governmentality was a critical interrogation of the limits of this historically peculiar rationality as a politics of truth, and its subjectification effects. As such, the debate around the status of these lectures – whether they can be read as for-or-against neoliberalism – is founded on a false dichotomy. For Foucault, this new form of power/knowledge, neoliberal governmentality, had to be *critically* interrogated not to establish whether it is to be embraced or rejected, but to ascertain the limits of the politics of truth it is putting forth and the effects of subject-formation that it has. Like all of these critical analyses, these lectures were open-ended, not complete and definitive, but rather the opening of an ongoing line of investigation into the contingent episodic outcomes of the relentless will to power. I will return to this shortly. The critical spirit of Foucault's philosophical work – be it his less systematic lectures, or his more methodical published works – is an indictment of complacency, since as he warns, power is not necessarily bad, it is dangerous. Those scholars who seek to mobilize Foucault's lectures to defend neoliberalism, or at least to interpret them as an embarrassing lapse of judgment in which Foucault was "tempted" by

neoliberalism[17], attempt to interject into the letter of Foucault's word something that flies in the face of the spirit of the critical attitude. The spirit of the critical attitude is non-negotiable when it comes to any undertaking that is either archaeological or genealogical in nature, or a "problematization" of the techniques of the self – a contention, which no doubt all Foucault scholars would be able to agree on.

This brings us to the second contentious issue at the forefront of the debate about the status of Foucault's lectures – their supposed atypical methodology, i.e. it is contended that the method Foucault employs is neither archeological nor genealogical; it is also not a problematization.[18] Rather, the method appears to be an elusive hybrid of all these "modes" of Foucault's histories (Specter 2017: 369). This "uncategorizability", I surmise, is taken to mean that these specific lectures are somehow anomalous, and, as such, their insights cannot be considered unambiguous, which further implies that they cannot unproblematically be put to any critical use. I find these concerns puzzling, to say the least, given the fact that Foucault is known for changing his mind, for changing the methods he employed, for eschewing any label that neatly categorized his thought and confined it to specific allegiances or approaches. Having said that, these methodological concerns are put forth by distinguished scholars devoted to the study of Foucault's work. As such, it would be amiss of me to merely dismiss them. In response then and as an attempt to allay some of these concerns, I want to consider how Foucault conceived of 'historical-philosophical' research.

While Foucault's methodological ruminations are scattered throughout his books, essays and interviews, I want to focus on two particular sources: the third part of the 1978 lecture, "What is Critique?" (pp. 48-61), in which Foucault specifically addresses the methodological issue of how to conduct historical-philosophical research, and the Nietzschean roots of Foucault's approach. The latter is found most succinctly in his 1971 essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in which he expressly draws upon Nietzsche's understanding of historical meaning – the sense which opposes *wirkliche Historie* to traditional history:

> "The former transposes the relationship ordinarily established between the eruption of an event and necessary continuity. An entire historical tradition (theological and rationalistic) aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity – as a teleological movement or a natural process" (Foucault 1971: 88).

[17] José Luis Moreno Pestaña, for example, argues in *Foucault, la gauche, et la politique* (2010) that Foucault was "totally convinced by the neoliberal discourse," and philosopher and sociologist, Geoffroy de Lagasnerie in *La dernière leçon de Michel Foucault* (2012) argues that Foucault offered little criticism of neoliberalism, but that, on the contrary, he seemed 'caught up' in it and was prepared to give it his "tacit assent."

[18] Cf. Flynn (1994) for this tripartite categorization of Foucault's method.

Wirkliche Historie, then, is an historical tracing that "deals with *events* in terms of their most unique characteristics, and their most acute manifestations" (ibid., my emphasis). Moreover, an event is "the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked 'other'. The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but responds to haphazard conflicts" (ibid.). An event is therefore a fundamental disruption of the status quo, a re-ordering of the playing field following the irruption of a foreign force.

In Section 12 of the Second Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), "Guilt, Bad Conscience and Related Matters", Nietzsche emphatically dismisses the traditional conflation of origin and purpose as if the reason for the appearance or emergence of something can be accounted for by the purpose it serves:

> "what causes a particular thing to arise and the final utility of that thing, its actual use and arrangement in a system of purposes, are separate *toto coelo [by all the heavens, i.e. absolutely],* that something existing, which has somehow come to its present state, will again and again be interpreted by the higher powers over it from a new perspective, appropriated in a new way, reorganized for and redirected to new uses".

For Nietzsche, all events involve "overpowering, acquiring mastery" which in turn involve a "re-interpretation, a readjustment" in which the "sense" and "purpose" up to then must necessarily be obscured or entirely erased. Here Nietzsche maintains that the usefulness of any organ, for example, an institution, custom or practice, tells us nothing about its origin. This contention flies in the face of the age-old belief that something's use-value explains its reason for coming onto existence. On the contrary, insists Nietzsche, all purposes or uses are only signs or symptoms that something more powerful has mastered something less powerful and has branded it with its own meaning of some function. This implies that the entire history of something is in reality "a continuing chain of signs of constantly new interpretations and adjustments, whose causes need to be connected to each other". The so-called "grand scheme of things" is nothing but the chronicle of a will to power that animate human action, which translates into the play of power, the victory of the most powerful and the retrospective sense-making despite the contingent circumstances that were the stage of their making. "Development", then, has nothing to do with progress towards a single goal, "even less is it the logical and shortest progress reached with the least expenditure of power and resources" – which is plain to see in a mere retrospective glance at the history of humankind. Halfway towards the middle of the 21st C in a time of a debilitating global pandemic, in the face of an ecological disaster and imminent nuclear Armageddon, with countless children succumbing daily to starvation, the idea of so-called "development", "reason" and "progress" following in the wake of the Enlightenment seems a farce, to

say the least. Nietzsche offers no reassurances. In 1887 he saw it with uncanny clarity: what accounts for the status quo is

> "the sequence of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of overpowering ... together with the resistance which arises against that overpowering each time, the transformations of form which have been attempted for the purpose of defence and reaction, the results of successful countermeasures. Form is fluid – the 'meaning', however, is even more so".

Nietzsche takes it even further – in a direction that few of us are in inclined to follow: for him, "the partial loss of utility, decline, and degeneration, the loss of meaning, and purposelessness, in short, death, belong to the conditions of real progress." "The size of a 'step forward'", he contends, "can even be estimated by a measure of everything that had to be sacrificed to it." For him, the crux of historical methodology, its object of study that determines its very rationale and methodological logic, is "a will to power playing itself out in everything that happens". It is the "spontaneous, aggressive, over-reaching, re-interpreting, re-directing, and shaping powers, after whose effects that 'adaptation' [the supposedly purposeful inner adaptation to external circumstances] first follows".

We can now better understand Nietzsche's notion of *wirkliche Historie,* which Foucault deals with at some length in his 1971 essay, and defines – echoing Nietzsche – as the tracing of "the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it" (Foucault 1971: 88).

To fully come to grips with the methodology of historical-philosophical research, we have to venture even further down the Nietzschean rabbit hole. Some years earlier, in the Second Essay of the *Untimely Meditations*, "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), Nietzsche distinguishes between *Historie* and *Geschichte.* This is an important distinction that sheds further light on the object of study of genealogy. *Historie* may be defined as the academic discipline, history or history as record, whereas *Geschichte* concerns history as *event.* Given the meaning and implications of history as event, we can now better understand why Nietzsche in this essay made a plea for a certain forgetfulness of history. Nietzsche was certainly not disavowing the fundamental historicity of human existence (its *Geschichte),* but rather questioning the value of an overly inflated historical sense of life, i.e. its potential stultifying effect. If history is the chronicle of arbitrary events resulting from merciless power plays in which the winner momentarily usurps power and reinvents the story of his/her victory to legitimize it and turn into an honourable and righful outcome; if history is not animated by a grand scheme that turns the slain into matyrs and heroes, then too much history does not serve life, but guts it of rhyme and reason – the very rhyme and reason that humankind *needs* to survive in the face of non-sensical adversity.

This is the backstory to the seemingly uncharacteristic methodology of Foucault's governmentality lectures. The third section of his 1978 lecture, "What is Critique?" is specifically focused on the precise nature and procedure of historical-philosophical research, i.e. "under what conditions, at the cost of which modifications or generalizations we can apply ... the question of the relationships between power, truth and the subject" "to any moment in history" (Foucault 1978: 47). This method of research would proceed as something that Foucault calls "an examination of '*eventualization' (événementalialisation)*". Foucault proceeds to explain what he means by this "horrible word" by detailing his now well-known insistence on the imbrication of power and knowledge. But he is careful to qualify what he means by it in very precise and nuanced terms:

> "Hence, the use of the word knowledge (*savoir*) that refers to all procedures and all effects of knowledge (*connaissance*) which are acceptable at a given point in time and in a specific domain; and secondly, the term power (*pouvoir)* which merely covers a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, which seems likely to induce behaviors or discourse" (ibid., p. 51).

For him, then, as he is adamant to stress, these two terms only have a *methodological function*. They, therefore, do not identify some general principle or feature of reality that can be used to legitimize a certain course of action, response or decision. Rather, methodologically they function to lay bear those elements or aspects that are pertinent for the analysis at hand. In other words, they function as symptomatic signs, indicators or fault lines – instances of many different entwined incarnations of power/knowledge as opposed to *one* power and *one* knowledge – where analytical digging is needed, where it is bound to unearth some incisive insight into the matter under investigation. Hence, Foucault says this may be called approximately, the *archeological* level (ibid., p. 53).

Furthermore, what becomes clear is that the object(s) of analysis – neoliberal governmentality in our case – were "not made acceptable by any existing right" (p. 54), irrespective of the habits or routines that have made them familiar to us and normalized them, irrespective of the forceful workings of power mechanisms or justifications employed to make them appear natural or legitimate. To understand what could have made them acceptable, one must extract that they were not in fact at all obvious, i.e. "its arbitrary nature in terms of knowledge, its violence in terms of power, in short, its energy" (ibid.). What one is dealing with, then, isn't a pure form, essence or foundation, but a "pure singularity" – unique and absolutely arbitrary in its historical emergence. "This", Foucault stresses, "is without doubt, one of the most important and debatable aspects of this historical-philosophical approach" (ibid., p. 55).

By its very nature, a singularity cannot be explained by an unitary, authoritative causal origin that accounts for its unavoidable emergence. The explication of causality in the case of a singularity is much more complex, the result of multiple and

heterogeneous relationalities. This is where the *genealogical* aspect comes in – genealogy as "something that attempts to restore the conditions for the appearance of a singularity born out of multiple determining elements of which it is not the product, but rather the effect" (ibid., p. 57). In other words, it is not the result of a process or action designed with its outcome in mind, but rather as an effect it is an inadvertent and/or contingent outcome that is more than the sum of its parts – parts that in some instances unwittingly contribute to a certain effect. Moreover, it is not so much an effect, as *effective* as in *wirklich,* that is, it is still in force and as such open-ended. The contributing or participating relationships are, at least in part, interactions between between individuals and groups that involve types of behaviour, decisions, choices, motives and impulses. By virtue of being *human* interactions, they imply "always variable margins of non-certainty" (ibid., p. 58).

What is particularly elucidating about the governmentality lectures is the fact that Foucault lays bear the ingenious neoliberal insight that profit, which is the outcome of the maximization of capital – "a source of future income" (Foucault 2008: 224), is the result of all those "physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage". Therefore, human labour is not the abstract product of labour power and the time during which it is used, as if such power is an invariable measurable constant that is merely utilized or not. Rather, as we know, human capital is contingent upon a variegated host of factors – not only acquired skills and natural aptitudes but also complex psychological, emotional and physical factors that either contribute to or detract from the productive output generated by this particular form of labour power, which has a limited lifespan. To maximize the efficacy and hence the productivity of this lifespan, the pioneers of neoliberalism realized that if there is innovation, that is, if new things and forms of productivity are discovered and technological innovations are made, "this is nothing other than the income of a certain capital, of human capital[19], that is to say, of the set of investments we have made at the level of man himself" (ibid., p. 231). This explains the danger that is inscribed in this "ingenious" neoliberal insight: it implies that every aspect of being human from cradle to grave is inscribed in – as either contributing or detracting factor – and therefore subjugated to the neoliberal project of maximizing profit.

Now to return to Foucault's clarification of his historical-philosophical methodology in his 1978 lecture – on how to proceed with an examination of "eventualization" –, we see that, to account for the "perpetual mobility, essential fragility or ... complex interplay between what replicates the same process and what transforms

[19] The main proponent of the theory of human capital was Gary Becker, recipient of the 1992 Nobel Prize in Economic Science. An important reference in this regard is his 1994 book titled, *Human Capital: a Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education.* In this classic study, he argues that an investment in an individual's education and training is similar to business investments in equipment.

it", he adds a third methodological dimension to archeology and genealogy, which he calls *strategics* (Foucault 1978: 58). These three do not represent three successive levels, which would be derived one from the other, but rather three necessarily contemporaneous dimensions in the same analysis. By simultaneously tracing the conditions of possibility of power/knowledge relations *and* conducting a series of analyses in the form of a strategics one is able to capture a glimpse of the singularity as effect of these relationships that are in perpetual slippage from one another. Importantly, Foucault stresses that one has to think about it in such as way as to see how it is associated with a domain of possibility, but also and consequently, of reversibility (ibid., pp. 59-60). The point of this historical-philosophical research would be to ascertain how the indivisibility of knowledge and power, which are caught in multible strategic interactions, result in singularities that are simultaneously fixed *and* fragile, and that turn these effects into events. The ephemeral fault line between fixity and fragility that risks destabilizing that which appears to be the hard and fast 'way things are' starts, according to Foucault, with the *decision not to be governed* (ibid., p. 60).

From these programmatic reflections on historical-philosophical methodology voiced in the very same period of time as his governmentality lectures, we can deduce at least two relatively indisputable conclusions for the purposes of the argument being pursued here. First, contrary to the insistence of a number of Foucault scholars debating the status of these lectures, their methodology is not at odds with the greater scheme of Foucault's modus operandi that can be discerned if his entire oeuvre is taken into account. What we recognize in these lectures is the very same methodological approach that typify his way of working and thinking in his books, lectures and essays of the late 70s and early 80s – the move from knowledge to a reconceived notion of power as irreducible to domination and inherently annexed to knowledge and deployed in networks of strategic relationalities, which reveal the potential reversibility of that which seems immutable. To lend credence to this first conclusion, I need only to briefly remind you of the oft-quoted passage from Foucault's "The Subject and Power":

> "One can therefore interpret the mechanisms brought into play in power relations in terms of strategies. But most important is obviously the relationship between power relations and confrontation strategies. For, if it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight. Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal" (Foucault 1982a: 225 in Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983 (2nd Ed.)).

The second conclusion that can be drawn from Foucault's reflections on historical-philosophical research is that his investigations were never simply a wholesale

dismissal or embrace of any particular regime, be it certain discursive formations, institutions, or an art of government. What we find instead are painstaking historiographical tracings of mutually responsive power/knowledge relations that resulted in unforeseen eventualizations. The threefold approach – archeological-genealogical-strategic – lay bear the conditions of possibility of the fixity but also the fragility of a particular constellation. Like all the objects that caught his interest, neoliberalism intrigued Foucault, but it would be to miss the point entirely to mistake this "intrigue" for some kind of "temptation", "defence of", "an apology for", "a flirt with" or "an embrace of" (cf. Zamora & Behrent Eds. 2016).

I am well aware that this argument can equally well be mobilized to contend that Foucault's analyses cannot justifiably be utilized to critique neoliberalism. If he was neither for nor against neoliberalism, then his analyses of neoliberal governmentality also cannot be mobilized against it. While these analyses are indeed value-neutral, Foucault contends that "the critical attitude appears as a specific attitude in the Western world starting with what was historically [he believes], the great process of society's governmentalizaiton (Foucault 1978: 34). In an attempt to desubjugate the subject in the context of power and truth, Foucault unequivocally made a plea – following Kant – to have the courage to use one's own reason without the direction of another's tutelage. If "governmetalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practices through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth", then "critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (ibid., p. 32). Governmentalization, then, cannot be dissociated from the question "how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (ibid., p. 28). The *letter* of the neoliberal governmentality lectures might be value-neutral, but they throw certain fault lines into relief that lays bear the fragility of the apparent immutable state of things. In other words, they arm critics with the means to undertake critique and the critical attitude itself – the *spirit* animating the lectures – not only licence but incites their audience to question and resist a governmental regime when the liberty of the subject is at stake.

In the final instance, the importance I accord to the critical attitude as virtue and methodological tool for Foucault may by buttressed by revisiting his lecture of 7 March 1979 (Foucault 2008: 185-214) with specific reference of the two reasons he offers for "dwelling on these problems of neo-liberalism [referring to the German version, ordoliberalism between 1930 to 1950]": first, he clarifies his "methodological reason" followed by the "reason of critical morality" (ibid., p. 186). Methodologically, he explains, he has dwelt so long on this problem of German neoliberalism because he wanted to see "what concrete content could be given to the anaysis of relations of power", i.e. the "domain of relations" that he calls "governmentality".

He wanted to investigate whether and how "this grid of governmentality" or "analysis of micro-power", which is assumed to be "valid for the analysis of ways of conducting the conduct of mad people, patients, delinquents, and children, my be equally valid when we are dealing with phenomena of a completely different scale , such as economic policy, for example, or the management of a whole social body" (ibid.). He concludes by stating "the analysis of micro-power is not a question of scale, and it not a question of a sector, it is a question of a point of view" (ibid.). His second reason is that of "critical morality". Here he tries to come to grips with the reasons informing the "state phobia" at the time. He argues that it is based on two assumptions that mutually support each other: first, "that the state has an unlimited force of expansion in relation to its object-target, the civil society, and second, that forms of state seems to me to form a kind of critical commonplace frequently found today" (ibid., p. 187). These two assumptions "put into circulation" what he calls "an inflationary critical value". He offers four reasons for this contention: first, it is inflationary because "it encourages the growth, at a constantly accelerating speed, of the interchangeability of analyses. As soon as we accept the existence of this continuity or genetic kinship between different forms of state, and as soon as we attribute a constant evolutionary dynamism to the state, it then becomes possible not only to use different analyses to support each other, but also to refer them back to each other and so *deprive them of their specificity"* (ibid., my emphasis). The second reason it is inflationary, he argues, is because it enables "a general disqualification by the worst", i.e., irrespective of the state's real functioning – its relative scope or whether it is better or worse, by virtue of the state's supposed intrinsic dynamic "the less can always be disqualified by the more, the better by the worst" (ibid., p. 188). The third inflationary mechanism is the fact that it does away with the need to analyse the actual reality pertaining to a particular state governmentality, since whatever one's grasp of it is or "profile of actuality reality presents", an overriding prejudicial suspicion predominates that enables "one to find something like the fantastical profile of the state" in any actual existing state of affairs. Finally, it is inflationary inasmuch as it "does not carry out a criticism or analysis itself". In other words, he explains, "it does not seek to know the real source of this kind of anti-state suspicion, this state phobia" (ibid.).[20]

4. CONCLUSION: GOVERNMENTALITY AS CRITIQUE OF NEOLIBERALISM

Given the value-neutral nature of Foucault's lectures on neoliberal governmentality and the contention around their status amongst Foucault scholars concerned about their 'atypical' methodology, can these lectures justifiably be utilized to

[20] In this regard, in instructive source is Marzocca (2017).

critically interrogate present-day neoliberal governmentalities? Moreover, what is the critical surplus value of interrogating neoliberal *as governmentality* over and against other forms of critiques of neoliberalism? To be sure, critiques of neoliberalism abound. Schematically these critiques may be divided along three main lines of argumentation: (1) neoliberalism as ideology, which offers a distorted picture of society and economy in need of an emancipatory corrective that is scientifically founded; (2) neoliberalism as economic-political reality, in other words, as the extension of economy into the domain of politics, the usurpation of the state by capitalism, the globalization that escapes the political regulations of the nation-state; and (3) neoliberalism as "practical anti-humanism" wreaking havoc on the lives of individuals, promoting the devaluation of traditional experiences, inciting processes of individualization that endanger collective bonds, threatening family values and personal affiliations through the imperatives of flexibility, mobility and risk-taking (Lemke 2000: 6). While these lines of critique certainly hold true and expose important effects of neoliberalism, analysing neoliberalism as a form of governmentality augment them in a crucial sense. Instead of merely relying on the conceptual dualisms it intends to criticize – knowledge and power; state and economy; subject and power – as these three lines of critique risk doing, neoliberalism – understood from the critical vantage point of governmentality – couples forms of knowledge, strategies of power and technologies of self to facilitate a more thorough-going insight into current political and social rearrangements, since it pierces the extensiveness of processes of domination and exploitation (ibid., p. 7). While the tenor of these lectures may be considered value-neutral, they are certainly not disinterested. Foucault's interest was sparked for sure, in a manner that might be described as a keenly critical intrigue in how self-induced crises fuel creative problem-solving transmutations. Importantly, Foucault's 'intrigue' is imbued throughout with the critical attitude alerted to the fact that while the omnipresent workings of power relations are not necessarily bad; they are dangerous.

As a 'chapter' in Foucault's historiographical analyses of the liberal and neoliberal arts of government, these lectures proceed as a genealogical excavation of the sources of history [*Historie*] as discipline in order to reanimate history as event [historicality or *Geschichtlichkeit*].[21] What Foucault discovers is that liberalism is a governmental practice that is not satisfied with respecting or guaranteeing this or that freedom, but *consumes* freedom. It can only function insofar as a number of

[21] A distinction originally made by Heidegger in *Being and Time* in 1927. See, for example, p. 381: "The proposition, 'Dasein is historical', is confirmed as a fundamental existential ontological assertion. This assertion is far removed from the mere ontical establishment of the fact that Dasein is the basis for a possible kind of historiological understanding which in turn carries with it the possibility of getting a special grasp of the development of historiology as a science". See especially Division II: Section V: "Temporality and Historicality" (pp. 424-455).

freedoms actually exist: freedom of the market, freedom of production, the freedom to exercise property rights, freedom of competition, etc. If it needs or consumes freedom, it must produce it. It must produce it, and it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the "management of freedom", producing what its subjects need to be free (economically). It is intent on ensuring the freedom necessary for freedom, i.e. the management and organization of the conditions in which one can be free. At the heart of this liberal practice, then, is the tension between the imperative to produce freedoms and the fact that this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats.

Foucault shows that the age of freedoms is exactly contemporaneous with the development, dramatic rise, and dissemination throughout society of those famous disciplinary techniques for taking charge of the behaviour of individuals day by day in its fine detail. It is for this very reason that in the end this liberal art of government introduces by itself or is the victim from within of what Foucault calls "crises of governmentality" (Lecture of 24 January 1979 (Foucault 2008: 68)). These crises then arise because the mechanisms for producing freedom ("liberogenic devices") actually produce destructive effects which prevail over the very freedom they are supposed to produce.

It is within this context that Foucault turns his attention to what constitutes a response to this crisis – the German and American neoliberalisms that emerged in the middle of the 20th C. They responded to the crisis induced by too much government by returning to a technology of frugal government (ibid., p. 322). What his analyses uncover, however, is that although less overt than discipline, the political programme of limiting state intervention exerts more effective and insidious control reaching as far as the intimate recesses of our private lives. Ever since the Great Depression of the 1930s mechanisms of economic intervention have been deployed to avoid the reduction of freedom that would be entailed by transition to socialism, fascism, or National Socialism. "But", asks Foucault in a manner unequivocally evidencing the 'critical attitude', "is it not the case that these mechanisms of economic intervention surreptitiously introduce types of intervention and modes of action which are so harmful to freedom as the visible and manifest political forms one wants to avoid?" (Lecture of 24 January 1979 (Foucault 2008: 69)).

I conclude with a quotation by Thomas Lemke that succinctly captures the critical surplus value of interrogating neoliberalism as governmentality:

> "the concept of governmentality suggests that it is not only important to see if neoliberal rationality is an adequate representation of society, but also how it functions as a 'politics of truth', producing new forms of knowledge ... that contribute to the 'government' of new domains of regulation and intervention" (Lemke 2000: 8).

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