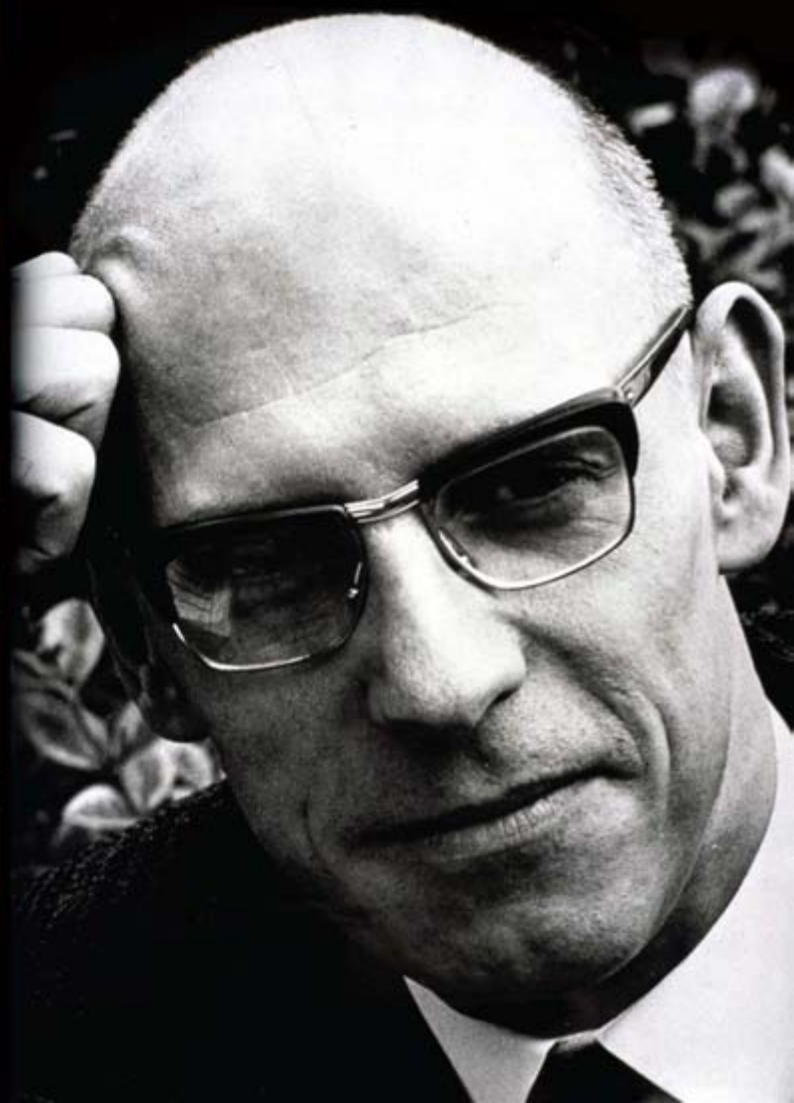


BIOPOWER

FOUCAULT AND BEYOND

EDITED BY VERNON W. CISNEY
AND NICOLAE MORAR



Biopower

Foucault and Beyond

Edited by

VERNON W. CISNEY
NICOLAE MORAR

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At the Origins of Biopolitics

ANTONIO NEGRI

TRANSLATED BY DIANA GARVIN

Marx in Italy and France: The “Break” between Traditional and Critical Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s

This chapter analyzes the *propagation* of the concept of “biopolitics” primarily from the standpoint of its genesis in Michel Foucault and the philosophical development that can be charted in his works; however, it also tries to stay out of the history of philosophy field and instead follow a series of heterodox currents in Western Marxism, developed in Italy and France in particular. By doing so, it illustrates how, while belonging to and breathing in the aura of events that were contemporaneous to the genesis of the concept, these currents developed biopolitics along the lines of strategies of intervention that, in the 1960s and 1970s, bore its mark and expressed its potential in turn. To do so, a longer story must be told to recall the premises that made this development possible.

To start, recall what “Italian *operaismo*” has been, not so much to dwell on the value of the theory, which will somehow emerge if the reader is patient, but to clarify how the scientific innovation of the “biopolitical” developed in the 1960s, a decade characterized by the demise of the experience of European resistance and the spread of the economic development of Fordism. Essentially, this innovation traversed an experience that sought to bring together the thought and practice of a new working-class politics at a particular time—the end of the 1950s, the aftermath of the 20th PCUS Congress and the workers’ revolt in Budapest, but more important, the defeat of FIOM (Antonio Gramsci’s metal workers’ union in Turin and FIAT Mirafiori) and in a determinate space—the modern factory. At stake was the reconstruction of political organization in the factory. Now, allow me to present my firsthand experience of Italian *operaismo*. We were

looking for a *strong subject*, the working class, capable of fighting against and bringing about a crisis of the mechanism of capitalist production, and it worked: this strong subject was a movement that, in the large factories, led the struggles until 1968 as an exercise of workers' counterpower against the bosses, and often did so against the official unions; a movement that grew to become an autonomous power and produce hegemonic forms of political comportment amongst the workers. In Italy, 1968 evokes both 1968 and 1969, with the youth protests and the workers' "hot autumn," marking a significant change in the power relations between workers and capital, whereby wages directly affected profits. One might say that 1968¹ lasted until 1977.

This was possible because of *operaismo* and its call for the centrality of the factory and the political centrality of the working class in general social relations. As Tronti puts it, "One must turn the question on its head, change the sign, and go back to the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development is subordinated to the workers' struggles. It comes after them and to them it must make the political mechanism of its own reproduction correspond."

The point was to give a new form, both theoretical and practical, to this fundamental contradiction. Theoretically, the fundamental contradiction was identified in the capital relation itself, and thus in the relations of production, or what at the time we called "the scientific concept of the factory." Here the collective worker potentially had, *when* fighting and *if* autonomously organizing its own struggle, *a sort of sovereignty* over production; then he was, or rather could become, a revolutionary subject. Karl Marx writes, "Labor not as an object, but as activity; not as itself *value*, but as the *living source* of value. [Namely,] it is general wealth (in contrast to capital in which it exists objectively as reality) as the general possibility of the same, which proves itself as such in action. Thus, it is not at all contradictory or, rather, the in-every-way mutually contradictory statements that labor is *absolute poverty as object*, on one side, and is, on the other side, the *general possibility* of wealth as subject and as activity."²

The analysis and militant activity of organization were based on the dominant "mode of production" in the Fordist era: the line worker,³ the worker on the assembly line in the Taylorist organization of work. Tronti notes that the alienation of the worker reached its apex here, but so did the maximum level of resistance. The worker with whom we built organization and struggle not only loved but also hated his work. The *refusal of work* thus became a deadly weapon against capital. Labor power, as an inner part of

capital (the variable capital distinguished from constant capital), once autonomous, removed itself from the function of productive work, and in so doing it placed a threat right at the heart of capitalist productive relations.

What more can be said? That this militant standpoint, which represented a shift from the analysis of the laws of motion of capitalist society toward an examination of the laws of motion of labor and workers' resistance, soon became dominant not only in Italy but wherever there were struggles in the Fordist factories of the mass worker. This period was violent but also full of hope. Marx's statement seemed correct: by emancipating itself, the proletariat will free the whole of humanity, or, better, its emancipation will abolish class society.

How did the capitalist powers react to this attack? They developed a counterrevolution, pure and simple. By now we are in the 1970s. To respond to the threat of workers' centrality, capital decided to bring down the centrality of industry and abandon, or revolutionize, the industrial society that had been both the reason for and the means of its own birth and development. This it did to the extent that it turned itself from industrial into financial capital.

But let us examine the transitions determined by this counterrevolution more closely. First of all, as we have seen, there was a transformation of the mode of production. The Toyotist "workstation" provisionally substituted the assembly line. Then, in a continuous and structural way, came the contraptions of automation; what was left of direct production⁴ started being "put out" of the factories, processes of "outsourcing" proliferated, and gradually and eventually, the company became computerized and placed under the control of financial capital. Enter *post-Fordism*. But, to come to our second point, labor changed too: capitalist socialization was now occurring on the basis and by means of processes of exploitation that had become *social*. The wage was no longer that monetary quantity the worker negotiated in the factory. Instead, it was reconfigured so as to become a machine that followed the reproduction and the formation of labor power at the level of society as a whole, and throughout the time of life.

At this stage, the question we were paradoxically forced to ask was: is there still a working class, as a *subject* central to the critique of capitalism, as a political subject, rather than a *sociological object*? And with the transformations of work and of the figure of the worker, the rise of the service industry, the shift from employment to self-employment, from material to cognitive labor, from security to precariousness, from the refusal of work to the lack of work, we had to question the political significance of these transformations. Well, faced with these questions, following the shift in

reality that was implicit in its analysis, *operaismo* (or at least its most active currents) had the intelligence of turning a historical archaeology (that of workers' struggle) into a new genealogy, that of the *social worker*,⁵ thus creating a device for the future.

Here the *biopolitical* entered the scene: biopolitical as life put to work, and therefore as politics mobilized to organize the conditions and control of the social exploitation of all realms of life. As we said in Marxian terms, capital "subsumed" the whole of society. The Frankfurt school had described the actuality and violence of this subsumption but failed to grasp the fundamental aspect of the process: the transformation of the figure of class, the metamorphosis and continuity of resistance. In other words, the biopolitical became central in political discourse at a time when the nature of labor power had changed and social activity had come to replace industrial labor as the source of productivity. At the end of the 1970s and especially during the 1980s and 1990s, this process became more widely acknowledged. Political thought and the critique of sovereignty had to adapt to this new ontology, and *biopower* and *biopolitics* came to describe respectively a new figure of sovereignty and financial command over labor, and the terrain where labor power exerted both its productive capacity and its resistance, where it suffered its alienation and expressed new forms of refusal of work in the shape of "exodus."

So far we have charted, through the knowledge that relates to militancy and workers' struggles, a deepening of the analysis of political control and its transformations. The story we have just told took place in Italy in the years that concern us. At that time, analogous processes were unfolding in France, albeit with differences, as they were often but not always linked to militancy. These led to the discovery of a new field of criticism and thus of a new subversive voluntarism. Let us start from the beginning again here and contextualize the political debate and the experience of the movement of the same period in France.

Where was critical Marxism in France at the time? We certainly would not find it in the French Communist Party, so let me put forward a different hypothesis.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the most attentive side of French political philosophy, highly influenced by the underground currents of communist thought, was invested in what might be defined as the question of "reproduction." Under question was the way in which concepts, knowledge, and ideology influence the reproduction of social systems and how, going through the ideological consistency of knowledge, social action and social being can self-perpetuate or change, be interrupted or subverted. The ques-

tion was no longer one of continuity/discontinuity, of historical being, but rather of the *dispositif* of change.

In classical economics and Marxism, reproduction refers to the economic field where the modes of production are regenerated. Extending the concept, one might say that reproduction represents a constant renewal of the conditions of exploitation of labor power in the system of capital. Why does capitalism manage to reproduce itself, thus reproducing, or even augmenting, the relations of exploitation? How can one break this process or cycle of production and circulation, commodities and knowledge?

In the 1960s, around Louis Althusser, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and later Jacques Derrida, the question of reproduction was raised in a radical way. These thinkers construed it as the search for a break, a rupture. They wished to comprehend what their critical consciousness found hard to believe: that is, why does the capitalist reproduction of the world seem to flow continuously, without breaks, when it is actually always the result of struggles, and thus of discontinuity, excess, and innovation?

One could confront the same issue from a different perspective, from the question Gramsci and critical Marxism were asking in the 1920s and 1930s. In that context, the debate critically focused on the relationship between structure and superstructure: where dogmatic Marxism claimed that the structure was economic and the superstructure ideological, Gramsci (and many others) denied the effectiveness of the distinction and affirmed that relations of domination became real when ideology was implicated in production. The affirmation of hegemony was a power that made it possible for the relations of production and those of ideology to mutually influence one another. This issue later assumed primary relevance for the philosophers of *rue d'Ulm* at the École Normale Supérieure in the 1950s and 1960s; then they faced the problem of reproduction by tracing the relations of production back to a series of anthropological equivalents, namely to the claim that *everything, in society, is productive* and thus there is no longer a realm "outside" production. Whether it critiqued or denied the centrality of workers' labor, theirs was not an anti-Marxist stance; quite the contrary, because it emphasized the importance of labor understood as social activity.

We thus came, in the 1950s and 1960s, in one of Europe's intellectual centers, Paris, to finally understand what Gramsci, György Lukács, Walter Benjamin, and others had been saying in the 1920s and 1930s: there is no longer an "outside"; production and reproduction are one, a whole. A refusal, contra the tradition of orthodox Marxism, of any possibility of medi-

ation that is external to the movements, of any recourse to a dualist model, including the claim to truth of the Party, thus became possible.

If there is no "outside" of production, and knowledge, ideology, and the concept are found in the processes of reproduction, then this whole of powers is organized autonomously, or, rather, structurally. But what is a structure; what is structuralism? Gilles Deleuze identified five aspects of structuralism: (1) the overcoming of the static-dialectical relation between real and imaginary; (2) the topological definition of conceptual space; (3) the recognition of structure through the identification of a differential relation of symbols; (4) the recognition of the unconscious (and conscious) character of the structural relation; (5) the serial or multiseriate movement of structure itself, that is, its internal self-regulation.⁶ According to Althusser, the structure is a "process without a subject," a completely closed logical space.⁷ Thus, the real is framed as a synchronic section of this whole. Every relation must be understood with reference to its position in the system. The philosophy of history, positivism, and teleology were thus eliminated.

Yet all these definitions would be completely irrelevant had we not been able to single out one unique and solid result of such a formidable period of research: namely, the severance of all *transcendental* concepts from our approach to history and to the world. What had been visible in the past was an internal criticism of the doctrine of Marxism whose foundational philosophy was a dualistic epistemology of structures and superstructures, and whose political project consisted of a dualism of party (leadership) and movements (spontaneity). This critical standpoint was now reemerging but transformed, thanks to the definition of an ontological fabric where such dualisms could *no longer* find the possibility or conditions for their existence.

The new question in France, then, was one that had already been addressed in Italy albeit in a more experimental and practical way. To confront it, one needed to move forward because the structuralist standpoint was untenable: how was a "process without a subject" conceivable? Ultimately, this premise had to be evacuated and replaced by a different project: how to *reestablish subjectivity* and situate it *within* a new framework that was solidly and fully immanent?

To this challenge rose Foucault's thought, which confronted it by turning the structuralist perspective into a *biopolitical* one.

When Foucault began his work, a set of conditions had matured. First of all, structuralism had successfully attacked the "autonomy of the political" and any ideology that isolated the function of the political from eco-

conomic and social struggles. In structuralism, the political had already taken on a biopolitical semblance: the social was subsumed under capital, even more so when it came to the expressions of the imaginary; through these the political was practiced. The most extreme example was the narrative that demanded that madness and its disciplining be recognized as political, economic, and social.

Second, the biopolitical framework was set against the “isolation of the social,” that is, the French tradition originating in Durkheim that regarded the social as a sort of independent realm capable of affecting other aspects of life. No, no category of the social that rules over the rest exists; all there is is a rich social reality that is an economic and political whole—and would later become also one of libido, passions, and fantasy.

Third, the situation is such that the structure started to come to life anyway. Foucault’s shift to the biopolitical was not a translation of the positions of the Frankfurt school (Marcuse’s *One-dimensional man*⁸) where the human was still reunited around an ontology of power, albeit in alienation and generalized despotism. In Foucault, we are dealing with *the exact opposite*, because the human agitates, moves, and changes. In other words, in so far as the structuralist context is traversed by subjectivity, it opens up to multiple dimensions.

Here, the encounter with the positions of Italian *operaismo*, which had always seen capital as a relation of command, and thus as a unity *split into two*—variable capital *against* constant capital, resistance and command, *puissance* and *pouvoir*—*finally the encounter took place*.

To conclude, from the beginning, in Foucault there is an insuppressible tendency to break the functional nexus of the structure, and what Foucault did not develop, Deleuze would take on, as in a relay.

Deleuze too came from the experience of structuralism, but by the 1960s, he had already turned both structuralism and its realm into the rigorous construction of a “field of immanence.” He did so by immediately reinterpreting the biopolitical field as a terrain of constitutive *dispositifs*. It was Félix Guattari who helped him in this crucial operation. The *dispositif* was not only an epistemological operation but also an ontological one. It reconstructed the real from below, in the situation, following an oriented pragmatics. Here crucial was the reference to Baruch Spinoza—a new reading of Spinoza that removed all static effects from pantheism to reveal, on the contrary and in all its riches, a creative drive. Thus biopolitics was traversed by “*cupiditas*,” desire, the *puissance* of action, and Friedrich Nietzsche’s thought, with Spinoza’s, put at the service of a materialist and emancipatory philosophy.

Another aspect of Italian *operaismo* was here taken on: the recognition that, in so far as society is structured and completely subsumed under capital and an "outside" no longer exists, "inside" class struggle unfolds *everywhere*; the recognition, then, that class struggle constituted the real, and revolutionary militancy interpreted it.

In fact, from the 1930s and late surrealism to the 1960s and Guy Debord, French philosophy had developed a singular view of the "real subsumption" of society under capital because this subsumption was immediately seen as a totality of being. What I am trying to say is that in poststructuralism the characters of real subsumption were partly recovered from a tradition. But this recovery went beyond all ideologies and was thus really operative because, in the meantime, a set of *historical conditions*, both economic and social, had come into being. What were these conditions? The first, from a historical standpoint, was that (as we have already underlined) around 1968 a shift occurred from the Fordist society of production to the post-Fordist society of communication. Anticipated by the reflections of Debord, there was a heightened awareness of this process, and the world of production was interpreted in this light.

Second, the transition from "disciplinary society" ("government") to the so-called society of control (*governance*) was being registered. An analysis developed to recognize that, in the society of control, production and resistance are organized into "modes of life." This operation amounted to a total reversal of the structural field and thus to an articulation of the "field of immanence" as a biopolitical terrain. There is no "outside," *dehors*; the *bios* is that "inside" wherein each one is entirely enveloped. Resistance thus exemplifies acting in this contradiction, but the contradiction one is immersed in is a biopolitical reality. The collective body lives there because it produces everything, because it works, but most of all because it resists, and in this resistance it configures reality.

Third, labor power was redefined. In post-Fordism it became and had to be recognized as being ever more socially active and cooperative, all the more immaterial the more valorization was realized in cognitive services.

At this point we need a second definition of the *field of immanence*. We have already partly characterized it as a creative *biopolitical* terrain. In so far as the poststructuralist ontology of "real subsumption" constitutes an ontology of the biopolitical, the field of immanence must reveal a creative dimension. But what is this creativity?

It is not easy to say. This philosophical path, constantly driven by a sort of revisionism (with respect to Marxist orthodoxy) and yet (in my view) always revolutionary, had determined a specific "topos": the field of im-

manence. Now that our poststructuralist authors had ruled out the possibility of a transcendental approach to reality, how was it possible to set an engine of creativity into motion starting from this topology? Would we not become trapped in an idealistic imagination?

Once again we must go back to the analysis of capital. As stated earlier, capital is a *relation*, but in this relation, in struggle, one must construct a materialist “telos.” What will this “telos” be?

Here allow me to simplify matters and present my reasoning in synthesis. In the field of immanence, human activity tends toward (or rather, desire and will subjectively tend toward) the construction of a world where one can freely live and build happiness. The intellectual, cognitive, and immaterial labor power of today that produces all wealth will therefore want to destroy any force that is contrary to and prevents this happiness. To return to Marx: labor is general wealth as possibility, the living source of value. Therefore the capital relation is subject to an enormous pressure that can cause it to explode.

In other words, where is *class struggle* today? How does critical Marxism work as a movement practice rather than a philosophy? There are two possibilities that follow from what has been said so far. By the end of the 1970s, evidently dogmatic Marxism was over, but it also seemed obvious that historical materialism had invaded the *entire* field of political thought. One can no longer escape class antagonism. Second, and this is very important, the concept of class, without losing its antagonistic characters, had profoundly changed as a social subject: the working class had changed its *technical* composition via a process that it itself had set into motion—from *the factory to society*. Against the ontological backdrop of these transformations of the relations of production and political struggle, the working class thus reappeared as a *multitude*, as a collection of singularities that built the common.

Although many problems are still open, our path in search of the political genesis of the “biopolitical” ends here. We are going to take a break and open the discussion to new issues and aspects of the “biopolitical.” In any case, it will be difficult to draw definitive conclusions.

Discussion

B1. We return now to the issue of the biopolitical foundation of the political and open another parenthesis in this line of inquiry. A question necessarily arises: when we put forward the *topos-telos* relation from a materialist standpoint, do we perhaps do so in terms of an uninterrupted flow? That

is to say, could “vitalism” be the philosophy that nourishes and expresses this particular development of subversive thought in France? *Is vitalism the trace of the biopolitical?*

The answer to this question is resolutely negative; the authors under consideration have nothing to do with the vitalist tradition, despite its greatness. The three names of the vitalism of the early twentieth century, Georg Simmel, Henri Bergson, and Giovanni Gentile, touched on the issues proposed by poststructuralism but always understood flow as “form.” Forms could be social and constitutive (Simmel), spiritual and fluid (Bergson), or disciplinary and dialectic (Gentile), but none of these perspectives accounted for what is essential today; they lacked an interpretation of the course of history as constituted by events and weaved together by singularities. Today, in the philosophical experiences we are examining, there are no “forms,” and were there any, they would present themselves as singular and evenemential. If a source of this so-called poststructuralist vitalism was to be found, it would not be in the early twentieth century but in the great tradition that goes from Machiavelli to Nietzsche through Spinoza and Marx. In these authors, vitalism is a *philosophy of power* (puissance).

Therefore, we here face the ontological consistency of the elements of flow. The difference between a classic vitalist conception and the current definition of the dynamic context of philosophical analysis is that, while in the vitalism of 1800 to 1900 the process of life presented itself as a metaphysical flow that is intercepted, separated, and configured by forms, in the work of our authors the agents that structure, constitute, and express this flow are events and singularities. From this standpoint, a truly crucial transformation became manifest because here the *possible* of life expressed itself as *power* (puissance). Put another way, the standpoint of vitalist metaphysics is translated here into one of the *ontology of practice*. The subjectivity that had been expelled as phenomenological-transcendental here returns as a practical subjectivity, as the capacity to act, as a materiality that is constitutive of the process. This doing can be uncontrolled, unconscious, but is always irreducible, strong, and real. At the beginning of this affair, in structuralism, there was a reversal of consciousness toward matter that in poststructuralism became a return of matter to consciousness. The ontological plane was paradoxically fixed, determined, and normalized by the exceptionality of the innovation, of the event, of the singular, and the problem of the *topos-telos* relationship became inserted in the tension of the possible, situated in the *dispositif* of the spread of power.

B2. If we now take up the thread of the argument that led us from the critique of modernity to the immanentist solution of the question of re-

production and the break with the structuralist framework, and eventually brought us to the emergence of a new subjectivity in the biopolitical approach—we can ask what, in the contemporary philosophical approach we share, is defined as “politics.” In short, having so heavily insisted on the “bios,” we can now try to provide a definition of the “political.” First and foremost, note that, in the period that interests us here, the political lies at the center of philosophizing. Indeed, when the philosophical terrain is radically defined as a “field of immanence,” and when language and bodies already represent the only matter in this immanence, then the ontological interrelation of subjects, the logical constitution of the common, that is, an ever-renewed genesis of the city, become the heart of philosophical analysis and the latter must increasingly become oriented by the political (*philosophia ancilla politicae*).

How to place a definition of the political in contemporaneity?

The political can be interpreted and defined along the following lines: (1) *synchrony*, (2) *diachrony*, (3) and the figure of the *relation of the political with life*. It could be assumed that, from the synchronic point of view, the political adheres to the surface of ontology and can only be represented within the ontological realm. It is within this ideal hegemony of the “inside” of ontological interiority that the political is determined.

On this premise, some contemporary theories, and the *deconstructionist perspective* in particular, nonetheless seek an alternative to the density of the ontological field, opening up to a notion of the political that is, so to speak, *excessive* or *disseminative*.⁹ To bring about this operation, the field of immanence must be “shaken” and made to react to a diachronic impulse. According to “deconstruction,” the “inside,” assumed as an existential and political totality, becomes dynamic and temporal by means of different meanings of the possible that present themselves as if by exceeding it. This exceeding is something placed at the margins: something that concerns the forms that lie at the edge of ontological totality and defines them as “disseminative,” “rhizomatic,” and so on. From the standpoint of immanence, it could be suggested that here, albeit tenuously, one might see a recourse to transcendence—but this would be unfair. In fact, the analytically negative and deconstructionist perspective, construed on this flat and full being, in this world “without an outside,” acts on the possibilities that are revealed and called forth from the *edge*, from the margins, and seeks to reopen, from these margins, an ethical and/or political development capable of shaking up the fullness of a seemingly static being. In fact, at work here is a moral drive, an ethical urge, as if the field of postmodern immanence, by virtue of its being ontological, had eliminated the possibility of making

value judgments about it. Deconstructionism seeks to rediscover and realize the value of judgment, and it is because of this that political judgment starts at the border, on the edge, suspended over nothingness. This condition is best represented by the Derrida of Levinas inspiration, who develops the philosophy of deconstruction.

Other authors, and Jacques Rancière in particular, have more radically tried to escape the political grip of the ontological "inside." To them, the political, a "kind of paradoxical action," has nothing to do with the material dimension of power structures and what the synchronic and diachronic conditions of its actual effects impose, nor does it concern historically determined power relations and regimes, that is to say, biopolitics and bio-powers. The paradoxical nature of the political consists of opposing, to the reality of power, the self-determination of "supplementary parts," parts empty of power, "without parts"¹⁰ in the overall social "*partage*." With respect to Derrida's definitions, the marginality of the political subject here becomes extreme and can no longer flow back toward the inside of the system, a possibility that deconstruction, on the contrary, had permitted. Clearly, though paradoxically, here transcendence and a sort of absolute purity of judgment are called on to testify to the definition of the political, which suggests that the specter of dialectics might reappear, or hover between the fullness of reality and the absolutely "different" of the political. Alain Badiou pushes this paradoxical dualism to the extreme and denies to the political any ontological reality.

This scenario can be summed up by emphasizing that whenever the definition of the political is sought in the *exceeding* of being *at the margins*, the notion that the "field of immanence" can be perceived as an insurmountable horizon for such definition is denied.

B3. It must be noted that the ontological "inside," if assumed as the exclusive realm of political experience, must be seen as "overabundant"; in other words, this reality is a being that contains the presence of a "beyond," or rather, it is an expression of *innovation* as *consistency* or substance of the field of immanence itself. Deleuze first expressed this concept, and from a diachronic standpoint he also proposed the possible as a "fold," *pli*, as a constant reopening of innovative tensions, of events, on the flat and powerful terrain that the field of immanence had revealed. Here it is no longer necessary to define a disseminating margin and, from there, construe a development of value: instead, it is the center of this being that is expressive, not through deconstruction but through the constitution of a power, *puissance*, in the constant sequence of the folds and (tenuous yet strong) movements of being.

At this point, let us return to an analysis of the field of immanence and ask whether in the alternative definitions we have presented one might already find a different appreciation of the field of immanence itself and its ontological consistency. As far as the authors of deconstruction are concerned, the field of immanence they operate on does indeed seem *anahistoric*, and therefore flat and hard. By contrast, Deleuze's "smooth field" is uneven, full of caverns, folds of being: it is a determination of being (and historicity) as a plurality of events and interweaving. But this perspective is also not exempt from criticism. Indeed, if one assumes that, in Deleuze's work, the mutation of all terms of reference is continuous, and the basis of each of their substance and/or desiring drives aleatory, then it will still be hard to define an idea of politics and/or power in his definition of "field of immanence." We are in a position where, if the *political* is given, it is given *without power*. The expression of freedom on this aleatory field seems to exclude the very possibility of power. One might object that power exists anyway (there are courts, prisons, taxes, armies, etc.); but the philosopher would then reply that these forms have no value, that they do not represent an ontological reality. And he or she would be right: in the field of biopolitical immanence, the negative cannot be a transcendental condition. At best, it could be an absence of being, which is to say that the negative is not there. In fact, if power (*pouvoir*) presents itself as a *dispositif* of total and full constitutiveness, if the ontological constitution is power (*puissance*), then the political is configured not so much as resistance but as *generation*, no longer as "being against" but as "being for." The negative that opposes the "being for" and the power that negates "generation" are not there; all there is is their negativity, their "nonbeing."

But to follow this path one must add concrete historicity to immanence, chase the *res gestae* in the field of immanence, because only thus can resistance positively reconstitute the negative to power and generation return power to nonbeing *tout-court*. What is missing in Deleuze is a full reduction of immanence to historicity. A convincing definition of the field of immanence and the biopolitical calls instead for the coincidence of immanence and history.

On this premise we can see that not only have we reached the end of the Platonic tradition that turned the political into transcendence, imposing it as force and order; not only have we surpassed the Aristotelian tradition that regards generation and corruption as elements that nourish one another in a reciprocal act. With Deleuze, despite the limits of his exposition, we find ourselves in a totally new position: that is, the definition of a politics of the eternal, if one sees as "eternal," irreversible, and irreducible, that

material constitution on which the strategies of *cupiditas* rest like matrixes of being, as in Spinoza.

B4. Having examined how the political is defined within the development of the synchronic and the diachronic, of being and history, we must now consider the political in relation to life. Now, between Derrida and Deleuze, between “dissemination” and “generation,” lies the Foucauldian experience of power and life: an experience that tends toward the Deleuzian alternative, internal to poststructuralism, and opens toward the vitality of being and generation rather than deconstruction and dissemination, moving forward with reference to the determinations of historicity. So as Foucault understands the centrality of Deleuzian immanentism, he also underlines its concrete limits. Here biopolitics becomes a full experience: life reveals the political conditions of its production and reproduction, and philosophy, with sociology and the other human sciences, manifest the extent of the depth and intimacy of this interrelation. *The field of immanence is biopolitical.*

But the biopolitical, the expression of the vital desire of subjects, conflicts with *biopower*. Theirs is not a polar or molar conflict, but rather a microphysical and molecular dynamic that the biopolitical expresses by colliding with and passing through biopower. The latter seeks to dominate each and every expression of life, and to present itself as the dissolution of the biopolitical fabric. The exercise of power wants to resolve the differences of the biopolitical within itself, subsuming the singularity of their acts and unifying them into a subject. By contrast, the experiences of life that constitute the field of biopolitical immanence give substance to *dispositifs* that are different from those the biopolitical wishes to establish. They are not binary, bipolar, or molar oppositions, by all means. They are infinite lines of flight, each driven to build new realms and terrains of biopolitical being. Both the *reductio ad unum* and the operation that tries to fix this movement in transcendence are not only inadequate but also impossible. The emperor has no clothes. The falsification or the covering of his nakedness is the product of parasitic speculations. Thus the field of immanence, perfected, is restored to us—at the end of a long path running from the debate on “reproduction” in the postwar years to today. Foucault is the author who best managed to provide a logic and a form to this long process of inquiry, but the biopolitical would be incomprehensible without Deleuze because it is not only a physical structure, a corporeal possibility, or a singular device; it is, above all, power (*puissance*). *The biopolitical, with power, produces new subjectivities.*

B5. Here allow me a last parenthesis on the concept of the *multitude*.

Paradoxically, one of the most important aspects of French philosophy (poststructuralist and post-1968) is that with its insistence on the field of immanence it opened itself to the perspectives and problems of globalization. This thought has not simply interpreted historic events like an owl of Minerva; it has also anticipated their development. The formation of empire, the end of national sovereignty, the deterritorialization of the concepts and categories of political science, and thus the shift from modernity to postmodernity, were often anticipated by the political thought that took its breath from "bios." It is sufficient to recall the pages of *Anti-Oedipus* on globalization, the writings of Derrida on the nation-state, but also more banal contributions such as Jean-François Lyotard's on value, Jean Baudrillard's or Paul Virilio's on communication: all of these theoretical elements have intervened to provide a rich definition of the shift to globalization.

In any case, what seems most important to us in this shift from the modern to the postmodern, or rather from the political to the biopolitical, is that the postmodern critically dissolved the moment it was defined, and this made it possible to open a breach through which the constituent flow of the biopolitical and its freedom could spread. We inhabit a field where constituent biopolitical processes develop in every way; diverse bodies couple, miscegenate, and hybridize; in immaterial labor one finds the cooperation of subjects that create ever-new services and relational goods; now, this multitude of bodies and activities, physical and intellectual, this multitude of souls functions as a creative subject. *This subject is multitude.* In modernity, both Bodin and Hobbes reduced the *multitudo* to the *vulgus*, Hegel to the *Pöbel*. The great novelty is that here, this *multitudo*, even without unity, is power. *Multitudinis potentia.*

When modern philosophers deny the possibility that the *multitude* can be powerful, they do so based on the impediment (inherent in the concept) of being one. They thus replace the concept of *multitude* with that of nation, people, or race, where unity is imposed from the outside, or with that of sovereignty, which claims to unify the multitude from within. By contrast, here we find ourselves in a position where the *multitudo* does not call for unity, and yet it is productive. It is a body without organs, a *corps sans organs* in *Mille Plateaux*. That is to say: *every body is a multitude, but the multitude is not a body, it is a whole of bodies—a whole of freedom.*

Concluding Remarks

Our argument has shown the biopolitical to be an "experience of being." This reference to Jean-Paul Sartre is opportune because the experience of

being—obviously experienced differently in postmodernity—can be referred to as a condition of reflection and action, of *engagement* and ontological constitution that Sartre, at the beginning of the postwar episode of French philosophy, dramatically hypothesized. From this reminiscence and renewal, the experience of the biopolitical leads once again to *praxis*.

And so we return to *operaismo*, to that notion of praxis that opened the analysis of this chapter. The journey of *operaismo* had barely begun. Now we must end it. For this, it will be useful to remember that this journey, so subversive (as French philosophy also was in the latter half of the twentieth century) always has to be nourished by struggles and organization. These must raise a specter—the resurrected specter of communism (as Derrida put it). This must be a communism that stands on new social legs—those of “mass intellectuality,” of cognitive labor power, of the migrant proletariat—and on the new ability to know and imagine that this new work demands and generates. It must emerge from new experiences: those of a life subjected to the command and consumption of capital that—within this, and no other domination—*rebels*. The biopolitical experience must be invented with all the intensity that rebelling “inside” demands, be immersed in the geographic and temporal breadth that the global nature of biopower determines, and for this reason, be aware that there are no margins from which we can aleatorily defend our souls, no possible escapes for our bodies. The “inside” of biopower has a “heart”: fighting against biopower is possible only if, from this heart, we remove all nourishment and circulation. Because power does not interest us, we have understood the *dissymmetry* between the biopolitical desire of democracy and the exercises of biopower; because the “inside” of the field of biopolitical immanence will eventually no longer have a center or a “heart,” but only “love” that circulates with violence and construes freedom.

Notes

This text has been read and discussed frequently: first on February 3, 1997, at a seminar directed by Eric Alliez and Barbara Cassin at the Collège International de Philosophie, then on September 30, 2000, at a seminar at the Fondazione Lelio Basso in Rome, and finally on November 21, 2009, at the Volksbuehne in Berlin, for the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

1. Negri cites the events of 1968 and 1969. This English rendering reflects the fact that the duration from 1968 to 1977 includes the year 1969. [Translator's note.]
2. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 144 (available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Grundrisse.pdf [accessed January 6, 2015], 235).

3. *Operaio* is translated here as the general term “worker” to preserve Negri’s linguistic consistency with reference to *operaismo* (workerism). While this does flatten the distinction between *operaio* and *lavoratore*, use of the alternative term “laborer” is not always applicable. This convention is followed throughout the essay. [Translator’s note.]
4. *Produzione diretta* implies not only the direction production by labor but also a sense of manual production that accompanies assembly-line work. [Translator’s note.]
5. “Social worker” is the conventional translation for *operaio-sociale*. See Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (New York: Continuum, 2003), 282. [Translator’s note.]
6. See Gilles Deleuze, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2004), 170–92.
7. See, e.g., Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005).
8. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (New York: Beacon Press, 1964).
9. Negri’s use of *dessimazione* for the French term *dessimination* is obviously a direct translation. English translations of Derrida’s term tend to follow this norm. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). [Translator’s note.]
10. “The part without parts” is the conventional translation for *la part sans part*. Rancière and his translators often shorten the designation to *sans-part*, as Negri does here in referring to the *senza-parte*. For readers who may be unfamiliar with this tendency, I have translated Rancière’s full phrase. See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004). [Translator’s note.]