

# **The Politics of Life**

Michel Foucault and the Biopolitics of Modernity

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Organized by

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## **The Politics of Life: Michel Foucault and the Biopolitics of Modernity**

Ever since the concepts of “biopolitics” and “biopower” appeared in the first volume of Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, they have continued to provoke responses. In 1976 Foucault picks up themes already developed in *Discipline and Punish*, and describes a shift in the structure of power that takes us from the epoch of sovereignty, in which the right of the ruler is to take life or let live, to the modern conception of power as a way to enhance, render productive, compose, maximize, and administer life. In some respects this is an undeniable progress toward a more “humane” world, but, as Foucault underlines, it also leads to a biological conception of politics. To exterminate the enemy, to expel the degenerate, the enemy of the people or the class from the social body in order to attain purity—all of this will become possible precisely because the body politic comes to be perceived as a living entity that must be attended to, and not just a source of disturbances that must be repressed.

Foucault’s research, which soon came to graft the concept of biopolitics onto the idea of a modern form of “governmentality”, has been a major source of inspiration for philosophy, political science and gender studies, as well as in bioethics and analyses of security apparatuses and techniques of surveillance. Foucault’s ideas have been critically extended in the highly diverse ways, often taking them far beyond their initial formulations—all of which indicate the extent to which thinking with, through, beyond and perhaps also against the questions posed by Foucault has proved to be a highly fertile ground for research.

In this way, the conference takes its point of departure in the work of Foucault, but with the intention of assessing the applicability of his thought to the present, which undoubtedly also means to envisage the possibility of different futures.

## Conference schedule

### Thursday, September 3

- 6 pm. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Introduction*
- 6.20-7.20 pm. Thomas Lemke, *Freedom and Fear: Foucault on Biopolitics, Liberalism, and Technologies of Security*
- 7.30 pm Cocktail and dinner at IASPIS

### Friday, September 4

- 10-11 am. Johanna Oksala, *The Political Ontology of Neoliberalism*
- 11-12 am. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Le "pouvoir pastoral" et les techniques de contrôle des pauvres et de chômeurs*  
(The lecture will be given in French, with an English translation available as handout).
- Lunch break
- 1-2 pm. Catherine Mills, *The Life of (Bio)Politics*
- 2-3 pm. Julian Reid, *Killing to Make Life Live: War, Biopolitics and Liberal Modernity*
- Coffee break
- 3.30-4.30 pm. Vikki Bell, title to be announced
- Dinner in the city

### Saturday, September 5

- 9-12 am: Panels A-D (see separate schedule below)
- Lunch break
- 1-2 pm Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Foucault and Biopolitics: Concluding Reflections*
- 2-3 pm Concluding round table with all speakers

## **Panels, Saturday, 5 September, 09.00-12.00**

### **A) Body, gender, individuation**

1. Sarah Hansen, *Terri Schiavo and the Lingualisms of Biopower*
2. Samo Tomšič, *Psychoanalysis: from subjectivation to subjection*
3. Martin G. Weiss, *The Dissolution of Human Nature: Philosophical Reactions to Biotechnology between Emancipation and Essentialism*

Location: "Baren"

### **B) Surveillance, security, control: problems of resistance and strategy**

1. Christoph Engemann, *The Will to Write Oneself – Governmediality of Digital Identity*
2. Kristian Klockars, *Ontology of actuality and the question of resistance*
3. Cecilia Sjöholm, *Foucault, Freud, and the concept of technique*

Location: "Ateljé # 2"

### **C) Architecture, urbanism, and the ordering of space**

1. Helena Mattsson, *Staging a "milieu" – surfaces and event zones*
2. Lukasz Stanek, *Biopolitics of scale*
3. Andrew Byerley, *Mind the Gap! Seeking Stability Beyond the 'Tribal' Threshold in Late-Colonial Uganda. The Role of Urban Housing Policy and Housing Provision, 1945-1960.*
4. Warren Neidich, *Neuropower*

Location: "Konstnärsnämndens kök"

### **D) Philosophical and methodological perspectives**

1. Manolis Simos, *Michel Foucault's Critique of Biopolitical Reason*
2. Simona Rentea, *Vital norms and the biopolitics of life*
3. Marit Grøtta, *The Potential of Play: Life, Power, and Usage*
4. Adeena Mey, *Ranciere as Foucauldian? On the 'Distribution of the Sensible' and new forms of subjectivities*

Location: "Projektrummet"

# Biographies

## Plenary speakers

**Thomas Lemke** is Heisenberg-Professor of Sociology with focus on Biotechnologies, Nature and Society at the Social Sciences Department of the Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main in Germany. From 1997 to 2006 he worked as an assistant professor for sociology at Wuppertal University and was a visiting professor at New York University, Goldsmiths College in London and the Copenhagen Business School. From 2002 to 2008 he was also a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt/Main. His research interests include social and political theory, sociology of organization, biopolitics, social studies of genetic and reproductive technologies.

**Johanna Oksala** is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Dundee, UK. She is the author of *Foucault on Freedom* (CUP, 2005) and *How to Read Foucault* (Granta Books, 2007).

**Maurizio Lazzarato** is a sociologist and writer, based in Paris. He is a member of the editorial board of *Multitudes*. Among his publications are *Videofilosofia. La percezione del tempo nel postfordismo* (Manifestolibri, 1997), *Lavoro immateriale. Forme di vita e produzione di soggettività* (Ombre Corta, 1997), *La politica dell'evento* (Rubbetino, 2004), *Les révolutions du capitalisme* (Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, 2004), *Puissances de l'invention. La Psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique* (Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002), and *Le nouveau partage du sensible. L'expérimentation politique aujourd'hui* (Editions Amsterdam, 2009).

**Catherine Mills** is Sesqui Lecturer in Bioethics at University of Sydney, Australia. Her main research interests lie in the areas of biopolitics and bioethics, especially in relation to technologies of reproduction. She is particularly interested in ideas of subjectivity, normalcy and responsibility. She has previously published *The Philosophy of Agamben* (Acumen, 2008) and is currently completing a manuscript on reproductive ethics. She has also published a number of articles in feminist theory, bioethics and political theory.

**Julian Reid** is Lecturer in International Relations at King's College, London. He taught previously at Sussex University and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and has held a Visiting

Professorship at the University of Lapland, Finland. He is the author of *The Liberal Way of War* (with Michael Dillon) (Routledge, 2009) and *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror* (Manchester University Press, 2006).

**Vikki Bell** is Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is author of *Feminist Imagination* (Sage 1999) and *Culture & Performance* (Berg, 2007) and numerous articles on cultural theory. She is an editor of the journal *Theory, Culture & Society*. Over the past few years she has also been working on contemporary art and politics in Argentina.

**Sven-Olov Wallenstein** teaches philosophy and aesthetics at Södertörn University in Stockholm, and is the editor-in-chief of *Site*. He is the translator of works by Winckelmann, Kant, Hegel, Frege, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Deleuze, and Agamben, as well as the author of numerous books on philosophy, art, and architecture. Recent publications include *Essays, Lectures* (2007), *The Silences of Mies* (2008), *Biopolitics and the Emergence of Modern Architecture* (2009), and *1930/31: Swedish Modernism at the Crossroads* (with Helena Mattsson, 2009). He is currently completing a Swedish translation of Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

## Panel speakers

**Sarah Hansen** is instructor and PhD Candidate in Philosophy, Program Assistant, Gender and Women's Studies at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN USA.

**Samo Tomsic** is research assistant at the Institute of philosophy, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia (since October 2003). Researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht, The Netherlands (since January 2009). PhD in Philosophy (University of Ljubljana, October 2008)

**Martin G. Weiss** is Director of Studies, Department of Philosophy, University of Klagenfurt

**Christoph Engemann** is lecturer & researcher at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences University of Bremen, Non-Residential Fellow at the Center for Internet and Society Stanford Law School and has taught STS at the Science, Technology and Society Program UT Austin. He currently prepares a research-project on the history of the Bundesdruckerei at the Department of Media Studies Bauhaus University Weimar

**Kristian Klockars** is lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki

**Cecilia Sjöholm**, is Professor of Aesthetics, Södertörn University

**Helena Mattsson** is lecturer at the Royal Institute of Technology, School of Architecture

**Lukasz Stanek** graduated in architecture and philosophy, and in 2008 he has defended his dissertation at the Delft University of Technology (NL). After a post-doc fellowship at the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, he is currently researcher at the Chair for Architecture Theory at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, and at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht. His research interests straddle philosophy, planning, and architecture. He has published articles on the theory of Henri Lefebvre, city building, mass media, and the production of space in former state-socialist cities like Nowa Huta, Poland.

**Andrew Byerley** is researcher at the Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University

**Warren Neidich** is an artist, writer and organizer currently working in Berlin and New York.

He is currently Visiting Scholar at the TU Delft School of Architecture, Delft, Holland. He is founder of the field of study called Neuroaesthetics. He is editor of the Journal of Neuroaesthetics and [www.artbrain.org](http://www.artbrain.org). He organized the first conference on Neuroaesthetics at Goldsmiths College where he was artist in Residence in 2005. He is author of Blow-up: Photography, Cinema and the Brain, DAP, 2003. His new book "Lost Between the Extensivity/Intensivity Exchange" will launch May 2 nd at Printed Matter in New York City and includes his performance performed at IASPIS, Stockholm entitled Some Cursory Comments on the Nature of My Wall Drawing. After studying photography and psychology Dr. Neidich went on to become research fellow in Neurobiology at California Institute of Technology in the laboratory of Nobel Prize Recipient and Neurobiologist Roger Sperry. He studied Medicine and then did a residency in Ophthalmology at Tulane University Medical Center, New Orleans, Louisiana. He retired from his post as Clinical Instructor at New York Eye and Ear Hospital in 1993 to pursue his artistic and theoretical practice full time.

**Manolis Simos** is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge, Department of French, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages. Undergraduate degree was in History and Philosophy of Science, University of Athens, Greece.

**Simona Rentea** is Lecturer in International Relations Theory, Aberystwyth University, UK

**Marit Grøtta** is postdoctoral researcher working on the project "The Aesthetics and Politics of Play" at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo.

**Adeena Mey** is at the Section of Theory and History of Psychology University of Groningen, The Netherlands.

## Panel Abstracts

**Sarah Hansen**, *Terri Schiavo and the Lingualisms of Biopower*

In his 1975-1976 lectures at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault invoked the life and death of Francisco Franco to illustrate the distance between two systems of power: “sovereignty over death” and the “regularization of life.” Today, Foucault’s readers have continued this interest in the “overcomatose,” calling upon persons like Terri Schiavo to figure the “biopolitical subject.” Despite her exposure in recent writings, few theorists have examined a feature of biopolitics that Terri Schiavo makes clear: the strange status of language in biopolitical subjectivation.

On the one hand, if Western political communities center their labors on a form of life traditionally understood as speechless (i.e. *zoe*), the ability to *speak* of the good may no longer define political life; read as a specifically *mute* figure, Terri Schiavo would signal the expiration of Aristotle’s speaking “political animal,” the “without-voice” of a more animal politics. On the other hand, if biopolitics subverts the distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, perhaps it also subverts that of “having” and “not-having” language; Terri Schiavo might be read, not as mute, but as speaking *otherwise*, signaling the strange but by no means absent voice of biopolitics.

This paper examines how, in debates over her “right to die,” Terri Schiavo is variously figured as a speaking or non-speaking being, and thereby, afforded or denied the protections of political life. Here the notion of the “lingualisms” of biopower finds a rich introduction in the life of a woman subpoenaed by Congress on March 18, 2005. Asked to speak on her incapacity for speech, the voice of Terri Schiavo is a telling one, a voice understood in many cases as neither present nor absent but rather *to come*

**Samo Tomsic**, *Psychoanalysis: from subjectivation to subjection*

The paper discusses the shift in Foucault's understanding of the function of psychoanalysis in modern society and in the frames of production of knowledge. The first part focuses on Foucault's „Les mots et les choses“ and on his text „Nietzsche, Freud, Marx“, concluding that the psychoanalysis is celebrated as an anti-humanist science, able to invent a new space of thinking and to produce a radical discontinuity on the level of the knowledge-truth relation.

The second part is a critical reading of „La volonté de savoir“ as Foucault's failed attempt to produce an „archeology of psychoanalysis“. The reading focuses on Foucault's Anti-Oedipal idea of a historical continuity between christian confession and analytic session. To his critics of psychoanalysis as a tool of bio-power it responds with Lacan's late re-elaborations of psychoanalytic procedure, showing the major logical differences between religious and psychoanalytic discourse.

**Martin G. Weiss**, *The Dissolution of Human Nature: Philosophical Reactions to Biotechnology between Emancipation and Essentialism*

One of the main targets of this project consists in clarifying the unspoken anthropological concepts underlying the philosophical reactions to genetic engineering and manipulative interventions into human biology.

Philosophers are deeply divided on the anthropological and ethical impact of biotechnical interventions on human nature. Whereas Post-humanists – in best humanist tradition – embrace “genetic engineering” as ultimate emancipation of humanity from the bounds of nature, more conservative philosophers fear the loss of anthropological and ethical orientation provided until now by the notion of a stable human nature.

Embedding this highly controversial discussion on the philosophical preconditions and consequences of biotechnology into the larger context of Biopolitics allows conceptualizing the biotechnological revolution as a particular symptom of the history of power described by Michel Foucault. In a biopolitical perspective biotechnologies and their regulation appear to mark the transition from sovereign power to bio-power – i.e. the transformation of the power to kill into the power to make life –, that Foucault defined as threshold of modernity.

Although Jürgen Habermas seems right in identifying “liberal eugenics” as the newest figure of bio-power, his view that the idea of letting parents decide on the genetic configuration of their children – or the increasing phenomena of people undergoing individual genetic screenings in order to take preemptive action on possible diseases – has to be seen as individualization and privatization of bio-power, must be dismissed. This because a closer look on these practices in modern liberal democracies reveals, that in the context of liberal eugenics, it is no more possible to discriminate self regulation from heteronomy. This circumstance makes the analysis of bio-power in the age of Biopolitics highly engaging and resistance extremely difficult.

### **Christoph Engemann, *The Will to Write Oneself – Governmediality of Digital Identity***

Proposing the investigation of *Governmediality* is motivated by the observation that contemporary industrial societies are in the midst of a media-transition from paper-based brick and mortar bureaucracies to digital administrations. This unique development allows to scrutinize the relationship between media and governmentality and life by confronting the *Studies of Governmentality* with contemporary Media Theory. What happens when the self, the body, populations, territory and time are written in the same universal digital medium?! The current re-medialisation of the self and the state in and with the digital medium enables the study of these developments and to expose the overlooked media a priori of governmental practices.

Digital Identity lies at the intersection of the self, media-technology and statehood. Even though a state mandated Digital Identity has not yet been established, all industrialized nations pursue such projects. In my paper I will use examples from the German Digital ID Card. I will show that the German effort culminates in the evocation of what I call 'the will to write oneself'. The will to write oneself is twofold:

1. A norm of exhaustive self-documentation: from Blogging over Social Networks to Geotagging and eHealth – individuals are expected to write their self and their bodies into digital archives. The digital medium collapses the writing of the self and the body into the same universal code. This is an essential component of digital *Governmediality* and as I will show the reform of the German welfare system relies on imposing and exploiting such selfwriting of both the self and the body.
2. An expectation of writing oneself in the sense of one self. Pseudonymous and anonymous activity in the Internet is increasingly coming under suspicion and in public discourse frequently linked to child-pornography and terrorism. Writing multiple selves, not allowing to link all activities to one name represented by one address anchored in an individual's body is suspicious. Trusted authorities issuing Digital Signatures – like the German 'Personalausweis' ID Card which incorporates biometrics - allow strong authentication on the Internet, providing

the potential to prove who has written what, when and where. Using Derrida's notion of the signature as a signifier of presence in time and space I call this writing of one self-writing oneself through the signature.

My paper will conclude that neither statehood, nor the body or the identical self disappear with the Internet. Rather the opposite; the Governmediality of Digital Identity, consisting of self-documentation and writing oneself through the signature, reiterates the individual and its body with unprecedented resolution. Statehood re-emerges as a digital 'Aufschreibesystem' mutually making itself and individuals readable to themselves, to society and last not least to the state itself.

**Kristian Klockars**, *Ontology of actuality and the question of resistance*

A crucial formulation of the normative motivations guiding Foucault's ontology of actuality is: "What is at stake ... is this: how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?". This indicates a double relation to power: (i) power is inevitable and (ii) resistance to power is a good thing.

Resistance, again, is divided into two forms: auto-generated and active political projects. The paper will attempt to clarify these issues. The latter question is connected to a demand to understand how power works in the present. Foucault claims that the present art of government is connected with liberalism, and that it replaces both classical reason of state and the police order. Today we need to ask if this order has been transformed into something different. Foucault enumerates the main factors of contemporary governmental reason: society, economy, population, security and freedom. It seems to me that the relation between the state and these have changed radically during the last 20 years. The paper will attempt to enumerate some of these changes. In the final part, I will address the relation between an ontology of the present and political thinking, and assess its relative merits with competing approaches.

**Cecilia Sjöholm**, Foucault, Freud, and the concept of technique

Freud's use of the concept "technique of psychoanalysis", and thereby also Lacan's, in the seminar on *Freud's papers on technique* is situated between *techne* and *poiesis*. To the Foucault that wrote *History of sexuality* however, it appeared otherwise; he argues that psychoanalysis is using the concept of technique in a regulative rather than a productive manner; replacing *poiesis* or a notion of a technology of the self with a regulative idea of *techne*. This paper examines the use of the term so technology and technique in psychoanalysis and in Foucault, discussing differences as well as possible affinities.

**Helena Mattsson**, Staging a "milieu" – surfaces and event zones

Public space is diminishing in many urban areas, and it has been claimed, for instance by Koolhaas, that this represents a major transformation of the contemporary city. At the same time new forms of public space are constructed, more than ever, both inside and outside institutions by private companies and corporations. "The public", it can be argued, becomes a technique to stage a "milieu" in Foucault's sense of the concept, where space is the medium for events. Programs and activities, earlier hidden in the "apparatus of society," are opened up for the public, and through transparent surfaces or event zones the individual gets caught in unexpected, but

still already staged, situations. In this paper I will discuss this phenomena in relation to some contemporary examples, like the factory and the prison, but also in relation to media institutions.

Foucault's reading of Bentham's Panopticon is often interpreted as focusing upon architecture as physical elements – like walls, windows, doors etc. – dividing space and creating a disciplinary regime. It is possible, however, to regard the architectural affect as the central technique. It was a modulation of light that made it possible for the guard to be absent and for the prisoners to act self-disciplining. The paper highlights architecture and its capacity to induce public affect, in particular in relation to what Foucault calls “the space of security” – a space that, in contrast to disciplinary space where everything is regulated, “lets things happen”.

**Lukasz Stanek**, *Biopolitics of scale*

This paper argues that the management of scale is an essential instrument of state administration of life and distribution of risk on the territory, that is to say within modern urbanism as a biopolitical project. In the 20th century discussion about the city, such concepts as “garden city”, “neighborhood unit”, “community levels” (Gaston Bardet), “extension of dwelling” (Le Corbusier), and “hierarchy of human associations” (Alison and Peter Smithson) become operative instruments of managing the relationship between the individual and the society, complementing the overarching concepts of territory and population introduced by Foucault. Under the concept of “biopolitics of scale”, this paper will interrogate the introduction of such scalar concepts in the regulation of flows of commodities and people; the distribution of infrastructure, security and welfare; ecological protection; and definition of citizenship. Special attention will be given to the urbanistic practices under real existing socialism (Oskar Hansen).

**Andrew Byerley**, *Mind the Gap! Seeking Stability Beyond the 'Tribal' Threshold in Late-Colonial Uganda. The Role of Urban Housing Policy and Housing Provision, 1945-1960.*

The article argues that the ‘turning point’ in British colonial policy in the Uganda Protectorate was an implicitly *spatial* problematic, and one that sought a transition across the tribal threshold. From blunt juridical and fiscal technologies of power in the pre-WWII era designed to extract labour power from Africans while conserving their tribal loyalty; thence to the introduction of anatomo-political technologies to *regenerate* the still tribal African body (1945-1953); then to technologies designed to cross the tribal threshold and norm and form ‘loyal’ modern subjects (1954-1960). This article investigates and argues for the vital but always evolving role of public African urban housing both as instructional spaces for these power investments and also as spatial ‘sorting devices’ or relay points in a wider architecture for canalising movement, separating populations, and guiding loyalties. It is further argued that in terms of the application of technologies of power the African was never viewed in isolation. Rather, technologies targeting the ‘African’ had to be *coordinated* with technologies directed at a wider constellation of actors and institutions that were, over time, discursively deemed either pollutants or attractors in projects of norming and forming, key ones investigated here being the ‘Asian’, the ‘Chief’, alcohol, urban cultivation, and sub-letting.

**Warren Neidich**, *Neuropower*

In the transition from the Disciplinary Society to the Society of Control and onward to what Lazzarato refers to as Noo-politics, the focus of power and the technology at its disposal is not directed toward the materiality of the body but instead its psychic life, particularly its memories and attention, recognizing that the mind and the body are inextricably linked through voluntary and involuntary, somatic and autonomic, striated and smooth conditions. (1) (2) I would like to extend this idea of Noo-politics to include a new focus of sovereignty: upon the neural plasticity itself and the possibility for difference it implies. When sovereignty administers the pluripotential possibilities of the brain at birth and when it focuses its attention upon those parts of the brain, like the forebrain and the pre frontal cortex, important for planning and future decision making, I use the term Neuropower. Utilizing now accepted theories of Cognitive Neuroscience such as that proposed by Gerald Edelman in San Diego and Jean-Pierre Changeux in Paris called Neural Selectionism I would like to show how the new tools of Neoliberal Global Capitalism especially those related to the Information economy like branding, prosuming and polling as they are related to Cognitive Capitalism have created a powerful toolbox with which to sculpt the Neuroarchitectonics of the brain at birth and its possibilities for difference. (3) (4) I will make clearer how Neuropower is now the means through which sovereignty, using powerful techniques at its disposal, regulates the pluripotential quality of that neural plasticity. (5) It is with these tools that the Multitude, which Thomas Hobbes rejected in his ideas of a state in favor of a concept of the people because he felt the multiplicity was unmanageable, can now in fact be regulated. But as Tony Negri and Micheal Hardt intuit the Biopower that produces Empire can constitute new conditions of resistance as well. (6) This is also true of Neuropower.

**Manolis Simos**, *Michel Foucault's Critique of Biopolitical Reason*

Michel Foucault's work can be considered a series of genealogical investigations which challenge the hypostatization of concepts as non-historical entities and the consideration of methodological approaches as unique devices of tracking metaphysically objective truths, and which expose them as social and historical constructs. The function of genealogical analysis is based on the critical replacement of the theoretical model of sovereignty with a different conception of power as a dynamic nexus of forces which forms and permeates the whole social body. According to this conception, power constitutes the condition of production of discourses of knowledge, while, in turn, the produced systems of truth enhance and extend power.

This paper shows how the psychological and psychiatric constitution of the concept of individual abnormality [1] is combined with the biological constitution of the concept of population, and its medicalisation and regularisation, forming, thus, the conditions of possibility of racism. [2] Furthermore, the paper presents the critical impact of the above investigations to contemporary political theory conceived as a form of governing rationality. Finally, it shows how these concrete analyses formulate and enrich Foucault's Nietzschean methodological premises.

**Simona Rentea**, *Vital norms and the biopolitics of life*

The aim of this paper is threefold: recover a second meaning of norms in Foucault's History of Sexuality, explore the type of subject created in relation to this norm through a reading of Foucault alongside Spinoza and

Canguilhem and explore its potential for bringing about a more positive biopolitics. Macherey (1992) discerns two conceptions of norms in Foucault: a negative, restrictive norm that pre-exists its intervention and acts externally on objects, like an imposition, and a positive, expansive norm that produces both itself and the elements on which it acts by operating through a biological process of inclusion and regulation. The second notion not only expands our understanding of the norm beyond the juridical code that links law to sovereignty but also the way we conceive the subject by shifting the terms of her belonging. To be a subject in relation to this norm is to position oneself as part of nature. This is a being that is structured by her belonging in the real rather than the symbolic. These alternative accounts of norm and subject, the paper contends, open up the possibility for thinking politics beyond domination (or the Hobbesian 'immunisation against ourselves') and allow us to imagine a positive form of biopolitics, one which defends a multiplicity of forms of life.

**Marit Grøtta**, *The Potential of Play: Life, Power, and Usage*

After Foucault, the concept of biopolitics has been thoroughly investigated by Giorgio Agamben. Extending Foucault's thought, Agamben also considers counter-strategies to today's political modality, and in this context he refers to *play* as a crucial concept. For Agamben, play represents a liberating activity and an act of profanation in which what has been separated is neutralised and made available for common usage. – To restore play to its purely profane vocation is a political task, he claims. But what kind of activity is *play*? This paper takes its cue from Agamben's approach to play, but investigates the concept further, with emphasis on the relations between constraint and freedom, power and use, and subjectivity and life. Revisiting the old question of the role of play in life and art (notably Aristotle, Kant, Schiller, and Nietzsche), it rephrases the question within a contemporary context, with reference both to Foucault and Agamben.

**Adeena Mey**, *Ranciere as Foucauldian? On the 'Distribution of the Sensible' and new forms of subjectivities*

In the fields of the history and philosophy of science and medicine and allied disciplines, Foucauldian archeological and genealogical methods and notions such as biopower, biopolitics, governmentality and technologies of the self have become more than seminal in the discussion on processes of subjectivation and subjectivity. Ranciere's work doesn't engage with science and medicine, but in his own word his method is close to that of Foucault. Moreover his notion of the 'Distribution of the Sensible' and the distinction he makes between 'police' and 'politics' allow for a discussion and critique of Foucault's and post-Foucauldian (such as Agamben's) take on 'biopolitics'. Those conceptual questions will be articulated with empirical studies on the rise of the 'autism rights movement' and self proclaimed 'neuro-minorities', and the question they raise in terms of (bio-)political subjectivation, as well as to the insufficiencies and problems of this formulation in the fields of the history and philosophy of science and medicine. Based on a discussion of Ranciere's criticisms towards the notion of 'biopolitics' and some of its takes, I will sketch possible contributions from his work to the debate on biopolitics within contemporary studies of biosocial, psychological (L. Blackman) subjectivities