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Waking Up from May '68 and the Repressive Hangover: Stages of Critique Past Althusser and Foucault

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Abstract: Following the May '68 student and worker uprisings in Paris, Foucault and Althusser reworked their analyses of power in order to take account of the social and political forces that had effectively squelched the revolutionary moment. At first, they organized their analyses around the notion of repression; but quickly thereafter, they reoriented their analyses toward the more productive dimensions of repressive power, with the ambition to unearth the sources of reproduction of social processes, practices, and institutions. Despite explicit rejections of the repressive model, however, a "repressive hangover" continued to have a significant effect on the style of critique that emerged in the 1970s. Foucault would eventually overcome it beginning in about 1980, after studying neoliberal governmentality in his 1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, and returning to theme of subjectivity: his exploration of the arts of living, of techniques of the self, of the care of the self can be interpreted as an effort to incorporate elements that would previously have fallen under the rubric of repression into the deeper subjective processes of the formation of the self. However, it is not critical theory or its evolution that would finally extricate us from the repressive hangover, so much as new digital technologies and the Internet of Things: the emergence of new conceptions of power in the digital age, tied to desire and *jouissance*, should finally allow us to get beyond the limitations of the post '68 repressive hangover.

Keywords: Foucault, Althusser, repression, self, neoliberalism, digital economy

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Introduction

Following the May '68 student and worker uprisings in Paris, a number of critical thinkers reworked their analyses of power in order to take account of the social and political forces that had effectively squelched the revolutionary moment and extinguished any radical potential. In several cases—notably, for Foucault and Althusser—the evolution of their thought followed a parallel trajectory: at first, they organized their analyses around the notion of repression; but quickly thereafter, they reoriented their analyses toward the more productive dimensions of repressive power, with the ambition to unearth the sources of reproduction of social processes, practices, and institutions.

My argument in this essay is that this shared historical trajectory—or, perhaps, path dependence—colored the critical theorization of power for years, if not decades. There was what I call a "repressive hangover" during the post-68 period that overshadowed much of the critical analyses. Despite explicit rejections of the repressive model—including, for instance, Foucault's criticism of the repressive hypothesis in *The Will to Know*—this repressive hangover continued to have a significant effect on the style of critique that emerged in the 1970s.

There were, to be sure, critical thinkers who more actively resisted the recurrence of repressive undertones—notably Deleuze and Guattari, drawing in part on Wilhelm Reich. And there were others, drawing on the earlier works of Marcuse, who also pushed beyond the originary condition of repression and resisted the temptation to backtrack on the "great refusal." But these forward-looking interventions often had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing the repressive hangover elsewhere. Despite Foucault's admiration for *Anti-Oedipus*, for instance, Foucault would develop, as a counterweight, his own theory of power in *The Punitive Society* and in *Discipline and Punish* that would refocus attention on the *prison* as metaphor for power relations throughout society.

Foucault would eventually overcome the repressive hangover beginning in about 1980, after studying neoliberal governmentality in his 1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, and returning to the theme of subjectivity. His exploration of the arts of living, of techniques of the self, of the care of the self can be interpreted as an effort to incorporate elements that would previously have fallen under the rubric of repression—for instance, the notion of subject formation (*subjectivation*) is closely tied to earlier notions of subjugation (*assujettissement*)—into the deeper subjective processes of the formation of the self. Foucault's turn to avowal and truth-telling in his Louvain lectures in 1981, *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*, reflects precisely the ambition to understand better how we, as subjects, bind ourselves to the social order at the very moment that we take care of ourselves.

Other critical thinkers also turned to these more subjective themes in order to reveal how productive forces shape society. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello provide a rich, recent illustration of this in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999), where they demonstrate how, begin-

ning in the mid-1970s and onwards, management theory abandoned the more repressive, hierarchical, Fordist model and instead embraced a more entrepreneurial, employee-initiated creative and autonomous model that allows workers to see their artistic selves—or subjectivities—in their work environment. The new management techniques harness the artistic critique of alienation at the heart of the May '68 protests in order to recast a new spirit of capitalism, while simultaneously disabling the social critiques by means of neoliberal rationalities. In this way, the revolutionary potential of May '68 was captured and rechanneled toward capital accumulation.

However, it is not critical theory or its evolution that would finally extricate us from the repressive hangover, so much as new digital technologies and the Internet of Things. The explosion of a digital economy that thrives on the basis of "likes," "follows," "shares," "retweets," and "LinkedIn invitations"—a political economy, in other words, that operates on the number of joyful clicks and downloads—has practically on its own, almost single-handedly, switched the gears forward and pushed us past the repressive hangover.

The displacement of Orwellian hatred and repression, and their replacement by desire and passion—which I explore and develop in *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age* (Harvard 2015)—has moved us beyond the model of repressive power. It may be, then, that we are only extricating ourselves from the repressive hangover now as a result of technological innovation, the systems of knowledge that surround them, and the way power circulates in the digital age.

Some critical thinkers will contest this, others may lament it, and yet others will argue that it may be fruitful for our understanding of the present. I cautiously lean towards the latter view. Cautiously in the sense that, as I will suggest in this essay, the emergence of new conceptions of power in the digital age, tied to desire and *jouissance*, must be wedded both to expressly repressive models of power and to the more productive theories of power.

In this essay, I will put a spotlight on three moments in the history of critical theory as I have set it out, focusing, first, on the repressive hangover in Foucault and Althusser; second, on Foucault's overcoming of that hangover by means of his return to subjectivity; and third, on our present digital condition analyzed through the lens of desire rather than repression. I will then suggest that our critical project, going forward, would benefit most from a marriage of the three critical stages.

I. The Repressive Hangover in Foucault and Althusser

The initial hypothesis of a repressive hangover involves a three-step movement: first, a turn to repression as a way to understand power post-68; second, a movement against repression to study the productive elements of power; and third, the repressive hangover.

A. *The First Two Moments: Moving Beyond Repression*

Foucault's lectures and writings most clearly follow the path of the first two moments. His first and most direct engagement with political power post '68 was through his analysis of the repression of the Nu-pieds rebellions in Normandy in 1639 in the first seven lessons of his 1971–72 lectures, *Théories et institutions pénales*, at the Collège de France.

To be sure, prior to those lectures, Foucault had frequently addressed the different ways of excluding and marginalizing the figures that were perceived as threats—through the epistemological distinction between reason and madness, and the other techniques that divided truth from falsity. From *The History of Madness* in 1961 through his first set of *Lectures on the Will to Know* in 1970–71, Foucault consistently analyzed the different ways that society has effectively parsed populations by imprisoning or medicalizing the mad, and rendering some discourses illegible and others reasonable. His inaugural address, *The Order of Discourse*, set out this very project: to explore how "the opposition between true and false" serves as a system of exclusion as powerful as legal prohibitions or claims of reason.[1]

There is, however, a distinct rupture in his research project on November 24, 1971, when he begins *Théories et institutions pénales* brusquely, without an introduction: "No introduction," Foucault jots down in his notes. "The *raison d'être* of this course: One need only open one's eyes."[2] Outside, the CRS and national police lined the streets. Non-parliamentary leftist parties were outlawed. Hundreds of militants, especially young Maoist militants of the *Gauche prolétarrienne*, had been arrested and imprisoned. Foucault did not need an "introduction" to his topic, because everyone knew he was addressing the French state repression that surrounded both him and everyone sitting at the Collège. And so, Foucault launched into seven intensely detailed lessons on the repression of the *Nu-pieds* rebellion: a historical analysis that traces the birth of a repressive judicial/policing apparatus in France.

As François Ewald suggested at Foucault 2/13, Foucault articulates in 1972 a model of repressive power relations.[3] The model took, as its object, certain revolutionary or seditious actors, but not all. The repression was not monolithic; some rebels were spared. It operated through the representatives of the king, who united the functions of administering justice and using military force, by means of a conjoint exercise of military power and of civil authority, in an unprecedented mixture. It deployed tactics of subjectivation of certain actors as enemies, a final judgment of wrongdoing, and dependence on the mystery of the sentence; as well as strategies of the dramatization of politics, of the use of ceremony and rituals. And it produced a particular outcome: not simply the production of order, or the

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[1] Foucault, *The Discourse on Language*, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 217.

[2] Foucault, *Théories et institutions pénales*, p. 3; BnF folio 1.

[3] *See* Harcourt, "The Stakes of the Balibar-Ewald Debate," at http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/foucault1313/2015/10/03/the-stakes-of-the-balibar-ewald-debate/

reestablishment of peace, but rather the production of a new form of power, namely the administrative state. The state of police.

This engagement with the *repressive* model of power was in part an outgrowth of Foucault's political involvement in the *Prisons Information Group*, a visceral experience that would produce a keen awareness of the seriousness of the struggles. It is not hard to imagine that his simultaneous turn to the notion of "civil war" as the basic matrix to understand social order was an outgrowth of this period. The repressive model loomed largest in 1972 and 1973, during and after the peak of the prison riots in France: the revolt in the Ney prison of Toul in December 1971, the Charles-III jail of Nancy on 15 January 1972, and the prisons of Nîmes, Amiens, Loos, Fleury-Mérogis among others.[4] After the revolt at Toul, on 5 January 1972, in a joint press conference of the G.I.P. and the *Comité Vérité Toul*, Foucault declares that "what took place at Toul is the start of a new process: the first phase of a political struggle directed against the entire penitentiary system by the social strata that is its primary victim."[5] Civil war comes to fore at the same time as he analyzes repression.

But as we know well, Foucault would famously move away from the repressive model of power rapidly, and turn instead to the *productive* dimensions of power relations. I have detailed this at length in the "Course Context" to *The Punitive Society*.[6] Starting as early as April 1972, after he visits Attica, and throughout the 1973 lectures, Foucault goes beyond this repressive model of power—leading, of course, to the famous passage in *Discipline and Punish* making clear that his focus is on the productive, not the repressive, aspects of punishment:

> Do not concentrate the study of the punitive mechanisms on their 'repressive' effects alone, on their 'punishment' aspects alone, but situate them in a whole series of their possible positive effects, even if these seem marginal at first sight. As a consequence, regard punishment as a complex social function.[7]

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[4] See *La Révolte de la prison de Nancy. 15 January 1972. Documents et propos de Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre et de militants du Groupe d'information sur les prisons* (Paris: Le Point du jour, 2013). Foucault gave his unreserved support to political prisoners and common law prisoners without distinction. As he elaborated the notion of "civil war," the very distinction—political prisoner and common law prisoner—no longer had any sense. This is an important aspect, both theoretical and practical, of Foucault's intervention at this time. See M. Foucault, "Sur la justice populaire. Débat avec les maos" (interview with Gilles et Victor, 5 February 1972, *Les Temps modernes*, no. 310 *bis*, pp. 355–366), *DE*, II, no. 108, pp. 340–369/"Quarto," vol. I, pp. 1208–1237; English translation by John Mepham, "On Popular Justice: A Discussion with Maoists," in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed., Colin Gordon (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980).

[5] *La Révolte de la prison de Nancy*, p. 19 (reproduction of the manuscript page).

[6] *See* Foucault, *The Punitive Society*, at pp. 267–269 and 279–281.

[7] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 23.

Althusser would travel along a similar path. He too, at about the same time, would complement his analysis of repressive state apparatuses with an exploration of the "ideological state apparatuses" that function not predominantly through repression, coercion, and punishment, but through persuasion, ideology, etc.

Althusser's starting point was, of course, repression. "The Marxist tradition is strict, here," he writes in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in 1969: "in the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (and in the later classical texts; above all, Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and Lenin's on *State and Revolution*), the State is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus."[8] Althusser goes so far as to say: "The State is a 'machine' of repression which enables the ruling classes […] to ensure their domination over the working class…"[9] This is the State comprised of the police, the prisons, the army, the law—and its basic function is to be "a force of repressive execution and intervention 'in the interests of the ruling classes'…"[10]

By contrast, there are a set of institutions that Althusser examines under the rubric of "Ideological State Apparatuses," which function predominantly by other means than repression. These include the different churches and religious establishments, the schools and universities, the family, the different political parties, the media, press, radio and television, and the cultural establishments, including the arts, literature, entertainment, and sports.[11] These institutions, most importantly, the educational ones, function on a different model than repression, one that Althusser describes as "ideological."

b. *The Stickiness of Repression in Foucault and Althusser*

Despite this important shift in both Foucault and Althusser—at about the same time in the post-'68 period—both thinkers remained somewhat trapped in a repressive *hang-over*. For both, the model of even *productive non-repressive* (or not *primarily* repressive) power remained linked to the internalization of social relations vis-à-vis a demanding other—often the police or prison guard. In other words, the repressive social bond continued to colonize their writings.

For Althusser, the theory of ideological interpellation was grounded in the example of the police officer who calls the subject out. The two main illustrations he offers—the first being, of course, the one that everyone uses to understand the very notion of interpellation—are the police officer hailing the subject and the person behind the entrance door asking, "who's there?" Althusser offers only two "highly 'concrete' examples," both of which have come down in critical theory as leitmotifs: the heart of his theoretical intervention, in his own

[8] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *On Ideology* volume (New York: Verso, 2008), p. 11.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 17.

words, "can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'"[12]

"Hailing as an everyday practice governed by a precise ritual takes spectacular form in the police practice of hailing: 'Hey, you there!'"[13] And when the illustration is not the police officer in the street, it is the "cop in your head."[14] This is a well known reference to the cover drawing on the *Action* weekly paper stating "Get rid of the cop in your head!" that Althusser criticizes in his (posthumously) published work, *On Ideology* in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, but again, places at the heart of the discussion.

When Foucault turns away from the repressive, he also ends up in the very heart of punitive detention—in the *panopticon* prison cell. This is, of course, despite his repeated insistence that the critical method had to break off from the traditional obsession with sovereign power; that, methodologically, his own approach "entails leaving the problem of the State, of the State apparatus, to one side."[15] As he would write in his manuscripts in 1974, "we cannot use the notion of State apparatus because it is much too broad, much too abstract to designate these immediate, tiny, capillary powers that are exerted on the body, behavior, actions, and time of individuals. The State apparatus does not take this microphysics of power into account."[16] And yet, although Foucault would help us discern the extraordinarily capillary nature of relations of power, the central metaphor he deployed in his productive phase was *prison* architecture.

Now, it was of course an extremely powerful image and metaphor, particularly in inverting the metaphor of the spectacle that Guy Debord had so convincingly elaborated in his *Society of the Spectacle*.[17] Foucault's reading of Nikolaus Julius and Bentham, and his inversion of the logic of the spectacle into the panopticon was a *tour de force*. A brilliant move that we can recognize in this passage from his Collège de France lectures on *The Punitive Society* in 1973:

> [T]his is precisely what happens in the modern era: the reversal of the spectacle into surveillance. We are in the process of inventing, says Julius, not only an architecture, an urbanism, but an entire disposition of the mind in general, such that, from now on, it will be men who will be offered in

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[12] Ibid., p. 48; *see also* Althusser, "On Ideology," 171–207, in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso, 2014), pp. 190–91.

[13] Althusser, "On Ideology," p. 190 n.24.

[14] Althusser, "On Ideology," 171–207, in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso, 2014), p. 178.

[15] Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, 16.

[16] Ibid.

[17] I have no doubt Foucault had Guy Debord in mind. *See* Foucault, *The Punitive Society*, p. 38 n.4; Harcourt, *Exposed*, p. 88–89.

> spectacle to a small number of people, at the limit to only one man destined to surveil them all. The spectacle turned into surveillance, the circle that citizens formed around the spectacle—all that is reversed. We have here a completely different structure where men who are placed next to each other on a flat surface will be surveilled from above by someone who will become a kind of universal eye.[18]

The universal watching eye of the prison guard in the central watchtower of the panopticon prison became Foucault's metaphor for the circulation of power in modern society. And so he would ask, rhetorically, two years later in *Discipline and Punish*, "Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penality? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"[19]

In both Foucault and Althusser, then, there is this repressive hangover—a source of tension that would place both Foucault and Althusser in a tense relationship with the work of Deleuze and Guattari. But here, I will jump forward and skip that episode.

II. Foucault's Return to Subjectivity: A Possible Overcoming

Several years later, Foucault would undergo another important movement in his thought that would take him from the close examination of the "arts of governing" to an analysis of the "arts of living." The shift began in earnest in 1980, though the trajectory there would be somewhat more circuitous. Let me propose here a schematic sketch.

After exploring the emergence of disciplinary power in the nineteenth century in his Collège de France lectures on *The Punitive Society* (1972–73) and *Psychiatric Power* (1973–74), as well as in his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault would turn his attention to more contemporary forms of power and governmentality—namely biopower and the neoliberal management of populations—in his book, *History of Sexuality, Volume I*, and his 1976 lectures. In order to understand contemporary forms of biopower, Foucault would trace a genealogy of neoliberal forms of rationality, starting in his 1978 lectures on *Security, Territory, Population*—a genealogy that runs through pastoral power, *raison d'État*, the police, and liberal and neoliberal thought. As he explained in 1979, in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, understanding neoliberal rationality is an essential building block to analyzing the concepts of populations and biopower.[20]

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[18] Foucault, *La société punitive*, p. 25.
[19] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 228.
[20] Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, p. 24.

Foucault meant to return directly to that project by analyzing biopolitics in 1980, which was his original proposal as evidenced by the title of the 1980 lectures *On the Government of the Living* (which he penned in Spring 1979). He fully intended to continue where he had left off the year before and *return* to biopolitics—in other words, to resume the investigation he had initially set for himself for the 1978–1979 term, but that he had not yet gotten to. As he indicated the previous year, on January 10, 1979, he had intended to focus his 1979 lectures on the core question of the government of "populations," but needed to first understand neoliberalism before getting there:

> "I thought I could do a course on biopolitics this year," Foucault said in January 1979. "But it seems to me that the analysis of biopolitics can only get under way when we have understood the general regime of this governmental reason I have talked about […] Consequently, it seems to me that it is only when we understand what is at stake in this regime of liberalism opposed to *raison d'État* … only when we know what this governmental regime called liberalism was, will we be able to grasp what biopolitics is."[21]

It seems clear, then, that the title he gave in Spring 1979 for his next lectures, *On the Government of the Living*, was intended to continue the work on biopolitics by directly addressing the topic of the government of the living.[22]

Instead, however, Foucault goes back in history to resume his work on the genealogy of the arts of governing, which he had begun in February 1978. This is the "double movement" I refer to elsewhere[23]: Foucault returns to an earlier archive—namely Sophocles, the Stoics, and the early Christian pastoral—in order to reexamine the genealogy of our contemporary neoliberal forms of rationality, by digging deeper into the forms of truth-telling and manifestations of truth that are inextricably linked to regimes of truth.

The return to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is telling, not only because it is a return to the theme of the "will to know" from the 1970–71 lectures, but also because that was precisely where he had, in some sense, left off in 1978. At the very beginning of his genealogy of the arts of governing on February 8, 1978, in *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault explored the different forms of government in ancient Greece—discussing the "metaphor of the rudder, the helmsman, the pilot, and the person who steers the ship"[24]—with a special attention to *Oedipus Rex*. At that point, right after discussing *Oedipus,* Foucault declares: "I do not think that the idea that one could govern men, or that one did govern men, was a

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[21] Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 21–22.
[22] Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, course context, p. 327.
[23] http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/foucault1313/2016/02/07/introducing-on-the-government-of-the-living/
[24] *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 122.

Greek idea. If I have the time and courage I will come back to this problem, either at the end of these lectures or in the next series of lectures…"[25]

But the 1980 lectures, in fact, pick up right there. They represent a return to that question and a reexamination—evidently casting doubt on his statement about Greek antiquity, as was his way: to reexamine everything. The first four lectures in 1980, which reinterpret *Oedipus Rex* through the lens of a manifestation of one's truth, serve as a corrective that then relaunches an inquiry into the pre-Christian East.

This has the effect of shifting the character of the genealogy somewhat, of opening new vistas, and of reorienting the project toward "the notion of the government of men by the truth."[26] It produces the shift from power-knowledge to the notion of government by the truth or of "regimes of truth." And it pushes the inquiry past the market as measure of truth, legal processes, and historical narratives, to the central place of the self—the "I," the avowal in the "rituals of manifestation of truth"[27]—which will, as we know, lead Foucault toward the avowal, the examination of self, the direction of others, forms of truth telling, and eventually *parrhesia*.

The next year's lectures, *Subjectivité et vérité* in 1981, explicitly pursues the line of research begun the previous year, focused specifically on the domain of ancient Greek and Roman sexuality, or rather, *aphrodisia* (since, as he explained, the term sexuality is a modern one and therefore anachronistic). The central question of the 1981 lectures is: "How to 'govern oneself' through actions of which one is oneself the objective, the domain on which they apply, the instrument that they use, and the subject that acts?"[28] To address this question, Foucault returns to texts from the period of Greek and Roman antiquity and late Antiquity, ranging from Plato's *Alcibiades* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, to Hippocrates and Xenophon, to Cicero's *De finibus*, Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, and Hierocles, to Artemidorus' *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the *Physiologus* (both circa 200 CE), in order to study the modes of ancient living through detailed analyses of marriage, marital life, and marital sex, the questions of sexual penetration, pederasty, monogamy, and incest, among others.

But what becomes increasingly evident as this research unfolds is that, while Foucault is pursuing the line of inquiry he had begun the year before, we begin to witness an important displacement in his thought from an earlier focus, beginning in 1977 and extending to 1980, on the "arts of governing," to a more concerted focus on the "arts of living." In other words, there is an increasing interiority to the object of these arts, of these *techne*. While much of

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[25] *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 123. At that point in 1978, Foucault turns to the pre-Christian East and spiritual direction, the pastoral.

[26] Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, p. 11.

[27] Ibid., p. 6.

[28] *Subjectivité et vérité*, p. 299.

the earlier work on madness, the clinic, and the prison—and even, to a certain extent, the first volume on sexuality—examined the conduct of conduct by others, Foucault's deepened attention to subjectivity begins to produce a slight shift toward the conduct of conduct by oneself. This can be felt in reading the lectures: they are increasingly about arts of living; about modes of existence that are more internal. They are about what Foucault calls "*la façon de se conduire, les modes de vie, les manières d'être*," "*les arts de vivre, l'art de se conduire*," "*les modèles de conduite*," or "*ces consignes d'existence*."[29] We have shifted ground, somewhat, to modes of life.

In the case of madness, or the clinic, or the prison, Foucault maintained, "the core of truthful discourse regarding the self was held from the outside, by an other"—by the psychiatrist, by the doctor, the social worker, actuarian, or warden. By contrast, in the domain of *aphrodesia*, the truthful discourse on the self is institutionalized in an entirely different way: by the subject reflecting on oneself. "That is to say," Foucault explains, "it is not organized on the basis of an observation or examination, or of objective rules, but rather around the practice of avowal,"[30] on the basis of a more internal or internalized reflection; on the basis of something that we, ourselves, tell ourselves about ourselves. It is unlike the doctor who tells us we are mad, nor like the psychiatrist who tells us we are dangerous; rather, it is we *ourselves* who talk about our own desires, about what *we* desire.

This represents a subtle shift. Foucault's lengthy treatment of Artemidorus' *The Interpretation of Dreams* is, of course, signaling *to others* how they should interiorize sex acts that augur well—surely, this is governing by the other too. But the focus is less on particular behaviors (what Foucault refers to as "*les arts du comportement*," which he associates with the modern period), than on modes of being, on "the being that we are," or "a certain quality of being, a certain modality of experiencing."[31] This does not mean that other persons do not play an important role; the director of conscience, the spiritual guide is a central figure. But nevertheless, as Foucault explains:

> Every art of living implicates that not only does one learn, but, as we would say with our vocabulary, we interiorize. *En tout cas il faut que l'on pense soi-même, que l'on réfléchisse dessus, que l'on médite*."[32]

This subtle movement from the "arts of governing" to the "arts of living" serves to reframe Foucault's research project in relation to the *bios* of biopolitics. Foucault comes back

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[29] *Subjectivité et vérité*, p. 29.
[30] Ibid., pp. 16–17.
[31] Ibid., p. 33.
[32] Ibid., p. 34.

to *bios*, which he suggests is the closest Greek concept to our modern notion of subjectivity, on March 25, 1981.[33]

Bios is still central here—corresponding to the Greek term for these arts of living, of how to conduct oneself—but it has taken on a slightly different valence from the earlier attention to "populations" to a new focus on techniques of the self. The manuscript of the 1981 lectures proposes a fascinating trajectory from *biopolitics* in relation to the normalization of sexual behaviors, to *biopoetics* in relation to a "personal fabrication of one's own life" and "aesthetical-moral conduct of individual existence," and ultimately to *biotechniques*, a term which Foucault uses in the public lectures.[34]

From *biopolitics*, then, to *biopoetics*, to *biotechniques* or techniques of the self, or technologies of the self: this is the path that Foucault takes in the final lectures to explore what, he tells us, the Greeks and the Romans practiced under the rubric "*tekhnai peri bion* (techniques of living)."[35]

III. Power and Desire in the Digital Age

The "techniques of living": these, I would argue, are highly probative to understand our present digital age. This is not because there is less repression today. With drone strikes and tortured confessions at Guantánamo and black sites around the globe, with police shootings, inner-city violence, and NSA surveillance, we live in a fully repressive world. However, the forms of governmentality today operate, for large segments of the population, through the more subtle mechanisms of our shared modes of living.

Today, we are not so much interpellated by the hailing police officer, nor confined to the panoptic cell, as we are projecting ourselves willingly on the plasma and digital screens around the globe. As I argue in *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age* (Harvard 2015), we live in a different age today: one in which power circulates differently. Today, a new digital way of life dominates in most advanced-capitalist liberal democracies. It is a digitized, cosmopolitan condition that is captured, almost entirely, by electronic communications—a rich social, professional, personal and political circuit of text messages and e-mails, digital photos and scans, PDFs, Skype calls, Facebook, and Twitter, a world of Google searches and Bings, and pings, and Snapchats, of digital subscriptions, Flickr photos, Vimeos, and Vines, of Instagrams, YouTube videos, and webcams. And with it, embedded within it, there is a whole technology of virtual transparence that allows for pervasive data-mining, digital profiling, facial-recognition, Amazon recommendations, eBay offers, Google algorithms, and

[33] Ibid., p. 255.
[34] Ibid., p. 37 n.a.
[35] Ibid., p. 37.

NSA surveillance. It is a new world in which we expose ourselves, our every activity, and our most intimate desires, inescapably, to the technological capabilities of the market and the state. For many of us, we are drawn in, even hesitantly, through our lust: this digital space seduces us into buying the most recent smart phone, downloading an irresistible application, clicking on a tantalizing image, giving free rein to our curiosity, addictions, fetishes, and ambitions. It recommends things to us we did not even know we wanted, but, it turns out, we do want.

In *1984*, the fundamental strategy of oppression was to eradicate desire. With its Junior Anti-Sex Leagues that advocated complete celibacy and drive to abolish the orgasm, the central tactic was to neutralize the passions of the men and women of Oceania; to wear them down into submission with the smell of boiled cabbage and old rag mats, coarse soap, and blunt razors. The goal was to replace *jouissance* with hate: "hate" sessions, "hate songs," "hate weeks."

Today, by contrast, everything functions by means of "likes," "shares," "favorites," "friending," and "following." No telescreen is forced upon us; instead we gleefully hang smart TVs on the wall that record all our preferences and even our words. The drab uniform and grim gray walls in *1984* have been replaced by the iPhone 6C in its radiant pink, yellow, blue, and green. "Colorful through and through," its marketing slogan promises, and it is precisely the desire for color-filled objects—for the sensual swoosh of a sent email, the seductive click of the iPhone camera "shutter," and the "Likes," clicks, and Tweets that can be earned by sharing—that seduce us into delivering ourselves to the surveillance technologies.

In all this, we are not so much being coerced, *surveilled*, or secured today, as we are *exposing* or *exhibiting* ourselves knowingly, many of us willingly, with all our love, lust, passion, and politics, others anxiously, ambivalently, even perhaps despite ourselves—but still, knowingly exposing ourselves. The relation of power is inverted: we, digital subjects—we, "digital persons,"[36] "digital selves,"[37] "data doubles,"[38] *homo digitalis*, we give ourselves up in a mad frenzy of disclosure. Many of us exhibit our most intimate details in play, in love, in desire, in consumption, in the social and in the political, throughout our rich digital lives—through our appetites, in our work, for our political convictions—to become ourselves. Even those of us who do not partake in the seductive world of social media often have no alternative but to share our intimate lives and political views in texts, e-mails, and Skype conversations, knowing that we are exposing ourselves. Everything is now digitized to more easily scan, share,

[36] Daniel J. Solove, *The Digital Person: Technology and Privacy in the Information Age* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[37] Shanyang Zhao, "The Digital Self: Through the Looking Glass of Telecopresent Others," *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 28, issue 3, 387–405 (2005).

[38] *See* Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, "The surveillant assemblage," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 51(4), 605–622 (2000), 611.

transfer, copy, and send around the world our most private thoughts and desires, to our loved ones, our children, parents and siblings, our partners, our comrades, our colleagues, and our enemies. We write love notes and political comments, we share intimate photos and inside jokes, and we throw ourselves onto the screen in our virtual spectacular forms, often wishing more than anything to be seen, to be "Liked," to feel connected, or simply because it is the only way to communicate today in advanced capitalist liberal democracies. For most of us, our digital existence *has become* our life—it is practically the pulse, the bloodstream, the very current of our daily routines. We need to be plugged not just to feel fully alive, but to function at work and at home—to be human, all too human.

We live today in an expository society, not just in a panoptic society. And this gives rise to new regimes of punishment that we need to study fully cognizant of the role that we, ourselves, play in it all. This is, I think, where we are today: not just in the fold of repression—though there is plenty of that—but also in the act of exposure. And in this new space, we need to pay special attention to our avowals and truth-telling, as Foucault did in his later lectures.

Peter Brooks discusses this in his study of the confessional form in *Troubling Confessions*. Brooks returns to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*—as he does to St. Augustine's—but in the case of Rousseau, he presciently underscores the expository dimension of the confessions. Returning to Rousseau's telling of the account of the stolen ribbon, Brooks observes that "confession as a speech accomplishes something other than the simple revelation of a truth."[39] The themes of exposure, but also guilt and absolution, loom large in the account. Brooks draws on Paul de Man's classic reflections on the stolen ribbon, in which de Man writes: "What Rousseau *really* wanted is neither the ribbon, nor Marion [the potential love interest], but the public scene of exposure which he actually gets…. The more there is to expose, the more there is to be ashamed of; the more resistance to exposure, the more satisfying the scene, and especially, the more satisfying and eloquent the belated revelation, in the later narrative, of the inability to reveal."[40] Brooks' analysis builds on this, and provides texture to the act of avowal: "In other words, this primal scene of exposure, shame, guilt, is absolutely necessary to the project of making a confession, and if the scene never occurred, one would have to invent something like it in order to motivate and perform the writing of the *Confessions*."[41]

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[39] Brooks, *Troubling Confessions*, p. 20.
[40] Paul de man quoted in Brooks, p. 20.
[41] Brooks, p. 21.

IV. Overcoming the Repressive Hangover

To explore this further, it might be interesting to consider two recent Internet phenomena in order to get a closer look at how power circulates through clicks and downloads, attention and distraction, desire and *jouissance* today.

A. *"Damn, Daniel!"*

The first is the most recent Internet phenomenon, which exploded in February 2016 in the United States. It was a short video made on an iPhone using Snapchat, of a young man, Daniel Lara (aged 14), caught on camera on successive days, showing off his stylish shoes, with an overlaid voice, each day and each time, saying "Damn, Daniel!" On particular snippets, when Daniel is wearing particular shoes—white slip-on Vans—the voiceover says "Damn, Daniel! Back at it again with those white Vans!"

The short video, only 30-seconds long, was made public on February 15, 2016, and went viral in matter of days. It had over 45 million views by the time the two boys—Daniel and Joshua Holtz (aged 15)—were invited on the Ellen Degeneres Show on February 24, 2016. The boys have become overnight celebrities because of the supposed catchiness of the meme "Damn, Daniel!" You can watch the video[42] here: https://youtu.be/tvk89PQHDIM.

Within days, songs and remixes were being written and produced using the meme; rappers Little, Teej, and LeBlanc created a track using the meme, raising issues of race and white privilege; another remix was by Suhmeduh. Celebrities as far and wide as Justin Bieber, Kanye West, and Kim Kardashian are sporting white Vans, riffing off the meme. On February 25, 2016, the *New York Times* (yes, the *Times* is writing about it!), referring to the video as "the latest Internet sensation," reported that "Daniel said that he can't even go to the mall or a swim meet without being asked for photos with his fans or getting marriage proposals."

Only twelve days since the video had been released, on February 27, 2016, it is hard to keep up with all of the fallout from the meme—positive (Ellen gave Daniel a life time supply of Vans) and negative (Joshua Holtz, for instance, just got swatted). Although easily dismissed as just "entertaining nonsense"—that's how the *New York Times* starts its article about the Internet phenomenon, describing it as "a meme ris[ing] up from the wondrous bog of entertaining nonsense that is the Internet"—there is in fact a lot going on with the "Damn, Daniel!" meme.

For instance, it reeks of neoliberal consumerism, with the focus on Daniel's different daily fashionable shoes. Daniel sports a different pair of new shoes practically every day, with the climax being his white Vans. It's unclear whether the shoe company, Vans, was in

[42] https://www.youtube.com/embed/tvk89PQHDIM

on the phenomenon, according to the *Times*; but they certainly have benefited commercially. They could not have produced a more effective commercial! The whole phenomenon centers on consumption and the commercialization of those white Vans, masquerading under the surface of popularity.

There is a clear racial dimension to the meme as well. It is filmed by white boys at a lily-white high school in Riverside, California, and has all the trappings of white privilege: sunny, monied, fashionable, blond-haired, white boys. The rappers Little Feat, Teej & LeBlanc make the racial dimensions clear in their take, suggesting that black kids might not so easily get away with the same things, rapping as well on the racial-sexual innuendos surrounding the phenomenon. "Back at it again with the white Vans. Back at it again with the black Vans. […] Black canvas with the black stiches and the white slit […] Lunch table with some white bitches, after school with some white bitches, sniffing lines with them white bitches…" The white vans symbolize, for these rappers, white privilege. "Vans on, they are Mr. Clean."

But notice that all of these neoliberal, political, racial, consumerist dimensions are played out through a process of addictive web surfing, clicking, and downloading. As of February 22, 2016, seven days in, it had 260,000 retweets and 330,000 "likes" on Twitter. The official YouTube version had almost 1.5 million views on February 27, 2016, with 13,617 "likes."

The whole experience is proceeding through hundreds of thousands of "likes" and tens of millions of "shares," "follows," and "clicks." It plays out as a mode of life. A style of existence. The pool. The white Vans. The swim team. The girls. And what is not in the picture? The political economy surrounding how those white Vans are produced and make their way to the poolside at Riverside High School, or the differential treatment that young black teenagers get at their high school. All of the politics are elided behind the pleasure of the meme.

b. *Donald Trump*

Without in any way being dismissive of the campaign or supporters of the then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, I believe it is fair to say that the Trump phenomenon is in large part the product of virtual reality and social media. Trump has succeeded in drawing attention precisely because he is a master of reality TV and a great communicator on social media.

Trump has reached such a wide audience by means of his Tweets and reality TV snippets. The cable news network *CNN* captures this best in a pithy lead to a story titled "Trump: The social media president?":

> FDR was the first "radio" president. JFK emerged as the first "television" president. Barack Obama broke through as the first "Internet" president.

Next up? Prepare to meet Donald Trump, possibly the first "social media" and "reality TV" president.[43]

Trump's campaign was unique in this sense and his success has been directly related, in my opinion, to his masterful command of reality TV—his commanding performances on *The Apprentice* and *Celebrity Apprentice*, and other entertainment venues. Trump has become such a social media phenomenon, that even when he did not participate in one of the Republican debates, that very night he dominated the other candidates in terms of searches on the Internet and social media postings.[44]

Now, this new media form is not all positive. Much of it is based on forms of hatred. Trumps' comments about not letting any Muslims into the country or his derogatory comments about Mexican immigrants to the United States—suggesting that they are all rapists and murderers—play on racial prejudice, religious bias, and ethnic hatred. It is important to underscore the Orwellian hatred here.

And a lot of the attention on the Internet is "gawker" interest: the curiosity of the freak show, of the extreme position. Recently, Trump was caught unwittingly retweeting a quote from Benito Mussolini—it was a ruse set up by the website Gawker intended to trap Trump. Trump himself, however, did not miss a beat, and when asked by a news network whether he wanted to be associated with Mussolini, Trump responded: "No, I want to be associated with interesting quotes."[45] According to the report, Trump then added that "he does 'interesting things' on his social media accounts, which have racked up 'almost 14 million' followers combined, and, 'Hey, it got your attention, didn't it?'"

"It got your attention": that is the new *modus operandi* of a social mediatized political campaign, and it is shaping the way in which citizens consume politics. Van Jones at CNN captures this phenomenon most succinctly in these words: "The Trump phenomenon flabbergasts pundits like me. We thought the billionaire was leaving the world of Entertainment, climbing over a wall and joining us in the sober domain of Politics. But in fact, the opposite happened. "Trump, The Entertainer" stayed exactly where he was. Instead, he pulled the political establishment over the wall and into HIS domain. The political class is now lost in the world of reality television and social media."[46]

To analyze how power circulates in the digital age today, it is crucial to understand how

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[43] Van Jones, "Trump: The social media president?" *CNN*, Oct. 26, 2015, available here: http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/26/opinions/jones-trump-social-media/

[44] http://www.politico.com/blogs/live-from-des-moines/2016/01/donald-trump-social-search-engine-218391#ixzz41Zf7yD2d

[45] "Donald Trump's social media strategy? 'Be associated with interesting quotes.'" *The Week*, February 28, 2016 availabel here: http://theweek.com/speedreads/609090/donald-trumps-social-media-strategy-associated-interesting-quotes

[46] Van Jones, "Trump: The social media president?"

contemporary subjects are drawn to information and data, all of which shape them in their deepest subjectivities. Whether it is the consumerism of the white Vans or the attention-grabbing brashness of Donald Trump, these new forms of Internet dissemination play on other registers than repression, or even the repressive hangover.

This is not to suggest that all Internet meme phenomena are neoliberal consumerist, politically vapid, or devoid of public interest. Many people, for instance, have been influenced by Mark Zuckerberg in his capacity as—what the *New York Times* calls—a "lifestyle guru," and many of his lifestyle choices have an altruistic dimension to them. His New Year's resolutions, in particular, seem to speak to many Facebook users. Those resolutions, however, are sometimes other-regarding or enlightened. For example, in 2011, Zuckerberg vowed to only eat meat that he himself had slaughtered; in 2014, he resolved to write a thank you note every day of the year; and in 2015, he promised to start up a book club and read a new title every two weeks.[47] Those who follow his lead, who call themselves "brogrammers," are accordingly brought into the fold, but that fold seems less troubling—at least one might think—than wearing fashionable shoes or simply looking as good as a Valley teenager.

Regardless, the appreciation of the subjective dimensions of these digital influences is key to understanding our current condition. And in this regard, the late lectures of Foucault may be extremely enlightening. As Daniele Lorenzini suggests, on the Foucault 13/13 blog, they help identify and address a real problem for us today, namely, the problem that resides in:

> la structuration de la subjectivité de la masse des individus qui, aujourd'hui, participent activement — consciemment ou pas, volontairement ou pas (mais comment pourrait-on se soustraire à cela ?) — aux mécanismes gouvernementaux [d'une société d'exposition]… Si la subjectivité de l'individu-consommateur-utilisateur de Google/Facebook/Twitter etc. est effectivement forgée aujourd'hui autour d'un désir de s'exposer au regard des autres, même si la plupart de nous sait très bien que cette exposition « volontaire » (et pourtant combien « incitée » !) de soi est l'un des moyens principaux que l'on utilise pour nous conduire, pour nous gouverner, eh bien alors les travaux de Foucault des années 1970–1980, et notamment le cours [*Sur le gouvernement des vivants*], peuvent encore jouer pour nous un rôle fondamental. […]
>
> Je suis convaincu que cette généalogie [de l'homme de désir], que Foucault n'a retracée qu'en partie, est cruciale pour essayer de comprendre pourquoi et comment, aujourd'hui, nous sommes encore gouvernés (et constitués : assujettis/subjectivés) en tant que sujets de désir. En d'autres termes, le « désir » de s'exposer, d'avouer perpétuellement ce que nous sommes en train de penser et de

[47] Matt Haber, "For These Guys, Mark Zuckerberg Is a Lifestyle Guru, *New York Times*, February 27, 2016, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/fashion/mens-style/mark-zuckerberg-lifestyle-guru.html

faire — moyen essentiel du gouvernement des êtres humains dans notre *digital age* —, mérite sans doute d'être interrogé aussi (je ne dis pas exclusivement) en reprenant, en prolongeant, en corrigeant si nécessaire, la généalogie foucaldienne de l'homme de désir. Bref, cette idée, qui nous semble peut-être un peu étrange, et qui pourtant continue sans doute à travailler dans les profondeurs de l'histoire, selon laquelle l'aveu de soi-même peut nous conduire au salut, à la guérison, au bonheur etc., constitue (encore) l'un des pivots, l'une des manières fondamentales par lesquelles « nous » sommes gouvernés. »[48]

Conclusion

For our current neoliberal digital regime to function, repression is, of course, required. Of that, there is no doubt. For the political economic system to function, it requires the NYPD to empty out Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street movement, and Stateville Prison, with its panoptic cell block, to warehouse our minorities and mass incarcerated. No, nothing I have said should be understood to deny that power in the digital age functions through express repression—as in the case of the PRISM program of the NSA, the Optic Nerve program of the British intelligence services, both of which I describe at length in *Exposed*, or for that matter, the use of metadata for drone strikes. As General Michael Hayden, former director of both the NSA and the CIA, emphasizes, "We kill people based on metadata."[49]

But it does mean that, to understand how power circulates today, our critical method should complement the study of repressive power, as well as productive power (with its repressive hangover), with a closer examination of digital desire and our new modes of living. The digital age works increasingly through the attractions and distractions of our inner subjectivities.

We inhabit an increasingly confessional digital world, with our selfies, our quantified selves, our Facebook publicity, and our reality-lives. Our digital acts of self-revelation betray our desire for attention and publicity. The urge may not be new, but the medium changes it, creating a potential audience that could never have been imagined before. The confessional dimensions of this digital age involve, first, a more public, exposed confession. These are no longer purely internal—like the stoic examination of conscience at nighttime—nor limited to a lover or minister. They are logged for others to see, and watch, and hear. They have, second, an element of permanence. They will be cached somewhere, and preserved forever.

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[48] http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/foucault1313/2016/02/13/post-epilogue-the-modern-subject-of-desire-in-french/

[49] Quoted in Cole, "Can the NSA Be Controlled?" *The New York Review of Books*, June 19, 2014, p. 16, available at http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/jun/19/can-nsa-be-controlled. As David Cole reminds us, through the words of the NSA General Counsel, "Metadata absolutely tells you everything about somebody's life. If you have enough metadata, you don't really need content."

Even if we erase them or delete them, someone will be able to find them in an unknown part of our drive or cloud. They are not fleeting or defined by their phenomenal presence. They are seared into the digital in the same way that a permanent mark of penitence might last forever, tattooed on our selves. Third, they are lighter and more malleable than the face-to-face confession: there is no risk of blushing, no bodily language, no visual cues to absorb. Their relationship to authenticity and fiction is looser, more supple. We are not forced to avow in the digital era. We are not required to perform at regular intervals. There is no rule, nor cold showers. We embrace avowal more entrepreneurially, made possible and magnified by the publicity and reach of the new mediums—Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, Snapchat, Facebook, Vine.

In this sense, we need to finish the project that Foucault began and integrate our work on subjectivity back into our analyses of repression and productive power. We need, today, to combine the analysis of digital desire and play with earlier analyses of repression and of the reproduction of power.

In the context of Foucault's project, it would clearly be an impoverished understanding of his writings on subjectivity to view them as displacing his earlier problematics. They complement, they add a necessary dimension, but they do not represent a break from earlier problematics. As you will recall, Foucault expressly stated in 1984, in *The Courage of Truth*, that it would be an impoverished reading of his work on power-knowledge to set aside subjectivity: "to depict this kind of research as an attempt to reduce knowledge (savoir) to power, to make it the mask of power in structures, where there is no place for a subject, is purely and simply a caricature."[50] In a similar way, it would be an impoverished reading of Foucault's work on subjectivity not to integrate it into the study of politics and power. In the study of sexuality, for instance, it would be essential to read his Volumes 2 and 3 back into Volume 1. That alone is what can make sense of the full research project.

This task was, I believe, cut short by Foucault's untimely death. But it is, for us, I think, for me I know, the greatest challenge to face—not only in reading Foucault today, but more importantly in my own work. In the end, it is absolutely crucial to integrate the analysis of repressive models of power and productive theories of reproduction with new theorizations of power that overcome our May '68 repressive hangover.

[50] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, p. 10.