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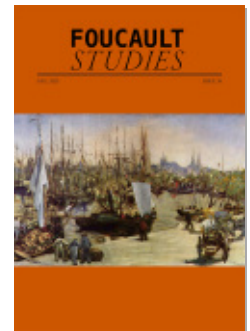
Waging War, Waging Peace: The Weimar Right and Michel Foucault's Analysis of Power in the Mirror of the Archives

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Waging War, Waging Peace: The Weimar Right and Michel Foucault's Analysis of Power in the Mirror of the Archives

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ABSTRACT. Michel Foucault started to reflect on a methodology for analyzing power relations upon his appointment to the Collège de France in 1970. This essay discusses potential unacknowledged sources of these reflections. Drawing on archival material deposited at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, I highlight similarities between Foucault's pre-1976 portrayal of power relations as essentially warlike and a passage from Erich Ludendorff's *Der totale Krieg* that Foucault excerpted as a reading note. On this basis, I ask to what extent the interpretation of Nietzsche developed by Foucault in the early 1970s depends on ideas that had been brought to Nietzsche's work from elsewhere. Citing a manuscript on governmentality not yet published in full, I argue moreover that although Foucault began to identify 'power' with 'government' after 1976, he still construed politics as a form of warfare. His reference henceforth would be Carl Schmitt's definition of the political through the friend-enemy distinction.

Keywords: method, methodology, power, war, government, governmentality, Friedrich Nietzsche, Erich Ludendorff, Carl Schmitt, sources

"The fact is that each writer *creates* [their] precursors."
Jorge Luis Borges, *Kafka and His Precursors*¹

INTRODUCTION

"I have never been a Freudian, I have never been a Marxist and I have never been a structuralist"² avows Foucault to Gérard Raulet in an interview published in the Spring 1983

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors" [1951], in *Borges, a Reader: A Selection from the Writings of Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Alastair Reid (1981), 243.

² Michel Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History" [1983], in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Jeremy Harding (London: Routledge, 1990), 22.

special issue of the literary journal, *Telos*, dedicated to the Mitterrand government and the state of French socialism more generally. Foucault was never shy to wear his heart on his sleeve when it came to identifying what he is *not*, and one occasionally gets the impression that he in fact enjoyed being assigned all sorts of contradictory positions within conventional schemata of theoretical and political classification.

The vastly different conclusions that his contemporaries came to regarding the political valence of his work was a talking point in two conversations between Foucault and his Californian interlocutors near the end of his life. In the first of these, conducted in April 1983 with Martin Jay, Leo Löwenthal, Paul Rabinow, Richard Rorty, and Charles Taylor, Foucault surmised that “the fact that from the beginning I have been considered an enemy by the Marxists, an enemy by the right wing, [and] an enemy by the people in the center” might perhaps indicate that there is, as a matter of fact, nothing “essentially political” about his work.³ When the various political labels that others had grafted onto him became the topic of conversation again in a dialogue with Paul Rabinow a year later, Foucault added to his earlier comments that the fact he had been called an “anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, [or] neo-liberal [. . .] doesn’t even suit me too badly.”⁴

Foucault’s disavowal of political and intellectual positions in his conversation with Gérard Raulet is of course not entirely credible, given that his first monograph from 1954, *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, promotes a materialist understanding of mental illness that openly sought to conform with the Marxism *du jour*.⁵ It is precisely this brief, juvenile episode of Marxism that Foucault would subsequently turn his back on. *Maladie mentale et personnalité* still maintains that mental illness is the outcome of a conflict between the bourgeois ideal of the human being and the subjective experience of the contradictions of bourgeois society.⁶ The closing suggestion of his 1954 book is that “true psychology” should, “like all the human sciences [, have the dis-alienation of the human being as its aim]”.⁷ In stark contrast, his 1966 magnum opus, *The Order of Things*, subtitled *An Archaeology of The Human Sciences*, famously proposes both that “Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water [. . .] [and] is unable to breathe anywhere else,” and

³ Michel Foucault, “Politics and Ethics: An Interview,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984), 375.

⁴ Michel Foucault, “Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984), 383–384 (translation modified). In the passage I omitted from this quotation, Foucault specifies that while these different labels mean nothing on their own, they become quite meaningful when taken together. It is apropos to the meaning of all these labels in concert that Foucault says it ‘doesn’t even suit me too badly [. . . ne me convient pas trop mal]’.

⁵ For a summary of the understanding of mental illness promoted by Foucault in the 1954 edition of *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, see Hubert Dreyfus’s foreword to the English translation of the significantly revised 1962 re-edition of Foucault’s first book: “Foreword to the California Edition,” in *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1987), at (xxiii–xxvii). For a discussion of Foucault’s ideas from the 1954 first edition of *Maladie mentale et personnalité* within their broader historical context, see Elisabetta Basso’s *Young Foucault* (2022) at (23–35).

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (1954), 104.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 110 (my translation).

“that man is a recent invention” in ‘European culture’, which perhaps might soon disappear again “like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.”⁸

In Étienne Balibar’s estimation, this portrayal in *The Order of Things* of Marx’s *urtext*⁹ as a kind of living fossil in the twentieth century represents a significant moment in the development of Foucault’s thought. As Balibar sees it, the publication of *The Order of Things* concludes a first ‘epistemological’ cycle of a lengthy *Abrechnung*;¹⁰ a process of settling accounts with the academic Marxism of his time that ostensibly began right after the appearance of *Maladie mentale et personnalité*. The first ‘epistemological’ cycle of Foucault’s *Abrechnung* has according to Balibar been followed by a second “political or politico-scientific [politologique]”¹¹ cycle, starting with the 1971–72 Collège de France (henceforth CdF) lecture course, *Penal Theories and Institutions*, “and coming to an end with the publication of *The Will to Knowledge* in 1976.”¹²

Balibar is certainly right to note that the 1971–72 lecture course marks the beginning of a discernible effort on Foucault’s part to elaborate the differences between Marxist historiography and his own genealogical approach for writing the histories of power-knowledge *dispositifs*. Marx and the Marxists, however, were certainly never Foucault’s only theoretical interlocutors. If the broad theoretical parameters of Marxist analysis — historical and economic determinism for the main part — were Foucault’s negative foil, the positive side of his theoretical enterprise in the early 1970s bore the face of Friedrich Nietzsche. Foucault would present Nietzsche as a theoretical companion to help him overcome the limitations¹³ of Marxist historiography¹⁴ and the method for analyzing power relations supposedly implied by it.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (2005), 285 and 422.

⁹ In an interview published in a 1971 Brazilian volume dedicated to his work (“Entretien avec Michel Foucault,” in *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988; tome 2: 1970–1975*, 1994), Foucault clarifies that when he writes about Marx and Marxism in *The Order of Things*, he refers to “the kind of Marxism that existed in Europe until the beginning of the twentieth century at most” (170, my translation).

¹⁰ Étienne Balibar, “L’anti-Marx de Michel Foucault,” in *Marx & Foucault: lectures, usages, confrontations*, ed. Christian Laval, Luca Paltrinieri, and Ferhat Taylan (2015), 86–87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86 (my translation).

¹² *Ibid.*, 87 (my translation).

¹³ For Foucault’s views on the limitations of ‘academic Marxism,’ see his 1973 PUC-Rio lectures on “Truth and Juridical Forms” [1974], in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984. Vol. 3: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (2000), at (1–2, 15–16, and 86–87). Both “Truth and Juridical Forms” and *The Meshes of Power*, a lecture he gave in Brazil two years later in 1976, also contain attempts at refashioning Marxist concepts of analysis and transposing them into Foucault’s own methodological framework. However, as Marcelo Hoffman notes, some of Foucault’s interlocutors at the time thought that the positive references to Marx and Marxism in *The Meshes of Power* lacked substance and were a mere tactical maneuver designed to please the audience. See here Hoffman, *Foucault in Brazil* (2024) at (119–122). For Hoffman’s discussion of Foucault’s references to Marx in “Truth and Juridical Forms,” see *Foucault in Brazil* at (35–46).

¹⁴ He presents Nietzsche in this manner, for instance, in the following texts: “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” [1971], in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984. Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (1998), 377–378; “Truth and Juridical Forms,” 14–16; and “Prison Talk” [1975], in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980), 53–54. Though it should also be

This essay argues on the basis of archival material deposited in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (henceforth BnF) that Nietzsche was neither the only nor the most significant influence on Foucault's efforts to develop his own method for analyzing power relations. With reference to a reading note taken by Foucault on Erich Ludendorff's *Der totale Krieg*, the first part of this essay discusses Ludendorff as a potential influence on the equation of power relations with warlike relations, which Foucault actively developed from his appointment to the CdF until the 1976 '*Society Must Be Defended*' lectures. The reason the note on Ludendorff is worth consideration is that it directly alludes to a central metaphor in Foucault's work on power relations and their analysis from the first half of the 1970s: the reversal of Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is politics pursued by other means. The second part of the essay makes use of an as of yet unpublished manuscript on governmentality, included in the lecture materials for the 1979 *The Birth of Biopolitics* course, to argue that while Foucault moved from equating power and war towards equating power with government post-1976, he also adopted Carl Schmitt's definition of politics as the distinction between friend and enemy at that time. I propose that Schmitt's definition of politics informs in particular Foucault's notion of 'counter-conducts.'

In making this argument, I seek to contribute to a growing body of literature in which archival resources are used to identify hitherto unrecognized or underappreciated influences on Foucault's thought at different periods in his life.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Valentina Antoniol comments on the influence of Schmitt on Foucault. Antoniol's 2023 monograph, *Foucault et la guerre*, is a comparative study of the similarities and divergences between the 'polemocritical schema [*schéma polémocritique*]'¹⁶ that Foucault ostensibly developed between 1971 and 1976 and Schmitt's commentary on warfare and enmity. Antoniol contends that Schmitt, despite Foucault neither mentioning him in public nor in archival documents corresponding to this period of his work, was an important source of inspiration and implicit target of critique in the 1976 '*Society Must Be Defended*' lectures in particular.¹⁷ The essay at hand, however, dates the beginning of Schmitt's relevance for Foucault's work to the period after 1976, and refracts the period immediately before through the lens

mentioned that in a conversation with Roger-Pol Droit from June 1975 (published as "« Je suis un artificier » : À propos de la méthode et de la trajectoire de Michel Foucault," in *Michel Foucault: entretiens*, ed. Roger-Pol Droit, 2004), Foucault curiously groups Nietzsche with Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger, and refers to all of them as thinkers who have "promised us a new day, a dawn [. . .] an evening, a night, and so on." This is framed there by Foucault as a "cyclical and binary" perspective on "temporality," which he deems in need of being abandoned in favor of thinking a "universal battle [which] escap[es] the perspective of the Apocalypse" (130–131, my translation).

¹⁵ See here for instance: Valentina Antoniol, *Foucault et la guerre : à partir de Schmitt, contre Schmitt* (2023); Elisabetta Basso, *Young Foucault: The Lille Manuscripts on Psychopathology, Phenomenology, and Anthropology, 1952–1955* (2022); Jean-François Bert, "Michel Foucault défenseur de l'ethnologie: « La magie – le fait social total », une leçon inédite des années 1950," *Zilsel* 2:2 (2017); and Niki Kasumi Clements, "Foucault and Brown: Disciplinary Intersections," *Foucault Studies* 32 (2022).

¹⁶ Antoniol, *Foucault et la guerre*, 15; for an extensive discussion of Foucault's "polemocritical schema," see *ibid.* at 67–123.

¹⁷ For Antoniol's comparison of Foucault and Schmitt, see *ibid.* at 165–205.

of the reading note on Ludendorff. My interest here is moreover not so much with what Antoinol calls Foucault's "discourse on war [discours sur la guerre]"¹⁸ as such. What interests me is the significance of the reduction of power to warfare within Foucault's recurrent reflections on the right method for the analysis of power relations *overall*; and, relatedly, the conceptual ruptures and continuities between his early focus on 'power-as-warfare' and the later work on 'power-as-government.'

1970–1976: 'POWER-AS-WARFARE' AND FOUCAULT'S NIETZSCHE

The Rapprochement of Nietzsche and Clausewitz

Foucault not only sought to distance himself from academic Marxism in his reflections on how to analyze power relations. The other intellectual current that Foucault's reflections set themselves against was the modern tradition of social contract theory. From the early 1970s through to his 1983 text on *The Subject and Power*, Foucault's 'search for a method' was premised just as much on the rejection of the thesis of the "economic functionality" of power as it was premised on rejecting the "juridical theory of power."¹⁹ Not only are power relations not determined by economic relations in the last instance; power also cannot, in the manner of a commodity, be bargained over and become the object of contractual exchange either. Power in fact does not exist in the form of an appropriable and exchangeable object at all: it only exists relationally. At first, Foucault's anti-juridicism and anti-economism led him to anchor his methodological considerations in the assumption that antagonism, strife, and warfare are in principle not so much to be seen as means to specific ends, but rather as the fundamental constituent of individual and social life.²⁰ This much already became evident in his very first lectures at the CdF, the 1970–71 *Lectures on the Will to Know*, where Foucault considers the historical-epistemological relevance of conflict with explicit reference to Nietzsche.

The *Lectures on the Will to Know* credit Nietzsche with establishing the epistemological position that knowledge is no more and no less than the haphazard outcome of a perpetual clash of instincts that animates human history. As far as Foucault's summary goes, the three-fold Nietzschean lesson on knowledge and truth is that "behind the subject who knows in the form of consciousness, there is the struggle of instincts, partial selves, violence, and desires"; that this "desire at the root of knowledge [. . .] [is not related to knowledge] at the

¹⁸ Ibid., 30–34 passim.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended': *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (2003), 13–14. For secondary literature attempting to reconcile the anti-juridicism and anti-economism in Foucault's work from the first half of the 1970s with Marxist categories of analysis, see Michele Spanò, "Towards a Juridical Archaeology of Primitive Accumulation. A Reading of Foucault's Penal Theories and Institutions," *Radical Philosophy* 211 (2021).

²⁰ My account of Foucault's equation of power relations with essentially warlike relations is limited to the bare minimum required for contextualizing the reading note on Ludendorff. For a more extensive discussion of Foucault's work on 'power-as-warfare,' see Marcelo Hoffman, *Foucault and Power: The Influence of Political Engagement on Theories of Power* (2014), 47–91.

level of ends, or by origin or nature”;²¹ and that truth, as guarantor of knowledge, is merely a later supplement produced by the workings of the same instinctual apparatus in history.²² In the *Lectures on the Will to Know*, Nietzsche’s theory of the production of knowledge and truth forms the conceptual substrate for Foucault’s discussion of the emergence of the characteristically Western ‘will to know’ from the gradual ritualization of proto-juridical, agonistic contests held for the purpose of establishing truth in the ancient Hellenic world.²³

The portrayal of strife and conflict as the ontic basis for the production of knowledge and truth is also present in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, an essay published in 1971 as part of a commemorative volume dedicated to Jean Hyppolite. There, however, the theme of the “manufacture” of knowledge and truth is embedded in much broader contemplations about the role of warlike conflict in human history. Commenting on Nietzsche’s notion of ‘emergence’ — which Nietzsche uses to explain the genesis of values, ideas, or concepts — Foucault remarks apropos his genealogical approach to historiography that “[t]he role of genealogy is to record [the] history [of the development of humanity]” precisely as the history of the “violent or surreptitious appropriation[s] of a system of rules” in the course of an inexhaustible “general war.”²⁴ In this sense, the 1971 essay on Nietzsche is paradigmatic for the entire further development of Foucault’s reflections on how to analyze power relations until his 1976 ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’ lectures.

Foucault’s insistence that Nietzschean genealogies construe human history as the history of generalized warfare would come to be supplemented in the 1972–73 CdF course on *The Punitive Society* with the trope of the inversion of Carl von Clausewitz’s dictum that “[w]ar is [. . .] a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.”²⁵ From then on until 1976, the trope of the reversal of Clausewitz’s dictum would keep recurring as a metaphorical illustration for the methodological assumption that power relations are to be analyzed as essentially warlike relations. Foucault introduces this trope in the second lecture of *The Punitive Society* as he brings the interpretation of Hobbes’s social contract theory he develops there to a close. Perfectly in line with his remarks on the function of genealogy from his 1971 essay on Nietzsche, Foucault reads Hobbes as proposing that humanity perpetually oscillates back and forth between the state of nature and the state of society.

The central argument of the interpretation of Hobbes developed by Foucault in the 1972–73 CdF lectures is that Hobbes considers “civil war” and “war all against all” to be distinct yet nevertheless related terms of analysis: Foucault suggests that for Hobbes,

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970–1971, and Oedipal Knowledge* (2013), 25.

²² Ibid., 214–216. I summarize here from the lecture on Nietzsche given by Foucault at McGill University in April 1971, shortly after the conclusion of the *Lectures on the Will to Know* at the CdF.

²³ This theme is pursued from the fifth up to the eighth lecture out of the twelve lectures of this course.

²⁴ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 378 (translation modified). Note that Donald Brouhard and Sherry Simon translate Foucault’s original French phrase ‘guerre générale’ as ‘total war.’ Adopting this translation, however, would open the door to misunderstandings in the context of this essay.

²⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* [1832] (1989), 87.

“civil war is [. . .] the terminal state of the dissolution of the sovereign, just as the war of all against all is the initial state on the basis of which the sovereign can be constituted.”²⁶ In contrast to Hobbes’s negative evaluation of civil war “as something that dissolves the collective component of the life of individuals,” Foucault proposes that “civil war is the process through which [. . .] a number of new, previously unknown collective elements are formed.”²⁷ It is in order to illustrate this claim that Foucault eventually alludes to Clausewitz’s dictum about war and politics. Foucault remarks that “if it is true that external war is the continuation of politics, then we must say, reciprocally, that politics is the continuation of civil war.”²⁸

The first allusion to Clausewitz’s aphorism after *The Punitive Society* comes in a 1975 interview that Foucault gave to Bernard-Henri Lévy for *L’Imprévu*, a fortnightly journal which Lévy edited. Discussing recent geopolitical developments of their time, Foucault quipped to Lévy that those who characterize the aftermath of the 1973 OPEC embargo as a ‘crisis’ are merely displaying their lack of “analytic tools [instruments d’analyse]”²⁹ to make sense of the situation. It can be assumed that Foucault’s scorn in this interview is directed at Marxist, or, ‘marxisant’ modalities of (geo-)political analysis:³⁰ Foucault implies that the pivotal question for those who are talking of current events in terms of a ‘crisis’ would be whether the present situation could be considered a moment in which contradictions have progressed so far that matters cannot continue to develop along the same path.³¹ In an attempt at discrediting the ‘marxisant’ vernacular of contradictions, Foucault asserts that:

if one keeps in mind that war is not the continuation of politics, but that politics is the continuation of warfare by other means, then the idea that the contradiction would become so serious that nothing can continue anymore must be abandoned.³²

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972–1973* (2015), 27. For further discussion of Foucault’s engagement with Hobbes in *The Punitive Society*, see Antoniol’s *Foucault et la guerre* at 53–65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, “La politique est la continuation de la guerre par d’autres moyens” [1975], in *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988; tome 2: 1970–1975* (1994), 703.

³⁰ To be more precise, it does not seem unlikely that Foucault’s scorn is directed at contemporary Maoist activists here. The topic of contradictions in society and their significance for political activism plays a central role in his conversation with two Maoist militants from February 1972. See “On Popular Justice: A Discussion with Maoists” [1972], in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980). In the 1936 text “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” published in the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: Volume 1* (1965), Mao Zedong himself in fact outlines a position resembling the one lampooned by Foucault. There, Mao proposes that “[w]ar is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions, when they have developed to a certain stage, between classes, nations, states, or political groups, and it has existed ever since the emergence of private property and of classes” (180).

³¹ Foucault, “La politique est la continuation de la guerre,” 703–704.

³² *Ibid.*, 704 (my translation).

In the 1976 CdF lecture course, '*Society Must Be Defended*,' less than a year after his interview for *L'Imprévu*, Foucault finally merged his hitherto separate references to Nietzsche and Clausewitz. Foucault clarifies at the outset of this course that he wishes to use it as an opportunity to consolidate the various answers to the question of the "'how" of power' which he had been developing "since 1970–1971."³³

The trope of the reversal of Clausewitz's formula makes its return towards the end of the first lecture of '*Society Must Be Defended*.' There, Foucault repeats his familiar catechism about the insufficiency of economism and juridicism for the analysis of power relations, and then frames the perspective that politics is a continuation of warfare by other means as fundamentally Nietzschean. Foucault does so while outlining the keystone of his proposed method for analyzing relations of power. He comments that:

if power is indeed the implementation and deployment of a relationship of force, rather than analyzing it in terms of surrender, contract, and alienation, or rather than analyzing it in functional terms as the reproduction of the relations of production, shouldn't we be analyzing it first and foremost in terms of conflict, confrontation, and war? That would give us an alternative to the first hypothesis — which is that the mechanism of power is basically or essentially repression — or a second hypothesis: Power is war, the continuation of war by other means. At this point, we can invert Clausewitz's proposition and say that politics is the continuation of war by other means.³⁴

Foucault subsequently outlines various corollaries of such an 'inversion of Clausewitz's proposition' and then associates this trope with Nietzsche. He performs this association while arguing that if one wishes to escape both Marxism and social contract theory when analyzing power relations, there would *prima facie* seem to be only two options: either fall back on the notion that "the mechanism of power is essentially repression," which he attributes to Wilhelm Reich, or assume that power is essentially "a warlike clash between forces."³⁵ Apropos this latter proposition, Foucault clarifies: "for the sake of convenience, I will call this Nietzsche's hypothesis."³⁶ As if to cast aside any remaining doubt, this segment from the first lecture of '*Society Must Be Defended*' closes by reaffirming that 'war' is the primary term of Foucault's own method for analyzing power relations. "Repression," he proposes, "is no more than the implementation, within a pseudopeace that is being undermined by a continuous war, of a perpetual relationship of force."³⁷

³³ Foucault, '*Society Must Be Defended*,' 3–13 and 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17. Foucault also presents the inverted form of Clausewitz's aphorism as a metaphor for the central precept of his method for analyzing power relations in the chapter on *Method* from *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* [1976] (1978), published in December 1976, at 92–93.

Ludendorff's Clausewitz

I have just outlined Foucault's remarks on the significance of conflict, strife, and warfare from his 1970 commentary on Nietzsche and the production of knowledge to his 1976 contention that the inverted form of Clausewitz's aphorism on war and politics reveals an inherently Nietzschean position. In what follows, I would like to explain how working with the documents deposited in the Fonds Foucault at the BnF has made me skeptical about Foucault's assertion that his identification of power relations with essentially warlike relations derives from a reading of Nietzsche, or at least from a reading of Nietzsche alone.

Of central importance here is a passage of text that Foucault excerpted on a reading note on Erich Ludendorff's 1935 treatise, *Der totale Krieg*. This note is to be found in box 19 of the Fonds Foucault, whose title in the archival catalogue is *Économie, Libéralisme de Smith à Hayek, Notes de lecture*.³⁸ This box of documents consists entirely of undated reading notes, organized into seventeen thematic dossiers. I initially did not suspect that any of this material would be related to Foucault's 'Society Must Be Defended' CdF course from 1976. The vast majority of the documents in this box correspond to the topics under discussion in *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the two CdF lecture courses on 'governmentality' that Foucault gave in 1978 and 1979, respectively.

Alongside excerpts from works of classical and neoclassical political economists, and notes on the concepts of state and civil society, box 19 also contains one dossier whose title page is inscribed "N.S / National socialisme."³⁹ This did not surprise me in particular, given that Foucault's 1979 lecture course on *The Birth of Biopolitics* discusses the influence of the "Nazi experience"⁴⁰ of its affiliates on what would eventually become the theoretical program of Freiburg School ordoliberalism. The 'national socialism' dossier holds materials on the Nazi state apparatus and Nazi economic policy which seem related to the passage in lecture five of *The Birth of Biopolitics* where Foucault discusses Nazism as a foil for the ordoliberals.⁴¹ However, the dossier also contains the above-mentioned note on Ludendorff's *Der totale Krieg*.⁴² It was this particular discovery that surprised me, given that the note on Ludendorff is clearly unrelated to the topics of Foucault's 1978 and 1979 CdF courses on governmentality. It instead echoes the identification of power relations and warfare which culminated in the 1976 'Society Must Be Defended' lectures.

³⁸ I encountered this document when I first undertook research in the Fonds Foucault in June 2019. Since my first visit to the Fonds Foucault, the contents of this box have been digitized and made available as an online resource by the *Foucault fiches de lecture* project, a research initiative and presentation platform funded by the French *Agence nationale de la recherche*. For a summary of the contents of this box, see the editorial note on the *Foucault fiches de lecture* website: Équipe FFL, "Boite_019 | Économie, libéralisme de Smith à Hayek," Foucault fiches de lecture. <https://eman-archives.org/Foucault-fiches/collections/show/393> (accessed May 26, 2025).

³⁹ NAF 28730, box 19, sheet 151. Note that 'N.S' and 'national socialisme' have been written in two different pens (one blue, the other black) and in seemingly two different handwritings (the first line of one 'N' is drawn top to bottom, whereas that of the other is drawn bottom to top).

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79* (2008), 114.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106–117.

⁴² NAF 28730, box 19, sheet 169.

The note itself uses the French title of Ludendorff's book, *La guerre totale*, suggesting that Foucault had worked with Arthur Pfannstiel's French translation, which first appeared in 1936. The reading note refers to page 14 of the book. On this page of the 1936 French edition, Ludendorff begins to formulate one of his central premises.⁴³ As Ludendorff has it, the supposedly total dimension that warfare had attained during the First World War (he argues that in Germany, "the military and the people were one"⁴⁴ during that conflict) instantiates a broader change in the relationship between warfare and politics since Clausewitz's times. Ludendorff's claim is that a number of political and technological developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have ushered in a new era of world history, characterized by essentially permanent, interminable war.⁴⁵ This line of argument eventually concludes with the following remark:

All of Clausewitz's theories are to be overturned [sind über den Haufen zu werfen]. War and politics both serve the purpose of preserving the life of the people, but war is the highest expression of a people's will to live [völkischen Lebenswillens]. Therefore, politics ought to serve warfare.⁴⁶

The above fragment, which I translate from the original German text, is quoted almost in its entirety in Foucault's reading note.⁴⁷

The absence of a date on the reading note makes it impossible to say with certainty when Foucault read Ludendorff. In my view, there are two circumstances to suggest that Foucault might have read Ludendorff prior to the '*Society Must Be Defended*' lectures. The first is that the content of the reading note is very similar to the content elaborated by Foucault in the passage on the 'inversion of Clausewitz' from the first of the '*Society Must Be Defended*' lectures. The second circumstance is an evasive remark made by Foucault in the third lecture of '*Society Must Be Defended*.' Explaining that he wishes to spend much of the remainder of his lectures outlining the genealogy of the discourse of 'power-as-warfare' — of which, as he mentions, he had hitherto been a proponent himself — Foucault proclaims that part of his reason for doing so is to circumvent discussing "[w]ho [. . .] had the idea of inverting Clausewitz's principle and [. . .] thought of saying '[i]t is quite possible that

⁴³ In the last paragraph on page 13 of the French edition (*La guerre totale*, 1936), which breaks over onto page 14, Ludendorff introduces this central argument by proposing that "[j]ust as the character of warfare has changed over the course of the last century, which is to say, since Clausewitz, so too has the relationship between politics and war [De même que depuis Clausewitz, . . .]" (13, my translation).

⁴⁴ Erich Ludendorff, *Der totale Krieg* (1935), 5 (my translation).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 (my translation). The purpose of peace, Ludendorff suggests in the same passage, is thus henceforth that of preparing a *Volk* for the 'struggle for life' (*Lebenskampf*) in wartime.

⁴⁷ According to my literal transcription, Foucault writes: « "les rapports entre la politique et la stratégie / militaire doivent se modifier. Ttes les théories / de Clausewitz sont à remplacer. / La guerre et la politique servent la conservation / du peuple, mais la guerre reste la suprême expression de / la volonté de vie raciale. C'est prquoi la politique / doit servir la guerre. » : NAF 28730, box 19, sheet 169. For this passage in Pfannstiel's 1936 French translation, see *La guerre totale* (1936) at (22).

war is the continuation of politics by other means but isn't politics itself a continuation of war by other means?'.⁴⁸ He clarifies that his strategy for getting around this discussion consists in attempting to establish that "the principle that war is a continuation of politics by other means [sic!]⁴⁹ was a principle that [already] existed long before Clausewitz."⁵⁰

Considering the broader social and political environment in which Foucault found himself after his return to France from Tunis in Autumn 1968, it should probably be mentioned that it might not have been overly difficult for him to develop some sort of interest in Clausewitz in the first place: at the time, the Prussian general and military theorist had been a household name for a good number of Foucault's academic and activist contemporaries.⁵¹ In the 'Course Context' essay written for Foucault's 1973 *The Punitive Society* lectures, Bernard Harcourt quotes Daniel Defert⁵² as insisting that Clausewitz's formula about the political nature of warfare was "very fashionable among Maoist militants at the time."⁵³ André Glucksmann repeatedly refers to Clausewitz and his 'war continues politics' aphorism in his 1967 *Le discours de la guerre*; a book which appeared shortly before Glucksmann's own participation in the events of May 1968 as part of the ultraleft.⁵⁴ From December 1971 until March 1972, Glucksmann's erstwhile doctoral advisor Raymond Aron delivered a series of lectures at the CdF entitled *Carl von Clausewitz en son temps et aujourd'hui*,⁵⁵ which formed the basis for his 1976 monograph *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*. The question of the 'correct way' of putting war and politics in relation is furthermore discussed in Carl Schmitt's *Theory of the Partisan*. This book, originally published in 1963, first appeared in French translation in 1972. Archival material discussed further below suggests that Foucault was familiar with *Theory of the Partisan*.

Nietzsche, a Red Herring?

Notwithstanding the vogueishness of Clausewitz in some circles at the turn of the 1970s, the note on Ludendorff still raises the question of whether Foucault might not deliberately

⁴⁸ 'Society Must Be Defended,' 47–48 (punctuation altered).

⁴⁹ Audio recordings of the lecture confirm that this is a slip of the tongue, not a transcription error. It should have been: "... the principle that *politics* is a continuation of *war* by other means"

⁵⁰ 'Society Must Be Defended,' 48.

⁵¹ See also Valentina Antoniol's more comprehensive commentary in *Foucault et la guerre* (2023) on the reception of Clausewitz in then-contemporary literature (73–79). Antoniol claims that Foucault was familiar with Glucksmann's *Le discours de la guerre* and cites Mauro Bertani as having related to her that Foucault 'appreciated it' (75).

⁵² Defert used to be a member of the *Gauche prolétarienne* himself.

⁵³ Bernard E. Harcourt, "Course Context," in *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972–1973* (2015), 303 n. 49.

⁵⁴ See Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s* (2004), 100–102.

⁵⁵ It should be worth highlighting in this context that Aron mentioned Ludendorff's notion of total war and its reversal of the Clausewitzian correlation of war and politics in his lecture from March 2, 1972. See NAF 28060, box 23, dossier 3, typescript of Lecture 11, March 2, 1972, page 9.

have attempted to conceal the source of his ideas from his audience in *'Society Must Be Defended'* in associating the reversal of Clausewitz's correlation of war and politics with Nietzsche. A concealment which doubtlessly would have been due to Ludendorff's *völkisch* fascist worldview and his propensity to indulge in anticlerical and antisemitic conspiracy theories. It is not implausible to hypothesize that Foucault's interpretation of Nietzsche came to be influenced by a reading of Ludendorff either prior to *'Society Must Be Defended'* or already before *The Punitive Society*. We could in fact ask whether Foucault might not have presented a Ludendorff-inflected interpretation of Nietzsche as early as 1971 in the essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*.

At any rate, in one of his last pieces of writing, namely in the passage on *Why I am a Destiny* from *Ecce Homo*,⁵⁶ Nietzsche arguably comes closest to articulating the idea that Foucault ascribed to him in *'Society Must Be Defended.'* In this passage, Nietzsche suggests that any future 'upheavals' that might be caused by him "challenging the lies of millennia" will ultimately lead to a situation where "[t]he concept of politics will have merged entirely with a war of spirits [. . . ist dann gänzlich in einen Geisterkrieg aufgegangen]."⁵⁷ There is also a plethora of less bombastic statements scattered throughout Nietzsche's work which suggests that he considered conflict a permanent, and indeed highly productive force in life. But if we consider Nietzsche's oeuvre as a whole, we would presumably have to conclude that it is far from self-evident that his reflections on conflict can straightforwardly be associated with the Clausewitzian notion of warfare⁵⁸ as an "act of force" where there is "no logical limit to the application of that force,"⁵⁹ as indirectly done by Foucault in *The Punitive Society* and directly in *'Society Must Be Defended.'* To cast Nietzsche's remarks on conflict as advocacy for partisan or interstate warfare arguably requires a deliberate elision on the part of the reader.⁶⁰

What makes it seem reasonable to believe that Foucault's 'bellicose' reading of Nietzsche did not develop by coincidence but rather through his engagement with Ludendorff is the fact that Nietzsche himself never mentioned Clausewitz in any significant way. To my knowledge, the note on Ludendorff's *Der totale Krieg* is the only document in the Fonds

⁵⁶ This passage from *Ecce Homo* also appears in slightly modified form in Nietzsche's final notebook, which he kept from December 1888 until his breakdown in January 1889. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887–1889. Kritische Studienausgabe, Bd. 13* (1999), 639–640. In the notebook, the passage in which Nietzsche evaluates the future significance of his work segues into a declaration of 'Todkrieg,' a 'war unto death,' against the Hohenzollern dynasty. Giorgio Colli contends about these comments on the Hohenzollern in his "Nachwort (zu Band 12 und 13)," in *Kritische Studienausgabe, Bd. 13* (1999), that they are the only fragments of Nietzsche's writings which clearly evidence his descent into madness (668).

⁵⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo" [1908], in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (1989), 327.

⁵⁸ On this question, see Yunus Tuncel's 2023 review of recent literature on Nietzsche and conflict: "Nietzsche on Conflict and Agon," *Nietzsche-Studien* 52:1 (2023).

⁵⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

⁶⁰ Perhaps we can refer to Tuncel's own disagreement in "Nietzsche on Conflict and Agon" with the author of one of the books under review (388) as an example of the lack of self-evidence regarding the extension of Nietzsche's remarks on conflict to the realm of political violence.

Foucault that alludes to the ‘inversion of Clausewitz,’ which became such a central metaphor in Foucault’s reflections on method until 1976. The reading of Nietzsche we encounter in this period of Foucault’s work is of course also proximate to the Nietzscheanism espoused by the proponents of the so-called Conservative Revolution in Weimar Germany. Perhaps that is no coincidence either: despite their political differences, the ideas promoted by Ludendorff and the style of thought associated with the Conservative Revolution after all grew out of the same basic experience.⁶¹

Jürgen Habermas and Nancy Fraser already pondered in the early 1980s whether Foucault’s critique of modernity can be considered identical to that of the ‘Young Conservatives’ of the Weimar Republic.⁶² Habermas answered this question in the affirmative, whereas Fraser’s assessment was more ambivalent. Yet the commentaries of Habermas and Fraser are in essence no more than broad speculations about the meaning of what should be the most obvious consequence of Foucault’s rejection of Marxist methods of historiography: the absence of a dialectical critique of modernity from his work. I believe that the reading notes deposited in the BnF and other archival material allow us to speculate in a somewhat narrower and more nuanced manner about Foucault’s intentions behind his possible use of ideas taken from conservative or outright fascist source material.

If we consider, for instance, that the recently published 1975 São Paulo lectures on *La généalogie du savoir moderne sur la sexualité* concern the persistence of ‘micro’ forms of fascism in disciplinary institutions after the collapse of the grand fascist state apparatuses of the first half of the twentieth century,⁶³ then we might ask whether the ‘bellicose’ interpretation of Nietzsche, potentially inspired by an engagement with the work of Erich Ludendorff, might not belong to an attempt on Foucault’s part at engaging in what he elsewhere referred to as a form of political judo:⁶⁴ an intellectual anti-fascism that seeks to redirect the force of historically fascist thought against whatever are deemed to be contemporary manifestations of fascism. If that is indeed what Foucault tried to achieve, then his efforts would be comparable to those of the anti-colonial intellectuals studied by Matthieu Renault,⁶⁵ who set out to reappropriate Oswald Spengler’s critique of Western civilization for emancipatory purposes.

⁶¹ Bruno Thoss suggests in *Der Ludendorff-Kreis 1919–1923* (1978) that Ludendorff’s own ideas about the “natural alternation of open warfare and interwar periods” developed out of post-World War I discourses around the creation of a new, military state, grounded in the principles of frontline solidarity and military discipline, which had been “virulent in the entire Freikorps- and, later, in the Wehrverband movement, and extending all the way up into the intellectual circles of the young conservatives” (7–8, my translation).

⁶² See Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” *New German Critique* 22 (1981); and Nancy Fraser, “Michel Foucault: A ‘Young Conservative’?,” *Ethics* 96:1 (1985).

⁶³ Michel Foucault, “La généalogie du savoir moderne sur la sexualité : Cours prononcé à l’université de São Paulo en Octobre 1975,” in *Généalogies de la sexualité*, ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (2024), 111–114.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, “Sur la sellette” [1975], in *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988; tome 2: 1970–1975* (1994), 721.

⁶⁵ Matthieu Renault, “Rewriting the ‘Decline of the West’ in the Black Atlantic (17 Jan 2024),” Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought, Goldsmiths, University of London — YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...>

An alternative hypothesis that cannot be entirely ruled out is that Foucault only discovered Ludendorff's work on total war at the same time as he delivered the '*Society Must Be Defended*' lecture course or shortly thereafter, just as the placement of the note in box 19 of the Fonds Foucault would suggest. If this hypothesis were true, we could ask further whether Foucault's reading of Ludendorff might not have influenced or even actively motivated his gradual post-1976 shift from the 'power-as-warfare' framework to that of 'power-as-government.' Foucault's changeover from 'war' to 'government' as the central concept for analyzing power relations will now be my focus. If Marcelo Hoffman insists that this shift is to be construed as a *displacement* rather than a *replacement* of the 'war model,'⁶⁶ then the following discussion of Carl Schmitt as a further potential influence on Foucault clarifies *where* the remnants of this 'war model' came to be relocated in conceptual terms. *Pace* Hoffman, I propose that 'government' did eventually replace 'war' as the general matrix for the analysis of power relations with the publication of *The Subject and Power*. But I also insist that while power, warfare, and politics were one and the same in Foucault's conceptual lexicon up until 1976, politics and warfare are to be thought of as separate from power in Foucault's post-1976 work on government and governmentality.

1978–1983, 'POWER-AS-GOVERNMENT': PLUS ÇA CHANGE?

Government: A 'Singular Mode of Action, neither Warlike nor Juridical'

Following the resumption of his courses at the CdF after a teaching sabbatical in 1977, a different answer to the question of the "'how" of power' began to emerge in Foucault's work. The 1978 *Security, Territory, Population* lectures mark Foucault's first significant attempt to associate power relations with relations of 'government';⁶⁷ the latter understood as the sum total of practices for guiding the conduct of subjects.⁶⁸ Foucault initially seemed ambivalent on the question of whether a relation of government is merely one specific form of power relation amongst others, or whether 'power' and 'government' should be considered synonyms. In his public appearances after *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault persistently oscillated between these two positions.⁶⁹

.com/watch?v=0_KR4ySysnk (accessed May 26, 2025). With Matthieu Renault's approval, I took the slightly unusual decision to refer to the recording of a research presentation in the absence of an imminent print publication elaborating on the material presented there.

⁶⁶ Hoffman, *Foucault and Power*, 77–86.

⁶⁷ Already in *Abnormal*, his 1975 lectures at the CdF, Foucault would speak of 'government' and the 'art of government' in the same manner as he would in 1978. In *Abnormal*, however, Foucault's references to government are in passing remarks only. See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975* (2003), 48–49.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78* (2007), 120–122.

⁶⁹ Compare here: *Birth of Biopolitics*, 186; "Politics and Reason" [1981], in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (1990), 83; "Discussion of 'Truth and Subjectivity'" [2013], in *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self. Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1980*, ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (2016), 103; "Interview with André Berten" [2012], in *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling. The Function of*

In 1983, Foucault's essay *The Subject and Power* appeared as an afterword to the second edition of Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. There, Foucault seems to have settled on the position that power is essentially government and outlines what it entails to construe power relations as relations of government. This outline retains from the first, 'power-as-warfare' answer to the question of how power is exercised the insistence that power is not to be thought of as intrinsically repressive,⁷⁰ but rather as a productive, "positive [mechanism]."⁷¹ *The Subject and Power* argues that although relations of power can assume the form of physical violence or, conversely, a quasi-contractual relationship of sub- and superordination, the essence of a power relation should be sought in neither of these two situations. We are told that although "the bringing into play of power relations does not exclude the use of violence any more than it does the obtaining of consent," this is not "the principle or the basic nature of power."⁷² Rather, 'government' as a "singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical"⁷³ is how Foucault now understands power.

If we treat Foucault's remarks from *The Subject and Power* as his last major contribution to (and hence also his final word) on this topic,⁷⁴ then Foucault's second answer to the 'how is power exercised?' question differs significantly from his earlier attempt. Both the 'power-as-warfare' and the 'power-as-government' answer are marked by an opposition to social contract theory; but warfare, formerly central to his reflections on the proper method for analyzing power relations, is now relegated to the margins. The literary scholar Keith Gandal thus seems to have put it quite aptly when, in a 1984 report on some proposed but never realized collaborative research with Michel Foucault, he referred to practices of government as practices of "'waging' peace."⁷⁵

Another archival document, however, gives the impression that there is nevertheless significant continuity between Foucault's pre- and post-1976 work, namely, with regard to

Avowal in Justice, ed. Fabienne Brion and Bernard E. Harcourt (2014), 240. Foucault would also occasionally affirm the 'power-as-warfare' model after 1976. Some instances of this are listed in the passage of Hoffman's *Foucault and Power* cited above at n. 66.

⁷⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*, 83–85.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷² Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (1983), 220.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 220–221 (my emphasis).

⁷⁴ Hoffman argues that there is evidence of Foucault retaining the 'power-as-warfare' model even after *The Subject and Power* had been published. He refers here to the 1983 *The Government of Self and Others* lectures, two interviews from 1983 and 1984, *Politics and Ethics* and *The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom* respectively, and the discussion of aphrodisia in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. I am not entirely convinced that these texts offer examples of the persistence of the pre-1976 reflections on 'power-as-warfare' in Foucault's work. As I see it, Foucault does indeed allude to the permanent possibility of counter-conducts in all these instances, but to identify the notion of counter-conducts with the 'power-as-warfare'-model *tout court* fails to do justice to the conceptual reworking and reorientation in Foucault's reflections on method after 1976. For Hoffman's discussion of all these texts, see *Foucault and Power*, 82–86.

⁷⁵ FCL 4. 16, *New Arts of Government in the Great War and Post-War periods: Projet de recherche*, 3.

the question of ‘what is politics?’. This other document is a thirteen-page manuscript on governmentality from box 1978–79 (VIII) of the Fonds Foucault,⁷⁶ which holds the entire lecture manuscript for the 1979 *The Birth of Biopolitics* CdF course, and other related documents. This document draws our attention to the circumstance that for as long as Foucault claimed that relations of power were warlike in essence, ‘politics’ and ‘power’ were effectively synonymous terms as well: if power is war and war is politics, then power is politics *qua* warfare. This identity, we can say on the basis of the governmentality manuscript, no longer holds for Foucault’s work on ‘power-as-government.’ The successful exercise of power *as government* is to be thought of as an apolitical process.

The existence of this manuscript has been known at least since Michel Senellart included fragmentary transcriptions and commented on in the ‘Course Context’ essay that accompanies the published edition of Foucault’s 1978 *Security, Territory, Population* lectures.⁷⁷ For Senellart, this manuscript illustrates that for Foucault, “politics is always conceived from the point of view of forms of resistance to power.”⁷⁸ Senellart also acknowledges Foucault’s citation of Schmitt in this manuscript. What Senellart’s commentary does not mention, but what the manuscript as a whole establishes relatively clearly, is that Foucault did much more than merely make a passing reference to Schmitt: the manuscript suggests that Foucault sought to adopt Carl Schmitt’s definition of the Political *qua* friend-enemy distinction⁷⁹ as the broader politico-philosophical framework for his work on government and governmentality. To gain a better understanding of Foucault’s late ‘Schmittianism,’ it is worth outlining first what Foucault said in his lifetime about the political dimension of his *Spätwerk*.

Politics Starts Where Government Ends: Counter-Conducts and Carl Schmitt’s Friend-Enemy Distinction as Foundation of the Political

It is worth recalling in this context that Foucault’s reflections on power as government coincide with a more general concern on his part about the position of his own work in the

⁷⁶ NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheets 185bis–196. The manuscript counts thirteen pages if one includes 185bis and 187bis in the count, which are two half sheets of paper sellotaped onto sheets 185 and 187, respectively.

⁷⁷ Michel Senellart, “Course Context,” in *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78* (2007), 390, and 400 n. 134.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 390. Senellart’s claim that this is the only text in which Foucault refers to Schmitt is erroneous. Another note from the ‘national socialism’ dossier in Box 19 of the Fonds Foucault contains a summary of Friedrich Hayek’s commentary from *The Road to Serfdom* on the distinction between the absolute, neutral, and total state made by Carl Schmitt in his 1931 *Der Hüter der Verfassung*. See NAF 28730, box 19, sheet 155. A further reference to Schmitt can be found in one of Foucault’s intellectual journals from 1979. See here: NAF 28730, box 92, folder 20, entry from January 19, 1979. For a partial transcription of this passage, see *Foucault et la guerre* (1979). Note though that Antoniol’s transcription wrongly suggests that the sentences starting ‘C’est la contre-action . . .’ and ‘La difference est dans . . .’ directly follow on from one another. These two sentences are separated by a passage where, as far as my own partial transcription goes, Foucault reflects on the choice between political violence and reformism.

⁷⁹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political. Expanded Edition* (2007), 26.

history of modern thought. These reflections can be traced throughout three commentaries on the legacy of the Enlightenment⁸⁰ that Foucault wrote in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The earliest of these is an untitled lecture given to the Société française de philosophie on May 27, 1978, eventually published as *Qu'est-ce que la critique?* (*Critique et Aufklärung*) in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* in 1990. Foucault moreover authored a commentary on Immanuel Kant's 1784 text, *What is Enlightenment?*, which Paul Rabinow published shortly after Foucault's death in English translation in the *Foucault Reader* under the same title as that of Kant's essay. While we do not know when exactly Foucault wrote the article published by Rabinow, Foucault's interest in the Enlightenment and its legacy in any case continued well into the 1980s: the third of Foucault's major commentaries on the Enlightenment is the first lecture of his 1983 CdF course on *The Government of Self and Others*. Foucault himself subsequently edited this lecture for publication, and it appeared as *Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?* in the May 1984 edition of *Magazine littéraire*.

The lecture at the Société française de philosophie offers a substantial engagement with the political dimension of the Enlightenment. Foucault explores this political dimension through a discussion of the "critical attitude [. . .] specific to modern civilization."⁸¹ As far as Foucault is concerned, the 'critical attitude' of the modern West is the product of a late Renaissance burgeoning of questions around the problem of government. The ubiquity of the question 'how to govern?' in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the story goes, has given rise to a "multiplication of all the arts of governing — the art of pedagogy, the art of politics, the art of economics, if you will — and of all the institutions of government, in the wider sense the term government had at the time."⁸²

According to Foucault, this 'critical attitude' is the negative counterpart of the resurgence of interest in the art of government. He argues in *Qu'est-ce que la critique?* that the late Renaissance omnipresence of questions around government did not merely produce pedagogy, political science, economics, et cetera, but also theoretical and practical counterproposals to these arts of government. The question 'how to govern?', he contends, "cannot apparently be dissociated from the question 'how not to be governed?'."⁸³ A few months before his lecture to the Société française de philosophie, while still delivering the *Security, Territory, Population* course at the CdF, Foucault already invented a name for these "struggle[s] against the processes implemented for conducting others":⁸⁴ 'counter-conducts.'⁸⁵

In *Qu'est-ce que la critique?*, these 'counter-conducts' are now presented as the sum and substance of the 'critical attitude' specific to Western modernity. The 'critical attitude,'

⁸⁰ It should be emphasized that Foucault (following Kant) does not primarily construe the Enlightenment as a historical epoch, but rather as an "attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life" which consists in a permanent "critique of what we are" so as to allow us to become something different. See Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" [1984], in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (2007), 118.

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?" [1990], in *The Politics of Truth*, 42.

⁸² Ibid., 44.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 201.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 201–216 passim.

Foucault tells his audience, is “a kind of general cultural form, both a political and moral attitude, a way of thinking”⁸⁶ that expresses itself in the “perpetual question [. . .] [of] ‘how not to be governed like that.’”⁸⁷ The further argument of the lecture then associates the ‘critical attitude’ thus understood with Immanuel Kant’s idea of Enlightenment.⁸⁸ In *Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?*, Foucault clarifies at last that this ‘critical attitude,’ formed in the Renaissance and then rearticulated by Kant, is also what he identifies his own work with.⁸⁹

Foucault’s insistence on the proximity of his own ideas about the ‘critical tradition’ of the Enlightenment to those of Immanuel Kant is somewhat curious. The understanding of critique that Foucault outlines runs counter to Kant’s liberal schematism, where critique is restricted to the arena of the public sphere and takes place in the form of the eminently intellectual process of the ‘public use of reason.’ In Foucault’s work on the legacy of the Enlightenment, critique is cast as a practice that transcends the public/private divide and which need not necessarily take the form of debate and discussion either.⁹⁰ The manuscript on governmentality from box 1978–79 (VIII) of the Fonds Foucault indicates in this context that ‘critique’ in Foucault’s sense ought in fact to be understood as an essentially antagonistic practice, analogous to his pre-1976 identification of politics with warfare.

It is not entirely clear how this thirteen-page manuscript on governmentality came to be included in box 1978–79 (VIII) of the Fonds Foucault. We might speculate that its placement at the end of the manuscript for the seventh lecture of *The Birth of Biopolitics* from February 21, 1979 might make it an outline of the lecture on February 28, which Foucault decided to cancel, with one week’s notice, “for reasons of tiredness and so [he] can take a bit of a breath.”⁹¹ In the thirteen pages of the governmentality manuscript enclosed with the *Birth of Biopolitics* lecture materials, Foucault seeks to explain the ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ consequences⁹² of his decision to conduct analyses of power relations on the basis of the concept of governmentality. The manuscript from box 1978–79 (VIII) begins by justifying the decision to create the concept of governmentality. The justification we encounter there resembles the remarks from the 1978 *Security, Territory, Population* lecture course about the state as merely “an episode in governmentality”:⁹³ Foucault proposes

⁸⁶ Foucault, “What Is Critique?,” 45.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, “What Is Revolution?” [1984], in *Politics of Truth*, 94–95.

⁹⁰ See his remarks in “What is Critique?” on a “dimension of critique [. . .] that [. . .] is supported by the historical practice of revolt” and the “individual experience of the refusal of governmentality” (75–76).

⁹¹ *Birth of Biopolitics*, 179 n *. There are moreover similarities in structure and content between the governmentality manuscript from box 1978–79 (VIII) and a document in box 1979–80 (IX) which might be notes for the contribution that Foucault made to his CdF seminar in the 1979–80 academic year. The topic of the seminar that year was *Libéralisme et Étatisme à la fin du XIX^e siècle*. For this document, see NAF 28730, 1979–80 (IX), sheets 280–302.

⁹² The manuscript contains one headline and two sub-headings, which I have transcribed respectively as « Conseq^{ces} », « A. Conseq^{ces} théoriques », and « B. Conseq^{ces} pratiques. ». See respectively: NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheet 185bis; sheet 189; and sheet 192.

⁹³ *Security, Territory, Population*, 248.

that the notion of governmentality is the outcome of an attempt at distinguishing his own method from other methodologies for analyzing power relations grounded in philosophies of history — Hegelian and Marxist by implication — in which the state is cast as the “subject of history”; philosophies which consider the state to be an “entity” that unites in itself “its principle of development and the logic of its [conjecture: operations].”⁹⁴ The manuscript clarifies that this choice of theoretical adversary is part of Foucault’s broader methodological commitment to a ‘historical nominalism’; that is to say, to an attempt at “writing history without universals.”⁹⁵

Senellart’s ‘Course Context’ essay for the *Security, Territory, Population* lectures contains the transcription of a passage stretching across two sheets of notes from the last part of the manuscript, in which Foucault outlines the ‘practical consequences’ of his concept of governmentality. In this passage, Foucault proposes that “the analysis of [...] governmentality as general singularity⁹⁶ implies that ‘all is political,’”⁹⁷ and then proceeds to offer two possible interpretations of the phrase ‘all is political.’ On the one hand, Foucault argues that this phrase could mean “[p]olitics is defined by the whole sphere of state intervention,” and hence “[t]o say that everything is political amounts to saying that, directly or indirectly, the state is everywhere.”⁹⁸ According to the other meaning of ‘all is political,’ “[p]olitics is defined by the omnipresence of a struggle between two adversaries.”⁹⁹ Foucault specifies immediately that “[t]his other definition is that of K. (sic)¹⁰⁰ Schmitt.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ I translate and cite from a passage that I have transcribed as follows: « Conseq^{ces} / 1. D’1 [conjecture : façon] particulière, par rapport à l’État. / - Refuser de voir dans l’État qqe chose, une entité qui s’unit en elle [conjecture : même] / Son principe de développ^{nt} / Et la logique de ses [conjecture : opérations] / - Refuser de voir en lui un sujet de l’histoire provoquant par les arsenaux, les annexions, les ~~conflits~~ [conjecture : contradictions] avec la soc. civile, les conflits avec les autres États, ~~les crises, des mécontentements, les révoltes, les guerres, la révolution.~~ »: NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheets 185bis and 185.

⁹⁵ I translate and cite from a passage that I have transcribed as follows: « C. Prquoi parler d’1 “style liberal” de gouverner, et ne pas parler de l’État ? / Prquoi lâcher la proie pour l’ombre ? / La seule q de réalité qui [conjecture : se mesure], par les mignardises théoriques ? / Parce que c’est la l’~~effet~~ conseq^e d’un parti pris théorique. / Celui qui consiste à tester de faire une histoire sans universaux. Essayer le nominalisme historique. »: NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheet 185bis.

⁹⁶ Foucault already mentioned in a roundtable discussion on historiography held in May 1978 that his method of writing history aims to “[make] visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all. To show that things ‘weren’t as necessary as all that’”: Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” [1980], in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (1991), 76.

⁹⁷ Senellart, “Course Context,” 390. This entire passage is transcribed from: NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheet 192.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault’s misspelling of Schmitt’s name matches the misspelling in the catalogue entry for the 1972 French translation of *Theory of the Partisan* of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, which might suggest that he worked with this edition of Schmitt’s text as opposed to the original German publication. Valentina Antoniol recounts in *Foucault et la guerre* (2023) that in private conversation with her, Pasquale Pasquino mentioned that he ‘perfectly remembers’ having seen the 1972 French edition of the book on Foucault’s desk (173–174).

¹⁰¹ Senellart, “Course Context,” 390.

When considering the governmentality manuscript in its entirety, it becomes clear that this reference to Carl Schmitt is not at all trivial: the position Foucault presents as the Schmittian interpretation of the phrase ‘all is political’ is also the position implied by his attempt at methodologically decentering the state. The presentation of Schmitt as a useful resource for this kind of methodological anti-statism might not even be surprising if Foucault worked with the 1972 French edition of *Theory of the Partisan* published by Calmann-Lévy. This edition is a joint publication of *Theory of The Partisan* and the 1963 re-edition of *The Concept of the Political*. In his Preface to the 1963 re-edition of *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt attempts to reposition his book — originally published in 1929 and subsequently in revised forms in 1932 and 1933¹⁰² — in order to make it fit into a new period of history in which “the state as model of political unity, the state as bearer [...] of the monopoly of political decision [...] is being dethroned.”¹⁰³ Writing in 1963, Schmitt explains that his 1932 revision of *The Concept of the Political* was an attempt at responding to the ‘challenges’ of a new, post-state era that the world was about to enter.¹⁰⁴ He characterizes this supposed new era as a “confused intermediary situation of form and shapelessness, war and peace.”¹⁰⁵

A few lines after the reference to Schmitt, the governmentality manuscript from box 1978–79 (VIII) eventually suggests that precisely those practices that the 1978 *Security, Territory, Population* lectures refer to as ‘counter-conducts,’ and which Foucault’s commentaries on the Enlightenment associate with the ‘critical tradition’ of Western modernity, are also the very essence of political action. There is no politics where practices of government are met with acceptance. “Politics is everywhere,” the manuscript reads, “not because the state is everywhere, but because everywhere there is resistance, [conjecture: loopholes], uprisings against governmentality / Politics is revolts criss-crossing the generality of government.”¹⁰⁶ It seems then that taken together, the governmentality manuscript and the note on Ludendorff allow us to connect three separate moments in Foucault’s œuvre: his reference to human history as the history of ‘general war’ over a ‘system of rules’; his insistence on the reverse of Clausewitz’s correlation of war and politics as a metaphor for power relations; and, lastly, his portrayal of the ‘critical tradition’ of the Enlightenment as a sort of anti-, or, counter-governmental decisionism. The manuscript on governmentality, in any case, leaves us with a curious new perspective on Foucault’s request, made in

¹⁰² The text of the 1963 re-edition is identical to that of the 1932 version.

¹⁰³ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen: Synoptische Darstellung der Texte* (2018), 40 (my translation).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 42–46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 42 (my translation). In the original German, the passage from which I cite reads: “Das ist die Lage. Eine so verwirrte Zwischensituation von Form und Unform, Krieg und Frieden, wirft Fragen auf [...]”

¹⁰⁶ I translate and cite from a passage that I have transcribed as follows: « La politique est partout non pas parce que l’État est partout, mais parce [conjecture : que] partout il y a resist^{ce}, [conjecture : échappatoires], soulev^{ts}, ctre la gouvernementalité. / La politique, c’est les révoltes à travers la g^{al}ité gouvernementale. » : NAF 28730, 1978–79 (VIII), sheet 194. See in this context also Senellart’s transcription from sheet 193: “Politics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first uprising, the first confrontation”: Senellart, “Course Context,” 390.

the conclusion of *Qu'est-ce que la critique?*, that those who study the relationship between knowledge and domination should focus on "a certain *decision-making will* not to be governed, [. . .] both an individual and collective attitude which meant, as Kant said, to get out of one's minority."¹⁰⁷

CONCLUSION

This essay focused on Foucault's post-1970s reflections on how to analyze the exercise of power. Using archival material deposited in the Fonds Foucault at the BnF, I proposed Erich Ludendorff and Carl Schmitt as unacknowledged sources of these reflections and discussed the potential significance of these sources for Foucault's two different answers to the "'how' of power'-question.

The Archaeology of Knowledge describes the history of thought as a discipline whose aim is to uncover what was hitherto concealed; a discipline concerned with "reconstitut[ing] another discourse"¹⁰⁸ and "re-establish[ing] the tiny, invisible text that runs between the lines and sometimes collides with them."¹⁰⁹ Foucault is writing this in an effort at distinguishing the history of thought from his own archaeological method for analyzing formations of discourse. The deposition of Foucault's documents at the BnF, however, has made it possible, and in fact also quite appealing, to do history of thought *à la* Foucault *with* Foucault. The source criticism I carried out in this essay, in any case, seems to suggest that there actually is a sort of 'invisible text,' 'another discourse' that runs between the lines of Foucault's œuvre, which is worth exploring. Foucault jested in a 1975 interview about playing a "sort of game"¹¹⁰ with his readers that consists in testing their ability to recognize Marxian ideas even if Marx is not cited. The very least I hope to have achieved with this essay is to demonstrate that Marx's ideas are far from the only stake in this game of hide and seek, and maybe not the most important either. My bigger hope is that my work on unacknowledged sources of Foucault's reflections on power will serve as a springboard for biographical inquiries. Can the archival references to Ludendorff and Schmitt tell us anything about Foucault's motivation for his decision to abandon the 'power-as-warfare' hypothesis and construe power relations as relations of government instead? Why did Foucault draft the manuscript on governmentality, but seemingly never elaborate on it in public? This essay will have served its purpose if these questions are now deemed worthwhile and worthy of further inquiry.

To be sure, my argument is not intended to make any inferences about the political valence of Foucault's work. It is true that by proposing Ludendorff and Schmitt as unacknowledged sources, I have placed Foucault in the vicinity of figures on the political right

¹⁰⁷ "What Is Critique?," 67 (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2009), 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. (citation modified). The 2009 Routledge edition from which I cite reads '... text that runs between and sometimes collides with them . . .' in seeming error.

¹¹⁰ Foucault, "Prison Talk," 52.

who rose to popularity *as authors* on the back of the so-called Conservative Revolution in Weimar Germany. But this is a proximity on the level of the history of ideas, and it does not coincide with a proximity regarding political positions. Evaluating the political significance of Ludendorff and Schmitt as potential sources of Foucault's post-1970 work in a satisfactory manner would require situating Foucault's work from that period in its wider political and social context.¹¹¹ Once more this essay can at most serve as a prolegomenon to such an undertaking. All I would like to note here apropos the question of how Foucault's reflections on power relations and their analysis might resonate with the broader zeitgeist of the 1970s is that his insistence on reversing Clausewitz's formula on war as a continuation of politics is not far removed from a common assessment of the Cold War at the time. That peace, in light of a geopolitical status quo marked by tensions between two hegemonic powers, had come to appear like a continuation of warfare by other means was an observation made at the time by commentators such as Carl Schmitt,¹¹² André Glucksmann,¹¹³ and Raymond Aron¹¹⁴ alike. Yet while each of these three figures saw in this ostensible reversal of the primacy of politics over warfare merely an allegory for their current historical conjuncture, Foucault went considerably further by elevating it into a central methodological postulate.

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¹¹¹ For an attempt at such contextualization, see Luke Illott, "Genealogy Beyond Critique: Foucault's Discipline and Punish as Coalitional Worldmaking," *Political Theory* 51:2 (2023). A brief sketch of the wider historical context of Foucault's 1970s work can also be found in *Foucault et la guerre* (2023) at (28).

¹¹² Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 47–48.

¹¹³ André Glucksmann, *Le discours de la guerre* (1967), 62–65.

¹¹⁴ Raymond Aron, *Peace & War: A Theory of International Relations* [1966] (2003), 162–173. See further: *The Century of Total War* [1954] (1965), 226–238; and NAF 28060, box 23, dossier 3, typescript of Lecture 12, March 9, 1972, page 7.

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