

Article

Class Struggle, Labor Power, and the Politics of the Body. Marxian Threads in the Work of Michel Foucault

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ABSTRACT: The article discusses the presence of “Marxian threads” in Michel Foucault’s work beyond his criticism of Marxism. It focuses on a specific Marxian problematic, which means the production of labor power as a commodity, and aims at showing how reflections upon that problematic spur Foucault’s work in the early 1970s, providing us with a peculiar angle on the shifts that shape his trajectory after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*. At the center of the analysis pursued in the text are the lectures held by Foucault at the Collège de France in 1971/72 (*Penal Theories and Institutions*) and in 1972/73 (*The Punitive Society*). Many other texts and interviews are also discussed in order to shed light on Foucault’s peculiar relationship with Marx and on the way in which a constant, although often underground dialogue with Marx helped him to delineate and develop his own problematic.

KEYWORDS: Marx beyond Marxism, class struggle, (civil) war, labor power, mobility, refusal to work

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Among the many notions forged by Foucault that continue to shape the lexicon of contemporary critical theory, “governmentality” seems to be particularly successful. “Governmentality studies” has indeed become an established field in the anglophone academic world. The Foucauldian notion of governmentality seems to provide an effective point of entry for the analysis of such diverse issues as post-genomic medicine and migration, security and poverty (see for instance Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke 2011). I am not interested here in discussing contemporary uses of the notion, although in *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (2013) Brett Neilson and I critically note that the mainstream of governmentality studies (instantiated by such authors as Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose) tends to flatten the field of subjectivity and to reduce it to the entrepreneurial liberal subject that dominates in advanced capitalist society. What interests me more for the purpose of this paper are the implications of the widespread use of the concept of governmentality for the way in which we read the work of Michel Foucault today. The emphasis on that concept often implies the idea of a radical break in his thought, signaled by the lectures on *Security, Territory, and Population*, held at the Collège de France in 1978. The discovery of “governmentality” would provide Foucault with a new epistemic ground, which would lead him to get rid of a whole set of notions, which he had forged in the previous years basically looking at society from the angle of “war” or “civil war.” A linear, “historicist” understanding of the relation between different power regimes analyzed by Foucault (sovereignty, discipline, security or biopolitics or control) usually underpins such view.

In *Border as Method*, Neilson and I challenge the idea of a smooth historical transition shaping the relation between different power regimes. Focusing for instance on Foucault’s analysis of the coexistence of “anatomy-politics” and “bio-politics” in *The Will to Knowledge*, we argue that there is a need to stress the relevance of the question of the articulation, but also of the frictions and tensions between them. And we contend that Foucault’s intense engagement with Marx in the early 1970s provides us with a guiding thread that sheds light on that question, while at the same time allowing to grasp in a different way the emergence of the problematic of governmentality. It is on such thesis that I would like to expand here. In recent years the relationship between Foucault and Marx has been again tested in critical debates, in a perspective significantly different from the one prevailing in the past. Far from looking for a “reconciliation” between the two or playing one of them against the other, new studies have attempted to dig out Marxian problematics in Foucault’s work while enabling new readings of Marx in the light of the latter (see for instance Chignola 2019, chapter 2; Laval, Paltrinieri, and Taylan 2015; Leonelli 2010; Macherey 2014; Mezzadra 2018; Negri 2017). In this paper I will focus on a specific Marxian problematic, which means the production of labor power as a commodity, and I will show how reflections upon that problematic spur Foucault’s work

in the early 1970s, providing us with a peculiar angle on the shifts that undoubtedly shape his trajectory after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*.

1. “As far as I’m concerned, Marx doesn’t exist ...”

Let us start by asking a very general question. Who is Marx for Foucault? Needless to say, he was not an “author” like any other (even regardless of his intense critical reflection on the very notion of author). Contending in 1976, in an interview on geography, that Marx for him “doesn’t exist,” Foucault is first of all addressing the question of his own relationship with “Marxism,” and with the intellectuals of the French communist party (PCF). What he is rejecting is “the sort of entity constructed around a proper name, signifying at once a certain individual, the totality of his writings, and an immense historical process deriving from him” (Foucault 1980, 76). There is a need to keep in mind the question of his convoluted relationship with “Marxism” while reading Foucault and trying to make sense of his views on Marx. His distance from the PCF (after joining the party in 1950 and leaving it in 1952) and its intellectuals—from what he ironically defines in another interview “communistological” rules, in other words from the rules “defined by communist parties who decide how you must use Marx so as to be declared by them to be a Marxist” (53)—translates onto a peculiar attitude toward the name Marx and even onto a peculiar politics of quotation. Sure, Foucault was generally not keen to disclose his sources, but in the case of Marx, as he contended in yet another interview in 1983, this attitude was reinforced by the will not to abide by the obligation to mention his name in order to comply with the “rules” of Marxism. “I often quote concepts, texts and phrases from Marx,” he contends, “but without feeling obliged to add the authenticating label of a footnote with a laudatory phrase to accompany the quotation” (52). Foucault’s engagement and dialogue with Marx must therefore be reconstructed reading his texts “against the grain,” disentangling them from the struggle against a Marxism that appeared to him as an oppressive discursive formation to be teased apart.

There would be of course much more to say about Foucault’s relation with Marxism, investigating for instance the role of Louis Althusser as the main interlocutor for Foucault’s critique of the notion of ideology (and such an investigation would shed light not merely on the divergence but also on some important and even unexpected coincidences between the two thinkers). However, Marxism remained in general terms for Foucault a discursive formation with its own “rules of formation” and its “enunciative rules” as well as with its “principles of exclusion,” to put it in the terms established in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). And it was for him, as I wrote above, an *oppressive* discursive foundation. One can read between the lines such an assessment in *The Order of Things* (1966), where Foucault famously writes that “Marxism exists in Nineteenth-century thought like

a fish in water: that is, it is unable to breathe anywhere else” (Foucault 2002, 285). But it is important to stress that it was the great rupture produced by 1968 that brought about a new politicization in Foucault’s thought and practice, casting a new light on Marxism (in particular, as we know, through his direct experience of student uprisings in Tunisia and of the “radical violence and intensity,” the “staggeringly powerful thrust” with which “everyone was drawn into Marxism” there; Foucault 1991, 135). Gilles Deleuze has effectively grasped the relevance of the global uprising of 1968 for Foucault, emphasizing the practical and theoretical break it represented for him. Before 1968, Deleuze argues, Foucault definitely had a political thought and political positions, but they were not “philosophically articulated,” while at the same time he had no “political practice.” In the new space of experience opened up by 1968, Foucault is compelled to ask two crucial questions, which reorient his work altogether: “are we confronted today with new forms of struggle? Are we confronted with the emergence of a new subjectivity?” (Deleuze 2018, 129–130).

To put it shortly, it seems to me that the insurgence of these new forms of struggle and the emergence of this new subjectivity politicized and renewed Foucault’s critique of Marxism insofar as they could not be “contained” by it and they established new critical parameters and even a new language of liberation. In the following years Foucault’s work, both theoretically and practically (through his activism as a founding member of GIP, the Prison Information Group), would develop within the framework of those parameters and of that language. My point is that within this new space of experience the entrenchment of the critique of Marxism (which includes what he calls the “hyper-Marxistization” of intellectual discourse in the “new left” in the wake of 1968; Foucault 1991, 139) not paradoxically opened up the possibility of a different approach to Marx—one that aims not that much at “quoting” him but rather at putting him “to work” to pick up on the terms used by Foucault in an unpublished text from 1979 (6). While in the 1960s one could say that Foucault was not particularly interested in making a difference between Marx and Marxism, that difference takes a distinct and crucial shape after 1968. Let us read the way in which Foucault develops his argument in the 1976 interview quoted above, after contending that Marx for him “doesn’t exist.” The passage reads as follow: “it is always possible to make Marx into an author, localizable in terms of a unique discursive physiognomy, subject to analysis in terms of originality or internal coherence. After all people are perfectly entitled to ‘academicize’ Marx. But that means misconceiving the kind of break he effected” (Foucault 1980, 76). It is by superimposing the rupture of 1968 and the break effected by Marx that Foucault’s engagement with Marx in the early 1970s emerges in its original and radical nature.

2. Barefoot power

Working through historical sources while learning to listen to “the distant roar of battle” was a methodic exercise for Foucault even before writing those memorable words in the final lines of *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1995, 308). This is particularly true for the lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 1971/1972 and in 1972/1973, respectively dedicated to *Penal Theories and Institutions* and to *The Punitive Society*. Those lectures amply demonstrate the intensity of Foucault’s engagement with Marx and with heterodox Marxist currents of the time, most notably with the work of Edward P. Thompson and with the school of “history from below.” It is here that Foucault forges his specific understanding of “war” and “civil war” as a matrix for the analysis of power writ large. While it is evident that other influences are also at work in this respect (one thinks of course first of all of Nietzsche), the Foucauldian notion of civil war clearly bears the traces of the Marxian paradigm of class struggle. This is particularly apparent if one considers the emphasis on the fact that, *pace* Hobbes, “there is no civil war that is not a confrontation between collective elements.” “It is always through masses,” Foucault further argues, “through collective and plural elements that civil war is at once born, unfolds, and is carried on” (Foucault 2015b, 28). Civil war is according to Foucault traversed and constituted by operations of power. What seems to me important is that he does not take the collective subjects engaged in civil war as pre-existing, as already constituted. They are rather “formed” by civil war. From the point of view of the notion of class, one could say that the Foucauldian matrix of civil war implies a critique of any objectivist view and invites us to focus—consistently not only with Thompson’s work, but also with the approach of Italian autonomist Marxism—on the *making* of class. And such a making is crisscrossed by “struggles” and “fights”—which means by those elements that build the privileged object of genealogy, as Foucault contends in “*Society Must Be Defended*” (Foucault 2003, 8). We will come back in the next section to analyze some implications of this important point.

Before doing so let us shortly dwell on the way in which Foucault, in the lectures of 1971/72, analyzes a crucial moment of transition in the history of the modern state in France, the processes of centralization of power that set the stage for what he calls “the ‘triumph’ of the state” in the 17th century (Foucault 2015a, 7). These lectures, notwithstanding the rather fragmented form in which they are available to us, are particularly interesting for the purpose of this paper. Foucault engages here in an investigation of the origin of the modern state and of the autonomy of state apparatuses (first of all of the repressive apparatus) that is attentive to the vexed question of the relation between capital and state. Moreover, he focuses his analysis on the role played in the process by a whole set of popular rebellions mainly against taxation, culminating in the so-called Barefoot uprising in Normandy in 1639. Those rebellions were lively discussed by histo-

rians in the wake of the publication in 1948 of an important book by the Soviet historian Boris Porschnev, translated into French in 1963 and harshly criticized by the Catholic historian Roland Mousnier. At stake in the feud between Porschnev and Mousnier were above all the class nature of popular uprisings in France in the 17th century, the agency of the subaltern (mainly of the peasants), as well as the relation between feudalism, absolute monarchy, and the transition to capitalism.

Foucault clearly frames his lectures in 1971/72 against the background of the debate between Porschnev and Mousnier. And although his most original contribution lies in the detailed analysis of the repression of the Barefoot uprising, he clearly sides with the Soviet historian when he emphasizes (with words that seem to echo the coeval debates in the French Maoist groups) the unity between the country and the city, between the “mass of peasants” and “the workers and craftsmen of the city” as a key to understanding the composition of the rebellion (Foucault 2015a, 10). Even more clearly, he states that the Barefoot, far from “simply struggling against the established power” or being maneuvered by the nobility or the bourgeoisie, “entered the stage *embodying themselves a power* (military, political, judiciary, financial)” (27, italics added). I think it is important to reflect upon this representation of the insurgent multitude of the Barefoot as a *power* in its own right, since it highlights the peculiar view of Foucault on class struggle. The destitution of such power becomes the guiding thread of the repression of the Barefoot uprising by Chancellor Pierre Séguier, and the constitution of a new architecture of power bears the traces of the expropriation of the power of rebellion. Class antagonism, one could gloss, haunts in such reversed form (as a ghostly counter-power) the majestic structure of the state in the age of Louis XIV. Class struggle frames Foucault’s narrative in these lectures through an analysis that materially calls attention to incipient forms of class constitution and to its multiple and violent truncations. War, which openly erupts as counter-insurgency with Séguier’s repression, appears here inherently intertwined with the dynamics of class struggle, which intersects the process of transition to capitalism. The development of the latter “in the interstices of the feudal system,” Foucault contends, was indeed predicated upon a “double political separation (city/country; populace/bourgeoisie)” that the uprising had challenged and had therefore to be restored (56).

3. The primitive accumulation of men

It is well known that the question of the transition to capitalism plays an important role in *Discipline and Punish*, where it is addressed from the double angle provided by the two phrases “accumulation of capital” and “accumulation of men” (Foucault 1995, 220–221). Although Foucault is keen to stress that the two processes are deeply intertwined, there is no shortage of readers who understand that passage as a critique of Marx. *The*

CLASS STRUGGLE, LABOR POWER, AND THE POLITICS OF THE BODY

Punitive Society, the lectures held by Foucault in 1973 that build a kind of rehearsal of the book he published two years later, prompts a quite different reading. One could even say that at stake in those lectures is first of all the Marxian notion of “labor power” and the specific angle it provides on the “men” whose accumulation runs parallel to the accumulation of capital in order to enable the transition to capitalism. Capitalism, Foucault clearly states here, “in fact, does not simply encounter labor-power, just like that” (Foucault 2015b, 232). As we know from Marx, indeed, such an encounter “comprises a world’s history (*eine Weltgeschichte*)” (Marx 1990, 274). It is precisely that world history that Marx analyzes in the chapters of *Capital*, volume 1, dedicated to the “so-called primitive accumulation,” where he describes the conditions and processes that—from the enclosures of common lands to the “bloody legislation” against vagabondage—lead to the existence of labor power as a commodity. It seems to me that Foucault takes from Marx’s analysis precisely the problematic of the production of labor power, stressing its relevance beyond the historical moment of the “so-called primitive accumulation” and considering it at root of specific antagonisms that he investigates in his lectures with respect to the first half of the 19th century but that retain their validity also in the present.

From this point of view, *The Punitive Society* is dedicated (among other things) to a careful analysis of what may be called in traditionally Marxist terms processes of *proletarianization*. The focus on such processes corresponds, as I noted above, to a radical problematization of the question of class formation (and implicitly class composition). There is no shortage of readers who emphasize the opposition between Foucault’s emphasis on war and Marx’s notion of class. On the contrary, I am convinced that the former can effectively work as a mirror to grasp the specific limits of Marxist elaborations of class and class politics, while opening up an angle precisely on class formation and composition. Class appears in this light as a stake within a dense fabric of power relations and subjective practices of refusal and contestation. And there is a need to repeat that what makes Foucault’s analysis challenging is the fact that the process of proletarianization does not appear to be doomed to end up in the existence of a full-fledged proletarian class. It is rather an open process that crisscrosses the very constitution of class and introduces an essential dynamism into its very core. And it is an *antagonistic* process, as Foucault stresses in *The Punitive Society* even more clearly than in *Discipline and Punish*. This is a point where Foucault goes far beyond Marx, who was so focused on the antagonism shaping relations of production that he only occasionally mentions conflicts and subjective practices of resistance surrounding processes of proletarianization. One is for instance reminded of the passage in the *Grundrisse* where Marx speaks with respect to the outcomes of primitive accumulation of a mass of expropriated people, “dependent on the sale of their labor capacity or on begging, vagabondage and robbery as their only source of income.” And he adds that “it is a matter of historic record that they tried the latter first,

but were driven off this road by gallows, stocks, and whippings, onto the narrow path to the labor market” (Marx 1993, 507).

Despite the emphasis and the rhetorical effectiveness of this passage, it remains true that Marx did not devote much attention, particularly in *Capital*, to the antagonistic sides of proletarianization. And even when he did so, he was convinced that conflicts around proletarianization played at best a secondary role with respect to struggles at the point of production (or were central only *before* the full accomplishment of the transition to capitalism and the age of “large-scale industry”). It is here that Foucault takes a different direction, reactivating and reopening the question of the production of labor power as a commodity and mapping the forms of refusal and contestation that surround such production. I am not contending that Foucault was interested in providing an “integration” of Marx’s critique of political economy. He rather takes the notion of labor power and the tricky question of its production, which was in the same years a crucial field of critical elaboration for radical feminism, as a point of departure for developing his own problematic. Contestation and refusal are indeed investigated and, in a way, celebrated as subaltern and proletarian practices in *The Punitive Society* insofar as they instantiate the unavailability of a multitude of tumultuous subjects to be *reduced* to “bearers” (to employ a Marxian term) of labor power. This moment of refusal and unavailability opens up a field of struggle where life itself, “subjectivation” is directly at stake. And this is the question that directly interpellates Foucault.

Having worked for many years on migration, I am particularly struck by the intensity with which Foucault politicizes *practices of mobility* in his lectures of 1973. Tracing back to the mid-18th century the emergence of vagabondage as “the fundamental category of delinquency,” as “the element on the basis of which other crimes are to be specified,” he insists upon the circumstance that the “very fact of traveling around,” the absence of a “geographical location within a definite community,” is criminalized insofar as it corresponds to “not being defined by a job.” It is “this constitutive hostility with regard to the normal mechanisms of production” what defines the vagabond as a criminal and as an enemy, qualifying his practice as a specific practice of refusal. “There is a primary and fundamental identity,” says Foucault, “between moving around and refusing work” (Foucault 2015b, 45–48). The refusal of work, a topic that Foucault develops in dialogue with the work of E.P. Thompson, occupied center stage in the early 1970s in Italian autonomist Marxism—a circumstance that was probably well known to Foucault. In *The Punitive Society*, the refusal of work provides him with a tool that allows mapping and making sense of a whole set of practices with which the subaltern and the poor resist proletarianization, taking mobility as a crucial battlefield. Those practices of resistance, contestation, and refusal materially shape the history of class struggle and end up infiltrating the production apparatus itself. Within the realm of production they nurture a specific

type of “illegalism,” defined by Foucault as illegalism of “*dissipation*,” which “takes the form of absenteeism, lateness, laziness, festivity, debauchery, nomadism, in short, everything that smacks of irregularity, of mobility in space” (188). Even the emergence of the strike as a privileged form of struggle for the labor movement is according to Foucault to be understood as an expression of the refusal of work (189).

It is striking to note that the forms taken by the illegalisms of “dissipation” mentioned by Foucault correspond in a quite accurate way to the workers’ and proletarian practices that were proliferating in many advanced capitalist countries in the wake of 1968 and were celebrated by Italian autonomist Marxism as radical forms of struggle against the Fordist factory discipline. At stake in those forms of struggle was the refusal of a specific form of work that at the same time translated onto a violent attack against the work ethic embodied and promoted by the official labor movement. It is definitely plausible to read Foucault’s emphasis on the refusal of work in *The Punitive Society* against the background of such struggles and critique. It is not by accident that he radically criticizes, with a transparent reference to Marx, the idea according to which labor is “man’s concrete existence.” “The time and life of man,” Foucault argues, “are not *labor* by nature; they are pleasure, discontinuity, festivity, rest, need, moments, chance, violence, and so on. Now, it is all this explosive energy that needs to be transformed into a continuous labor power continually offered on the market. Life must be synthesized into labor power, which involves the coercion of a whole system of sequestration” (232). It is through such coercion—as Foucault adds in *Truth and Juridical Forms* (1974) where he picks up almost literally on this passage—that men are “bound to the production apparatus for which they labor.” And it is only the violent operation of that coercion that sets the conditions “for man’s essence to appear as being labor” (Foucault 2001, 86).

This is an important point. Independently of what one thinks of Marx’s ideas regarding “man’s essence” and of the shifts in his thought regarding this question, Foucault is clearly interested here in stressing a point of dissonance and difference with Marx on a terrain that we may call “anthropological,” or more specifically with respect to the understanding of subjectivity. The discovery of the specificity and persistent relevance of what I termed before the antagonisms surrounding proletarianization (or the production of labor power as a commodity) opens up a new continent of struggles, which pertain directly to the field of subjectivity. “The fact is,” Foucault writes in *Truth and Juridical Forms*, “capitalism penetrates much deeper into our existence” than Marxism allows us to grasp (86). The elements of coercion and discipline, emphasized here by Foucault, must definitely be studied in their specificity (and they will be at the center of *Discipline and Punish*). But the “explosive energy” of the human must be also investigated from the angle of the potentiality of struggle and refusal, resistance and constitutive power it bears in itself. One can say that such an investigation is a latitudinal concern in Foucault’s

work of these years, which supports and prompts the productivity of his work and crystallizes in memorable although fragmentary statements—for instance in the “biopolitical” reframing of resistance in the last chapter of *The Will to Knowledge*: “since the last century,” he writes here, “in the great struggles that have challenged the general system of power [...] what was demanded and what served as an objective was life, understood as the basic needs, man’s concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plenitude of the possible” (Foucault 1978, 145).

4. Biopolitical meshes

As we just saw, coercion and compulsion figure prominently in Foucault’s investigation of processes of proletarianization in *The Punitive Society*, which can be productively read against the background of Marx’s analysis of the so-called primitive accumulation. Commenting upon a text by the Physiocrat economist Guillaume Le Trosne (1764), he speaks of his “dream” of “a great confinement to the place of work,” predicated upon a war of annihilation conducted against tumultuous practices of mobility and refusal on the part of the recalcitrant subaltern multitude. The “manhunt” envisaged by Le Trosne, argues Foucault, “tells us what will happen when capitalist institutions and coercive measures are in place.” And he further contends: “the transition from hunt to *coercion*, transforming labor power into productive force, is the penal system’s condition for being able to function in our society” (Foucault 2015b, 51). This passage is important insofar as it sheds light on the problematic of *Discipline and Punish*. It also introduces a further challenging aspect with respect to the Marxian notion of labor power that Foucault underscores and that shapes his reflections upon such concepts as discipline, disciplinary power, and disciplinary society. Labor power as a commodity is not given as such, as we saw. It has to be produced (and reproduced), in history no less than in the present. To this something else has to be added, which means that, once it has been produced, labor power has to be transformed into a “productive force,” which means, in Marx’s terms, it must be “set in motion” in forms that enable the valorization of capital (Marx 1990: 270). At stake in this process—as well as in the production of labor power as a commodity—is the “worker’s body,” whose “physical strength” is dissected and recombined through the action of disciplinary powers (of the “despotic” command of capital, to stay with Marx) after “its integration into a system of production” (Foucault 2015b, 187). These are all questions that Foucault will analyze in detail in the chapter on “Docile bodies” in *Discipline and Punish*, where he explicitly refers to Marx regarding the question of “constituting a productive force whose effect had to be superior to the sum of elementary forces that composed it” (Foucault 1995, 163)—which means to the question of “co-operation” analyzed by Marx in *Capital*, volume I, chapter 13.

CLASS STRUGGLE, LABOR POWER, AND THE POLITICS OF THE BODY

The body takes center stage in Foucault's analysis with respect to labor power, a circumstance that will not surprise readers of *Discipline and Punish*. It is nevertheless important to underscore this relevance of the body thinking of the definition of labor power proposed by Marx. One can in fact say that while he posits the body as the necessary "container" of labor power, he also tends to dismiss its relevance, considering it as a kind of neutral tabernacle. Foucault's "anatomy-political" take on the production of labor power as a commodity and on the process of its transformation into a "productive force" seems to echo once again a whole set of movements and struggles in the wake of 1968, which were radically politicizing the body. One thinks here first of all of feminist and anti-racist movements. The stress on the fabrication of the body, on the economy and composition of physical and mental forces, on the body as a crucial field of inscription of power relations and resistances compose a rich theoretical and analytical fabric that provides us with a fertile ground to test and renew the notion of labor power. Once again, I am not contending that this was Foucault's direct aim. It is a possibility he opens up for us, while it is important to emphasize that the reflection upon the Marxian notion of labor power was an important aspect in the research trajectory that led Foucault to delineate *his own problematic*. And it is not difficult to demonstrate that such a reflection continues to spur Foucault's research after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, and plays an important role in the emergence of such crucial questions as "biopolitics" and "population," which eventually lead to the reframing of the notion of government from the angle of "governmentality."

Particularly relevant in this regard is the text of a lecture given by Foucault in Bahia in 1976, "The Meshes of Power," where among other things he engages in a direct conversation with Marx (although there is a need to note that the reference to *Capital*, volume 2 in the text is misleading here: Foucault rather speaks of the second tome of the French edition of volume 1, and in particular of the chapters on the working day, on cooperation, and on machinery). Marx's investigation of power and discipline ("command") in the factory, in "large-scale industry," is presented here as an important source of inspiration for Foucault's "analysis of power in its positive mechanisms" (Foucault 2007, 156). While one could ask whether Foucault's reference here to "local, regional forms of power" is consistent with the analysis pursued in the afore mentioned chapters of *Capital*, his emphasis on Marx's critical stance with respect to classical modern theories of sovereignty and on his displacement of the centrality of the state apparatus definitely grasps an important point. Focusing on the history of the technology of power, a project that he also finds at least foreshadowed in *Capital* (158), Foucault describes here the emergence of "discipline," which he defines as "the mechanism of power through which we come to control the social body in its finest elements, through which we arrive at the very atoms of society, which is to say individuals" (159). Echoing *The Will to Knowledge*, the book

he had just finished to write, he then adds a second family of technologies of power, to be distinguished from disciplinary “anatomy-politics” as “bio-politics.” We know the general characteristics of “bio-politics,” which does not appear here to substitute discipline but rather to integrate and work in tandem with it. “What is more important,” Foucault writes, bio-political technologies of power “did not target individuals as individuals, but on the contrary [they] targeted the population” (161).

I think there is much to learn from connecting the emergence of bio-politics in this text with the previous discussion of Marx. What is particularly relevant is the opposition between the two subjective references (“targets”) of “anatomy-politics” and “bio-politics”—which means individuals and population. Going back to the Marxian problematic of labor power I discussed above with respect to *The Punitive Society* (and therefore to *Discipline and Punish*), we can say that both the production of labor power and its transformation into a productive force entail questions that cannot be adequately tackled by a unilateral focus on the individual. “Population” becomes here the (necessarily elusive) name of the societal fabric within which the individual is always already enmeshed (and it would be worth testing from this viewpoint Marx’s uses of the notion of population, particularly in chapter 25 of *Capital*). And “bio-politics” refers to techniques of power that integrate the disciplinary take on an individual body that is always part of what Foucault calls in *The Will to Knowledge*—in terms reminiscent of the young Marx’s species-being—“species body” (Foucault 1978, 139). “Bio-power,” which in the latter work includes both “anatomy-politics” and “bio-politics,” “was an indispensable element of the development of capitalism” (140–141) precisely because it targeted both individuals and populations, in other words because it combined heterogeneous technologies of power capable to manage both the individual and the societal dimension of labor power. The element of coercion haunts both “anatomy-politics” and “bio-politics,” although in the following years Foucault would definitely integrate the analysis of such element with a focus on what he calls “technologies of the self,” which also implies a reframing of the question of struggles and resistance. Although in shifting forms, the Marxian problematic that I have attempted to locate at the origin of the emergence of the notions of “bio-politics” and “population” continues to prompt his reflection on “governmentality” in the late 1970s. And it provides us with an original angle on that reflection.

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CLASS STRUGGLE, LABOR POWER, AND THE POLITICS OF THE BODY

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