

The Government of Desire



A Genealogy of the Liberal Subject

Miguel de Beistegui

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The University of Chicago Press
Chicago and London

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
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articles and reviews. For more information, contact the
University of Chicago Press, 1427 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637.
Published 2018
Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-54737-4 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-54740-4 (e-book)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226547404.001.0001>

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Beistegui, Miguel de, 1966– author.
Title: The government of desire : a genealogy of the liberal
subject / Miguel de Beistegui.
Description: Chicago ; London : The University of Chicago
Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017040680 | ISBN 9780226547374 (cloth : alk.
paper) | ISBN 9780226547404 (e-book)
Subjects: LCSH: Political science—Philosophy. | Sex—Political
aspects. | Recognition (Philosophy)
Classification: LCC JA74.5.B458 2018 | DDC 320.01—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017040680>

© This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO
Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

At nova res novum vocabulum flagitat.

LORENZO VALLA, *Antidotum in Facium* 1.14

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: Why Desire?	1
PART ONE <i>Homo Oeconomicus</i>	
1 The Birth of <i>Homo Oeconomicus</i>	31
2 Man's "Vain and Insatiable Desires," or the "Oeconomy of Greatness"	45
3 Neoliberal Governmentality	63
PART TWO <i>Homo Sexualis</i>	
4 "Abnormal Desires" and "Barbarous Instincts": The Birth of the Sexual Pervert	85
5 Instincts or Drives? The Birth of Psychoanalysis	111
PART THREE <i>Homo Symbolicus</i>	
6 Recognition, That "Most Ardent Desire"	143
7 Struggles for Recognition	171
8 The Consolations of Recognition	187
Conclusion: Desire, Again . . .	209
Notes	229
Bibliography	267
Index	289

Acknowledgments

This book owes a great debt of gratitude to the friends and colleagues who have commented on it, criticized it, and helped me revise (and hopefully refine) some of its claims and arguments: Éric Alliez, Chiara Bottici, Arnold Davidson, Marjorie Gracieuse, Daniele Lorenzini, Peter Hallward, Stephen Houlgate, David James, Johanna Oksala, Peter Osborne, Judith Revel, and Claudia Stein. An equal debt is owed to the many postgraduate students at the University of Warwick and the New School for Social Research who were patient enough to listen to early versions of this book, and to respond to some of its theses. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their insightful comments and helpful suggestions. Last but not least, I want to thank my editor, Elizabeth Branch Dyson, whose sharp eye and enthusiastic support were invaluable. ix

INTRODUCTION

Why Desire?

Desire is everywhere—everywhere recognized, displayed, discussed, and drawn upon. It is so much part of our lives, so deeply entrenched in our bodies and minds—so “hard wired” into our brains, some would say—that we cannot imagine a life without it, indeed, cannot imagine what it could mean to live without experiencing its force and appeal, but also the conflicts and struggles it gives rise to. The law of desire is one by which we live. It seems to play a crucial part in our understanding of who we are, our sense of self, and our relations to others. We need only look around us. In the summer of 2014, I came to New York to teach for a semester. The first day, I stumbled upon an exhibition with the very Buñuelian title of *That Obscure Object of Desire*. It was mostly about sexual and erotic desire, and featured various photographs by Robert Heinecken, whose work was also exhibited at MoMA and reminded one of Hockney’s paintings from the very early 1960s. Heinecken was a photographer and media artist who established the photography program at UCLA in 1964. He commented extensively, with considerable humor and irony, on issues concerning gender, sexuality, pornography, and various perversions, such as fetishism and sadism.

Look a bit further afield, and you will realize that our experience of desire is not limited to the sphere of sexuality. It is also a basic mechanism of our economic machine, if not the very force that propels it. We know this all too well. In order to sell their products, companies appeal explicitly to our desires. One could go so far as to say that they exploit them shamelessly. This view—in fact, this economic and cultural program—is one

that Paul Mazur, a banker working for Lehman Brothers, expressed very clearly almost one hundred years ago, in an article published in the *Harvard Business Review*: “We must shift America from a needs- to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed . . . Man’s desires must overshadow his needs.”¹ As we now know, this goal was fulfilled beyond Mazur’s wildest dreams, and our economic culture has indeed become one of desire. “Driven by Desire” is the slogan of a recent TV advertisement for an Estée Lauder lipstick. Desire and drive have become synonymous, and the real genius of contemporary capitalism is perhaps to have turned desire into the very engine of the economy, to have capitalized on desire itself. With the digital revolution and the ability of social media to make us “share” our most intimate thoughts, aspirations, and experiences, freely and happily, this commercialization of desire seems to have reached new heights. “To search for something on the Web,” Siva Vaidhyanathan writes in *The Googlization of Everything*, “is not unlike confessing your desires to a mysterious power.”² Another advertisement (“From Details to Desire: The Power of Big Data”)³ promotes IBM’s ability to capture this new, precious commodity, that is, to record, process, respond to, and anticipate our most intimate and precious desires. Amazon’s Fire TV or Echo home listening devices, along with other web spying programs installed in our smartphones, tablets, computers, Apple watches, and Xbox consoles, allow companies—to say nothing of intelligence-gathering agencies—to monitor and target individual desires and preferences, as never before.⁴ They call it data mining. Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, YouTube are the new mining companies, and we the raw material. In desire, advanced capitalism has found the inexhaustible and insatiable resource that guarantees its own future, and the key to a potentially infinite wealth—one that, to be sure, requires access to cheap money and ever growing personal debt on the part of the consumer. The current stage of capitalism is defined at least as much by the systematic production and exploitation of our desires as by the exploitation of the physical force of the proletariat.

And then there is popular culture. There is this (rather male) obsession with obsession, with primal, violent desires, which seek to exploit or abuse others, often sexually. There is our fascination with serial killers, sexual predators, and moral monsters. There is our endless curiosity for deviant and abnormal types, for what we call “perverse” desires and “abnormal” instincts. Émile Zola, who was an avid reader of the press of his time, filled

his novels with characters inhabited by a mysterious “desire for murder” and who, in “the full satisfaction of [their] eternal desire,” experience “mad ecstasy, all-consuming joy.”⁵ From Fritz Lang’s *Human Desire* (which the filmmaker adapted from Zola’s *La bête humaine*) to Kubrick’s *Clockwork Orange* and Pizzolatto’s *True Detective*, the intersection of sexual desire and death—of *eros* and *thanatos*—is a distinctive feature of modern and contemporary fiction, and one that, we believe, reveals something at once profound and disturbing about human nature. This is the ugly face of desire, its dark—we like to say “monstrous” or “evil”—side.

Desire and sexuality. Desire and capitalism. Desire and perversity. Those connections are an intrinsic part of our life, cultural landscape, and civilization. The economist and the capitalist, the psychiatrist and the sex therapist, the scriptwriter and the novelist all seem to be the contemporary explorers and specialists of desire, who probe its depths, reveal the extent of its reach, and, sometimes, help us navigate its turbulent waters. As for desire itself, we take it for granted. Its ubiquity, we claim, is a sign of its rootedness in human nature. We readily admit that it is a force we need to reckon with, and that governs us, often beyond our own will, but we do not question that we are creatures—and not just subjects—of desire.

What are we to make, in that context, of the somewhat elliptical and puzzling remark that Michel Foucault made in the course of a discussion at the University of California—Berkeley in 1983, according to which Western civilization is *the* civilization of desire?⁶ We might find this suggestion needlessly provocative. To the extent that desire is, as we tend to believe, a constitutive feature of human nature, aren’t all civilizations by definition civilizations of desire? Isn’t desire so bound up with who we are that the very suggestion that civilization itself—any civilization—might not be its expression, that is, might not recognize it, integrate it, organize it, in short, deal with it in some way, can only come across as fanciful? Yet, following Foucault’s provocation, I began to question this assumption, and to consider the possibility that our culture of desire may have an origin and a history, and a very Western history at that. Following his intuition, and extending it, I began to take seriously the counterintuitive thought that desire—or, better said perhaps, the problem of desire—emerged at a particular time and under specific historical circumstances; that it had a particular and far-reaching history; and that it defines who we are today in ways that we are not always aware of, and that are not inevitable. This book is an attempt to contribute to that critical history. Specifically, it is

an attempt to define the limits or contours of the various configurations or regimes of desire under which we live, to trace their emergence, and to measure their consequences. This means that it is not so much a book *on* Foucault as one that is written *with* him, using some of the tools and the method (genealogy) he has left us with. However, despite my wish—one could say my fantasy—to write a Western philosophical history of desire from Greek and Roman antiquity to the present day, I will limit myself to exploring the roots and identifying the dominant features of its contemporary configuration. What do I mean here by “contemporary”? When does the “contemporary” begin, and how—with what conceptual tools and method—can one hope to define it? These are complex questions, which I can only begin to address here.

Philosophy as Diagnosis and Critique of the Present

I cannot find a better way to begin than by asking about the general problem that brought about Foucault’s own interest in desire—an interest that he developed in a period that stretched across the 1970s and the early 1980s. The problem in question, I want to argue, is the problem that he claims to have been concerned with throughout his life, namely: who are we? More precisely: who are we *today*? It is the problem of the status of the self, and subjectivity, raised from the point of view not of transcendental philosophy or fundamental ontology, but genealogical history, and with a view to interrogating our own present. To an interviewer who asked him the extent to which his work could be seen as philosophical, Foucault replied somewhat ironically: “It’s quite possible that what I’m doing is somewhat related to philosophy, especially given the fact that, since Nietzsche, the aim of philosophy is no longer to utter a universal and transhistorical truth, but to diagnose . . .”⁷ In another interview from the same year (1967), he emphasized again the role of philosophy as diagnosis, before adding: “The philosopher has ceased to try and say what is eternally. The far more arduous and fleeting task he is now faced with is to say what is happening.”⁸

Here, we have an image of philosophy that, in the interview from which the passage is extracted, Foucault traces back to Nietzsche’s extraordinary ability to see in our highest values and loftiest ideals symptoms of an unknown and lethal pathology. Elsewhere, however, and perhaps sur-

prisingly, he traces it back to Kant—not the Kant of the critical project, who seeks to identify the conditions and limits of human experience and knowledge, but the Kant of the historical essays, and of “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” in particular. In his lecture course at the Collège de France in 1982–83, Foucault confirms that Kant’s text has always represented for him something like an “emblem” or a “fetish.”⁹ In his essay, Kant raises the question of who we are and what it means to philosophize *today*. He raises the question of philosophy against the backdrop of an event, the Enlightenment, which he defines as “the courage to make use of one’s own understanding” and the “*public* use of one’s reason.” Philosophy, then, insofar as it is bound up with such a project, is identified with an “attitude” and an “ethos,” best described as the “permanent critique of our historical era”¹⁰ and the “historical ontology of ourselves.”¹¹ Let me quote from Foucault’s essay on Kant:

It seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.

This entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into *the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying*.¹²

In the previously mentioned lecture from 1978 entitled “What Is Critique?” Foucault provides further details on the manner in which, following Kant, we need to interpret the “dare to know!” (*sapere aude*) of the *Aufklärung*, and the sense of critique that Kant himself developed—not in relation to the problem of the limits and conditions of possibility of knowledge, or of its various obstacles (such as error, illusion, or forgetting), but in relation to the problem of power, or, more precisely, of the connection between knowledge and power. According to Foucault’s interpretation of Kant, to dare to know—or, which amounts to the same thing, to enter the age of philosophical maturity—means not so much to seek knowledge (for that task is one that animated philosophy from its inception) as to question it,

that is, to adopt a critical attitude in relation to the rationality or rationalities under which we think, act, and relate to ourselves as well as others, the effects of power they generate, and the institutions and practices on which they rely. In other words, it is to ask about the manner in which we are governed, the authority under which we live, and the truths we live by, all of which contribute to making us the subjects that we are. But it is also, and at the same time, to ask ourselves whether and how we could govern ourselves differently, what sort of subjects we could become, what kind of self we could be. “The main objective today,” Foucault claims in “The Subject and Power” (1982), “is not to discover, but to refuse what we are.”¹³ Over and beyond its ability to diagnose, philosophy appears as an act of resistance: “We need to promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing the type of subjectivity that has been imposed on us for several centuries.”¹⁴ In that respect, Foucault concludes, “the critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating,” but as “*a philosophical life* in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”¹⁵ The term that Foucault introduces to gather and summarize those attitudes of “disobedience,” “dissent,” “dissidence,” and “resistance” is “counter-conduct” (*contre-conduite*).¹⁶

It would seem, then, that the motivation behind Foucault’s work and life is the need to delineate, understand, and critically assess our present. A question of *method* follows from that fundamental task. Are we, in this effort to understand the nature of our own subjectivity, to direct the light of thought onto our own subjective experience, and interrogate ourselves directly, as phenomenology does? There is no question that phenomenology develops rigorous tools to describe the manner in which lived experiences are given and constructed, and that it avoids philosophical or psychological naïveté in the process. Yet, for reasons that would be too long to expose here, when it turns to history, and specifically to our own present, phenomenology falls short of its own standards: It tends to interrogate history either by making human subjectivity the source of history itself, or by (re-)introducing a quasi-transcendent principle as the universal drive of history. Should we, instead, and perhaps as a result of a suspicion regarding the identity of the projector and the object it is meant to illuminate, adopt a different approach, and try and apprehend ourselves from

a distance, as it were? It is the latter method that Foucault privileges, and that I will be adopting here. For it is only by moving the source of light away from ourselves—from our own, immediate present—that we have a chance of understanding how the present came to be in the first place, and this in such a way that it no longer appears to us as obvious, unquestionable, or necessary. Genealogy avoids a double pitfall or illusion: first, that of self-reflection or self-transparency, through which we believe that we only need to look at ourselves, to direct the light of thought onto our own subjectivity, in order to understand who we are; second, that of a philosophy of History, which examines our own present from such a distance, such an entirely heterogeneous standpoint, that our own present risks losing its specificity in the process. Most often, the latter illusion requires that history be understood from the point of view of a hidden principle, idea, or basic mechanism, such as Truth, Freedom, or Being. The difficulty, then, consists in avoiding the adoption of a vantage point that is either too close or too distant from our own present. In both instances, and for different reasons, we conceal that which we are supposed to reveal. Genealogy, in contrast, is the method that allows us to find the right distance, and forge the proper tools, in order to arrive at a critical assessment of our own present, and allow a freer relation to it. This, in essence, is what Foucault means when—immediately following the passage I quoted earlier from his article on Kant’s essay—he elaborates on the meaning of critique, which he connects with both “archaeology” and “genealogy”:

In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological—and not transcendental—in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.¹⁷

Ultimately, genealogy is not only a method aimed at diagnosing our present. It is also a “tactic,” the aim of which is to “set free” or “desubjugate.”¹⁸ For that reason, it is also a politics—not, naturally, in the sense of a participation in, or a struggle against, a given system of government (although one could imagine situations in which it could also be that), but in the sense of a “politics of truth,” a politics, that is, which locates itself at the strategic junction of a discourse of truth and a regime of power, measures its effects, and questions its authority. While this aspect of critique will orient much of what I have to say in this book, I will return to it explicitly in my conclusion, and suggest ways in which the contemporary construction of the subject of desire can be resisted. Specifically, and with the necessary caution, I will refer to anarchism as a tactic of desubjugation and as the art of being governed less, and differently.

Desire in the Age of Governmentality, or the Power of Norms

What, then, of the problem of desire from a genealogical perspective? Why, and how, should it be included in such a genealogical critique and effort to “desubjugate”? My claim, in this book, is that desire is a key assemblage of knowledge and power through which we are constituted as subjects, and through which we learn to recognize and govern ourselves. In that respect, I will treat desire not as a transcendental feature of subjectivity, or as a basic structure of our psychical life, but as a historical normative process, to which individuals are subjected, a manifold set of procedures through which they are produced and their experience is shaped. By sketching its genealogy, or, to borrow Nietzsche’s words, by asking about the conditions under which the subject of desire “grew up, developed and changed,”¹⁹ I hope to be able to see how the experience of ourselves as desiring subjects includes several realities or levels that overlap and intertwine without giving birth to, or resolving itself in, a harmonious experience or a unified subjectivity. My aim, then, is to show that Desire is not a monolithic and univocal phenomenon, but a multifaceted reality, organized according to different configurations or regimes, all of which have a specific history and singular traits, which I will attempt to distinguish but also to reveal in their interconnectedness. If the notion of regime is apt to characterize the various faces or expressions of desire that

we, as subjects, adopt, this is because it designates the irreducible “governmentality” that is at stake in this phenomenon.

With the concept of governmentality, which he introduces in the mid-1970s, and largely in the context of his analysis of biopower, Foucault seeks to identify a problem that is at once broader than, and different from, that of government understood as the political system best suited to meet the demands and needs of a community, the foundations, legitimacy, and basic institutions of which it is normally the business of political philosophy to debate.²⁰ At the most basic level, governmentality designates a specific “art” or “technique,” which Foucault defines as “the art of conducting conducts [*conduites*],” the “general technique of the government of men,” or the “general technique of the exercise of power.”²¹ The notion of *conduite* is ambiguous, in that it refers to two things at the same time. On the one hand, it refers to “the activity of conducting [*conduire*], of conduction [*la conduction*].” On the other, it signals “the way in which one conducts oneself [*se conduit*], lets oneself be conducted [*se laisse conduire*], is conducted [*est conduit*], and finally, in which one behaves [*on se trouve se comporter*] as a result of a form of conduct that is an activity of conduction.”²²

The technique in question varies immensely, depending on its object and the historical period at which it was designed. Initially applied to what the Greek Fathers called the government of souls (*oikonomia psūchon*), it was eventually transformed with the advent of biopower and applied to the mentally ill, to prisoners, children, the poor, workers, or the sexualized body. In each instance, the technique works differently, and corresponds to a specific way of envisaging the subject to which it is applied, the effects it is supposed to generate, and the type of knowledge (*savoir*) on which it rests.

Minimally, though, governmentality coincides with a system of norms, or a normativity, which needs to be distinguished rigorously from the order of interdiction and the power of the law, around which, so often and for so long, the problem of government and, more generally, that of power, were (and still are) articulated. That very model is often and traditionally used, notably by Lacanian psychoanalysis, to think about the nature and basic mode of operation of desire. As Foucault puts it in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, according to this “juridico-discursive” model of desire, “the law is what constitutes desire and the lack on which it is

predicated.²³ As a result, the only two tactics available, which genealogy is precisely to overcome, are the “promise of a ‘liberation’” (if, as Marcuse argues, “power is seen as having only an external hold on desire”) or “the affirmation: you are always-already trapped” (if, as Lacan argues in his work from the 1940s and 1950s, the law is “constitutive of desire itself”).²⁴ Foucault sharpens his critique of this juridical model of power, especially when applied to the problem of desire, by emphasizing the false alternatives to which it leads:

But the problem is not to know whether desire is alien to power, whether it is prior to the law, as is often thought to be the case, or whether it is the law that, on the contrary, constitutes it. This question is beside the point. Whether desire is this or that, in any case one continues to conceive of it in relation to a power that is always juridical and discursive, a power that has its central point in the enunciation of the law. One remains attached to a certain image of power-law, or power sovereignty, which was traced out by theoreticians of right and the monarchic institution.²⁵

Foucault concludes his critique by saying that it is this image of power, and this theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty, that we must break free of, “if we wish to analyze power within the concrete and historical framework of its operation.”²⁶ And it is precisely in this effort to “construct an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code”²⁷ that I suggest we turn to the normativity of power, and of the manner in which it affects desire. Whereas one transgresses a law and is punished accordingly—that is, by the power of the sword—one can only deviate from a norm. Here the meaning of norm is the same as the Latin *norma*: a straight angle that allows one to “straighten” something. The norm—normative power—does not aim to exclude, reject, or repress. On the contrary: Its primary aim is to redress, correct, rectify, reintegrate, rehabilitate, in short, normalize. The type of power that is at issue here is not repressive or conservative, but productive and inventive: In order to operate, it requires new types of knowledge and new institutions. In short, whereas a law forbids certain acts, without transforming their subject, the norm generates a form of subjectivity.²⁸

Now governmentality and biopower can rely on disciplinary mechanisms or techniques, such as those found in the prison system or the army.²⁹

For the most part, however, and insofar as it aims to regulate the collective dimension of life, or life as population, governmentality is broader, more flexible, and more effective than the disciplining of bodies. Foucault is perhaps most explicit about this connection, and about the central role of the norm, in one of his lectures at the Collège de France (17 March 1976):

The norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize. The normalizing society is therefore not, under these conditions, a sort of generalized disciplinary society whose disciplinary institutions have swarmed and finally taken over everything. . . . The normalizing society is a society in which the norm of discipline and the norm of regulation intersect along an orthogonal articulation.³⁰

It would be undoubtedly wrong, therefore, to reduce biopower to sovereign power, or to the power of the law. But it would be equally wrong to reduce it—and its normative dimension—to disciplinary power, which, as a power of correction, is nonetheless a key dimension of normative power. The normative power of governmentality has not ceased to gain ground since the end of the eighteenth century, and this, Foucault claims, despite the fact that its original, religious model—namely, the government of the flock, and of each individual ewe, through what Foucault calls pastoral power—has been on the decline. It was applied to schools, with the creation of the state school system, to medicine, with the organization of hospitals, and to industrial production, with the creation of markets and factories. The introduction of the normative paradigm proved decisive: As soon as those spaces and human types (the worker, the child, the sick person, and so on) were defined on the basis of certain norms, it became possible to measure the deviations to which they were subjected and to invent techniques aimed at rectifying or correcting them. In other words, the normativity of governmentality is indistinguishable from its power of normalization. In that respect, the concept of governmentality, with which I claim it is best to problematize the phenomenon of desire, is also to be distinguished from power as domination or exploitation, that is, as coercion: Processes of governmentality are essentially subjectivating and individualizing; they exercise their power at the level of every individual and require the active, wilful participation of every individual. Having

said that, and as we shall see in detail, it is not as if normativity had simply replaced the law. Rather, the law, and the system of rights it guarantees, is itself the product of the normativity of biopower.

Yet, as Agamben has shown in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, the origin of the concept of government is not exclusively pastoral. It can also be traced back to Christian, and especially scholastic theology. There, it designates the government of the world as a whole (*de gubernatione mundi*), and is synonymous with Providence, which directs natural beings toward their own perfection. Christian theology distinguishes between the being (or nature) of God, and his action or his economy, through which he governs himself as well as human history. God governs on the basis not of his own nature—that level is defined as his “reign”—but of his free will. And this is what distinguishes him from the purely necessary Aristotelian God, or Prime Mover, who reigns, but who does not govern. The Reign concerns the *ordo ad deum*, or the relation between creatures and the primary cause. Government, in contrast, concerns the *ordo ad invicem*, or the contingent relations between things. For Aquinas, and in addition to being created, things need to be governed, that is, brought into their own perfection through a *manus gubernatoris*, that is, a helping hand. If Providence is the Christian name for the government of the world and its intrinsic economic order, Desire is a key—if not *the* key—mechanism through which, beginning in the eighteenth century, men and women are understood to be *self*-governed, and this means able to generate a spontaneous order, independent of that of Divine Providence.³¹

Genealogy of the “Man of Desire”

At roughly the time that he was turning to Kant to define further his conception of the task and method of philosophy—marked by his lecture courses of 1975 at the Collège de France on *Abnormal* and in São Paulo on sexuality,³² as well as the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976)—Foucault was also, and I would claim primarily, attempting to understand how and why desire had become such a crucial problem in Western civilization, and how it had evolved into a technology of the self and government, the consequences of which are still felt today. In other words, he was precisely busy trying to figure out how Western civilization had become *the* civilization of desire. And while his point of

entry into the problem of desire was indeed the “analytic” and “system” (or *dispositif*) of sexuality as it emerged toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, and as a key dimension of biopower, he soon realized that the problem in question was much broader, and much older. So broad and complex, I want to argue, that he died before he was able fully to delimit the degree to which we are subjects of desire, and to reveal the contemporary faces of what, in the final lecture of *Subjectivity and Truth*, he defines as a “historical transcendental” schema.³³

One could see an early sign of that transcendental-historical conception of desire in an enigmatic claim that, a decade before his analyses of sexual desire, Foucault made in the very short section of *The Order of Things* entitled “Desire and Representation.”³⁴ There, he suggests the following: Resemblance, which defined the *episteme* of the Renaissance, was eventually replaced with the *episteme* of representation in the classical age, and made possible the emergence of sciences such as general grammar, natural history, and the science of wealth; similarly, the modern age and *episteme*, which account for the transformation of the sciences just mentioned into those of philology, biology, and political economy, coincided with a decline of representation and the emergence of desire, of its force and thrust. More surprisingly still, Foucault sees this new dimension of subjectivity, which escapes the demands and constraints of representation, played out in the Marquis de Sade. To be more specific, he seems to see in Sade a pivotal moment, which remains subjected to the age of representation (to the point of obsession) while unleashing the full force of desire. And that, he adds, is why Sade is still a libertine, rather than a pervert, why his age is still that of *libertinage*, and not yet that of sexuality:

the libertine is he who, while yielding to all the fantasies of desire and to each of its furies, can, but also must, illumine their slightest movement with a lucid and deliberately elucidated representation. There is a strict order governing the life of the libertine: every representation must be immediately endowed with life in the living body of desire, every desire must be expressed in the pure light of a representative discourse.³⁵

In that respect, *Justine* and *Juliette* would play, in relation to the birth of modern culture, a role similar to that of *Don Quixote* between the Renaissance and Classicism.³⁶ Unlike Don Quixote, the characters of Sade do not signal the ironic triumph of representation over resemblance, but that

of “the obscure and repeated violence of desire battering at the limits of representation.”³⁷ In Sade, everything must be said, named, represented. And yet, because of the manner in which, in what amounts to an exhaustive and exhausting discourse, he tries to represent the unrepresentable, he holds sway at the limit of that classical discourse: “After him, violence, life and death, desire, and sexuality will extend, below the level of representation, an immense expanse of shade which we are now attempting to recover, as far as we can, in our discourse, in our freedom, in our thought.”³⁸

A few pages later, Foucault asks about the “fundamental,” indeed, “most radical event” that must have presided over the dissolution of the positivity of classical knowledge, and the emergence of a new positivity, which, because we are still caught inside it, escapes us. How, he asks, were the objects that the classical rationalities of general grammar, natural history, and the science of wealth study, replaced in just a few years with those, radically different, of philology, biology, and political economy? What can such a transformation be attributed to? Could that transformation be related to, indeed attributed to, the emergence of desire? Could desire be more than a feature of the human being, more, also, than an object of historical investigation, and more than a philosophical concept? Could it be an *episteme*, or a transcendental-historical horizon, against which certain objects become manifest and others disappear, certain experiences become possible and others not?

If anything, this book seeks to identify some of the most significant features of the “man of desire,” and thus to contribute to his overall portrait. In that respect, the manner in which it interrogates desire is radically different from the hermeneutics and alethurgy of desire and subjectivity that, from Augustine and Christian pastoral care to the psychoanalytic cure, we have grown accustomed to, and which takes the form of the following imperative: “Tell me your desire, and I’ll tell you who you are”—radically different, that is, from the tradition that is concerned with the desires themselves, their content, and their object, with understanding, interpreting, and analyzing them, with a view to revealing their hidden meaning, their intrinsic value, and their truth. Rather, the question is one of knowing how, under what conditions and circumstances, the Western subject came to recognize him- or herself as a subject of desire, how his or her subjectivity was shaped around the problematic of desire, how desire itself entered the *jeu de vérité* that is constitutive of Western thought (and

took, for example, the form of confession), and thus became an object of “veridiction” as well as “government.”

Perhaps already while writing *The Will to Know* Foucault realized that the history of sexuality, which was originally meant to include six volumes (and to look very different from the three volumes he ended up publishing), actually presupposed a key historical phenomenon, which was the emergence of the problematic of desire in late antiquity and early Christianity, and the distinctive manner in which that problematic was both integrated in, and transformed by, biopower. The last words of Foucault’s final lecture at the Collège de France in 1981 (*Subjectivity and Truth*) are devoted to a brief analysis of the birth of “the moment of desire” in late Stoicism, and the manner in which it was taken up in early Christianity; the second volume of his *History of Sexuality (The Use of Pleasure)* ends with just two pages on the birth of the “subject of desire” in Plato’s *Symposium*.³⁹ In general, the recently published lecture courses from the early 1980s reveal that, while planning and writing his history of sexuality as an essentially modern phenomenon, Foucault was forced back in time, and felt compelled to turn to the problem of desire as constitutive of Western subjectivity. To be sure, he claims in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* that we need to distinguish the modern experience of sexuality from that of the flesh in the Christian sense. But we also need to recognize that both are “dominated by the principle of ‘the man of desire’”⁴⁰ and thus ask about how desire—as a specific way of understanding ourselves and as a “technology” aimed at exercising control over our own sexual activity—came about in the first place. At the very least, this means that the problem of desire is broader than that of sexuality and that of the flesh, and in fact accounts for both. In part 4 of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault already claims that, if we are fully to comprehend the meaning and consequences of the analytic of sexuality, and the sexualization of the Western subject, it is of the utmost importance to consider how (that is, through what mechanisms and transformations) our entire being—our “body, soul, individuality, history”—was placed “under the sign of a logic of concupiscence and desire.”⁴¹ In other words, it is imperative that we understand how desire became the universal key to understanding who we are, and the technology through which our subjectivity was shaped. The task turned out to be far more arduous than he had anticipated. In the São Paulo lecture course, for example, Foucault analyzes in detail the manner in which, in the classical age, the “game of truth” that characterizes

the technique of confession (*aveu*) was transformed, on the side of both the penitent and the confessor: It was no longer oriented toward the acts and their circumstances, but toward the intention that preceded them, the degree of resistance or complacency with which it was met, the intensity with which it was felt. The truth of sexuality was no longer shaped or experienced at the level of the act through which it manifests itself, but at the level of the desire that underpins it. Desire signaled the point, at the limit of consciousness, at which the penitent was now expected to situate his or her discourse. Similarly, the conscience director, now no longer simply a confessor, was required to bring out the hidden, secret truth of the sexual acts, to throw light on the desire itself, and govern it. The truth of sexuality was thus no longer a function of its visibility, but a function of its invisible origin.⁴² But does this mean that “desire” was a classical construction? Or does it mean that, at a certain point, sexuality was inserted within an already existing schema, that of desire, the emergence of which Foucault was yet to analyze? In the introduction to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, published eight years after the first volume, and according to an entirely revised plan, Foucault actually admits that by moving into the genealogy of “the man of desire,” he has moved further away from his initial goal, which was to write a history of sexuality, and further away, it seems, from our own present, which he had set out to delineate. It is my feeling that he died before he was able to loop back toward the present: The third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, as well as the final lecture courses at the Collège de France, continued to focus on Greek and Roman antiquity—though from the point of view of the “care” or “cultivation” of the self; and the final planned volume, *The Confessions of the Flesh* (*Les aveux de la chair*), was never published.⁴³ What matters, at this stage, is to emphasize that Foucault realized that before we can even begin to write the history of sexuality—a history that he sketched but that, in the end, he left to others to write—and situate it within the context of the emergence of the new type of power that targets life itself, we need to trace the emergence of the “man” or subject of desire.

My goal, in this introduction, is not to enter into the detail of Foucault’s account of the emergence of the subject of desire, but to extract from it the features that made it possible for the “contemporary” subject of desire to emerge. With that goal in mind, the following remarks, extracted from the final lecture (1 April 1981) of *Subjectivity and Truth*, should suffice. The question, which Foucault addresses in that lecture course, as well as

at the very end of the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, is that of knowing how, in matters of sexual activity and comportment, a decisive shift took place in late antiquity. I will leave aside the delicate question of how Foucault's remarks on Plato in that work are—historically and substantially—compatible with what he says about the emergence of desire in late Stoicism. The shift in question is one that sees an ethics of pleasure—centered on the problem of how, when, and with whom one ought to find one's pleasure, the sort of pleasures one ought to pursue, and those one ought to avoid—progressively give way to an ethics of desire, centered not on the act itself, and the subject's relation to others, but on the intention preceding the act, and located within the subject. As a consequence, the latter's degree of freedom and humanity is no longer a function of his ability to make a proper use of his pleasures, but to resist or even eradicate his desire.

It is that shift, Foucault claims, which eventually made possible the very Christian idea of concupiscence and temptation, and thus the asceticism that characterizes its views, ideals, and prescriptions in matters of sex, as well as the alethurgic techniques of confession and spiritual direction. The question, then, became one of knowing how the problem of sexuality, once governed by a set of rigorous prescriptions (a “regime of use”) regarding how best to engage in a pleasurable activity that is naturally prone to excess, and sometimes violence, and is directed toward the sexual partner, was internalized, to the point of becoming “a permanent fixture of subjectivity” around the first and second centuries CE.⁴⁴ This new technology of the self replaced the problematization and use of pleasures (*khresis aphrodisia*) with a new regime, which distinguished sex as a social status from sex as an activity, and reduced the latter to the conjugal sphere. As a consequence, the problem of sexual activity, and the sphere of sexual acts, shifted from being a relation between boys to one between man and woman, and especially man and wife; legitimate sexual pleasures were themselves limited to the sphere of monogamous, heterosexual, and penetrative relations, and to marriage especially.⁴⁵ This means that the classical model, which we have inherited, regarding the use of pleasures, as heterosexual and taking place within the institution of marriage, is not distinctly Christian.

Now in order to fulfill that goal, the self is required to find and control within itself the root of the sexual activity. It is only, Foucault claims, through the permanent observation and interpretation of the self by itself,

and through a scrupulous and interminable “hermeneutics of desire,” that the distinction between sex as status and sex as activity becomes tenable. It is only with the introduction of the spiritual techniques of the fourth and fifth centuries CE (techniques of confession, spiritual direction, prayer, abstinence, and so on) and in the context of the problematic of the flesh, that the problem of sex—now understood as sexual *desire*—became the main or central piece of the architecture of self-examination. If we look at the writings of Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and other Stoics, we realize that their attention and self-examination were not really, or at least primarily, focused on their sexual activity, but rather on their negative passions and emotions, such as ambition or wrath. But what matters is that they establish the principle of a technique of self-control, or the mastery of a force that, left to its own devices, tends to become destructive—a force that is also at the root of sexual activity. Now, this element that calls for its own mastery, this force that we need to observe and control, is precisely desire (*epithumia*). Desire becomes the very form of the relation of the self to itself, and especially to its own sex. Desire is the element that the self needs to *know* as an object, in order to be able to control it. All of this to say that it is no longer the sexual act itself (*aphrodisia*) that is the object of the technique or technology. It is what takes place before the act, namely, desire. This recentering of the problem of sex and pleasure on desire already takes place in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. For them, I am truly my own master not, as Socrates, when I’m able to give up the desire that I have to go to bed with Alcibiades, but when I reach the point when I no longer desire him, or any beautiful man or woman. There is a key difference, then, between desiring Alcibiades, yet renouncing any sexual relation with him—and thus manifesting one’s *egkrateia*, or power to resist—in order to enter into a pedagogical relation with him, and not desiring him at all, that is, extirpating that desire from within the depths of the self. Epictetus embodies the latter attitude: He sees a beautiful man or woman, yet feels no desire.⁴⁶ He has managed to eradicate his desires, and is thus free. He has become his own master. So, on Foucault’s reading, Stoicism planted the seeds of a technology and hermeneutics of the self, and a way of life, that is in effect a technology of desire, which Christianity adopted and fixed firmly in the minds and bodies of its subjects by inscribing within the problematic of the flesh.

Desire, understood in that way, becomes the central pillar of the technology of sex in early Christianity, and concupiscence becomes the real

objet or target of that process of self-examination. It requires an entirely new type of self-knowledge and a new way of governing the self. This, Foucault insists, means that, far from having been repressed, desire is a grid of intelligibility, a way of understanding the self's relation to itself, as well as to others, which emerged progressively from an altogether different configuration. Specifically, it was torn away from an economy of pleasures and bodies, and inserted into the problematic of the flesh, one that gave way to an endless process of confession and spiritual direction: It is the form in which the old problem of *aphrodisia*, or sexual acts, was both objectified and subjectified. This, in turn, led to a formidable codification of sexual activity in the Middle Ages, focused on the institution of marriage, and to a sexual ethics based on the conjugal relation and the depreciation of pleasure as such. In that respect, Foucault concludes, desire "is indeed what I would call the historical transcendental [*le transcendental historique*], on the basis of which the history of sexuality can and indeed must be thought."⁴⁷

Unsurprisingly, Foucault's most explicit discussion of desire occurs in the context of his analysis of the history of sexuality. The specific question is one of knowing how the spiritual hermeneutics and alethurgy of sexual desire I have just sketched eventually gave way to the analytics and *dispositif* of sexuality Foucault had initially planned to explore in his *History of Sexuality*, and had indeed begun to analyze in its first volume. The missing link, in that regard, and as I have already begun to suggest, is the emergence of biopower in the eighteenth century, and the manner in which it did not so much replace as displace and transform sovereign power, and oppose the power of the norm to that of the Law (or the sword). There came a point when the highest function of the state was no longer to take life (or let live), but to "invest life through and through,"⁴⁸ to foster and administer it; there came a point when life, or the phenomena that are specific to the life of the human species, made their way into history, that is, into the order of knowledge and power. At that point, desire, as a central and constitutive feature of the Western subject, itself becomes the object and target of a *vital* power. It becomes a fundamental stake of life itself, and its initially spiritual framework progressively gives way to a naturalist one. In short, desire becomes naturalized. This development, Foucault claims, took two basic forms. On the one hand, biopower invests and targets human bodies as machines, with a view to rendering them more efficient, productive, and docile. It is concerned with the body's "dres-

sage,” with the “optimization of its capabilities, the extraction of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.”⁴⁹ This is the “disciplinary” side of biopower. On the other hand, biopower focuses on the body as species, that is, on the body insofar as it is imbued with the mechanics of life, or with basic biological processes: “propagation, birth and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions than can cause these to vary.”⁵⁰ Through its constant supervision, its control, and intervention, this side of biopower amounts to a biopolitics of the population. What Foucault terms the *dispositif* or blueprint of sexuality occurs at the junction between those two aspects of biopower, and as a major technology of biopower. But it is not only the framework of desire that changes. Its status also is transformed. To be sure, desire—sexual desire especially—is still the target and object of power. But desire is also, and I would say above all, a *mechanism* of (bio)power. By that, I mean that power is exercised not so much on, over, or even less against desire, as with it, and through it.

Three Regimes of Desire

Naturally, then, I shall follow Foucault’s lead and explore the connection between desire and “the analytics of sexuality” that emerged in the nineteenth century. I shall ask about how we arrived at the situation in which, to use Foucault’s own words, “the constitution of the self is largely determined by the way in which people relate to their own sexuality,” and the manner in which “desire” and “sexuality” became closely identified.⁵¹ I will need to analyze the manner in which desire was integrated into the analytics and mechanism of sexuality, to the point of making sexuality eminently desirable. This will require an investigation into the emergence of the clinical discourse of sexuality, which is essentially normative, as well as into the birth and place of psychoanalysis in relation to the history of psychiatry. I will look at the history of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, analyze the concepts of “instinct” and “drive,” draw out the differences between the figures of the “pervert,” the “neurotic,” and the “psychotic.” I will do so by drawing on Foucault’s own work, as well as on more recent work carried out by historians and philosophers of sexuality.

But is desire limited to being the basis of the history of sexuality, or

does it reach beyond that specific regime? Is desire—as a “transcendental historical” schema—constitutive only of a historical phenomenon that stretches from the birth of the Christian problematic of the flesh, of concupiscence and temptation, to the more recent science of sexuality? Or did it also give birth to other discourses and practices, other regimes of subjectivity and techniques of government? I will argue that the schema in question is indeed broader, and I shall suggest from the start that our own desiring subjectivity, our own sense of self, is played out in at least two other areas, and inscribed within two other rationalities, which I will analyze in turn. In other words, I will claim that the naturalization and normalization of desire gave birth to at least two further discourses and attitudes.

Besides sexual desire, we need to acknowledge the central role and status of desire in the equally normative discourse of political economy—which predates the emergence of the *scientia sexualis*, but not by much—and, more important still, in the transformation and expansion of the market. This is why, before turning to the sexualization of desire, I will begin by analyzing the manner in which, under the liberal, market-driven paradigm, desire was rehabilitated and recognized as an irreducible and necessary engine of agency, but only in the form of economic self-interest and utility. I will do this by emphasizing various key passages from Foucault’s lecture courses on *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978–79), which connect with, and expand, the passage from the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* I was referring to earlier on. My main aim, in this first part, will be to show that with the advent of liberal political economy and the transformation of the role of the market, the nature of the relation between “desire” and “government” changes radically: Contrary to what happened under the specifically Christian problematic of the flesh, concupiscence, and sin, which saw desire as the object of government, or as that over which one needed to exercise one’s sovereignty and will, the force of desire is now seen as the very mechanism of government itself. One no longer governs oneself (or others) against one’s own desires, but with them, by allowing them to flourish within the very specific yet constantly expanding space of the market. Desire is no longer a force to be controlled, dominated, or punished, but one to be mobilized, used, or channeled, as Mazur had understood very well. From an essentially therapeutic strategy of domination and control we have moved to a strategy of enhancement and maximization, that is, of management. From

an essentially ascetic regime of desire, which dominated the ethical and political ideal of the West for centuries, we have moved to an economic regime and a libidinal economy. The question is no longer one of knowing what it is legitimate (or not) to desire, but what can generate the highest degree of satisfaction for any individual. Desire is naturalized, and seen as a form of positive energy, that is, as a spontaneous mechanism generating its own norms. But it also requires its technicians, which make sure that desires are created, organized, and distributed according to economic coordinates.

The thesis I want to defend and extract—some would say all too freely—from Foucault’s text is that, in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, “the man of desire,” whose origins Foucault traces back to the Hellenistic period, was integrated into the normative configuration of power I was referring to earlier, and according to a double procedure or assignation. To begin with, desire was integrated into the economic rationality of the Physiocrats and nascent liberalism, and inscribed within the normative space that emerged from it, namely, the market. Most striking about this new space is its formidable power of normalization, unparalleled, perhaps, in the modern era. Normalization cannot be opposed to freedom. In fact, and as we’ll see in some detail, economic normalization presupposes freedom: it presupposes a freedom of exchange, of monetary flows, of goods, choice, and consumption. A “free” market, that is, a market freed from the tutelage of sovereign power, is one that creates habits and expectations, feeds desires, shapes behaviors; more important, it delineates a new space of experience and a new form of subjectivity, through the invention of norms such as interest, utility, competition, efficiency, flexibility, or capital. In order to turn the Western (and now, increasingly, planetary) subject into a consumer, producer, and, more recently, entrepreneur of him- or herself, of his or her own existence and human capital, it was necessary to deploy a considerable amount of energy, effort, time, resources, and inventiveness.

But I shall need to ask why this liberation did not, at least initially, apply to the domain of sexuality, or at least not in the same way. For “sexuality” is itself a clinical invention of the nineteenth century, and one at the heart of which figures the notion of desire, though retranslated as instinct or drive. “Sexuality” requires the emergence of a new rationality, which no longer opposes desire to chastity, but distributes desires between normal and pathological ones, reorganizes them in a new typology, and invents

treatments, techniques of education and discipline, in short, an entire orthopedics of desire that is intrinsically normative. To the displacement of the sexual acts toward sexual desires, the science of sexuality adds their clinical framing. The claim that I will be making—and that, in my view, explains why the age of “sexuality” was one not of liberation but of clinical codification and framing—is that the discourse of sexuality, articulated around the concept of instinct, emerged from within the liberal rationality of political economy, and as a response to a tension or problem internal to the bourgeois economic and judicial order. Specifically, I will argue that the concept of the natural instinct, and of the natural *sexual* instinct in particular, along with the various sexual deviations or “perversions” it gave rise to, was developed largely to compensate for liberal penology’s inability to account for behaviors and criminal cases that could not be explained, and thus judged, from the point of view of the rationality of motive and interest, on which it was—and still is—based. The forensic origin of the discourse of sexuality cannot be underestimated: Its main concepts and categories were the result of attempts to adjudicate responsibility in criminal cases, most often of a barbarous nature. To the penal question regarding who, how, and on what basis one ought to punish, another, strictly biopolitical question was soon added, namely, whom and how should one cure? In the context of that question, and those connections, I shall turn to, and expand on, some of Foucault’s analyses in *Abnormal*, as well as more recent work on the history of sexuality. There is little doubt that sexuality is increasingly liberated from its psychiatric norm, and increasingly integrated into the normative rationality of the market. The typology of sexuality, forged by psychiatric discourse in the nineteenth century, has become an object of consumption, and the science of sexuality is in the process of becoming an industry of sexuality. In the neoliberal context that continues to gain ground, the economic norm seems dominant today, and close to having absorbed, integrated, or accommodated virtually all the forces of desire. There is, it seems, a growing convergence or synergy between the economic and sexual axes: If we define ourselves according to one of the two, it is to better serve the other.

Yet, as I will try to show, there is a form or configuration of desire that, in principle at least, marks the limit of economic and sexual normative power, while insisting that it, too, is *vital*. There is, to be more specific, a further way in which desire was rehabilitated, and inserted as an instrument of government and a key mechanism of biopower. It is the desire to be

acknowledged and count for something, or the desire to be recognized—not, I hasten to add, as the subject of a particular virtue or excellence, but as a *person*, that is, as a being whose life cannot be lived without dignity and who is intrinsically worthy of respect. In the same way that, in the context of the emergence of political economy, desire was related to the newly formed concepts of individual interest and utility, and, in the context of the birth of psychopathology, to those of the natural sexual instinct and drive, it is now, in the context of what I call its symbolic reconfiguration, associated with a family of concepts that includes those of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-respect. The rehabilitation and transformation of desire translated into the emergence of not only the *homo oeconomicus* (the figure of the consumer, producer and entrepreneur of him- or herself) and the *homo sexualis*, but also the *homo symbolicus*. An equally considerable amount of energy, effort, time, resources, and inventiveness was devoted to the production of a subject who desires him- or herself, that is, a subject whose desire takes the form of what was once described as self-love. To govern well, therefore, is not only to liberate, encourage and even generate a subject of interest and utility. It is also—and I will need to show the extent to which those two aspects are intertwined, but not identical—to stimulate self-love. As Foucault himself puts it, good government is no longer a matter of limiting self-esteem in the sense of love of oneself, but one of encouraging this desire, so that it can produce its necessary beneficial effects.⁵² Those effects are seen as pertaining to the sphere of life itself, and their privation as the sign of a diminished life: A number of pathologies, destructive tendencies, and antisocial behaviors are attributed to a lack of self-esteem. It is thus the duty of those who govern, and of each and every individual, to foster and nurture this love of oneself. Like the other two regimes of desire, to which it is obviously related, and with which it overlaps, the regime of recognition requires an education of the self: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem require the creation of various mechanisms and the collaboration (and transformation) of various institutions, such as the law, the family, community centers, schools and universities, and the workplace, as well as the symbolic semiotic with which we represent our national, local, religious, or cultural identities.

A recent and philosophical formulation of this idea—one that served as the matrix for much of the contemporary debate on social recognition—can be found in Kojève’s interpretation of the reality and unfolding of self-consciousness in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “All human, anthropo-

genetic desire—the desire that generates self-consciousness, the human reality—is, finally, a function of the desire for ‘recognition.’”⁵³ Ultimately, Hegel claims that desire cannot be realized in the struggle to death between two consciousnesses, but only in the ethical and juridical sphere of the modern, rational state. In 1992, both Francis Fukuyama and Charles Taylor came up with their own formulation of Hegel’s insight, the first claiming that “the desire for recognition is the most fundamental longing,”⁵⁴ and the second, that “due recognition is . . . a vital human need.”⁵⁵ At stake, in claims such as those, is the idea that a society remains normatively deficient so long as its members are systematically denied the recognition they seek and deserve. This is a position that, still in 1992, Axel Honneth formulated in his influential *The Struggle for Recognition*: The possibility of realizing one’s needs and desires as a fully autonomous subject—in other words, the very possibility of identity formation—depends on the development of three modes of relating to oneself: self-confidence (through love), self-respect (through rights), and self-esteem (through solidarity). These can be acquired and maintained only intersubjectively, that is, through mutual recognition, and not solely through the pursuit of individual economic interests.⁵⁶

My claim, then, is that recognition constitutes the third main normative framework within which “the man of desire” governs himself today, one that operates often through the law and takes the form of a struggle for equal rights, but also, and perhaps even primarily, through other, more symbolic mechanisms. Through the former, the desire for recognition is subjected to a universalizing procedure, whereas through the latter, it is subjected to procedures that reveal a complex and potentially endlessly differentiated field of particularities, be they cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, and so forth. They are all biopolitical, and their solution is symbolic. If rights are still at issue, it is less in the sense of the sovereign, universal rights of men and women, and more, as Foucault puts it, in the sense of “the ‘right’ to rediscover what one is and all that one can be.”⁵⁷ This right to be oneself, to be “all we can be” and be recognized for “who we are,” is a distinctive feature of governmentality, and the basis for an active ethics and politics of the self. In that context, the concept of recognition can be seen as the placeholder for a vital desire that seeks to express itself outside the classical right of sovereignty, but also, and crucially, outside the economic or utilitarian regime of desire.

I also want to suggest that, while contemporaneous with the birth of

the physiocratic and utilitarian liberalism of self-interest and utility, this regime of desire actually constitutes another, parallel form of liberalism. Fukuyama is most explicit about this point when he claims that the desire for recognition is the “missing link between liberal economics and liberal politics,” that is, between the rationality of self-interest—in which Hegel himself, an avid and enthusiastic reader of British political economy, saw the necessary mechanism for the realization of the “system of needs” and the material well-being of populations⁵⁸—and that of the struggle for self-esteem, self-worth, and dignity.⁵⁹ Finally, I want to suggest that, if it has been seized upon, exploited, and developed to the extent that it has since the early 1990s, by the likes of Taylor, Fukuyama, and, most important, Axel Honneth, it is precisely in response to the rise of social and political struggles around the recognition of the rights and equal dignity of minorities, ethnic groups, and cultural identities, and as an attempt to salvage social-democratic liberalism from the onslaught of neoliberalism.⁶⁰ But the rise in question, I will argue, is itself a function of the extension of biopower to the sphere of life once known as self-love.

Such are the reasons why, ultimately, I see the problem of desire as a way into the history of liberalism, and as a way of addressing the complex problem of Foucault’s own relation to liberalism, and even neoliberalism.⁶¹ To address what that means, what are the various threads that compose this complex historical phenomenon, and in what manner can genealogy throw a different light on it, is the secondary aim of this book. Its subtitle refers to the challenges, both theoretical and practical, with which liberalism confronts us, and to the sort of subject that liberalism turns us into. Through its systematic treatment of the role and mechanisms of desire in the age of biopower, this book signals an attempt to come to grips with the legacy of liberalism, one that is irreducible to a mere history of the ideas that shaped it, or to the critique of its ideology. Its conclusion points to possible modes of subjectivity beyond the regimes of desire already mentioned, and returns to the question of resistance and counter-conducts. How, if at all, can desire deploy itself beyond, or perhaps at the limit of, the assemblages of knowledge and power constitutive of the liberal subject? Does desire have a place and a future outside the limits and constraints of biopower? And to the extent that the articulation of power and desire in liberalism is a matter of norms, rather than of the law, what strategies or tactics (other than transgression) can be deployed to counter them? In attempting to answer those questions, I will suggest that the economic

regime of desire can be resisted through a range of techniques, such as laziness and idleness, indifference and flight; that the sexual regime of desire can be overcome through a renewed eroticism, another way of relating to one's body, and a new voluptuousness; that the symbolic regime of desire, at the heart of which figures the longing for recognition, can give way to processes of creation and points of intensity that signal another way of being with one another, another ethics and politics of desire. Together, they pave the way for a desire that I will call "sovereign."

PART ONE

Homo Oeconomicus

1

The Birth of *Homo Oeconomicus*

At a Conservative Party meeting in the late 1970s, shortly after Margaret Thatcher had become party leader, a speaker had prepared a paper arguing that the socioeconomic middle way was the pragmatic path for the party to take. Before he could finish introducing the paper, Thatcher reached into her briefcase and took out a book. It was Friedrich von Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*. She interrupted the speaker, and held the book up for all to see. "This," she said sternly, "is what we believe," and banged Hayek down on the table.¹ After winning the 1979 general election, she appointed Keith Joseph, the director of the Hayekian Centre for Policy Studies, as her secretary of state for industry in an effort to redirect Parliament's economic strategies. This change of economic policy was soon to be followed by Ronald Reagan in the United States, and other countries throughout the world subsequently. The age of neoliberalism had begun. Although hard to define, the terms "Thatcherism" and "Reaganomics" are often thought to refer to the set of policies that include the privatization of the public sector, the deregulation of industry, reduction of trade barriers, and the "liberation" of the powers of finance worldwide, which are themselves reinforced by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. However, neoliberalism also signals the emergence of a new form of subjectivity and a new technique of government, organized around the economic norms of competition, flexibility, risk calculation, and human capital.

With Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, however, there is evidence of a political rejection of over thirty years of

neoliberal economic policies, and of the total transformation of the social and even existential landscape it has led to. The very countries in which it was first introduced have now voted against it, in what amounts to a reaffirmation of politics, albeit of a nationalistic, populist, xenophobic, and generally exclusive kind. Politics, it seems, is having its revenge, one that, sadly, but unsurprisingly, often takes the actual form of revenge, and even fascism. Neoliberal international treaties, such as NAFTA or TTP, European antitrust and state-aid regulations, and basic neoliberal principles, such as the free movement of people, are called into question, and protectionism, mercantilism, and tariffs are back on the agenda. Will 2016 have been the year that neoliberalism died? It is, I think, too early to say. As I will show in chapter 3, neoliberalism is not just an economic program. It is also, and perhaps above all, a construction of subjectivity, and one that has permeated every sphere of life. As a result, and in addition to the skepticism one might have with respect to the anti- or post-neoliberal declarations of Theresa May in the United Kingdom, or Donald Trump in the United States, one might wonder about the sudden demise of a technique of government and of the self that has grown such deep roots.

The year that Thatcher became prime minister, Foucault gave a lecture course at the Collège de France entitled *The Birth of Biopolitics*. In fact, the lecture course has very little to say about biopolitics as such, but much about the history of liberalism, the emergence of neoliberalism, and the birth of political economy. It is a remarkable lecture course, in which, contrary to his habit, Foucault interrogates not a more or less distant past, nor even the present, but a phenomenon that was only beginning to take shape at the time, and that has dominated the life of hundreds of millions of people in the last thirty years. His analyses turn out to have been not only accurate, but also prescient. In that respect, Foucault's lecture course is a remarkable tool to interrogate our present and understand the sort of subjects that we are today. It provides us with the means to understand a decisive shift that took place in the "art of governing." At the heart of it figures desire, and its inscription within a normative horizon anchored in the concepts of interest and utility, and played out in the rigorously constructed and monitored space of the market.

Yet, as he clearly says in the lecture course from the previous year (*Security, Territory, Population*), his main concern is not with the history of political economy as such, but with the manner in which this specific

form of *knowing* (*savoir*) is connected with a specific modality or regime of power (*pouvoir*), and oriented toward a particular type of *subject*. Foucault's thesis is that, from the eighteenth century onward, "government" no longer consists solely, or even primarily, in the exercise of the sovereign's right. Rather, to govern now means to administer and manage, to monitor and supervise, to support and sustain human beings as *living* entities, or as *population*, and thus as imbued with a certain *naturalness*. This new kind of power, which Foucault defines as "biopower," doesn't simply replace sovereign power, but overlaps with it and complicates it. Where sovereign power was seen as the right to "take life and let live," biopower can be seen as the power that rules over life itself, invests it, governs it, manages it. It is the right to "make live and let die." The emergence of what Foucault calls liberal governmentality is itself to be situated within that power shift. We need to be a bit clearer here: Foucault's claim is not that the notion of population did not exist before the birth of biopower. It is a notion that can be found as early as Bacon's *Essays* (1597).² His point, rather, is that the problem of population in the classical age was entirely bound up with a specific problem, that of the power of the sovereign, and with the question of territory, as that over which the sovereign's power is extended. It is a problem, yes, but only insofar as it interests the sovereign, and it interests the sovereign primarily as a quantity that can be used: A large population is a source of power in that it provides troops and resources. Population is contrasted with depopulation, which can happen as a result of wars, diseases, or famine. So the problem of population, even for the mercantilists and cameralists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, remains subordinated to the rationality of the state and the question of how to increase its power.³

This begins to change in the eighteenth century, and with the French *économistes* (or, as they came to be known, Physiocrats) in particular: The population no longer appears as a collection of subjects of right, of the sovereign's will, but as a set of *natural* processes, which need to be *managed*. What does this mean? It means, first of all, that it is recognized as a complex phenomenon, which depends on a large series of variables, such as the climate, material surroundings, commerce, customs and laws, moral and religious values, means of subsistence, and so on. Because of that complexity, it is not immediately transparent to the sovereign's action, and the relation between the population and the sovereign cannot be one

of obedience or refusal of obedience, submission or revolt. One cannot act on those variables through sheer voluntarism. It is no longer possible to think of the relation as one of the type: “Do this.” It requires a different rationality of government, namely, management, and a different kind of knowledge, namely, political economy. All of this comes out very clearly in the “Maxims of Economic Government” that Quesnay lays out at the outset of his article from Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* on “Corn,” as well as in his articles on “Men.”⁴ It is “men,” we are told, who constitute the economic power of states, and the wealth of nations depends on “the employment of men and the increase of population.”⁵ As a result, “the principal matter of concern in the economic government of states” is “the state of the population and of the employment of men,” and the government in question is precisely a matter of “management” and “administration.”⁶

At the same time, the question is also one of knowing whether, beneath all those variables, which now need to be recognized, analyzed, combined, there is something like an invariant, or a “mainspring of action” that the population as a whole would share, and which should therefore become the object or target of government. And that is precisely *desire*.⁷ The next chapter will be devoted to the manner in which desire entered the field of economic governmentality, and was very closely associated, if not identified, with the concepts and norms of *interest* and *utility*. However, before turning to the question of the economic government of desire, and the birth of the *homo oeconomicus*, I need to sketch Foucault’s genealogy of the discourse of political economy, and describe the transformation of the epistemological status of the market that accompanied its emergence. Chapter 3 will reveal a radicalization and further internalization of the economic regime of desire, and of the norms of interest and management, in neoliberalism.

“Economics” and “Politics”

The association of the terms “economics” and “politics,” which we take for granted today, was far from obvious when it was introduced toward the end of the eighteenth century. Until then, politics and economics designated two very different, even heterogeneous spheres of activity. In ancient Greece, for example, the very idea of political economy would have been seen as a contradiction in terms.⁸ This is how one historian puts it:

Oikonomikè, the science of the *oikonomia*, was first and foremost the art of managing one's *oikos*, one's property, and what we call economics, that is, the set of phenomena related to the production and exchange of material goods, had not yet acquired in Ancient Greece the autonomy that, beginning in the eighteenth century, it acquired in the modern world . . . Economics was still *embedded*, integrated into the social and political realm.⁹

Telling, in that respect, is that, besides war and politics, the only activity the Greeks documented in some detail, and saw as worthy of a free man (and thus a citizen or political animal), was agriculture. While the Greek world was one of cities, its main *economic* activity was related to the land. Furthermore, the connection between the land and the city was not only of an "economic" nature. It was also a religious connection and, more important still, a political one: Only landowners were allowed to be citizens.¹⁰

By contrast, the so-called mechanical arts (*βανανυσικαὶ*) were held in low esteem, as Socrates makes it perfectly clear in the following passage from Xenophon's *Economics*:

Very good, Critobulus; for to be sure, the mechanical arts, as they are called, are spoken against, and are, naturally enough, held in utter disdain in our city-states [τῶν πόλεων]. For they spoil the bodies of the workmen and the foremen, forcing them to sit still and live indoors, and in some cases to spend the day at the fire. The softening of the body involves a serious weakening of the mind. Moreover, these so-called mechanical arts leave no spare time [χολίας] for attention to one's friends and city-state, so that those who follow them are reputed bad at dealing with friends and bad defenders of their country. In fact, in some of the city-states, and especially in those reputed warlike, it is not even lawful for any of the citizens to engage in such arts.¹¹

We have a clear indication of the value system within which work in general, especially that of the builder or craftsman, was held, in the fact that the salaries of, say, an architect, and the various people working under his supervision, or the potter and the goldsmith, were roughly equivalent, and never exceeded a ratio of one to three. This means that labor was not deemed sufficiently important, or valuable, to be measured precisely, but was seen only as a "service."¹² While undoubtedly recognized for his

skilled work, requiring the mastery of a certain *techne*, and thus freeing men from the constraints of nature, the artisan was also seen as unable to gain access to that other, nobler *techne*, the *techne politike*.

Aristotle's own conception of economic exchange, and of the role of money in particular, confirms this general attitude:¹³ It is, he says, a just and equitable operation between equal citizens, yet always threatened by the danger of an unlimited desire for money, which severs the links between free, sovereign, and equal citizens—the basic political link that he calls *philia* and for which we, moderns, living in the age of self-interest and competition, have no equivalent (solidarity, or fraternity, rather than friendship, would be an approximation). In his *Politics*, Aristotle warns against the dangers of this peculiar *techne* called chrematistics (χρηματιστική), or money-making, which consists in the accumulation of wealth for one's personal gain. He distinguishes it very clearly from economics, which caters to the natural needs of life (*zoe*) and the household, and is governed by a principle of use. The following two passages are worth citing in full:

As in the art of medicine there is no limit to the pursuit of health, and as in the other arts there is no limit to the pursuit of their several ends, for they aim at accomplishing their ends to the uttermost (but of the means there is a limit, for the end is always the limit), so, too, in this art of wealth-getting there is no limit of the end, which is *riches of the spurious kind*, and the acquisition of wealth. But the art of wealth-getting which consists in household management [ἡοικονομία], on the other hand, has a limit; the unlimited acquisition of wealth is not its business. And therefore, in one point of view, all riches must have a limit; nevertheless, as a matter of fact, we find the opposite to be the case; for all getters of wealth increase their hoard of coin without limit.¹⁴

Hence some persons are led to believe that getting wealth is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that *they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well*; and as *their desires are unlimited*, they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit. Those who do aim at a good life seek the means of obtaining bodily pleasures; and, since the enjoyment of these appears to depend on property, they are absorbed in getting wealth; and so there arises the second species of wealth-getting. For,

as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art of getting wealth, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary to nature.¹⁵

In his highly influential *The Great Transformation* (1944), the economist and historian Karl Polanyi refers to those passages as “probably the most prophetic pointer ever made in the realm of the social sciences” and judges them to be “certainly still the best analysis of the subject we possess.”¹⁶ The reason for that, he argues, was Aristotle’s ability to distinguish between gain as a motive specific to production for the market and use as the principle governing production for household management (which, we know, was extended to the management of the *polis*). More important still, Aristotle was able to see this crucial difference as the principle separating two very different types of civilization, the second of which alone, he thought, was worthy of a Greek citizen. “In denouncing the principle of production for gain as boundless and limitless, ‘as not natural to man,’” Polanyi states, “Aristotle was, in effect, aiming at the crucial point, namely, the divorce of the economic motive from all concrete social relationships which would by their very nature set a limit to that motive.”¹⁷ Aristotle’s point regarding human nature, and money-making as counter-natural, is significant, insofar as it was through a new definition of human nature, and a new philosophical anthropology, that that activity was rehabilitated in the nineteenth century, and the social being of man identified with the pursuit of his own interest. Specifically, the kind of desire that Aristotle designates as intrinsically negative, for being insatiable, is precisely the desire that was eventually rehabilitated, first by being recognized as natural, and second by being presented as an irreducible and necessary condition of general prosperity. Polanyi’s further claim, to which I shall return at various points throughout this book, is that the Aristotelian or “embedded” conception of the economy, divorced from markets, and subordinated to clearly articulated social, political, and religious aims, dominated Western Europe (and the rest of the world) for centuries, at least until the birth of capitalism.

That separation between the sphere of economics and that of politics (or religion) remained in place for a very long time. In one of his books, the French historian Jacques Le Goff cites an English sermon from the fourteenth century, according to which “God made the clergy, the knights,

and the ploughmen; but the devil made the bourgeois and the moneylenders.”¹⁸ And in a letter to his friend Francesco Vettori, Machiavelli embraced the separation with the following words: “Fortune has decreed that, as I do not know how to reason, either about the art of silk, or about the art of wool, either about profits or about losses, it befits me to reason about the State.”¹⁹ Yet this is precisely the situation that was to change radically and irreversibly in the eighteenth century, through the birth of a new *savoir*, or rationality, namely, political economy, the transformation of the role and importance of the market, and the recognition of interest and utility as the fundamental mechanisms of human agency. It is in connection with the latter development that desire was reintroduced and given a decisive and positive—that is, social and economic—role (see chapter 2).

The Birth of Political Economy

Foucault sees in the emergence of political economy the form of rationality and calculation—the regime of truth—that secured the self-limitation of what is traditionally known as the “reason of state” (*ragione di stato*), which he also refers to as “governmental reason.” The expression *ragione di stato* is one that we find in Machiavelli and a number of anti-Machiavellian authors, the most famous of whom is the ex-Jesuit Giovanni Botero, author of the widely read and influential *Della ragion di stato* (1589).²⁰ In that context, *ragione* and *ragionare* refer to the state’s ability to calculate and know its own interest. By the time Botero published his work, the term *ragion di stato*, one commentator notes, “already enjoyed wide currency; it was associated with Machiavellianism and Tacitism; and it was used to account for political actions that were, on the face of it, contrary to ‘Divine Law’ or morality.”²¹ A chief skeptic regarding natural law and the primacy of morality in politics, to which he opposed the self-interest of princes, was the Florentine historian and statesman Francesco Guicciardini.²² Botero begins his work by registering his indignation regarding such a trend: “I was moved to indignation rather than amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance that it was brazenly opposed to Divine Law, so that men spoke of some things being permissible by Reason of State and others by conscience.”²³ It is important to note, then, that under the influence of Machiavelli, what was commonly referred to as the reason of state was distinguished from,

if not opposed to, that which is virtuous or right (*honestum*), and designated that which is useful or profitable. It was seen to correspond to a different logic or form of rationality, one of utility, profit, or interest, as the political analyst René de Lucinge, a friend and admirer of Botero, made clear in his influential treatise of 1588.²⁴ Having noted that all actions of princes were motivated by either honor or profit, and that the latter often prevailed over the former, he writes: “We shall therefore concern ourselves only with profit, which we may call ‘interest.’”²⁵ Botero, Malcolm claims, adopted and popularized the use of “interest” as a fundamental principle of political analysis, despite his reservation regarding what it did to divine and natural law:²⁶ “It should be taken for certain that in the deliberations made by princes, interest wins all parties [*l’interesse è quello che vince ogni partito*].”²⁷ A few years later, Botero summarized his view with the simple phrase, “reason of state is little else than reason of interest.”²⁸

What the Italians of the Renaissance call *ragione di stato* is, according to Botero’s own definition, “the knowledge of the means fit for founding, preserving and increasing a dominion [*dominio*]”; it is the science of the conservation and increase of state power, the calculation of the means that will bring about such an end. In that respect, the state is bound to the rule of its own interest and power as to its most fundamental law. The emergence of the *ragione di stato* is itself bound up with a transformation of the notion of interest: Toward the end of the sixteenth century, interest begins to be distinguished from the ancient and medieval norm of the *utilitas communis* or *publica*, to which it was hitherto bound, and becomes a more directly “operational” category, applied exclusively to the pursuit of the interest (*interesse*) of the state as a political subject or sovereign, to what is useful to the conservation and expansion of the state and its mode of government. The state becomes “subject” and “rational” precisely by following its own “interest,” which is clearly distinguished from the private or individual person of the prince.

Now, it is precisely by shifting this new rationality of calculation and interest from the state, where it belonged initially, to individual subjects, and by presenting economic agents as *naturally* moved by their private interests, that the discourse of political economy will manage to impose itself as the *internal* limit of the reason of state. Specifically, by putting forward the idea that the interplay of individual interests leads spontaneously to a higher social order, and greater prosperity, the discourse of political economy will eventually curtail the power of the sovereign, and establish

itself as a necessary and more effective rationality of government. And that it was able to do not through morality, by distinguishing between what is good and what is wrong, or through right, by distinguishing between what is legitimate and what is illegitimate, but by the insertion of itself within the *jeu de vérité* that characterizes Western science. In other words, the authority of the limit in question stemmed from its ability to distinguish between what is true and what is false, what works and what does not. It coincided with the emergence of the idea according to which the *true* art of government relies on the proper understanding of the laws and the rationality—akin to those of nature—that govern the growth, wealth, and prosperity of nations, as well as the interests and motivations of individuals. A “good” government is no longer (at least not simply) one that meets the demands of justice, but one that also meets those of truth. Liberalism, therefore, marks a shift in the meaning of government itself, and in the way in which men govern themselves. And at the heart of this new method or technique of government lies a transformed conception of desire.

The Transformation of the Market

It is precisely in that context, and for those reasons, that the status of the market changed dramatically: From a place of sovereign power, it became a place of truth, and from an object of jurisdiction, it became one of “veridiction.” In the Middle Ages already, but even more so in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the market constituted a privileged object of intervention and regulation on the part of governments. As a place of justice, the market was defined by a strict and complex set of regulations, which concerned the objects that could be brought onto the market, the type of manufacturing of those objects, the origin of products, the rights that needed to be paid, the procedures for their exchange, and their price. The last-named was particularly important, and closely regulated: The selling price was considered to be *fair*; there was a sense of what a fair price was or ought to be, insofar as it reflected the labor that went into the final product, as well as the needs of the seller and the buyer. In addition, the market was a place in which distributive justice was carried out exemplarily: The market was organized in such a way that the poor as well as

the rich were able to buy. Finally, the market was to guarantee the buyer against fraud. It is that very social and moral context that Polanyi has in mind when he describes the very strict rules that framed the emergence of markets up until the mid-eighteenth century:

From the start this institution was surrounded by a number of safeguards designed to protect the prevailing economic organization of society from interference on the part of market practices . . . Towns, insofar as they sprang from markets, were not only the protectors of those markets, but also the means of preventing them from expanding into the countryside and thus encroaching on the prevailing economic organization of society. The two meanings of the word “contain” express perhaps best this double function of the towns, in respect to the market which they both enveloped and prevented from developing.²⁹

This situation changed radically toward the middle of the eighteenth century, when the market became a place and a mechanism of truth-formation. First of all, the market appeared as something that followed and needed to follow “natural,” that is, spontaneous, mechanisms—spontaneous to the point that they could only be denatured if interfered with.³⁰ Second—and this is the sense in which the market became a place of truth—those natural mechanisms, if and when left to their own devices, allowed for the emergence of a price that Boisguillebert, an important predecessor of the Physiocrats, characterized as “natural,” and the Physiocrats themselves saw as “proper” (*le bon prix*).³¹ Later on, it was referred to as the “normal” price. The price was supposed to reflect a certain relation between the cost of production and the extent of demand. When allowed to express its nature or truth, the theory goes, the market enables a certain price, known as the “true” price, to emerge. If, according to Foucault, it is still known as the “fair” price, it is no longer in relation to an implicit sense of justice. Rather, the price is now thought to reflect the *value* (a *truth-value*) of the product—a value defined by the relation I just alluded to. This is how the market appears as revealing something like a truth, which government needs to integrate, and to actually be governed by. Inasmuch as, through the exchange mechanism, the market is able to link production, needs, offer, demand, value, and price, it constitutes a place of truth; it is governed by a specific form of rationality, which the Physiocrats and

early political economists referred to as a “natural order,” akin to the physical world, ruled by immutable laws, and which neoliberal economists eventually referred to as “market efficiency.”

A New Legal Order

I have proceeded thus far as if the emergence of political economy as the internal limit that political reason imposes on itself, and of the market as a place of truth, simply replaced what Foucault describes as the initial, external limit of state reason, namely, law, or the rule of law. Yet, as Foucault himself insists, there is no simple opposition and exclusion between the two, and we need to refine our initial assessment. Rather than see the emergence of political economy, and the market, as replacing law as *the* limit of the reason of state, we need to recognize that the question became one of knowing how this self-limitation could be formulated in terms of the law, without paralyzing government, on the one hand, and without smothering the place of truth (*lieu de vérité*) that the market had become, on the other hand. It is not a matter, therefore, of claiming that public law, and the problem of public law, has disappeared altogether, and has been replaced by another, internal, limit. Rather, it is a matter of acknowledging how the law itself was forced to evolve in the face of the emergence of political economy, and thus of a specific normative framework. In that respect, it should come as no surprise that the first economists, such as Beccaria and Adam Smith, were also jurists. The question is no longer, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one of knowing how sovereignty can be established, and under what conditions the sovereign can be seen as legitimate and can exercise his rights legitimately. Rather, it is now: How can limits be imposed on the exercise of public power?

To that question, Foucault claims, the eighteenth century provided two basic answers, which led to two different traditions, of which only the second will be of interest here. That being said, it is not as if the two were entirely separate; *in fact*, they gave rise to various combinations, and they have points of convergence and areas of overlap. Both involve law and the juridical order, but in different ways. There is, first of all, the way that, in the lecture of 17 January 1978, Foucault describes as juridico-deductive, as axiomatic, and as revolutionary: The point of departure is not government and its necessary limitation, but the natural and inalienable rights of every

individual, as distinct from those rights we agree to relinquish in return for security and general welfare. The trajectory, therefore, goes from the rights of man to the delimitation of governmentality, and through the constitution of the sovereign. This is the way adopted by Locke and Rousseau. The second way begins with the practice of government itself and posits its *de facto* limits. It is important to note the difference between those limits that are *de facto* and those that are *de jure*, even though the *de facto* limits themselves lead to a certain juridical order—one that, Foucault argues, evolved and became more prominent with the birth of neoliberalism. Now the pragmatic limits may come from the tradition, as they do in common law. But they can also be derived from the objectives of government, and can take into account the population, the resources, and so forth, of a nation. In that case, the limits of governmental reason are seen from the perspective of what is desirable, or what is reasonable. And on that basis, it becomes possible to say what makes sense, or not, to interfere with. Mostly, though, it becomes possible to define what should and should not be interfered with, bearing in mind that the obligation or desirability in question is purely a function of what is useful, or not, what gains from being regulated, or not. The sphere of government itself becomes defined in terms of what it would be useful or not to do or not do. And this is where the revolutionary, possibly “French” question, What are my natural, inalienable rights, and how can I make sure they are respected by every sovereign? is replaced with the English, and specifically utilitarian, question: How useful is it? To what extent should it be embraced? At what point does it become useless, if not harmful?³² The law, then, is no longer conceived, as in the revolutionary way, as the expression of a common will, or the share of rights that citizens have agreed to yield, and the share they insist on keeping. Rather, the law is now conceived as the effect of a transaction or an agreement that separates the sphere of intervention of the state from the sphere of independence of individuals.³³ In actual fact, that is, it is not always easy to see a significant difference in the effects that those two ways and traditions generate. Yet if we trace them back to their origin, we see that they are the result of, and the answer to, two different types of problem.

In that respect, to govern is no longer to exercise a sovereign power, but to understand and facilitate the maximal expression of that rationality. Economists are the experts or technocrats who unveil the mechanisms of prosperity and advise governments. All the questions that, up until then,

defined the art of government—questions such as, in the Middle Ages, Am I governing according to the laws of morality, nature, or God? or, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Am I governing enough, with the required intensity and depth, in order to bring the state to its maximum degree of power or force?—are now entirely displaced, and replaced by the following: Am I sure that I am not governing too much, not intervening with those laws and mechanisms that, left to their own, inner tendencies, lead to prosperity and a natural equilibrium? This, in effect, is what Foucault means by the birth of liberal governmentality—namely, the maxim or general rule of conduct that follows from the emergence of a new regime of truth, of which there are various formulations, the most famous one being that of the marquis d’Argenson in 1751 (“*laissez-nous faire*”), a preliminary sign of which can be found in Robert Walpole’s “*quieta non movere*,” or “do not move settled things.”³⁴ To what tends to govern itself, to what is imbued with a natural direction and coherence, which benefits the majority, one need not add further government; on the contrary, one needs to plan, project, and calculate in order *not* to interfere, or to interfere as little as possible, with an independent dynamic. This is the beginning of the epoch of “frugal” or “cheap” government—an epoch, as we know, which came perhaps to its highest expression, and its completion, in the last thirty years.³⁵

2

Man's "Vain and Insatiable Desires," or the "Oeconomy of Greatness"

In the previous chapter, I began to explore the link that Foucault establishes between the emergence of biopower and the birth of the discourse of political economy. Yet once the object of government is identified as population, and is defined by a wide range of natural processes and variables, which need to be recognized, analyzed, and integrated, the question also becomes one of knowing whether, beneath all those variables, there is something like an invariant, or a "mainspring of action" that the population as a whole would share, and which should therefore become an instrument of government. And that, Foucault claims, is precisely *desire*.¹ Now desire, Foucault goes on to comment in the same passage, is an old notion that first appeared and was employed in spiritual direction. We have seen how, in his lectures from the early 1980s, Foucault traced the emergence of this phenomenon to the Hellenistic period and early Christianity. Significantly, though, desire undergoes a transformation and makes its second appearance within the philosophical anthropology and moral psychology of the eighteenth century. More important still, it is integrated as a key mechanism for the government of individuals.

45

A New Philosophical Anthropology: Desire as the Universal "Spring of Action"

When Foucault describes desire as a "mainspring of action," he is simply repeating the expression that, beginning with Locke, and through the early

nineteenth century, moral psychologists used to define desire. Yet more remarkable is the consistency with which the idea of desire came to be identified with the concepts of self-interest and utility. I will eventually return to the passage from *Security, Territory, Population* I have just referred to. But to situate and introduce it, let me begin by showing the manner in which philosophers and moral psychologists rehabilitated desire as a necessary spring of action, and came to understand self-interest as a constitutive and irreducible feature of human nature, which any *good* government would have to take into account. This principle, established in the seventeenth century by Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1655), and developed further by Locke in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689), was taken up by philosophers and economists such as Hume,² Condillac,³ Helvétius,⁴ Adam Smith,⁵ Pietro Verri,⁶ Cesare Beccaria,⁷ and, of course, Bentham.⁸

In *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke defines desire as “an *uneasiness* of the mind for want of some absent good,” and thus as involving the idea of pain, which we naturally seek to avoid.⁹ “Life itself,” he goes on to write, “is a burden cannot be borne under the everlasting and unremoved pressure of such an *uneasiness*.”¹⁰ As such, desire is what motivates the *will* to act, and is the main, if not the only, engine of human action. Locke distinguishes desire and the will very clearly: It is through the will that we act, but desire, and not the good, *determines* the will. “[G]ood, the *greater good*, though apprehended and judged to be so, does not determine the *will*, until our desire, raised proportionally to it, make us *uneasy* in the want of it.”¹¹ Unless some sort of want, privation, and uneasiness is felt, there is no reason to act: “Good and Evil, present and absent, ’tis true, work upon the mind: but that which immediately determines the *will*, from time to time, to every voluntary action, is the *uneasiness* of *desire*, fixed on some absent good, either negative, as indolency to one in pain; or positive, as enjoyment of pleasure.”¹² Desire, in that respect, is “the spring of action.” And this law applies to natural needs—such as the desire to satisfy one’s thirst, hunger, or sexual appetites, which work toward the preservation of ourselves and the continuation of the species—moral principles, or “habits acquired by fashion, example, and education,” such as “the itch after *honor, power, or riches, etc.*”¹³

Ultimately, desire is the only power that moves us, as it allows us to experience the pain and privation that we seek to remove as an obstacle toward the achievement of happiness, or pleasure, which is the ultimate goal and highest good for man.¹⁴ What we desire is happiness, or at least its

lowest degree, which is the absence of pain. This, however, does not mean that we are led by our desires as if blindly, nor that we should seek to pursue each and every one of them, nor even as they emerge, for it is in our power—a power of the *mind*—to “suspend the execution and satisfaction” of any of our desires and to “examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others” with a view to *judging* “the good or evil of what we are going to do” and so avoid a “variety of mistakes, errors and faults which we run into, in the conduct of our lives, and our endeavors after happiness.”¹⁵ When we have done this, “we have done our duty, and all that is in our power.”¹⁶ This process of rational deliberation, reminiscent of the Aristotelian *bouleusis*, which keeps desire at bay, or temporarily suspended, is precisely the exercise and “source of all *liberty*.”¹⁷ Far from being a restraint or limit of freedom, such a process of examination and judgment is the “end” and “use of our *liberty*,” as well as its “very improvement and benefit.”¹⁸ In addition, “the further we are removed from such a determination, the nearer we are to misery and slavery.”¹⁹ Consequently, we need to nuance what seemed to be an unlimited rehabilitation of desire as the source of action, and come to the following conclusion: that while no action and no happiness is possible without desire, our liberty consists in our ability to examine each and every one of our desires and decide which ones to prioritize in our pursuit of happiness. It is only when judging of the good or evil of an action that we are genuinely free, that is, self-determined or autonomous. There is another, unspoken reason why desire cannot be rehabilitated entirely. To be sure, desire is necessary in the pursuit of happiness, and thus in action. Yet insofar as it is always accompanied by pain, what it really seeks is the end of desire, or a state of permanent happiness. But that is precisely what it will never be able to achieve: The human condition is that of a desiring being who desires only one thing, and that is to no longer desire. He or she may achieve temporary happiness. “But,” Locke concludes, “as soon as any new uneasiness comes in, this happiness is disturbed, and we are set afresh on work in the pursuit of happiness.”²⁰

Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, published half a century after Locke's *Essay*, formulates a similar idea: “The chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind is pleasure or pain.”²¹ Reason alone, then, is not enough to motivate the will, and any form of action, including virtuous action, requires the force of desire, which Hume tends to identify with passion. He goes so far as to say that “reason is, and ought only to be the slave of passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey

them.”²² Why? By virtue of the same principle—pleasure and pain—that allowed Locke to rehabilitate desire, and whose terminology Hume is content to repeat: “’Tis obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain and pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry’d to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction . . . ’Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object.”²³ “Desire,” Hume goes on to specify, is nothing but the prospect of pleasure, and “aversion” is its opposite.

This general principle also applies to the just or morally good action: far from being natural, it arises artificially, from education and human conventions, and requires some *motive* to be carried out: “[N]o action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality.”²⁴ What is the motive in question? Hume rejects the thought that it be a concern for the common good or interest: “Men, in the ordinary conduct of life, look not so far as the public interest, when they pay their creditors, perform their promises, and abstain from theft, and robbery, and injustice of every kind. That is a motive too remote and too sublime to affect the generality of mankind.”²⁵ There is, Hume goes on to write, “no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself.”²⁶ There is no love, and no positive feeling toward others, which is not rooted in the pleasure “that any action, sentiment or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation.”²⁷ There are no exceptions to the rule of pleasure and pain as the principal motivation for human action and tendencies. More specifically, there is a clear *natural* advantage for human beings to behave according to the rules and laws of society, including from the point of view of sexual reproduction. For it is as if nature, which has exercised considerable cruelty toward human beings by loading them with countless needs and necessities, and extremely limited means to relieve them of such necessities, had encouraged human beings to enter into society. It is through society alone that human beings are able to compensate for their natural disadvantage and acquire superiority over their fellow creatures.²⁸

The natural conclusion to draw from those observations is that, since human beings are *naturally* governed by interest, and “even when they extend their concern beyond themselves, ’tis not to any great distance,”²⁹ it would be unwise, if not altogether foolish (or simply ineffective) to gov-

ern them any differently than according to their own interest and relative selfishness, especially regarding private property and the acquisition of riches: Human beings "establish government, as a new invention to attain their [natural] ends, and preserve the old [society]," the primary motive of the invention being "nothing but self-interest."³⁰

By the mid-eighteenth century, and taking the advances in mechanics introduced by Galileo and Newton as a model, self-interest was seen as a natural law governing human action, which any good (or *reasonable*) government would seek to take into account. "Just as the physical world is ruled by the laws of motion," Helvétius writes, "no less is the moral universe ruled by the laws of interest."³¹ Similarly, James Steuart's *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* (1767), which introduced the term "political economy" in the English language, defines self-interest as "the universal spring of human actions," and draws the following conclusions for their government:

The principle of self-interest will serve as a general key to this inquiry [into the principles of political economy]; and it may, in one sense, be considered as *the ruling principle of my subject*; and may therefore be traced throughout the whole. This is *the main spring, and only motive which a statesman should make use of*, to engage a free people to concur in the plans which he lays down for their government . . .

From this principle men are engaged to act in a thousand different ways, and every action draws after it certain necessary consequences. The question therefore constantly under consideration comes to be, what will mankind find it their interest to do, under such and such circumstances . . .

The best way to govern a society, and to engage everyone to conduct himself according to a plan, is for the statesman to form a system of administration, the most consistent possible with the interest of every individual, and never to flatter himself that his people will be brought to act in general, and in matters which purely regard the public, from any other principle than private interest.³²

The principle of self-interest, Steuart goes on to say, is so firm and reliable that "were public spirit, instead of private utility, to become the spring of actions in the individuals of a well-governed state, I apprehend it would spoil all," and "were a people to become quite disinterested, there would be no possibility of governing them."³³ Every man, therefore, "is to act for

his own interest in what regards the public . . . and it is the combination of every private interest which forms the public good.”³⁴

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the views regarding human nature that he inherits from Locke and Hume, James Steuart defines the desire for riches, and for money in particular, as “the universal object of desire to all men,” since money is “an adequate equivalent for every thing” and an exact measure of our desire.³⁵ Aristotle, you will recall, had described this desire as vain and counter-natural in the *Politics*, and Augustine denounced it—alongside sexual desire (*concupiscentia*) and the desire for power (*libido dominandi*)—as a major sin. But in the capitalist society, money is the ultimate value insofar as it is able to translate into a quantity, visible for all to see, the desire that we have to possess certain goods and acquire prestige. It is, in other words, the dominant and easiest measure of social recognition, and something like a meta-desire. Technically a means toward practical ends and the satisfaction of vital needs, money becomes an end in itself, yet one that, because it is merely abstract, or is precisely not a thing, is without end: The process of monetary accumulation is intrinsically vitiated. This is an idea that Georg Simmel formulated most explicitly in *The Philosophy of Money* (1900).³⁶ Technically “the means for the acquisition of values,” money has become an *absolute* value: “Never has an object that owes its value exclusively to its quality as a means, to its convertibility into more definite values, so thoroughly and unreservedly developed into a psychological value absolute, into a completely engrossing final purpose governing our practical consciousness.”³⁷ And by becoming “the absolute purpose for most people,” money has taken on a *symbolic* value.³⁸ Money “works” insofar as it is able to *quantify* a desire for recognition that is essentially symbolic, or convert all social mechanisms of recognition into an abstract and universal quantity. It is, in the words of Simmel, “an absolute intermediary,”³⁹ or, in those of his translator, David Frisby, “the reifier of all relations.”⁴⁰ On that basis, it could be argued that capitalism has succeeded in converting the flows of desire into monetary flows, and in facilitating and accelerating their circulation to an almost absolute limit. Money *does not* work, however, to the extent that it translates relations between *subjects* into relations between *things*. In the end, one is not and can never be finished with *accumulating* money—that is, with this operation of translation, and with seeking recognition through purely quantitative means. In other words, this conversion or translation is more like an illusion, or a trick, which, to the extent that it is adopted as a means for

recognition, rather than for the satisfaction of needs, generates sadness as well as a form of joy. This absolute yet doomed translatability of everything into the pure and abstract value of money is the symbol of modern life, the symbol of the attempt to reify the symbolic order of desire.

But the most striking and most famous formulation of the rewriting of desire in terms of interest came probably from Adam Smith, who, a few years before Steuart, claimed that the wealth and prosperity of a population depend on the free play of individual interests and desires: It is the "natural selfishness and rapacity" of the rich, with all their "vain and insatiable desires," rather than benevolence and virtue, which leads to the benefit of all.⁴¹ The famous passage concerning the "invisible hand" is worth quoting in full. Yet we need to bear in mind that it is introduced by a long and remarkable description of the utter uselessness and vanity of such pursuits from the point of view of pure reason and wisdom—a point of view that, unfortunately, only a few can ever hope to achieve. Smith describes the life that dedicates itself to ambition or to the acquisition of riches and honor in the most devastating prose, worthy of the most lucid *moralistes*:

The poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition, when he begins to look around him, admires the condition of the rich. He finds the cottage of his father too small for his accommodation, and fancies he should be lodged more at his ease in a palace. He is displeased with being obliged to walk a-foot, or to endure the fatigue of riding on horse-back. He sees his superiors carried about in machines, and imagines that in one of these he could travel with less inconveniency. He feels himself naturally indolent, and willing to serve himself with his own hands as little as possible; and judges, that a numerous retinue of servants would save him from a great deal of trouble. He thinks if he had attained all these, he would sit still contentedly, and be quiet, enjoying himself in the thought of the happiness and tranquility of his situation. He is enchanted with the distant idea of this felicity. It appears in his fancy like the life of some superior rank of beings, and, in order to arrive at it, he devotes himself for ever to the pursuit of wealth and greatness. To obtain the conveniences which these afford, he submits in the first year, nay in the first month of his application, to more fatigue of body and more uneasiness of mind than he could have suffered through the whole of his life from the want of them. He studies to distinguish himself in some laborious profession. With the most unre-

lenting industry he labors night and day to acquire talents superior to all his competitors. He endeavors next to bring those talents into public view, and with equal assiduity solicits every opportunity of employment. For this purpose he makes his court to all mankind; he serves those whom he hates, and is obsequious to those whom he despises. Through the whole of his life he pursues the idea of a certain artificial and elegant repose which he may never arrive at, for which he sacrifices a real tranquility that is at all times in his power, and which, if in the extremity of old age he should at last attain to it, he will find to be in no respect preferable to that humble security and contentment which he had abandoned for it. It is then, in the last dregs of life, his body wasted with toil and diseases, his mind galled and ruffled by the memory of a thousand injuries and disappointments which he imagines he has met with from the injustice of his enemies, or from the perfidy and ingratitude of his friends, that he begins at last to find that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquility of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys; and like them too, more troublesome to the person who carries them about with him than all the advantages they can afford him are commodious.⁴²

Unsurprisingly, the moment of reckoning inevitably happens:

But in the languor of disease and the weariness of old age, the pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness disappear. To one, in this situation, they are no longer capable of recommending those toilsome pursuits in which they had formerly engaged him. In his heart he curses ambition, and vainly regrets the ease and the indolence of youth, pleasures which are fled forever, and which he has foolishly sacrificed for what, when he has got it, can afford him no real satisfaction. In this miserable aspect does greatness appear to every man when reduced either by spleen or disease to observe with attention his own situation, and to consider what it is that is really wanting to his happiness. Power and riches appear then to be, what they are, enormous and oporose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniences to the body, consisting of springs the most nice and delicate, which must be kept in order with the most anxious attention, and which in spite of all our care are ready every moment to burst into pieces, and to crush in their ruins their unfortunate possessor. They are immense fabrics, which it requires the labor of a life to raise, which threaten every

moment to overwhelm the person that dwells in them, and which while they stand, though they may save him from some smaller inconveniences, can protect him from none of the severer inclemencies of the season. They keep off the summer shower, not the winter storm, but leave him always as much, and sometimes more exposed than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death.⁴³

So much for the idea—and ideal—of *doux commerce*, dear to Montesquieu!⁴⁴ Yet, in what amounts to a spectacular reversal, Smith immediately goes on to claim that it would be entirely unfair, and certainly useless, to condemn an attitude and a disposition that are, after all, an expression of human nature. In fact, in the absence of such a purely reasonable standpoint and wisdom, which, while desirable, is almost unachievable, Smith celebrates the economic and social virtues of the “vain and insatiable desires” I began by evoking. In the absence of such a standpoint, it is well, and even *providential*, that nature forces itself onto us in this manner. Through a kind of cunning of nature, our selfishness generates prosperity for the greatest number:

It is this *deception* which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains, and made the trackless and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth. The earth by these labors of mankind has been obliged to redouble her natural fertility, and to maintain a greater multitude of inhabitants. It is to no purpose, that the proud and unfeeling landlord views his extensive fields, and *without a thought for the wants of his brethren*, in imagination consumes himself the whole harvest that grows upon them. The homely and vulgar proverb, that the eye is larger than the belly, never was more fully verified than with regard to him. *The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the immensity of his desires*, and will receive no more than that of the meanest peasant. The rest he is obliged to distribute among those, who prepare, in the nicest manner, that little which he himself makes use of, among those who fit up the palace in which this little is to be consumed, among those

who provide and keep in order all the different baubles and trinkets, which are employed in the oeconomy of greatness; *all of whom thus derive from his luxury and caprice, that share of the necessaries of life, which they would in vain have expected from his humanity or his justice.* The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants which it is capable of maintaining. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and *in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity,* though they mean only their own convenience, though the sole end which they propose from the labors of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, *they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements.* They are led by *an invisible hand* to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus *without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society,* and afford means to the multiplication of the species. When *Providence* divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. These last too enjoy their share of all that it produces.⁴⁵

In the space of a few decades, then, a tendency that was given some legitimacy within the context of the reason of state and sovereign power, while recognized as a constitutive feature of a fallen human nature, and thus in need of being fought and contained (through the love of God and charity), was legitimized and integrated into a discourse of truth, and as a basic instrument of government. Initially perceived as cynical and disturbing, the idea of self-interest, and of its inevitable pursuit, was eventually accepted as an indisputable truth regarding human nature. From a flaw that needed to be controlled and dominated, it became a basic and indispensable instrument of government.

The Liberal Technology of Government

Let me circle back to the passage from *Security, Territory, Population* I began by quoting, and in which Foucault identifies desire as the basic mechanism of liberal governmentality:

As Quesnay says: You cannot stop people from living where they think they will profit most and where they desire to live, because they desire that profit. Do not try to change them; things will not change. However—and it is here that this naturalness of desire thus marks the population and becomes accessible to governmental technique—for reasons to which we will have to come back and which are one of the important theoretical elements of the whole system, this desire is such that, if one gives it free play, and on condition that it is given free play, all things considered, within a certain limit and thanks to a number of relationships and connections, *it will produce the general interest of the population. Desire is the pursuit of the individual's interest.*⁴⁶

Here, Foucault puts his finger on what I take to be the key point—namely, the identification or translation of desire as interest. Desire is wrested from its Christian, and specifically Augustinian, framework and is now identified with a force of good, which is itself interpreted in economic and utilitarian terms. The passage continues by emphasizing the connection between individual interests and the collective interest of the population:

In his desire the individual may well be deceived regarding his personal interest, but there is something that does not deceive, which is that the spontaneous, or at any rate both spontaneous and regulated play of desire will in fact allow the production of an interest, of something favorable for the population. The *production of the collective interest through the play of desire* is what distinguishes both the naturalness of population and the possible artificiality of the means one adopts to manage it.⁴⁷

All this is to say that the duc de Rohan's famous expression, "interest does not lie," applies to *individuals* as well as states. In fact, Foucault attributes the transformation of sovereign power into biopower and liberal governmentality to this change of attitude in relation to personal desires:

This is important because you can see that with this idea of a management of populations on the basis of the *naturalness* of their desire, and of the spontaneous production of the collective interest by desire, we have something that is completely the *opposite of the old ethical-juridical conception of government and the exercise of sovereignty*. For what was the sovereign

for the jurists, for medieval jurists but also for the theorists of natural law, for Hobbes as well as for Rousseau? *The sovereign is the person who can say no to any individual's desire*, the problem being how to legitimize this “no” opposed to individuals’ desire and found it on the will of these same individuals.⁴⁸

In the old ethical-juridical conception of government, but also in the Christian conception of the good life, individual and worldly desires are to be opposed and dominated. This is what changes with the advent of governmentality and the birth of political economy:

Now through the economic-political thought of the physiocrats we see a completely different idea taking shape, which is that the problem of those who govern must absolutely not be how they can say no, up to what point they can say no, and with what legitimacy they can say no. *The problem is how they can say yes; it is how to say yes to this desire*. The problem is not therefore the limit of concupiscence or the limit of self-esteem in the sense of love of oneself, but concerns rather everything that stimulates and encourages this self-esteem, this desire, so that it can produce its necessary beneficial effects. We have here therefore the matrix of an entire, let’s say, utilitarian philosophy.⁴⁹

Desire is now integrated as an instrument of government, as that without or against which men cannot be governed. If anything, liberal governmentality is the government of desires, by desires, and for desires.⁵⁰ The “good” method of government now consists in knowing how to say yes to individual interests, self-love, and self-esteem.⁵¹ The question is no longer one of knowing what is legitimate or illegitimate to desire, but what can bring about the highest satisfaction possible from an *individual* perspective. The problem no longer has to do with the moral quality of the object that one desires, but with the manner in which we make choices in order to maximize individual and collective satisfaction. And that is precisely what the new “science” of economics, and the newly defined space of the market, is meant to help us achieve.

If the “matrix” of modern utilitarian philosophy was perhaps shaped by the Physiocrats, its full articulation was, of course, the work of Bentham and his followers. In the first chapter of the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781), Bentham defines the principle of utility

in the following terms: "By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness."⁵² *Pain* and *pleasure*, Bentham adds, are the "two sovereign masters" under the governance of which "Nature has placed mankind."⁵³ They are irreducible to the point that "they govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think."⁵⁴

As a result, it would be unreasonable, if not altogether pointless, to try to govern mankind against its own nature. Insofar as the ultimate criterion, or justification, of governmental action is the quantity of pleasure experienced by any given individual, it is individuals themselves, utilitarianism believes, who are the best judges, and the best agents, of their own satisfaction. This is the sense in which pleasure, albeit as collective, is the limit of government, or the principle of its own delimitation. Governmental reason is itself limited by the interest of the individuals. In *The Book of Fallacies*, Bentham claims that "in every human breast . . . self-regarding interest is predominant over social interest; each person's own individual interest over the interests of all other persons taken together."⁵⁵ Governmental reason is now required to follow the complex game of individual *interests* (*interest* is now a plural), of social utility and economic profit, of the balance of the market and the regime of public power. What government does, in this new configuration and context, is to manage competing interests. What it is now concerned with is far less substantial—possessions, land, rights, actual individuals—and far more abstract—namely, this or that individual, thing, possession, insofar as it interests other individuals or the collective as a whole. In short, the problem of government now takes place within what Foucault calls the "phenomenal republic of interests" and what I suggest we call the economic regime of desire.⁵⁶ For government, too, the principle of utility allows it to distinguish between the necessary and desirable action, on the one hand, and the useless and harmful action, on the other. The material, the aim, and the end of liberal government is the field of interests as a whole. If, as we saw, private interests constitute the limit of governmental activity, they are also the material with which governmental reason has to deal, and in which it needs to intervene, without upsetting or altering its natural, spontaneous mechanisms.

Equally, as a result of utility as the measure of good governance, the market is seen as the place where this maximization and realization of

pleasure takes place; the mode of organization of the collective allows for such a maximization. In the economic domain, the state has little to do to stimulate utility, to provoke the actions that will increase happiness, for the simple reason that individuals seek to increase it *naturally* and *spontaneously*. The market, therefore, so long as it is not interfered with directly, is a *spontaneous* producer of satisfaction, a natural vehicle for the increase of pleasure. That is why, in a domain such as the market, defined by *sponte acta* and a natural course, governmental intervention is to be kept to a minimum.

However, the state does play a decisive role in creating and maintaining the necessary *conditions* for the optimal functioning of the market and, more generally, the increase of well-being for the majority. In fact, it generates an entire normative arsenal. The liberal technology of government includes, among other things, the gathering and distribution of the information that is necessary for individuals to best calculate their utility, and the creation of new institutions, such as schools, prisons, hospitals, and factories, in which one is taught to calculate properly and to increase one's productivity. It also deploys an entire arsenal of incentives, moral prohibitions, and control mechanisms, which amount to an "indirect legislation" aimed at preventing bad conduct. The truth is that, even under the classical liberal regime of the nineteenth century, and up until the 1920s, free markets were the result of strong interference on the part of the state—in practice if not always in theory.⁵⁷ The paradox of *laissez-faire* is that it was entirely planned. As Polanyi puts it: "There was nothing natural about *laissez-faire*; free markets could never have come into being merely by allowing things to take their course."⁵⁸ The 1830s and 1840s, for example, saw not only "an outburst of legislation repealing restrictive regulations, but also an enormous increase in the administrative functions of the state," now organized as a central bureaucracy.⁵⁹ Free markets required the constant scrutiny of administrators to be put in place and operate. To the typical utilitarian, "*laissez-faire* was not a method to achieve a thing, it was the thing to be achieved."⁶⁰ And to fulfill that goal, a series of measures and laws, initiated by government, needed to be put in place. Specifically, it was the task of government to provide the knowledge required for markets to operate efficiently and economic agents to act rationally, by collecting statistics and information, fostering science and experiment. Far from doing away with the need for control, regulation, and intervention,

Polanyi concludes, anticipating Foucault's own claims, the introduction of free markets actually increased their range considerably.⁶¹ Free or self-regulated markets, it was thought, required a new and strict system of knowledge, combined with a new organization of power.⁶²

But the law may be the most important tool at the disposal of the liberal rationality of government. The task of the liberal government is to combine individual interests with the general interest, through a system of laws, which are—for Bentham at least—coercions that each individual integrates in the calculation that he or she makes of the risks of pain involved in transgressing them. Generally speaking, the principle applicable to political and administrative institutions is the "interests junction principle." For liberalism, and for Bentham in particular, the economy is not a domain that escapes the law, or a kind of pocket of nature within society (Bentham is perhaps not the naturalist that Smith is, and that Foucault himself want him to be). But the law is an instrument of the legislator that he can use to further the happiness of all members of society. Yet since the law is always a constraint, a limitation of one's freedom, and a cost from the point of view of individual happiness, the legislator must use it parsimoniously and moderately. So, the question of governmentality, of how to govern, is this: Inasmuch as the system of production and exchange of the market operates according to spontaneous mechanisms, how must the state act, under what circumstances, with which aims, objectives, and means? It is not, therefore, a matter of asserting that the state must do nothing. Rather, it is a matter of allowing the state's actions to be led by the sole criterion of utility, and this means by weighing the advantages and inconveniences that its intervention is likely to produce:

The great object, the great *desideratum* is to know what ought and what ought not be done by government. It is in this view, and in this view only, that the knowledge of what is done and takes place without the interference of government can be of any practical use. Otherwise than in this view the knowledge of what spontaneously takes place is a matter of curiosity rather than use.⁶³

All this is to say that, under the liberal paradigm, the order and power of the law does not disappear in favor of the market. But it is now subordinated to the *normative* power of the market, and its role consists in facili-

tating its expansion. So, while the legal order is crucial, in that it protects property rights, the rights of consumers, and the freedom to exchange, it cannot be mistaken for the sovereign law of juridical-political power.

In connection with the problem of punishment, for example, and the penal system as a whole, the question is now one of knowing whether it is “interesting” or “useful” for society to punish, and if it is, what kind of punishment will be most interesting. Is it more interesting to torture or to rehabilitate? Or is it better to prevent, through constant surveillance and monitoring, for example? How much does it cost, and how can it be made cost-effective? What *price* should be paid for breaking this or that law? This line of questioning involves a new and very specific way of approaching the problem of punishment. Specifically, it involves a rationality of punishment based on an economic calculation of interests, originally formulated by Beccaria in *On Crimes and Punishments*, published anonymously in 1764, and perhaps best encapsulated in the following passage: “In order that punishment should not be an act of violence perpetrated by one or many upon a private citizen, it is essential that it should be public, speedy, necessary, the minimum possible in the given circumstances, proportionate to the crime, and determined by the law.”⁶⁴ As Harcourt puts it: “In the penal sphere—just as in the economic domain—the solution Beccaria proposed was to properly administer a rational framework of tariffs and prices—in essence, to set the right price for deviance in order to minimize its occurrence.”⁶⁵ In other words, it is now a matter of privileging a reasonable—that is to say, proportionate—penal system for a reasonable—that is to say, self-interested—population. Insofar as “the true relation between sovereigns and subjects” has now been “discovered,” proper or *effective* government naturally ought to follow from that newly discovered truth. The truth in question—which Beccaria shared with many philosophers and economists of his time, such as Hume, Condillac, and Verri—is that human beings are rational, self-interested pursuers of pleasure.⁶⁶ As a result, to govern and, in this instance, to punish effectively means to govern and to punish according to those basic mechanisms, and with a view to ensuring “*the greatest happiness shared among the greater number*.”⁶⁷ In Beccaria’s opinion, the new, *economic* rationality, when applied to the sphere of punishment, had civilizing effects and allowed the sovereign to avoid the barbaric methods and procedures of the past. He sees punishment as “tyrannous” and thus bad, but also—and unfortunately—unavoidable: It is a necessary evil aimed at preventing

"the offender from doing fresh harm to his fellows" and deterring others "from doing likewise."⁶⁸ But it is effective only insofar as it graduated and measured, and offers a precise indication of the degree of civilization of a nation: "If there were an exact and universal scale of crimes and punishments, we should have an approximate and common measure of the gradations of tyranny and liberty, and of the basic humanity and evil of the different nations."⁶⁹

Ever since the publication of Foucault's detailed analysis of its mechanisms, Bentham's Panopticon has often been seen as the paradigmatic expression of this new, economic approach to punishment.⁷⁰ Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* draws our attention to the significance of Bentham's plan for a panoptic prison that would combine discipline and market efficiency, or introduce *maximum surveillance at the lowest possible cost*, both economically and politically: "economically," Foucault writes, "by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses."⁷¹ In that respect, there is no opposition, and no contradiction, between the freedom of individuals, especially in the economic sphere, and the proliferation of techniques of discipline, control, and surveillance under liberalism. On the contrary.⁷² This is how, as Bentham himself claimed in his later work, and as Foucault rightly emphasizes, the Panopticon becomes the very image and ideal of government itself:

At the beginning of his career, or around 1792–1795, Bentham presented the famous Panopticon as a procedure for institutions like schools, factories, and prisons which would enable one to supervise [*surveiller*] the conduct of individuals while increasing the profitability and productivity of their activity. At the end of his life, in his project of the general codification of English legislation, Bentham will propose that the Panopticon should be the formula for the whole of government. What basically must a government do? It must *give way* to everything due to *natural mechanisms* and make no other intervention, to start with at least, than that of *supervision*. Government, initially limited to the function of supervision, is only to intervene when it sees that something is not happening according to the mechanisms of behavior, exchange and economic life. Panopticism is not a regional mechanics limited to certain institutions; for Bentham, panopticism really is a general political formula that characterizes a type of government.⁷³

In other words, panopticism is the very image of good government, insofar as it is limited to a function of supervision [*surveillance*] of social and economical mechanisms, akin to Newton's laws of nature, and intervenes only when those mechanisms are themselves under threat. In his *Foucault*, Deleuze understands this very well when, commenting on the stronger sense of *surveiller*, he writes that Foucault defines panopticism as an optical or luminous assemblage that characterizes the prison and, by extension, the workshop, the school, the barracks, and the hospital, and, at the same time, as something more abstract than "to see without being seen"—that is, as a way of imposing a conduct on a given human multiplicity, of *managing* and *controlling* life understood as "population."⁷⁴ But this economic, liberal approach to questions of crime and punishment came under pressure almost from the start, and led liberal penology to turn to psychiatry in the face of crimes that signaled the limit of its own rationality. This means that the economic normalization of desire, and its integration within the system of interests, utility, and motives, proved inadequate in the face of criminal cases that seemed devoid of interest and motive, and rigorously uneconomical. Far from calling into question normalization as such, though, those other, "monstrous" or "abnormal" desires generated a different kind of normativity, and a different discourse of truth, namely, psychopathology. I will return to this tension internal to the liberal order, and this point of bifurcation, after I follow the fate of the economic regime of desire into its neoliberal reconfiguration.

3

Neoliberal Governmentality

I began this genealogy of the economic subject of desire with a historical anecdote, which indicated the manner in which, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a neoliberal paradigm of government began to emerge. Following key passages from Foucault's lectures *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*, I traced the birth of liberal political economy and its connection with a new form of power, which Foucault describes as biopower, and emphasized their necessary connection with a renewed conception of desire as "interest" and "utility." My claim, then, has been that with the advent of the liberal style of reasoning, subjects were made to recognize and, more significantly still, *govern* themselves as subjects motivated primarily by their self-interest and individual satisfaction. I shall now return to neoliberalism, and ask about its connection with liberalism on the issue of desire. Does it simply extend liberal governmentality, or does it also introduce new, distinctive features? My goal is not to give an exhaustive account of the history or theory of neoliberalism, but to ask about the evolution of the economic regime of desire under neoliberalism.¹ I will draw once again on Foucault's analyses, as well as on more recent work on neoliberalism, without losing sight of my overall problematic. My claim is that the complex phenomenon known as neoliberalism reveals a radicalization and further internalization of the economic regime of desire, which defines liberalism, and which consists in a normalization of subjectivity through the promotion of self-interest and the maximization of utility. But it also departs from liberalism on a few key aspects, and

introduces new norms and new technologies of desire. So, while neoliberalism inherits the normative framework initially introduced by the likes of James Steuart, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, it also builds on it, and innovates: To the norms of interest and utility, through which individuals experience and govern their own subjectivity, it adds those of competition, efficiency, and management (of one's life, one's human capital, and the risks one is willing or encouraged to take). Neoliberalism sees those norms as inseparable, and as revealing the *true* mechanisms behind the actions and motivations of human beings. Taken together, they constitute what, in their Draft Statement of Aims, published in 1947, the founding fathers of neoliberalism, gathered in Switzerland at a place called Mont Pèlerin, defined as a "system of individual freedom."² My claim is that, in the end, neoliberalism defines the contours of a space of experience and a type of governmentality that are highly normative, and through which our own subjectivity is increasingly shaped. After a brief historical contextualization, aimed at shedding light on the origins and development of that discourse of truth, I will focus on a few of its key innovations and, as economically as possible, on the specific role of desire in the life of the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*.

A Brief History

In his introduction to *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, Dieter Plehwe suggests that the term "neoliberalism" probably appeared for the first time in 1925 in a book entitled *Trends of Economic Ideas*, by the Swiss economist Hans Honegger.³ In his study, Honegger identified "theoretical neoliberalism" as a concept based on the works of Alfred Marshall, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Friedrich von Wieser, and Karl Gustav Cassel. But the birthplace of neoliberalism is often and rightly thought to be the Vienna of the 1920s, associated with the names of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. The former published *Untersuchungen über den Sozialismus* in 1922, and *Liberalismus* in 1927. Also in 1927, von Mises and Hayek created the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (*Österreichisches Institut für Konjunkturforschung*), which attracted many scholars. From Vienna, neoliberalism spread to various corners of Europe and, eventually, the United States. The broad-

est discussion of neoliberalism took place in France around 1935, and at the Colloque Walter Lippmann in particular (1938), often regarded as the precursor to the Mont Pèlerin Society.⁴ In Germany, Walter Eucken, Alexander Rüstow, and Wilhelm Röpke developed their own version of a “new liberalism” on the eve of Nazism’s rise to power. Von Mises moved to New York in 1940, and taught at New York University between 1945 and 1973. Hayek moved to London in 1931, and taught at the London School of Economics, before crossing the Atlantic and teaching at the University of Chicago between 1952 and 1962. Following Hayek’s move, the so-called Chicago School, with economists such as Theodore W. Schultz, Milton Friedman, and Gary Becker, came to be known as a hotbed of neoliberal thought.

What did those strands of neoliberalism have in common, and what was the secret of their eventual success? Neoliberalism grew against the backdrop of two disastrous events, or two historical traumas. On the one hand, it developed as an answer to the Great Depression, and to what was perceived as the failure of classical liberalism, which conceded too much to governmental control of the market, to have prevented such an economic disaster. In that respect, neoliberalism can be seen as a radicalization and transformation of classical liberalism, or as a desire to carry out a thought and a program that had led to too many compromises. On the other hand, neoliberalism responded to the rise of totalitarianism, and to Nazism in particular. The very simple, yet highly effective idea it put forward in response to both is that any form of economic interventionism, whether it serves nationalist or socialist ends, leads to totalitarianism and to the erosion, if not the eradication, of individual freedom. There is, it claims, an intimate and necessary connection between political voluntarism in economic affairs, and tyranny. Conversely, there is a necessary connection between liberalism and democracy. This means that only liberalism can constitute a genuine protection against the rise of totalitarianism. Unsurprisingly, the Draft Statement of Aims of the Mont Pèlerin Society affirms that “each extension of the power of the state gradually erodes the minimum basis for the maintenance of a free society.”⁵ The freedom that is at issue here and that needs to be protected is, of course, *individual* freedom, and it is defined primarily negatively: It is the freedom from the reason of state, and is embodied in the economic rationality of the market; it is the freedom that is thought as the real aim of gov-

ernmental reason. There is no question, therefore, of opposing a system of norms and individual freedom. Rather, the issue is recognizing how individual freedom is itself forced into existence through the normativity of neoliberal governmentality. The “conduct of conducts” that is at stake here has to do not with the application of a principle of organization, or a final design, to each individual, but with the free expression of individuals’ ends and desires, which generates order spontaneously. Freedom in the neoliberal sense of the term is intimately bound up with the recognition of the market as a spontaneously ordered and autonomous force, which needs to be upheld and protected *against* the state, and *by* the state. The role of governmental reason, as a consequence, is to *engineer* individual freedom—that is, to introduce the *conditions* of freedom, by legal and other means. Remarkable, but also unsurprising, in that respect, is the manner in which neoliberal political economists always present the market as the battleground of freedom itself, and as the stage where the struggle against serfdom and oppression takes place. The very first point of the Draft Statement of Aims of the first meeting of the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) makes this connection clear:

1. Individual freedom can be preserved only in a society in which an effective competitive market is the main agency for the direction of economic activity. Only the decentralization of control through private property in the means of production can prevent those concentrations of power which threaten individual freedom.⁶

I will return to the crucial and distinctively neoliberal value of competition, and the manner in which it structures subjectivity today. For the time being, though, I simply want to emphasize the way in which freedom becomes almost indistinguishable from what, in the following point of its Draft Statement of Aims, the MPS calls “efficiency in production” and “individual satisfaction”:

2. The freedom of the consumer in choosing what he shall make, and the freedom of the worker in choosing his occupation and his place of employment, are essential not merely for the sake of freedom itself, but for *efficiency in production*. Such a *system of freedom* is essential if we are to maximize output in terms of *individual satisfactions*.⁷

Or, to put it yet differently, freedom is as much an end as a means, a natural aspiration as a technique aimed at maximizing utility. Individual satisfaction itself *requires* free, competitive markets. While neoliberals champion freedom as the highest value, freedom is defined in a very specific sense: It is not “the realization of any political, human, or cultural *telos*,” but “the positing of autonomous self-governed individuals, all coming naturally equipped with a neoclassical conception of rationality and motives of ineffable self-interest, striving to improve their lot in life by engaging in market exchange.”⁸ The most radical definition of freedom thus understood is perhaps that of the Chicago School, for which, according to Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski, freedom means only “the capacity for *self-realization attained through individual striving for a set of necessarily unexplained (and usually interpersonally ineffable) prior wants and desires*.”⁹ The reference to desires, and to desires as wants, is both crucial and, given what I have said in chapter 2, unsurprising. For the wants in question designate something that we desire, but also, and primarily, something that we lack. And freedom is defined not as the ultimate desire, but as the necessary condition for the satisfaction of those desires—a condition that can be realized only in and through the market as a place of truth, and, at the same time, is never entirely achievable.

Beyond the philosophical failures and shortcomings of classical liberalism, and the rise of totalitarianisms in Europe, however, the real target of neoliberalism was (and remains) the historical solution adopted by most Western countries after the Depression, and retained until the late 1970s, namely, Keynesianism. If the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century were, to use Aristotelian concepts, the occasional motivation behind neoliberalism, and the cause of its success, the real target was the economic thought of the author of *The General Theory of Unemployment, Interest, and Money*, which dominated economic policy in Europe and the United States until the late 1970s.¹⁰ The *tour de force* of neoliberalism consists in having assimilated Keynes’s ideas not to serfdom as such, but to the *road to serfdom*, as the title of Hayek’s book indicates.¹¹ That much of this ideological battle was fought during World War II is itself telling: Behind the immediate and obvious enemy lurked the shadow of another, more deeply rooted foe. In 1943, for example, Röpke published an article in which he described the Beveridge Plan, then in place in the United Kingdom, and inspired by Keynes, as paving the road to authoritarian rule and tyranny.¹²

The New Economic Order

I shall now focus on two areas of innovation of neoliberalism, the second of which will bring us back to the problem of desire. The first is changes within the conception of the market, and its relation to the state, and the second is the *homo oeconomicus* and the idea of “human capital.”

We saw how, for liberalism, the market was the principle of self-limitation of the state; it defined the limit beyond which the state would not interfere. Under neoliberalism, however, the market becomes the regulative principle of the state itself, or the criterion for good government, for the simple reason that it is seen as a spontaneous creator of order: the issue is no longer accepting market freedom, as defined and monitored by the state, but bringing the state under the surveillance of the market, and creating a “market state.”¹³ If anything, it is the state that is now seen as a limit, in the sense of an obstacle, to the spreading of market efficiency and rationality. The old *ragione di stato*, which prevailed for centuries, is being replaced by, or at least subordinated to, something like a *ragione di mercato*, or a market rationality. As one commentator puts it: “Neoliberalism is that discourse of governmentality which places political power . . . at the mercy of ‘political economy.’”¹⁴ This means that, in principle at least, there is no limit to how far the market can go. To the extent that no ills are associated with it, and that it never lies (or, which amounts to the same thing, that it is “efficient”), there is no domain that falls outside it and into the state, at least in principle.¹⁵ Education and healthcare, of course, but also the military, the police, and national security, as recent developments in the United States have shown, are increasingly extracted from the claws of the state and handed over to the private sector and market rationality.

Most revealing, in that respect, is the neoliberal conception of the law.¹⁶ Traditionally, political, sovereign power is associated with the power to make or lay down the law and, at its most extreme, with the right to “take life or let live.” In neoliberal governmentality, however, the power to make law is systematically subordinated to a highly restricted conception of the juridical law. This comes out clearly in Hayek’s *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, which opposes two conceptions of the law, one of which he calls *nomos*, and the other *thesis*.¹⁷ *Nomos*, he contends, is “grown law,” and has its historical roots in English and Scottish common law. *Thesis*, on the other hand, designates a conception of the law as an instrument of orga-

nization or constitution of a political community. While *nomos*, or “law of liberty,” is “derived from the conditions of a spontaneous order which man has not made,” *thesis*, the rule of organization laid down by a legislative authority, such as Parliament, “serve[s] the deliberate building of an organization serving specific purposes.”¹⁸ Organization, which—drawing on the Greek word that traditionally served to designate manmade orders, such as battle orders—Hayek also calls *taxis*, is thus sharply distinguished from, if not radically opposed to, the natural, “spontaneous order” (*kosmos*) of individual desires and self-interests, represented by the market. Whereas the former requires an external force and authority to come into being, and to evolve, the latter contains its principle of evolution within itself. Contrary to *nomoi*, which are simply discovered and then made law by judges, *thetic* legislation is manmade, and aims to generate a specific outcome in an otherwise spontaneous order. Vatter summarizes the neoliberal position on the law rather nicely:

In neoliberalism, the law is no longer intended to organize citizens as law-giving subject into a free people (*civitas*). Instead, the law favors negative liberty (“free choice” and the “pursuit” of self-interest) which, in turn, compels subjects to conduct themselves with respect to each other by following these legal norms that structure the spontaneous order of the free market (*societas*).¹⁹

Concretely, this means that the law is a mechanism used to enhance the normative power of the market, rather than an instrument used to control it. Its *raison d'être* is to sustain and facilitate the ever expanding normative power of the *raison de marché*, rather than, say, to express the sovereign or general will of the people.

Thus far, whether in connection with the Mont Pèlerin Society or Hayek, I have referred to the concept of “order,” and especially of “spontaneous order,” as the natural outcome of the market, and the aim of government. But I have yet to clarify the sense in which the concept is used, and the presuppositions that lie beneath it. The order in question can be understood in the sense in which Adam Smith defined it—that is, as the providential result of the free expression of individuals’ self-interest and “insatiable desires.” Unsurprisingly, Hayek sets up his own discussion of order in *Law, Legislation and Liberty* with a long passage from Adam Smith, which introduces the key terms that Hayek adopts:

The man of *system* . . . seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chessboard. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chessboard have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them; but that, in the great chessboard of human society, every single piece has a *principle of motion of its own*, altogether different from that which the *legislature* might choose to impress upon them. If those two principles coincide and act in the same direction, the *game* of society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is very likely to be happy and successful. If they are opposite or different, the game will go on miserably and human society will be at all times in the highest degree of *disorder*.²⁰

Adapting Smith's vocabulary to the natural scientific conceptuality of our time, Hayek himself distinguishes between an authoritarian concept of order, which derives from the belief that order can be created only by forces outside the system (or exogenously), and a "spontaneous" or "endogenous" concept, which designates systems that generate their equilibrium from within. The market, he argues, is a system of the latter kind: If and when allowed to follow its own course, it will generate order and complexity—on the condition that competition be constantly at work. The sense of order that Hayek embraces is thus borrowed from the natural sciences, and in particular from the study of self-organizing systems, such as living organisms, that can generate varying degrees of complexity, without following a specific end or design. This does not mean that spontaneous orders do not follow certain rules; on the contrary, they are generated as a result of very specific rules or norms of conduct, such as the laws of thermodynamics. Hayek's problem is to know what kind of rules of conduct will produce an order of society and what kind of order particular rules will produce. Thus, in the same way that, in the physical world, the second law of thermodynamics or the law of entropy provides the norm of disorder, the social order also tends to generate its own form of entropy. But in what sense? To what extent and up to what point can society itself, and the market within it, be understood from the point of view of the physics of dissipative systems, as Hayek himself seems to suggest? In order to answer those questions, and following Hayek's own invitation, let me venture into an explanation of the concept of order in thermodynamics. Ultimately, I do not want to argue that Hayek—or any neoliberal thinker—thinks of the

market as an actual thermodynamic system (or a classical mechanical one), but as a spontaneous creator of order analogous to dissipative systems.

Thermodynamics isolates a magnitude that it terms *entropy*, which serves to measure the increase in heat in a closed system (the system must be closed in this first stage; the move to open systems will amount precisely to a qualitative difference in its relation to time). Entropy means that a closed system is not *spontaneously* ordered. Spontaneously, it tends toward a state of equilibrium (also known as disorder). The second law of statistical thermodynamics stipulates that if one places light molecules of gas in the left compartment of a box, and heavy molecules in the right compartment, and then allows the two compartments to communicate, the molecules will inevitably mix.²¹ The isolated system will reach its state of entropic equilibrium only when the molecules will have mixed completely. Similarly, as we have all witnessed, a droplet of dark blue ink in a dish of still water diffuses inevitably to a uniform light blue. The ink does not reassemble into a single droplet. The increase in entropy in equilibrium systems—those closed to the exchange of matter and energy with their environment—stems from the statistical tendency of the system to pass randomly through all possible arrangements (the so-called “ergodic” hypothesis). In the vast majority of cases, the molecules will be distributed uniformly. And so, on average, that is what we will see. The ink droplet diffuses and does not reassemble; the molecules diffuse from one compartment to the other and do not find again their initial configuration. Left to its own devices, a system will visit all possible microscopic, fine-grained configurations equally often. But the system will spend most of its time in those coarse-grained patterns satisfied by very large numbers of fine-grained patterns—molecules uniformly distributed throughout the box, ink throughout the dish.

The consequence of the second law is that, in equilibrium systems, order—the most unlikely of the arrangements—tends to disappear. There is, within matter itself, a tendency toward equilibrium, or disorder. If order is defined as those coarse-grained states that correspond to only a few fine-grained states (molecules neatly arranged in two separate areas of the box), then at thermodynamic equilibrium, those delicate arrangements disappear because of the ergodic wandering of the system through all its microstates. It follows that the maintenance of order requires that some form of *work* be done on the system. In the absence of work, order disap-

pears. Hence we come to our current sense that an incoherent collapse of order is the natural state of things.²² This *inner* tendency is not a metaphysical projection, but a physical reality: Entropy increases in a closed system, and this happens *irreversibly*. If the particles within a system move about entirely randomly, they will move in the same direction also only accidentally. And if such an accident does occur, it will always tend to disappear in the long run. Entropy is the measure of this disappearance. So long as the state of disorder has not reached its maximum—and this means the state where the molecules can be found in any place and with any direction—entropy increases. Entropy is proportional to the number of locations at which the molecule can be found in the vessel—up until the point where every molecule could be located anywhere within the space. The molecular disorder is at the same time a statistical order, one that says: The molecules can move about randomly, and I will be able to verify this statistically with the law of entropy, which stipulates that the molecular disorder will tend toward a maximum. In the short term, this may not be the case, as there may be, and will almost inevitably be, “fluctuations,” or departures from the average value. Locally, there can be effects of lesser entropy, simply because of the nature of the collision between molecules, in much the same way that the casting of dice can accidentally turn out to be a six several times in a row. These variations can, once again, have an impact over a very short period of time. But they will have a smaller impact as time goes on (this is what the ergodic hypothesis verifies). In the long term, I shall be able to verify that the molecules move about randomly.

But if we now turn to a system slightly different from the ones considered so far, the overall situation changes quite dramatically. Let us consider two compartments linked by a tunnel and filled with a combination of two gases, hydrogen and nitrogen, for example. We begin with a situation of equilibrium: The two compartments are at the same temperature, the same pressure, and contain the same homogeneous combination of the two gases. We now establish a difference in temperature between the two compartments. One of the compartment is heated continually, while the other one is cooled. Only at the cost of sustaining this difference in temperature can we maintain this departure from equilibrium. The constant flow of heat compensates for the effects of thermic diffusion. So far, and from the point of view of Boltzmann’s analysis, there is nothing abnormal or surprising. A huge loss of heat is needed for this difference in temperature to be maintained. Entropy increases dramatically. Yet some-

thing strange happens. While the difference in temperature is being maintained, the gases separate and remain separate. This example reveals the extent to which we need to free ourselves from the idea that the activity that produces entropy is synonymous with degradation, with a leveling out of differences. For while there is an entropic price to pay to keep the process of thermodiffusion at its stationary state, this state clearly corresponds to a creation of order.²³

What, exactly, took place in this experiment? Something actually *emerged* in the system, as a considerable amount of energy was spent imposing certain constraints on it. A new order was generated. An order effect within disorder was produced. Through the dissipation of a large quantity of energy, a certain structure can be obtained. Does this not mean, then, that the movement of dissipative systems in general goes not only from order to disorder, but also from disorder to order, albeit at an energetic cost? Furthermore, the new order is not merely a return to the previous order, but precisely a *new* order.

It is clear from this account of order, and if I am correct in seeing it as a model underpinning the neoliberal conception of the market, that neoliberalism is committed to thinking of the emergence of order in the social sphere—defined as the increase of freedom, prosperity, and well-being for the greatest number—as the result not of deliberate planning on the part of a political authority, but of the seemingly random and conflicting relations and fluctuations between individual interests and desires. And it is equally clear that the market is precisely to be understood as the rigorously delineated space through which this order is generated, so long as the basic condition of its exercise—namely, competition—is allowed to prevail. For only the capacity of individuals to compete for resources, goods, and market shares selects differences and forces them to evolve. Competition is thus the necessary condition for the creation of order, a condition that is itself (and contrary to what classical economists like Adam Smith believed) not spontaneous, but the product of a political will. A constant infusion of competition is the neoliberal answer to the entropy that is the inevitable byproduct of any system, and which, in the economic sphere, it calls monopoly (whether state or private), stagnation, or the socially engineered leveling of differences that kills the spirit of enterprise. The desire to compete, without which the entire economic order would collapse, is one that needs to be constantly revived and protected. Over the years, neoliberal capitalism has proven remarkably successful in developing tech-

niques of desire that fuel and propel the competitive economic order and legitimate the distribution of “winners” and “losers” in the “global race.”

Thus far, it would seem that the spontaneous order of the market would exclude governmental intervention, and that any attempt to “organize” it would generate disorder. But the truth is that the role of government is considerable and essential to the success of neoliberal economics. “Although,” Hayek writes, “it is conceivable that the spontaneous order which we call society may exist without government, if the minimum of rules required for the formation of such an order is observed without an organized apparatus for their enforcement, in most circumstances the organization which we call government becomes indispensable in order to assure that those rules are obeyed.”²⁴ It is all a matter of knowing what that role is, of defining what sort of things governments are allowed to interfere with, or the level at which they are allowed to operate. If and where government intervenes (and it does, massively) it does so not in the market itself—not, that is, in the actual mechanisms of the market, by saying who is to provide services or commodities, at what price or in what quantities, the assumption being that markets are self-regulating systems, which tend toward their own equilibrium—but in the *conditions* of the market, chief among which are competition and property rights. The role of government, then, is recognized, but also limited; it is restricted to providing and enforcing the “rules of conduct” that are necessary for the normal—that is, normative—operation of a free, market-driven society. Like a “maintenance squad of a factory,” Hayek claims, the role of government is not “to produce any particular services or products to be consumed by the citizens,” but to see that the mechanism that *regulates* the production of those goods and services is kept in working order.²⁵ The role of government is that of a regulator. Government ought not to act directly—on prices, for example, or on strategic objectives—but indirectly, on factors that may influence and shape the market, such as technologies, learning and education, demographics, health, or security—in short, those conditions normally referred to as *social*.²⁶ Here again, the analogy with self-organized, physical systems reveals the manner in which government is to approach the market:

We can never produce a crystal or a complex organic compound by placing the individual atoms in such a position that they will form the lattice of a crystal or the system based on benzol rings which make up an organic

compound. But we can create the *conditions* in which they will arrange themselves in such a manner.²⁷

In the same way, a social order or *kosmos* cannot be generated by placing each individual in a fixed structure, and controlling their every move. As Adam Smith puts it in the passage quoted above, “in the great chessboard of human society, every single piece has a *principle of motion of its own*,” which the legislature can accompany, but can neither determine nor seek to influence. All it should seek to do is provide the optimal conditions for its emergence—that is, provide the basic rules required for its self-organization. The rule of law, especially in the sense already referred to, is one such mechanism.

But as far as the market itself is concerned, the main mechanism, which government is to facilitate, nurture, and administer, and which alone can guarantee its success, is *competition*. As Hayek insists, and as the Mont Pèlerin Society makes amply clear in its opening Statement of Aims, there is an absolute and necessary convergence between “economic order” and “competitive order.” In the economic sphere, there is order so long as there is competition. As a result, the main task of government, to use Hayek’s expression, is “to make competition work.”²⁸ And this, he claims, is precisely what distinguishes neoliberalism from liberalism:

While it would be an exaggeration, it would not be altogether untrue to say that the interpretation of the fundamental principle of liberalism as absence of state activity rather than as policy which deliberately adopts competition, the market, and prices as its ordering principle and uses the legal framework enforced by the state in order to make competition as effective and beneficial as possible—and to supplement it where, and only where, it cannot be made effective—is as much responsible for the decline of competition as the active support which governments have given directly and indirectly to the growth of monopoly.²⁹

The object of government intervention is the maintenance of a competitive or, as Foucault rightly emphasizes, unequal environment, from which, it is thought, individual freedom and prosperity will emerge. The paradox, however, is that the order in question—like any ordered system in the thermodynamic sense, or like the universe as a whole—requires a

constant amount of *work* in order to continue to generate order: Order is never entirely free, whether it applies to a refrigerator, the biosphere, or markets. And the work or *cost* that is required for order to be generated and sustained is part and parcel of the system as a whole. This is where government has a crucial role to play: “Planning and competition can be combined only by planning for competition, but not by planning against competition.”³⁰ In the economic sphere, order is not simply natural and spontaneous, but requires a political will and the intervention of the state in the service of a goal for which there is no clear end: It remains, and always will remain, something like an ideal or regulative idea, one that presupposes an infinitely active politics. The ordered system as a whole, then, is not just the market, which would need to be maintained *against* the state; it is the market *and* the state, understood as a very specific practice and normative process. As Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski put it:

The starting point of neoliberalism is the admission, contrary to classical liberalism, that its political program will triumph only if it acknowledges that the conditions for its success must be *constructed*, and will not come about “naturally” in the absence of concerted effort . . . In a phrase, “The Market” would not naturally conjure the conditions for its own continued flourishing, so neoliberalism is first and foremost a theory of how to reengineer the state in order to guarantee the success of the market and its most important participants, modern corporations.³¹

Hayek himself distinguishes between two types of conditions for the creation of a new economic—that is, competitive—order. On the one hand, there are those “preconditions,” which include services such as unemployment benefits or “sanitary and health measures, which could not possibly be provided by the market,” as well as monetary and financial policy.³² On the other hand, there are more direct conditions, such as the law of property and contract, of corporations and associations, including, in particular, trade unions (a subject dear to Margaret Thatcher), monopolies, taxation, and international trade.³³ The first set of conditions seems to fall clearly within what Foucault calls biopower and targets the two poles of health and security that are constitutive of the government of life. The second set is more strictly socioeconomic, yet oriented toward an ideal of competition, rather than, say, social justice. In the words of the Freiburg ordoliberal economist and jurist Franz Böhm, “civil rights and liberties

have no value in themselves; they only acquire their significance through the institution of competition.”³⁴

The New Homo Economicus

As a result of the infinite expansion (at least *de jure*) of the market, and of competition as its basic mechanism, a new type of subject emerges, and the meaning of the *homo economicus* is transformed. Now, since the term *homo economicus* dates back to the end of the nineteenth century and was coined as a critical response to Mill’s work on political economy,³⁵ it would be more apt to speak of the *new homo economicus*. What, exactly, defines this new subject? The *new homo economicus* is no longer the partner of an exchange relating to a problematic of needs, on which a utility is founded, and leading to the process of exchange. He is no longer defined by a system of exchange, value, and even consumption, at least as understood in the traditional sense, that is, as the instance that exchanges money for goods. Rather, he has internalized the value of competition, to the point of making it a principle of conduct of life itself, of his *own* life. The model and basic norm of the market has been internalized and applied to life itself, and as a whole: We are encouraged to comport and govern ourselves as competitive units of capital, for which we are responsible, and which require a never ending cycle of investment and return. Capital now defines the very *being* of the *human* being; it is the new anthropological paradigm and normativity that claims to speak the truth regarding human life as a whole. We have become, or are encouraged to become, *self-entrepreneurs*—not purely in the sense of being entrepreneurial, but in the sense of producing our own self through entrepreneurial techniques. The aim of neoliberalism is to allow each and every one of us, every individual, to recognize and experience him- or herself as an entrepreneur, albeit of him- or herself, of his or her own home, property, family, body, and mind. As Foucault says, we have witnessed the multiplication of the model of enterprise within the social body.³⁶ Workers are no longer defined by their labor force—although one could of course argue that, across the globe, the number of proletarians in the Marxist sense is actually increasing—but by their “skills” and “human” capital, which now includes their genetic inheritance (“genetic capital”), cultural background and education (“cultural capital”), and even looks (“erotic capital”).³⁷ The idea of a labor force, which needed

to sell itself at the market price to a capital that would be invested in a firm, has been replaced by the idea of skills *as* capital, which receives an income in return for its services. Through the figure of the entrepreneur, and the theory of human capital, the difference between labor and capital is erased. The worker is no longer compensated for a quantum of force that he or she expresses, but for an (essentially libidinal) investment that he or she made, and continues to make—for example, in education, now a service industry selling skills that are negotiable in the market economy, and in need of regular updating and upgrading. There is no longer anything like a pure salary: Salaries themselves are viewed as income, and by that we need to understand a return on investment in human capital broadly defined. And insofar as the investor-consumer generates his or her own satisfaction or utility in that way, he or she is also a *producer*. Human capital, Schultz writes, is “*human* because it is embodied in man, and *capital* because it is a source of future satisfactions, or of future earnings, or of both.”³⁸ In other words, the worker is the producer of his own enjoyment. Every worker is an agent or subject engaged in the same activity, namely, the maximization of the utility function, and in that respect equivalent to any other activity. As Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose put it, the worker is “no longer considered as a social creature seeking satisfaction of his or her need for security, solidarity, and welfare, but as an individual actively seeking to shape and manage his or her own life in order to maximize its returns in terms of success and achievements.”³⁹ The worker is now a (seemingly) self-owned enterprise requiring constant investment and improvement so as to perform in the best possible way in a competitive environment, while the competitive environment has invaded all spheres of life. Education, health, family, and community all come under the descriptor of capital. In *A Treatise on the Family*, for example, Gary Becker presents the family as a small firm that mobilizes a certain amount of resources in order to produce “goods” of various kinds, including meals, health, skills, and even children.⁴⁰ In seeing those products turn into profit, such as the children’s success, or a favorable change in social status, the self-esteem and therefore the utility of the family enterprise increases. Neoliberalism has generated a form of market normativity, if not morality, which involves free agents able to deliberate rationally about costs and benefits, to the exclusion of other norms and values. Even criminals, Becker tells us, are involved in a rational decision process involving risk and reward: They weigh the poten-

tial gains from an action against a potential risk of punishment, which can involve the loss of their personal freedom, or even life.⁴¹

In his *La psychologie économique* (1902), and so well before the birth of neoliberalism, Tarde had already noted the “rapid and feverish progression” of market-desires around 1900. At the same time, however, he believed that the progression in question could not go on forever, and this despite acknowledging the growing role of publicity in capitalist societies: “There will necessarily come a time when the human heart, *even the American one*, will no longer suffice to meet the continuous demand for the generation of new desires, which comes from developments in machine-production [*la machinofacture*] and expects that he finds continuously growing outlets for its increasingly abundant production.”⁴² A threshold will be reached, he goes on to say, beyond which economic growth will no longer be possible or desirable, and it will signal the decrease of human labor and the growth of leisure, which Tarde saw eminently realized in “reading” and “conversation.” A few pages further down, he also—rather lucidly—remarks that, should a doctrine such as Stoicism or early Christian evangelism spread in North America or Europe, or should a profound belief in the vanity of Desire and in the wisdom of a life reduced to its simplest expression emerge, “it is certain that modern industry would be dealt a fatal blow.”⁴³

How wrong he was! As we know, capitalism has proved remarkably adept at creating techniques and technologies to generate, capture, channel, package, and sell desires. One thinks of marketing, communication, and advertising, of course, which are all technologies of the self and of life in general. Recall the prophetic statement that Paul Mazur made in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1927, and which I referred to in my introduction:

We must shift America from a needs- to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed . . . Man’s desires must overshadow his needs.

Advertising was a major tool in enacting that shift, since, according to a specialist and former director of the General Motors Research Lab, it is nothing other than “the organized creation of dissatisfaction.”⁴⁴ But one also and increasingly thinks of the computer technology that uses and

capitalizes on the extraordinary development of social networks, online videos, tweets, clickstreams, and other “unstructured sources” by gathering, analyzing, and ultimately selling to other companies what is referred to as “big data,” and which IBM defines as the data of “desire.”⁴⁵ The proliferation and increasingly individualized offer of products have led to an unlimited growth of the force of desire, yet one that is unified by money as the universal measure of desire. Under neoliberalism, it is indeed a matter of desiring, and desiring ever more. But the challenge is to make sure that one desires according to what Lordon calls “the capitalist *epithumè*.”⁴⁶ “Desire, desire as much you want,” we are told, “so long as you desire according to the economic norms and social relations dictated by the market.” Yet if, through this new technology, firms are able to understand, predict, and anticipate the desires of their (actual or potential) clients, desire also constitutes its internal mode of organization. It radiates through the firm as a whole, from its lowest echelons to its highest levels, and through the creation of new hierarchies and grades between those extreme poles (middle management, back office, intermediaries, and so forth) to which correspond a quasi-infinite list of titles (director, vice president, president, CEO, CFO, and so on). As systems of desire, companies—and, increasingly, universities—also require the assistance of various techniques of “motivation” (such as seminars, conferences, trips, and social gatherings, aimed at encouraging and consolidating the corporate ethos), “reflection” (such as coaching, performance evaluations, self-evaluations, and targets, aimed at improving productivity and competitiveness), and “recognition” (such as promotions or symbolic gestures through which members of the corporation feel valued, and even loved).⁴⁷ All this is to say that the bipolarity of the old schema (employee/employer) has been replaced by the infinitely more nuanced and wide spectrum of a single Desire, by a series of stages or steps that one climbs patiently, by the ladder of the unifying Desire—the desire to maximize one’s potential, or to obtain a maximal return on one’s investment.

To be sure, those techniques of subjectivation and this normative system are different from the disciplinary techniques of, say, the military, the prison, or even the school. In a sense, they are more effective—that is, more productive and “rational”—precisely to the extent that they achieve their goals through consent and even enjoyment, especially that linked with acquisition and money. But let us not forget that, ultimately, it is a

question of *government*, that is, of conducting the conducts of subjects. Specifically, it is a matter of producing “individuals” through the realization and maximization of their capital, of generating skilled subjects able to compete in the global marketplace. On the surface, and through the market, it seems that desire was freed, and that the market is precisely the expression of the multiplicity, the infinity, even, of human desires. But it is of the utmost importance that those desires all work in the same direction, that each step or stage be a cog of the same mechanism, the desire of a unique, infinitely differentiated Desire—the Capital-Desire. This is how, already in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari summarized it: “The wage earner’s desire, the capitalist’s desire, everything moves to the rhythm of one and the same desire, founded on the differential relation of flows having no assignable exterior limit, and where capitalism reproduces its immanent limits on an ever widening and more comprehensive scale.”⁴⁸ In that respect, capitalism can be seen as the greatest apparatus of production *and* capture of desire ever invented, the greatest (and constantly evolving) force to have aligned the multiplicity of desires on a meta-desire. Following Frédéric Lordon, we could characterize that apparatus as “epithumosynthetic,” in that it manages to gather, federate, and organize the majority of desires. But insofar as it also generates or produces its desires, it is also “epithumogenetic.”⁴⁹ At once federator and generator of desires, postindustrial capitalism has become something like the World Organization of Desire. The market is the space in which desires are thus set free, but also funneled, channeled, and captured, in short, siphoned off. Paradoxically, we arrive at a situation that is the exact opposite of the one that is explicitly mentioned as the natural outcome of the market economy: The market, we recall, is supposed to be the place where pleasure and happiness are maximized. But the pleasure in question, and thus the form of desire it presupposes, is one that cannot and must not be satisfied. It *cannot* be satisfied since, uncertain as we are about our future, we keep oscillating between fear and hope, in such a way that our relief from anxiety, and our experience of pleasure, can only be temporary. It *must* not be satisfied because it is precisely by fueling such an uncertainty that the dynamic of the market works, and its future is assured. Something like a Faustian pact is introduced through that form of power: The tap of desire is turned on and allowed to flow apparently freely, but only so long as its turbulent flow ends in the siphon of the master-desire, the desire as lack

or void that can never be filled. The question, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, thus becomes one of “organizing lack within the abundance of production,” or “precipitating desire as a whole in the great fear of lacking.”⁵⁰ In the economic regime, desire becomes, to borrow an expression from Augustine, “a land of want.”⁵¹

PART TWO

Homo Sexualis

4

“Abnormal Desires” and “Barbarous Instincts”

THE BIRTH OF THE SEXUAL PERVERT

In the two previous chapters, I touched on the manner in which the liberal technology of government, and the utilitarian rationality that underpins it, transformed the question of punishment: Who or what, exactly, is being punished? How ought one to punish, and with what aim? The question that emerged was one of knowing the extent to which it is “interesting” for society to punish and, if so, what kind of punishment is most adequate. Is it better—that is, more *effective*—to torture or to discipline and prevent, through constant surveillance and monitoring, for example? The claim that, drawing further on some of Foucault’s works, I shall make in this chapter is that the question of punishment as it arises in the liberal context also accounts for the emergence of a different discourse, that of forensic psychiatry and psychopathology, which, very quickly, and as early as the 1840s, established itself as a science of *sexuality*. We need only pay attention to the full title of the work often considered, if not the first, at least the most influential study of sexuality—namely, Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Special Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-legal Study* (1886)—to be struck by its intimate connection with the legal and penal system.¹ Liberal governmentality found it necessary to supplement the distinction between licit and illicit *acts* with the distinction between normal and abnormal *individuals*, and to introduce the idea of normal and pathological *instincts*.² This is how, from within the rationality of interest and motive, characteristic of the economic framing of desire, there emerged another rationality of desire, that of the sexual instinct.

85

Tensions within the Liberal Penal System

In *Discipline and Punish*, as well as in his lecture at the Collège de France of 29 January 1975, Foucault emphasizes the shift that took place between the classical age and the eighteenth century, or between sovereign power and the emergence of what he calls disciplinary power. Foucault's position is now well known, so I will only emphasize some of its key points. In classical law, Foucault argues, the crime affected not another person, or the interests of society as a whole, but the sovereign, its force, and physical body. As a result, punishment was indistinguishable from the vengeance of the sovereign, and the return of force. The problem of the relation between crime and punishment was not a problem of proportion and balance, of measurable equality or inequality. On the contrary, there needed to be an excess on the side of punishment, commensurate with the formidable force of the sovereign. Punishments needed to be terrifying, without proportion, and displayed for all to see. The opening pages of *Discipline and Punish*, in which Foucault narrates the torture and agony of William of Orange's assassin in 1584, which lasted for eighteen days, are, in that respect, exemplary and memorable.³ As Foucault emphasizes in *Abnormal*, such "cruel" practices could be applied even to persons who were already dead.⁴ One need only think of the fate of Oliver Cromwell's body after his death: Charles II, who was the son of Charles I, executed by the "Lord Protector" on 30 January 1649, ordered that Cromwell's body, along with those of two of his collaborators, be exhumed, hanged, left for all to see for a day, and then decapitated, on—symbolically enough—30 January 1661. After decapitation, Cromwell's head was left to hang on a spike outside Westminster for at least twenty-three years. As Foucault puts it, if we can speak of an "economy" of punishment in such cases, it is characterized not by measure and proportion, but by excess and the atrocious. If anything is "monstrous," it is not the crime, or the criminal himself, but the punishment. But that sublime monstrosity and might was precisely that of sovereign power. Furthermore, the economy of power in question was such that the *nature* of the criminal was never in question, and the mechanics of the crime never became the object of a specific knowledge, least of all a science. All that exists, in the case of such punishments, is a strategy of power, which unleashes and displays its might, wrath, and fury on the basis of the crime and around it.

Now, this type of power, which seeks to maximize its effects, progres-

sively gave way to a different economy of power and punishment. This is how Foucault describes it:

There was the elaboration of what could be called a new economy of the mechanisms of power: a set of procedures and analyses that enabled the effects of power to be increased, the costs of its exercise reduced and its exercise integrated in mechanisms of production. By increasing the effects of power I mean that there was the discovery in the eighteenth century of means by which, or at least, the principle in accordance with which power could be exercised in a continuous manner, rather than in the ritual, ceremonial, discontinuous way it was exercised under feudalism and continued to be exercised in the absolute monarchies.⁵

Here, we recognize the features of economic efficiency and effectiveness that are constitutive of the liberal rationality of government. The new rationality of power altered the problem and economy of punishment precisely by subjecting them to the same imperatives of efficiency and effectiveness: Henceforth, measure and proportion, rather than imbalance and excess, were to define proper or good punishment; “instead of the grand extravagant rituals in which the atrociousness of the penalty repeated the atrociousness of the crime,” there is a *calculated* system of punishment, aimed at the *interest* motivating the crime, and countering it with another interest, slightly stronger than the interest that was the basis of the crime itself.⁶ It is now possible to speak of an economy of punishment governed by the rationality of efficiency and interest, which the market expresses in its purest state, rather than by the symbolic value and system of the atrocious. Most important for our purposes, and for the connection we have established thus far between desire and interest, is that interest is the unit of measurement common to crime and punishment, and their “natural basis”: “Judges and criminal law theorists call this unit of measurement of the new technology of punitive power ‘interest,’ or the crime’s motive, the element that is the crime’s *raison d’être* . . . This natural basis of crime, this motive for crime, is what has to serve as the unit of measurement.”⁷ Interest (or motive) is what makes the crime both intelligible and punishable; it is what allows crime and punishment to be brought in a relation of proportion and analogy, a mathematical or economical relation. In the punishment itself, the rationality of the crime is asserted: One can only punish to the extent that a rational interest can be shown to have moti-

vated the crime. Without this key shift, it would be impossible to understand the neoliberal, and specifically Chicago School, approach to crime and punishment.⁸ Penal sanctions, it argues, are necessary only to the extent that they deter or punish inefficient behavior, and not because the behavior in question is morally wrong or violates basic rights. As Harcourt notes, by relying on the Coase theorem and its natural-order assumptions, Posner is able to define crime not on the basis of a welfare analysis, but on the presumption of market efficiency.⁹ This leads him to understand crime as “market bypassing,” whether the market in question is that of goods, services, or labor. And this, Posner adds—crucially from the point of view of this chapter—is true even for crimes of “passion,” such as rape and certain types of murders. Rape bypasses the market for sex and the market for marriage—“market” being defined here as “a system where agents voluntarily transfer benefits to one another for compensation.”¹⁰ It is *inefficient* in that it does not provide the other party with any compensation for parting with that which has value for it, and should, as such, be forbidden and punished. Those who are not well versed in, or indeed convinced by, such an approach, might still find it puzzling. Still, it follows quite logically from the liberal economy of power, which is an economic rationality of government, crime, and punishment.

But the problem is that this new model, and this new rationality of crime and punishment, is immediately confronted with a challenge—one that is still very much in place today. And it is as a result of this challenge that psychiatry is, almost from the start, integrated into the new punitive power and penal system—that is, further specified as *forensic* psychiatry—and that the concept of *interest* is supplemented with that of *instinct*. The problem is that of the criminal act for which no reason, motive, or interest can be found, without being attributable to the only category that, until now, had any validity from a legal and penal standpoint, that is, insanity. Before the emergence of this new rationality of crime and punishment in the early nineteenth century, so long as the subject’s dementia had not been demonstrated, the crime could be punished. But now, a crime can be understood as such only to the extent that it violates a principle of rationality or a form of efficiency. As a result, more is required: To the extent that the subject is rational—that is, naturally imbued with interests (which can include passions) and spontaneously seeking to maximize his or her utility—how can actions that are themselves without clear reasons

or motives be accounted for, without being attributable to sheer insanity? Who or what, which discourse or knowledge, is going to be able to establish the extent to which, and the reasons why, this particular subject can or cannot be punished, and how? Psychiatry moved into that space, which it still occupies today. Its success, which was not immediate and, as expected, was initially resisted by the courts, stemmed from its ability to develop something like a rationality of irrationality, a *savoir* of the mechanisms behind or beneath actions that escape the logic and economy of interests, motives, and utility, without being attributable to that wholly other and dark side of human nature, namely, dementia. Its appeal, ultimately, lay in its ability *theoretically* and *clinically* to integrate into the bourgeois order a *practical* limit of that order, and to establish a kind of mediation between the economy of interests and an altogether different economy, or perhaps an aneconomy of behaviors that would be recognized as *pathological*, without falling under either the relatively simple diagnosis of delirious insanity or the old, moral and religious category of perversity. It is very much as a result of the pressures *on* and *of* the bourgeois penal system, and the rationality of interest that underpins it, that psychiatry was forced to evolve and to move away from the medicine of insanity (or *aliénation*) in which it was still caught in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The challenge consisted in coming up with a rational explanation for the absence of reasons, including the play of passions. It entailed recognizing that between the case of obvious insanity—“alienation” or “dementia”—and psychic normality, on the basis of which a crime can be attributed entirely to its author, there is a range of intermediary states, that is, different mental anomalies or abnormalities susceptible of mitigating, but not erasing, the legal responsibility of the accused, who is then considered the *agent* of his or her crime, but not its *author*. The result of that move was the pathologization of crime, and of the criminal in particular, the intertwining of the penal and the medical, and the inscription of crime and punishment within the clinical rationality of norms and its (eventually formidable) power of normalization. In addition, and to the extent that, very early on, this emerging style of reasoning was applied to violent crimes that were sexual, albeit only in part, or in origin, it also resulted in the naturalization of perversity, now known as perversion. And yet, the old—I would say archaic—problem of perversity, or evil, never quite went away, and continued to haunt the clinical rationality of instincts and per-

versions. The paradigm of the norm continued to feel the presence of the Law, and the figure of Sade continued to cast its shadow over the discourse of psychiatry, from alienism to psychoanalysis.

To illustrate this tension internal to the penal system, and the pressure under which it found itself, let me refer to a couple of examples. The first is the famous case of François Bertrand, a sergeant in the French army. Much has been written about it, both around the time of Bertrand's trial in 1849 and in the years that followed, when it was addressed by eminent psychiatrists, including Krafft-Ebing, who used it as an example of sadism.¹¹ More recently, and beginning with Foucault himself, historians and philosophers of sexuality have also commented on it.¹² I shall return to the sexual dimension of the case, and to the designation of Bertrand as a sexual pervert. For now, I simply wish to point to the conflict, internal to the rationality of interests and reasons, which this case reveals. Bertrand, the "vampire of Montparnasse," was accused of having desecrated corpses, having sex with some of them, and tearing them to bits. In the middle of the trial the presiding officer, Colonel Manselon, questions Bertrand about his "awful desires" (*désirs affreux*) and asks the following question: "Have you ever wondered what was the point of destroying corpses that were already dead?"¹³ This question echoes one that, a few years earlier, a magistrate had put to Louis-Auguste Papavoine, accused of stabbing two young children in the heart in front of their mother: "The common cause of crimes is interest. What interest might there be in killing two children?"¹⁴ Such questions illustrate the limit and embarrassment of liberal penology, which, as we saw, presupposes the rational autonomy and free will of an agent, motivated by self-interest and utility. This absence of motive, often confirmed by the perpetrators themselves, is precisely what caused the confusion of the judicial system. In the absence of either a clear motive, by which the crime in question could be made intelligible and judged, or evidence of dementia, on the basis of which, up until the 1830s, it could be exonerated, the act could only be seen as the expression of a mysterious, blind, and irresistible *force*. And this is how, for the most part, the courts saw such acts, proceeding to sentence the accused as if he or she were mentally sane, while recognizing him or her as a "moral monster." This, in substance, is what another famous case reveals. In 1824, Antoine Léger killed a young girl, opened up her body, drank her blood, cut off her genital organs, and finally ripped out her heart and ate it. In his case, a magistrate spoke of an "awful mystery," attributable, perhaps, to a

“barbarous bloodthirstiness” and “diabolical disposition,” before concluding that such origins, precisely to the extent that they remain mysterious, are not a matter for the court, which was therefore justified in sentencing Léger to death.¹⁵ It should be noted, in passing, that the logic of passions is not opposed to that of reasons and interests, but is entirely contained within it. In fact, the court sentenced Léger to death on the grounds that he had acted not from madness, but from passions. It thus became of the utmost importance for psychiatry to distinguish perversions from mere passions, however violent, and to isolate types of desires irreducible to mere impulses. This is how the vocabulary and typology of “monomania” was developed.

Now, within the rationality of crime and punishment of the nineteenth century, which is still largely our own, Manselon’s question to Bertrand, or the magistrate’s question to Léger, make sense. But for us, who are now also used to the “psychiatric style of reasoning,” the question simply fails to account for the nature of the desires and acts of the accused. We cannot imagine that rational motives or “interests”—or passions, for that matter—can be behind repeated acts of mutilation and destruction of corpses. But we do not feel that they can be attributed to a purely momentary state of madness, or a return to an animal or savage state, either. Bertrand’s answer seems to resonate with the way in which we have become accustomed to approaching such cases: “I had no goals; I felt this irresistible *urge* to destroy.” “When my disease started,” he also says, “I felt, without being aware of it, this *need* to destroy.”¹⁶ But if this “urge to destroy,” this “awful desire,” can be attributed to a “disease,” as Bertrand himself seems to recognize, rather than to sheer moral perversity, or to a total madness, the question is, what kind of disease? For the first time, psychiatrists were almost unanimous in recognizing a case of *sexual* perversion. To the courts and the liberal strategy of punishment, psychiatry held the following discourse: “You base the right to punish on the moral subject’s relation to its own acts, and its intrinsic rationality. But you fail to acknowledge that certain acts escape that rationality altogether, and thus constantly run the risk of punishing acts, the origins of which are to be located elsewhere. Where you see certain acts as the result of a vicious nature, and attribute it to perversity, or a return to a state of savagery, we see a case of perversion, that is, a medical condition that pushes people to act against their will and interest.”

This new type of reasoning emerged in France in the work of *aliénistes*

from the 1820s and 1830s, such as Georget. Speaking of the Léger case, for example, he agrees that “the *ordinary* motives of criminal actions are cupidity, revenge, ambition, etc.” and that “anthropophagy is foreign to civilized people.”¹⁷ In that sense, he confirms the views held by other French *aliénistes*. Esquirol, for example, thought that “the criminal always has a motive,”¹⁸ and Brierre de Boismont that “it is a truth that has been known for a long time that all human actions have a motive, and that no individual commits a crime only for the pleasure of committing it.”¹⁹ But Georget also concludes that, for that very reason, “Léger was not pushed to crime by the *passions* that are its ordinary motives; his action does not have a motive that could be admitted by reason. He wanted *to drink blood! To eat human flesh!*”²⁰ To be sure, his “desires” are “entirely foreign to the civilized man,” but they are the sign of a “moral accidental *perversion*, an obvious mental disorder [*aliénation*].”²¹ We cannot help notice, a few years before the Bertrand case, the hesitation and possibly confusion between the moral and clinical lexicons, or between a “moral accidental [as opposed to innate] *perversion*” and a mental illness. The question is precisely one of knowing how to distinguish between moral *perversion* (sheer perversity) and mental *perversion* or *alienation*, when they are expressed in the same manner, that is, through the same kinds of acts. In fact, the moral *perversion* will be seen as the effect of the mental *perversion*, and not the expression of an innate perversity. But what is the *perversion* in question? In the absence of straightforward dementia, what sort of insanity are we talking about?

Desire as Instinct

Only when psychiatry was finally able to attribute such comportments to, first of all, a disease that was not simply the negation of health—in this instance, of reason—but a deviation from a norm, and thus an abnormality, and, second, a disease of a natural *instinct*, was it in a position to establish itself as this new discourse of authority on human nature, and both pose a challenge to and insert itself within the rationality of crime and punishment.²² By turning the notion of instinct into a *scientific* concept and focusing, relatively quickly, on one instinct in particular, that of sexuality, psychiatry was able to discover—in fact, create—new pathologies, which themselves required treatments and therapies of various kinds,

an education and discipline of the sexualized subject, and a normalization or, better said perhaps, a normativization of sexual practices.

But before I go deeper into the analysis of that scientific concept, and eventually turn to the problem of sexual perversions, let me venture two remarks regarding the history of medicine, which are necessary to better understand the significance of the concept in question.

The first concerns the new way in which diseases came to be understood in Europe around 1820, and in France especially, where diseases of the sexual instinct were first recorded. Broussais was the first physician to describe pathologies as a mere *deviation* from the laws governing normal life, rather than as a state governed by entirely different laws. This is how Auguste Comte acknowledges the significance of Broussais’s *De l’irritation et de la folie*, published in 1828:

Until Broussais, the pathological state obeyed laws completely different from those governing the normal state, so that the exploration of one could have no effect on the other. Broussais established that the phenomena of disease coincided essentially with those of health from which they differed only in terms of intensity. This brilliant principle has become the basis of pathology, thus subordinated to the whole of biology.²³

A pathology, then, is an abnormality or deviation from a norm, which is itself understood as regulating the proper functioning of an organism.

My second remark concerns the fact that, after the publication of Bichat’s *Anatomie générale* in 1801, it was thought that if a disease could not be localized, it could not be an object of science, and thus could not be either true or false. In the case of psychiatry, the *brain* became the assumed organ of the mentally diseased. The view held by most psychiatrists was that the criminal—like the pervert, epileptic, or idiot—has a certain type of brain. This is perhaps best illustrated by Moris Benedikt’s *Anatomical Studies upon Brains of Criminals*.²⁴ Benedikt hoped that his dissections—twenty-two in all!—would furnish the “foundations of a Natural History of Crime.”²⁵ It is this “a priori conviction,” to use Benedikt’s words, that sets the stage for neuropsychiatry. Yet in the end, pathological anatomy did not substantially influence the clinical description and classification of crimes. And the introduction, and then the success, of the category of instinct (and possibly also of the sexual drive) can be attributed, in part at least, to that neurophysiological dead end.

Let me now turn to the concepts of instinct and perversion. The former was not created in the nineteenth century; rather, it is an old concept, originally used to account for animal behavior. Beginning with Aristotle, and up to the eighteenth century, instinct was explained teleologically and providentially, as the following passage from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* reveals: "Although dumb animals do not know the future, yet an animal is moved by its natural instinct to something future [namely, the preservation of the species], as though it foresaw the future. Because this instinct is planted in them by the Divine Intellect that foresees the future."²⁶

This providential view of instinct was eventually challenged by Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), who offered a materialist alternative to this "*divine something*" or "kind of inspiration."²⁷ Instincts, he claims, are "acquired" characteristics, and so acquired "*by the repeated efforts of our muscles under the conduct of our sensations or desires*."²⁸ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829), another materialist, tied instinctive behavior to his theory of evolution, and equated it with a blind "force" perfectly adapted to a given end, independent of both intelligence and volition, and thus able to explain a wide range of actions.²⁹ By the nineteenth century, and especially in the wake of Charles Darwin's own view of instincts as consequences of the reproductive success of individuals,³⁰ the concept of instinct was naturalized and progressively integrated into the scientific literature, whence it found its way into other, including popular, discourses.

The legal case of Henriette Cornier illustrates the progressive, and initially confused, emergence of the category of instinct in psychiatric discourse. In 1826, Henriette Cornier had offered to take care of her neighbor's eighteen-month-old daughter for a short while, but only, once she had taken her back to her house, to cut off her head with a sharp knife, and bring it to her mother in her apron, before tossing it out the window. Psychiatric experts, who were called upon to make sense of her actions at her trial, spoke of an "irresistible direction," "irresistible affection," "almost irresistible desire," and "atrocious leaning [*penchant*], the origin of which cannot be accounted for."³¹ Her lawyer spoke of "the presence of an extraordinary agent foreign to the regular laws of human organization."³² What those experts recognized, in effect, was the dark area that escapes the rationality of "normal" criminality, that is, the criminality of interest and motive, and accounts for the violent, aggressive nature of certain acts. This type of criminality can be explained, it seems, only by

appealing to the categories of “monstrosity,” “savagery,” and “barbarity.” Cornier’s lawyer, Fournier, for example, spoke of a “barbarous instinct,” and Marc, one of the psychiatrists, of an irresistible “instinctive propensity [*propension*].”³³ Unlike passions, which are constitutive of “normal” subjectivity, what the alienists of the 1820s and 1830s call “instinctive monomanias” denote irreducible and sudden impulses, analogous to that of hunger, which the will is unable to resist, and which can force it to act in ways that it cannot comprehend. This lesion of the will is not, of course, without recalling the moral idea of weakness of the will, inherited from Christian theology and philosophy. Highly symbolic crimes of the time, such as decapitation (Cornier), parricide (Papavoine), cannibalism (Léger), and incest (Feldtmann), all point in the direction of the “*monstre psychique*,” whose acts amount to a sinister combination of sex, blood, and a form of *jouissance*.³⁴ The aggressive, criminal background against which psychiatry and the idea of the sexual instinct emerged cannot be underestimated; it accounts for the intertwining of the clinical concept of perversion and the moral concept of perversity, and will continue to haunt psychiatry for many years.

This sudden fascination with the idea of instinct, and the irresistible natural force it was supposed to designate, soon found its way into the vernacular and popular culture, which often combines various court cases and confuses various schools of psychiatry. Let me mention just one example. Although it is a literary one, its origins lie in various court cases and criminal investigations, including the murder of the *préfet* of the *département* of the Eure in 1886 and the crimes of “Jack the Ripper” in London a couple of years later. In *La bête humaine* (1890), Zola, who was very familiar with the criminal anthropologies of Lombroso and Tarde, describes the “hereditary flaw” of the Macquart dynasty, and of Jacques Lantier in particular.³⁵ The author presents him as a man who embodies the idea of a primitive or bestial desire to kill that is reducible neither to a lack of moral conscience, nor to the motivations of self-interest. Unlike the common criminal, who kills “out of desire to do so, either through calculation or self-interest”—as in Roubaud’s case, who kills President Grandmorin out of jealousy—Jacques Lantier can only bring himself to kill when under the violent influence of an uncontrollable desire, a “*fit of instinct*.”³⁶ When Séverine insists that he kill Roubaud to liberate their affair and legitimize their love, his moral conscience is repelled by the idea: “No, no, he would not kill! What a *monstrous* thing it was, unimaginable, impossible. He felt within him the

civilized man revolt, the full force of his education, the steady and indestructible walls of imparted ideas. *One must not kill*, he had suckled that phrase with the milk of every generation.³⁷ What he really wants, what he truly *desires*, is to kill a *woman*; but above all, to kill the woman whom he desires and who desires him in return: “*Tuer une femme, tuer une femme!*” The words were ringing in his ears, beating in his young heart, with the intensifying, maddening fever of desire. Like the others who, in the dawn of puberty, dream of possessing one, he had been consumed by the idea of killing one . . . Her! My god! That flower he had seen grow before him, that wild little thing whose love had touched him so deeply!³⁸ This murderous *instinct* is what constitutes his own monstrousness, his own flaw. Throughout the novel Jacques continues to be a victim of the “thrusts of instinct”³⁹ and, ironically, of a “sudden desire for murder,”⁴⁰ which torture him ceaselessly and to which, after much struggle, he eventually succumbs: After his most blissful night of lovemaking with Séverine—when he finally resolves to eliminate her husband—it is Séverine that Jacques assassinates instead, in the grip of an irrepressible instinct and “*in full contempt of his interest.*”⁴¹ So what does he feel? “Mad ecstasy, all-consuming joy,” and “*the full satisfaction of eternal desire.*”⁴²

It is this combination of sexual *jouissance* and homicidal desire that psychiatry, moving away from the vocabulary of instinctive monomania, eventually diagnosed as a functional disease—a “perversion”—of the sexual instinct. The concept of instinct became clinical precisely by being inscribed within the distinction between the normal and the pathological, and by being understood as a natural feature prone to deviations from its normal state, known as *perversions*.⁴³ It is important to emphasize that, from the point of view of psychiatry, the emergence of that concept, and the manner in which it was progressively combined with that of perversion, constituted an epistemological break with the medicine of madness, exemplified by Pinel and the early Esquirol. But it also introduced a grid of interpretation that escaped the moral and legal category of perversity and monstrosity, and provided an alternative to the criminal anthropologies of people like Lombroso and Tarde. Its aim was to distinguish as unambiguously as possible between an evil passion and a form of abnormal condition characterized by a *diseased* instinct. While, until then, certain passions might have been seen as extenuating circumstances, and thus helped soften a verdict, they could not, unlike insanity, entirely exclude legal responsibility. This is why the magistrates and lawyers who fought

against the effort to legitimize mania without delirium did so by stressing as much as possible the intimate relation between passion and insanity. It was therefore imperative for psychiatrists to sharply distinguish passion from mania without delirium: Both the fairness of the judicial system and the legitimacy of forensic psychiatry rested on precisely this distinction.

What about the medical concept of perversion, then? Initially, *perversio* belonged to the moral and theological Christian register, and gave birth to the idea of “perversity.” For Augustine, it designates a voluntary and guilty departure from the way of God, and from spiritual life. But the medical, and specifically psychiatric, concept of perversion has its roots in the medical vocabulary of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ It was introduced to designate an “alteration” of the human body, and of the “humours” in particular. It names the process of vitiation of those essential fluids, such as blood, bile, or phlegm, which, by rendering them acidic or thick, or through fermentation, forced them to lose their *normal* quality, and become *pathological*. This is how, in 1803, a doctor like Portal was able to attribute the process of aging, and its mortal outcome, to an “alteration of the fluids” or “perversion of the humours.”⁴⁵ This, rather than the moral and theological concept of *perversio*, and the other, eventually penal category of “perversity,” is the context from which the specifically psychiatric concept of perversion emerged.

To understand how this physiological interpretation of perversion paved the way for the psychiatric concept of perversion, let me take a little detour through the history of “alienism,” already alluded to.⁴⁶ Until the 1830s, alienism—as shaped by Pinel, and revised by Esquirol⁴⁷—was dominated by an interpretation of madness inherited from the eighteenth century. The interpretation in question attributed madness to usually chronic affections or *perversions* of the mind’s faculties (the will, the understanding, and the imagination) as well as to the passions, and classified mental illnesses in terms of melancholia, mania (without delirium), dementia, and idiotism. Madness was synonymous with perversion, and the perversions of the various faculties immediately described the various types of madness. Esquirol, who was followed by Georget and Marc, replaced those categories with the concepts of lypemania (*lypémanie*; from the Greek λύπη, “sadness,” “affliction”) and monomania, but without transforming fundamentally the general framework of analysis: He remained attached to a purely idealist or intellectualist understanding of mania, which signaled an affection or alteration—typically, a lesion—of the intellect or will, and resulted in a

fixation on one idea, or the emergence of strange ideas. Thus, he describes mania as “the disturbance and exaltation of the subject’s sensibility, intellect, and will,”⁴⁸ and lypemania as the condition in which “sad, oppressive passions modify the intellect and the will.”⁴⁹ Several of the criminal cases mentioned above were explained as monomanias, most often homicidal and erotic.

Now, in addition to this grid of analysis, phrenology—and the works of F. J. Gall and his student J. G. Spurzheim, in particular—helped shape another approach.⁵⁰ Phrenology—a term coined not by Gall, who rejected it, but by the English naturalist and physician Thomas Ignatius Maria Forster in 1815, and commonly used in the 1820s—identifies various faculties (or “organs”) in human beings, such as benevolence, destructiveness, sociability, and their normal subordination to the “superior” faculties of the will and the intellect. It thus distinguishes clearly the affective order of instincts, feelings, tastes, and impulses, from the order of the mind and the will. As a result of this distinction, and beyond the confines of phrenology, it became possible to study the primitive instincts of the human being for itself, as a relatively autonomous field. It was assumed that this field was made up of relatively distinct leanings or tendencies, each with the ability to be afflicted by specific pathologies, which were precisely not of the order of delirium, or of a mental disorder. What became conceivable, then, was a disorder of the leanings and impulses, or a clinic of the perversions of the instincts, independently of any *mental* disorder. To each instinct presiding over a fundamental function of human beings as animals—the genesic or sexual instinct, the instinct of nutrition or preservation, and so forth—correspond various perversions, which manifest themselves in *abnormal* behaviors. As a result, and as early as the 1830s, an entire cartography of the pathologies of various instincts, which are themselves envisaged as “functions” essential to life, and independent of the life of the mind, begins to emerge. They are seen as the result of a force that leads to certain actions, which cannot be resisted. Broussais, for example, sees in the act of eating dirt or excrement a perversion of the instinctive need for nutrition; or in the tendency to destroy or hurt those we love, a perversion of our social instinct.⁵¹

At that point, deviations from normal behavior can be understood from two points of view. The first, purely *quantitative* interpretation was inspired by Broussais, and adopted by phrenology. It was also championed by Claude Bernard, who defined diseases as “the exaggerated or dimin-

ished expression of normal functioning.”⁵² It led to certain difficulties, though, as some extreme cases of “moral monstrosity,” such as that of the serial killer, could be accounted for only by positing a normal instinct, the instinct to kill, which, for reasons unknown, turned out to be particularly developed in the case of the serial killer, or simply not kept under control by the other cognitive or moral faculties. Thus, among the twenty-seven faculties that he identifies, Gall recognizes a “faculty of murder” (*Mord/Würgsinn*) and a “faculty of larceny” (*Diebsinn*).⁵³ The second, *qualitative* point of view—which led to the formation of the concept of perversion, and was eventually widely adopted—was introduced to remedy the highly problematic position of the first. Perversion is understood as a “qualitative alteration” of the instinct, or a deviation from its normal tendency. By “perversion,” we now need to understand a *functional* disturbance that does not necessarily require an anatomical lesion, even of the brain. At issue is the possibility of a radical and qualitative disruption of vital forces, which needs to be distinguished from an increase or decrease of that same function. It is now believed that natural instincts, such as appetite, taste, or reproduction, can be depraved, and can lead to a “delirium” of the instincts or the acts, which can turn a natural function against itself, and lead to counter-natural behaviors. As a consequence, abnormality is attributable to neither moral monstrosity and degeneracy, nor quantitative excess (or deficiency). Rather, it designates the qualitative deviation of a function indexed to a normal goal or aim: Thus, in the case of bulimia or anorexia, the appetite is perverted and deviated from its normal aim, which is to regulate the energy intake of the body. The pathology is then understood as the deviation itself.

The Sexual Instinct and Its Perversions

But what about the *sexual* instinct? What are its function and aim? And how does one *recognize* a sexual perversion?

Before I return to the case of Bertrand, whom Singy calls “the first sexual pervert,” let me venture two remarks, borrowed from Arnold Davidson’s *The Emergence of Sexuality*. To begin with, the idea of the sexual instinct requires that it be distinguished from the biological-anatomical level. The latter, Davidson argues, may have a lot to say about sex, but nothing about sexuality. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives as its first example

of “sexuality” (defined as “possession of sexual powers, or capability of sexual feelings”) a statement from 1879 made in J. M. Duncan’s *Diseases of Women*: “In removing the ovaries, you do not necessarily destroy sexuality in a woman.” This statement, Davidson claims, is a clear illustration of the fact that sexuality is an object that requires a style of reasoning other than the anatomical one:

A woman’s sexuality is not reducible to facts about, or to the existence of, her reproductive system, and given this understanding it was necessary to have a way of conceptualizing sexuality that permitted one to say something about it without invoking, in any essential way, those anatomical facts. It is the psychiatric style of reasoning that made such talk possible in medicine, that made it possible to make statements such as Duncan’s. Without this style of reasoning, we would be forever talking about sex, not about sexuality.⁵⁴

Earlier on, I claimed that, after Bichat, it was thought that if a disease could not be localized, it could not be an object of science, and thus could not be either true or false. In the absence of defects of the reproductive organs, the *brain* became the assumed organ of the sexual perversion, and this despite the systematic lack of evidence. Sexual perversions were thought to be ultimately traceable to brain diseases. Yet there is ample evidence that, in the end, pathological anatomy, including of the brain, was unable to influence the clinical description and classification of the perversions in any significant way. Of course, the pathological anatomists did not want the notion of a sexual instinct to escape their grasp. Griesinger and Krafft-Ebing, for example, both claim that the sexual instinct can be located in a part of the brain. And Freud remained committed to such a physiological bias. But those claims amount to nothing other, in the end, than speculations. No clear anatomical foundation of the sexual instinct was established.

Second, to be able to determine precisely what phenomena are functional disturbances or diseases of the sexual instinct, one must also, of course, specify what the *normal* or *natural* function of this instinct consists in. One must first believe that there is a natural function of the sexual instinct and then believe that this function is quite determinate. On that point, and on what that function is, psychiatrists seem to have been

unanimous: *propagation* is the natural function of the sexual instinct. In the words of Krafft-Ebing:

During the time of the maturation of physiological processes in the reproductive glands, *desires* arise in the consciousness of the individual, which have for their purpose the perpetuation of the species (sexual instinct) . . . With opportunity for the natural satisfaction of the sexual instinct, every expression of it that does not correspond with the purpose of nature—i.e., propagation—must be regarded as perverse.⁵⁵

Krafft-Ebing’s view is confirmed by Moll, who writes: “We ought to qualify as pathologic those functions of the genital system which do not contribute to the preservation of the individual and the species simultaneously, a condition which is essential to the health and the normal state.”⁵⁶ This is how the long list of perversions or, to use Dr. Laupt’s word, “abnormal desires,”⁵⁷ from masturbation and homosexuality to fetishism, voyeurism, exhibitionism, masochism, and sadism, which appear to have no essential features in common, can be treated as species of the same disease. They all manifest the same basic kind of functional deviation.

Does this mean, as Davidson argues, that there were no perverts before the emergence of the concept of “perversion” in the mid-nineteenth century? “Perversion and perverts,” he claims, “were an invention of psychiatric reasoning.”⁵⁸ By that, he means that perversion

was not a disease that lurked about in nature, waiting for a psychiatrist with especially acute powers of observation to discover it hiding almost everywhere. It was a disease, created by a new (functional) understanding of disease, a conceptual shift, a shift in reasoning, that made it possible to interpret various types of activity in medicopsychiatric terms . . . Perversion was not a disease candidate until it became possible to attribute diseases to the sexual instinct, and there are no possible diseases of the sexual instinct before the nineteenth century; when the notion of diseases of this instinct loses its last remaining grasp upon us, we will rid the world of all of its perverts.⁵⁹

Before the early nineteenth century, questions of sexual perversion (or, better said perhaps, depravity) were not cloaked in silence or secrecy, but

were dealt with primarily in treatises of moral philosophy, moral theology, and jurisprudence. If we take the example of homosexuality, also known as “inversion,”⁶⁰ before the emergence of psychiatry and the category of perversion, there were only the *legal* categories of sodomy and perversity, defined in terms of a certain behavior; the sodomite was a judicial subject of the law, because sodomy was a *vice*, a problem for morality and law.⁶¹ But homosexuality, as Davidson shows, is something quite different: *a psychic disease of the sexual instinct*.

With those preliminary remarks in mind, let me return to the case of Bertrand. At the time, his actions were, like those of Cornier or Papavoine, seen as horrible beyond belief, so abominable that they could not possibly have been motivated by a mere quest for pleasure (at least understood in the ordinary sense), or any other interest, especially since, as both the press and psychiatrists noted, he was a good-looking man who could have easily satisfied his sexual desire with living women.⁶² As a result, his depravity could not be integrated into the phrenological paradigm developed by Gall. Furthermore, he was, by all accounts, an intelligent and honest fellow, and a good noncommissioned officer. He was thus not an “innate pervert.” For those reasons he was, in the eyes of the public and the court, an enigma who posed a real threat to the existing social order. This explains why the military court condemned him to one year in prison, the maximum sentence for the crime of desecration, according to article 360 of the penal code of 1810. But the psychiatric experts who examined him, and those who commented on the case, were unanimous in diagnosing an “erotic monomania” caused by a “perversion of the genesis instinct,” or a “deviation of the venerian appetite.”⁶³ Michéa, for example, saw the sexual desire for human cadavers, soon known as necrophilia, as “the most extreme and rarest degree of deviation of the venerian instinct,” and thus as the maximum departure from the psychosexual norm.⁶⁴ Krafft-Ebing describes Bertrand’s acts as the most extreme form of sadism, and Épaulard sees Bertrand as the very model of “necrosadism.”⁶⁵ He was the dismemberer, the ripper, the eviscerator, and the necrophiliac. And yet, rather than being attributed to sheer wickedness, those traits were now seen as symptoms of a sexual disorder, a perversion of the most serious kind. Ambroise Tardieu, professor of criminal medicine at the École de Médecine in Paris, qualified them as the “last stage the perversion of the sexual instinct can reach.”⁶⁶ Psychiatrists were now convinced that the insanity of perversion is only partial, to the point of being visible only in comportments that

are morally and socially deviant. This is the reason why, in the eyes of the layperson, incapable of distinguishing insanity from vice, nymphomania, for example, is indistinguishable from debauchery.

Despite their best and repeated efforts, however, psychiatrists were never able—in practice, at least—to distinguish entirely between the clinical category of perversion and the theological, moral, and juridical categories of perversity. Krafft-Ebing formulates clearly that crucial (yet highly unstable) distinction:

*Perversion of the sexual instinct . . . is not to be confounded with perversity in the sexual act; since the latter may be induced by conditions other than psychopathological. The concrete perverse act, monstrous as it may be, is clinically not decisive. In order to differentiate between disease (perversion) and vice (perversity), one must investigate the whole personality of the individual and the original motive leading to the perverse act. Therein will be found the key to the diagnosis.*⁶⁷

This principle of axiological neutrality is one that psychiatry—forensic psychiatry especially—did its utmost to uphold. To this day, it operates like an ideal toward which psychiatry strives, with varying degrees of success. Yet, while acknowledging the need to distinguish between perversion and perversity, psychiatrists of this period quickly admitted that it often proved difficult to do so. Only minutely detailed examination could help to determine that a given patient was a genuine pervert, and not merely evil or wicked. Only the most rigorous diagnosis could distinguish a psychosexual pathology (a perversion) from a socially or morally deviant *act*. And yet, in many, if not most, cases, the deviant conduct turned out to be the condition of visibility, and thus of objectification, of the sexual perversion: As Mazaleigue-Labaste shows, the concept and clinic of fetishism were made possible by the fact that theft of, and, to a lesser extent, public masturbation on, various objects, was considered deviant and, as such, suppressed.⁶⁸ This irreducible ambiguity, if not tension, I believe, can be attributed to the manner in which the old problematic of desire as *concupiscentia*, and of the flesh as a corrupt or corrupted form of desire, was integrated into the normal-pathological distinction and subsumed under the concept of instinct, thus giving birth to the clinical category of sexual perversion and the type of the pervert. Consider the following claim from Dr. Laupts (pseudonym of G. Saint-Paul), which illustrates this shift, as

well as the fundamental ambiguity that underpins it: “Where our predecessors saw culprits [*des coupables*], we see patients [*des malades*]; where yesterday’s philosophers discovered a fault, we diagnose a nervous failure or accident.”⁶⁹ However, fearful of throwing out bourgeois morality, religion, and right with the bath water of obscurantism, Dr. Laupts immediately adds: “This is not tantamount to saying that sin has disappeared,” and “Perversity is a crime.” This ambiguity, I suggest, continued to shape psychiatry and psychiatric manuals for many years, and eventually triggered a decisive turn within psychoanalysis itself.⁷⁰ But it also, and to this day, continues to haunt and horrify our collective consciousness and imagination, despite the constant evolution of what, from a clinical point of view, counts as a perversion or “paraphilia.”⁷¹ The figure of the sexual pervert is also the figure of perversity and evil, and even, in novels or films, the figure of physical monstrosity. “Sexual predators” and “monsters” continue to haunt the flow of daily news and popular fiction.⁷²

With Bertrand, and psychiatry’s prolific response to the challenges his case presented it with, a new field was opened up—that of psychosexual pathologies, or sexual aberrations. In addition to necrophilia, the phenomena of bestiality (later known as “zoophilia”), pornography, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism, and sexual inversion were all identified, most often under different names, and on the basis of examples borrowed from literature, history, or philosophy, rather than from empirical cases. In addition, they were loosely connected with one another. What matters, though, is that a new clinical field was delimited—that of the psychosexual—and a whole new set of pathologies, known as perversions of the sexual instinct, was “recognized.” Not only was sexual activity displaced from the sexual acts themselves to the desires that produced them, or failed to produce them (this move, you will recall, is one that Foucault attributes to the emergence of the problematic of *epithumia* in late antiquity and early Christianity), but also sexual desires were clinically framed, that is, integrated into a strict distinction between a normal and deviant sexuality. Thus, “innate” homosexuality was seen as a morbid desire for someone of the same sex, necrophilia as a morbid desire for an inert and partial subject, fetishism a morbid desire for a partial object, rather than a whole person, and so on.

But this displacement, and the fact that the clinical gaze is now directed at the sexual desire, rather than the sexual act, has a further consequence. With the Bertrand case in 1849, the perception of what is sexual, or what can be perceived as sexual, is altered dramatically: Sexual perversions are

no longer simply the (normative) result of the psychiatrization of unusual erotic tastes, which already existed. Henceforth, psychiatrists will see sexuality where they previously did not, and will be able to detect the homosexual in the friend, the fetishist behind the specialized thief, the sadist behind the zealous or strict tutor.⁷³ Many crimes of blood will become crimes of sex; many ill treatments will be attributed to a morbid eroticism; and in the face of a strange taste for fabrics, pigtailed, or nails, psychiatrists will do their utmost to detect the point, at times minuscule, that will enable them to confirm their intuition and wrap the individual as a whole in the cloak of sexuality.⁷⁴ What was once thought to be a merely violent act is now *seen* as the manifestation of a sexual perversion—that is, as the result of a specific kind of desire. The clinical gaze has become sexualized, as well sexualizing, and the *homo eroticus* has become *homo sexualis*. Childhood itself, once thought presexual, falls under this new paradigm in the 1880s and 1890s, at least to the extent that any adult sexual perversion can, in theory at least, be traced back to a precocious or perverse infantile sexuality. Since it cannot be associated with any specific organ or type of act, the sexual instinct can manifest itself anywhere, and in a potentially infinite number of ways. This is how M. P. Legrain puts it:

The sexual instinct is a physiological phenomenon in every normal being endowed with life. It is a need of a general order and in consequence it is useless to look for its localization, as one has done, in any particular part whatever of the organism. *Its seat is everywhere and nowhere . . .* This instinct is therefore independent of the structure itself of the external genital organs, which are only instruments in the service of a function, as the stomach is an instrument in the general function of nutrition.⁷⁵

The natural and at the same time disturbing conclusion to be drawn from this is that if the seat of the sexual instinct is “everywhere and nowhere,” its diseases are also everywhere and nowhere.⁷⁶ The “discovery” of the sexual instinct is the discovery of not just one instinct among many, but, potentially at least, the key to understanding all the other instincts, and psychical life as a whole: “The sexual instinct,” Heinrich Kaan writes in *Psychopathia sexualis*, “controls all mental and physical life.”⁷⁷ As such, it can even account for pathologies that are apparently entirely unrelated to sexuality. By the time Freud arrived on the scene, the following statement, which he formulated in 1905, reflected the view of many psychiatrists:

People whose behavior is in other respects normal can, under the domination of the most unruly of all the instincts, put themselves in the category of sick persons in the single sphere of sexual life. On the other hand, manifest abnormality in the other relations of life can invariably be shown to have a background of abnormal sexual conduct.⁷⁸

As he puts it later on in the same essay, experience has shown him that a large number of physiological symptoms and pathologies among his patients were in fact expressions of their sexual life and constituted their sexual activity.⁷⁹ Equally, though, as Krafft-Ebing insisted before Freud himself, the sexual instinct is also the root of the noblest feelings, the highest values, and the most treasured accomplishments of civilization, such as art and poetry, ethics, and religion.⁸⁰ G. Stanley Hall summarizes the state of psychiatry at the turn of the twentieth century: “Sex is the most potent and magic open sesame to the deepest mysteries of life, death, religion, and love.”⁸¹ Sexual desire, in other words, explains just about everything.

But to explain everything, it needs to be *interpreted*: Psychiatry is a new hermeneutics of desire. To arrive at the desire behind the act, which itself is not necessarily sexual, the psychiatrist needs to overcome various obstacles, look beyond mere appearances, learn to decipher a world of sexual signs, and see the world through this new grid. Each and every one of us, in turn, and through various means, is encouraged to put on the same glasses, and learn to recognize him- or herself as a subject of (sexual) desire—and yes, if he or she looks hard enough, as a sexual pervert. Often, but not always, this hermeneutics includes confession as one of its techniques: “Tell me your sexual desire, and I’ll tell you who you are.”⁸² Individuals are encouraged to open up and reveal their innermost desires, which they do with a combination of guilt (inasmuch as those desires contravene the “normal,” socially accepted desires) and relief, if not zeal (inasmuch as they indeed discover the truth about who they are and gain access to their own singularity through this process of identification). Most of the time, though, at least before the advent of psychoanalysis and sexology, this new hermeneutic translated into sexual terms police investigations and records, as in the case of the fetishist, who hides his true nature behind the theft of a certain kind of object.

It is easy to understand how this hermeneutic was also, and from the very start, a therapeutic, aimed at normalizing sexual desire. Given that the dividing line no longer runs between desire and chastity, but between nor-

mal and pathological desires, abnormal desires need to be made “normal” again—that is, compatible with genital sexuality, and the expectations to which it corresponds (marriage, reproduction, family)—with the help of a variety of methods. The psychological therapy of perversion is a system of correction aimed not at the acts themselves, but at their cause (desire). It becomes a matter of correcting, redressing, or putting right the psyche, in the same way that, under disciplinary power, it is a matter of correcting and rectifying bodies. Unsurprisingly, the methods advocated often resembled the therapies of desire inherited from the Christian pastorate: Psychiatry was (and in many ways remains) a practice of subjectivation, and often subjection. At times, the normalizing power of psychiatry targeted the body itself, and required the invention of an impressive range of measures and devices, from special belts and genitalia protections to electrical shocks, a rigorous diet, and regular physical exercise.⁸³ An example is infantile masturbation, which became something of an obsession in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and led to an extraordinary and at times tragic struggle against that perceived threat—one that involved the combined effort and expertise of medicine, disciplinary and parental power, and pedagogy. Manuals, such as Hermann Rohleder’s treatise on masturbation, or G. Stanley Hall’s monumental work on the psychology, sexuality, and education of adolescents, were written to tell doctors, parents, and educators how to tackle the problem.⁸⁴ Hall, for example, advocates work, early rising, good music, cold washing, hard beds, light covering, pockets placed to the side and not too deep, as well as moral education.⁸⁵ Mostly, though, psychiatry tried to act on the desires themselves, and their physiological place of origin, the mind. It developed clinical therapies of desire and techniques of correction, which ranged from entertainment and education to certain drugs (for example, bromide) and hypnosis. Kraepelin, Krafft-Ebing, and August Forel, for example, were all convinced of the virtues of hypnosis. Kraepelin found it particularly effective in curing homosexuality, as it allowed many patients fully to “recover” from that disease, and even to marry.⁸⁶ Forel also saw it as an essential tool in “the struggle against bad, morbid habits, and perverse character traits.”⁸⁷ For most psychiatrists, though, perverse desires were best countered not by having recourse to coercion, but by actively stimulating other, healthy desires. Thus, Dr. Laups claims, homosexuality is more likely to be cured if a patient is encouraged “to frequent an elegant, honest, or at least pleasant, feminine milieu,” rather than being forced to visit prostitutes. Then,

and only then, he says, “will you be able to see emerge within him a normal passion.”⁸⁸

The claim I have been making in this chapter is that the conditions of possibility of the concepts of sexuality, sexual instinct, and drive, as framing a new sense and experience of desire, lie not with some deep psychic or libidinal reality, the truth of which psychiatry and psychoanalysis would have finally discovered, but with a specific historical context, a specific construction of human nature, and a specific regime of power. If, today, who we are, our sense of identity, our experience as subjects, is so bound up with what, unproblematically and as a matter of course, we refer to as our “sexuality”; if sexuality is so commonly thought to be one of the keys to our innermost self, as opposed to a mere biological phenomenon, driven by necessity; if desire is so obviously “sexual,” it is because, far from signaling a natural phenomenon that falls outside the domain of historical emergence, sexuality is, in the words of A. Davidson, “the product of systems of knowledge and modalities of power” that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and that “bear no claim to ineluctability.”⁸⁹ It is a product of a style of reasoning, and thus a rationality, that challenges and at the same time supplements the rationality of interest and motive of liberal governmentality.

I have shown how “sexuality” and “sexual desire” emerge as a result of a specific operation, or a specific graft: that of the newly conceived medical paradigm of the normal and the abnormal, or the pathological, onto the old concept and problematic of the flesh and concupiscence, inherited from Christian theology and pastorate. The graft gives birth to the idea of the sexual instinct or drive. We need to emphasize this, not only for reasons of historical accuracy, but also to recognize the role of the medical discourse in our understanding of ourselves, of the sort of subject we are, and the manner in which an entire domain, which was once articulated around the distinction between the permitted and the prohibited, and within the discourse of the Law, was rearticulated around the distinction between the normal and the abnormal, or the pathological. As a result, if we are going to use the concept of sexuality in any other way, outside the discourse of psychiatry and its intrinsic normativity, we need to know what we’re up against. We must ask whether sexuality can be so easily wrested from that discourse, about the conditions under which this could be done, and the reasons why one would want to twist free of that discourse. All of this is to say that the simple association of terms—namely, “sexual desire”—that is

now often taken for granted has a precise history and, like the concept of interest, corresponds to a certain articulation between a type of discourse, a kind of experience, and a specific form in which power is exercised. It is not, then, as if *sexual* desire were a special kind of desire, or even, as some psychiatrists—Freud most emphatically—have claimed, the source of all desires and the key to understanding “human nature.”

I have also shown how the emergence of *sexual* desire conflicts with, but also supplements, the construction of desire as interest, and as defined by the liberal paradigm and the discourse of political economy. This means that, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, but especially in the years 1880–90, the subject of desire is defined according to two different rationalities, that of the *scientia sexualis* and that of political economy, or that of the sexual instinct and that of economic interest. Both rationalities claim to have discovered the fundamental mechanism of human subjectivity and action, or the key to solving the problem of human nature; both present themselves as the new *mathesis universalis*. Both are normative discourses, which signal the shift from sovereign, juridical power, to biopower, or from the subject of the law to the living subject. At the heart of biopower, we saw, is the naturalness of desire as interest. But we also saw how biopower discovers this other, wilder side of desire: the world of instincts, the perversions of which can lead to the strangest and most disturbing pathologies.

At the same time, our reading of various sources in psychiatry has shown that, despite the best efforts of its main representatives, the problem of perversity and wickedness continued to encroach on the clinical concept of perversion. As will become more apparent in my discussion of psychoanalysis, that dimension is one that, in the end, Freud himself recognized as irreducible, and that rendered necessary a clear distinction between the sexual *instinct* and the death *drive*. In that respect, psychoanalysis both extends and breaks with the discourse of psychiatry as I have presented it. Specifically, I shall argue that, while clearly anchored in the discourse of psychiatry, and the *scientia sexualis* in particular, while clearly indebted to some of his predecessors, and to Krafft-Ebing in particular, Freud breaks with psychiatry on at least two central dogmas.

The first dogma is that of perversion. Freud reopens the question by asking: How are we to understand it? To what mechanisms should we attribute it? As a corollary, he also asks: How should we define “normal” sexuality, and what should count as a symptom, and as a pathology? This

will lead me into a discussion of Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905). My conclusion will be that, almost paradoxically, by broadening and generalizing the sphere of perversions, and insisting, especially in light of his observations regarding infantile sexuality, that perversions—at least those that represent a mere “deviation” from, or “variation” of, the “normal” sexual aim and object, as opposed to the hysterical or neurotic manifestation of an “abnormal” sexual instinct—are themselves “normal,” Freud begins to loosen the strong connection, established by psychiatry, between sexuality and normality, or between the sexual instinct and the sexual object and aim. This shift, as I shall show, comes across most clearly in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” (1915). The second dogma is that of the norm and the normative. Freud's (partial) break with the discourse of norms is a natural extension and radicalization of the first point, and is eventually accompanied by a return of the sovereign paradigm of the Law, which Lacan amplified and systematized. It is bound up with the recognition of a different, nonlibidinal type of drive, namely, the death drive. That drive, along with the oedipal complex, accounts for the rearticulation of desire around the older, “juridico-discursive” order of the Law. My claim, then, is that, by progressively loosening the connection between sexuality and naturalness, and moving away from a possible convergence between its own discourse and that of biology, which Freud had done his utmost to secure, psychoanalysis transforms the meaning of desire itself: From a natural instinct, and through its reorganization around the ancient paradigm of the Law, desire becomes a cultural construction, rooted in the complex play of prohibition and transgression.

5

Instincts or Drives?

THE BIRTH OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

How are we to situate and interpret the history of psychoanalysis in light 111
of the genealogy of sexual desire I've just sketched? In what follows, and
leaving aside the (of course, central) *therapeutic* dimension of psychoanal-
ysis, I shall suggest that, while retaining the overall epistemological frame-
work of sexuality, Freud offers a way out of the psychiatric discourse of
the natural instinct and of perversions as essentially pathological. In fact,
he offers a double way out, one from the top, as it were, and one from the
bottom. On the one hand, and through his analysis of child sexuality, in
particular, and of its pregenital, polymorphously perverse dimension, he
recognizes "normal"—that is, adult—genital and reproductive sexuality
as the result of a perhaps necessary but in any event costly process of nor-
malization: Through repression and sublimation, the libido is made com-
patible with the demands of "civilization," without ever renouncing the
principle of pleasure that governed infantile sexuality and psychical life.
On the other hand, from "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) onward,
Freud is forced to recognize the existence of a drive that is itself not sexual,
and thus not generated from within the economy of the pleasure principle.
This is an essentially destructive form of desire, which can be oriented
toward the self or toward others, and can take the form of ambivalence,
death wishes, sadism, and masochism—and also war, organized cruelty,
and genocide. This destructive drive helps throw light on some of the
disturbing behaviors explored in the previous chapter, yet without situat-
ing them within the rationalities of either sexuality or liberal penology. It
reveals the very limit of both, and forces the latter to explore its connec-

tion with what Lacan will eventually recognize as the connection of desire with the Law, and thus with what, following Foucault, I have called the juridico-discursive or sovereign paradigm of power.

Sexual Instincts or Sexual Drives?

In the sixth and final edition of *Three Essays*, first published in 1905, Freud added an introductory section to the first essay, which engages quite directly, and critically, with some of the basic assumptions of biology and psychiatry regarding the status of human sexuality. Specifically, it seems to question the idea of a sexual instinct that would be reducible to a basic need, such as hunger. The essay as a whole begins with the following statement: “The fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the *assumption* of a ‘sexual instinct,’ on the *analogy* of the instinct of nutrition, that is, of hunger.”¹ It calls this instinct “libido.” It could equally have called it “Lust,” had it not been that the German term is ambiguous, in that it designates pleasure as well as lust; or simply “desire,” which, after all, is the classical translation of the Latin *libido*. In a way, the word itself does not really matter. What matters is the “assumption” that it is equivalent or analogous to the basic mechanism of hunger and nutrition—that is, the mechanism of an appetite that signals a deficiency or a lack that can be satisfied or fulfilled, until its next occurrence. It is precisely this model that—in the sixth and final edition of 1925, at least—Freud sets out to question, transforming our understanding of human sexuality (and of its so-called perversions) in the process, opening up a conceptual space for a sexual desire irreducible to a natural instinct. But that space was fragile from the start, and it remained fragile and not entirely clear throughout, if only because Freud uses the same German word, namely, *Triebe*, to designate both natural instincts and human drives; or, to be more precise, the word *Trieb*, in Freud, hovers, undecided, between instinct and drive. As this is one of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, but also used in different contexts, and by other disciplines, it is important to try to clarify its meaning. In “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” published ten years after the first edition of *Three Essays on Sexuality*, but ten years before its final edition, and on the opening page previously mentioned, Freud tries to clarify the concept by looking at it from the perspective of physiology. There, he says, it seems very

close to the concept of stimulus and the pattern of the reflex arc, with which it is associated. But the instinct differs from the stimulus in at least two ways: It does not arise from the external world, but from within the organism itself; and its impact is not momentary (as in the case of motor flight), but constant. Furthermore, insofar as it operates from within the organism, it cannot be resolved in flight. As a result, it is best described as a need, rather than a stimulus, for the simple reason that needs can be resolved by being *satisfied*. We cannot take flight in the face of instincts; we can only satisfy or appease them. External stimuli impose only the single task of withdrawing from them, through muscular movement. But instinctual stimuli greatly complicate the simple pattern of the physiological reflex, and cannot be dealt with through such a simple mechanism. Their demands on the nervous system are much greater and cause it to undertake complex and interconnected activities that affect the external world until it affords them satisfaction. From the biological point of view, then, and when applied to psychical life, the concept of “instinct” can be defined “as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with body.”² But the question that seems to preoccupy Freud increasingly is that of knowing whether the biological view is itself sufficiently complex to account for the reality of the sexual instinct: Can (sexual) desire be satisfied like any other physiological need, such as hunger? Or is there something about sexual desire that exceeds the—still fairly simple—dynamic of physiological need and satisfaction? This is a question that, in the end, Freud may never have entirely resolved. What is certain is that, while in the end critical of the physiological model of hunger as a way to understand the complex behavior of sexuality, Freud remained hopeful that biology would eventually confirm his own findings and theories.

The difference between the sexual instinct and other natural instincts, such as nutrition, is one that Freud developed at length between 1910 and 1912, and thus between the second and third editions of *Three Essays*. Already implicit, Freud’s distinction between the “instincts of self-preservation” (*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*), or “Ego-instincts” (*Ichtriebe*), and the “sexual instincts” (*Sexualtriebe*) makes its first explicit appearance in “The Psycho-analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision” (1910). In that article, Freud speaks of the “undeniable opposition between the

instincts which subserve sexuality, the attainment of sexual pleasure, and those other instincts, which have as their aim the self-preservation of the individual—the ego-instincts.”³ Elsewhere, however, he also insists that the distinction in question “does not have the status of a necessary postulate” and that it is “merely a working hypothesis, to be retained only so long as it proves useful.”⁴ *Ichtriebe* designates the set of needs (*Bedürfnisse*) related to the bodily functions required for the preservation of life. Freud calls them *Ichtriebe* to emphasize that the ego is the psychical agency responsible for the preservation of the individual. He never developed a systematic or exhaustive account of the various types of instincts of self-preservation, and tends to mention them in general or in relation to hunger as their basic model. They follow from the main organic functions: nutrition, defecation, urination, vision, muscular activity, and so forth. Two key terms in Freud’s definition warrant special attention, namely, “needs” and “conservation.” *Triebe*, in this first sense, refers to vital needs, to what is necessary for us to be and stay alive. And in “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,” written a year later, Freud further characterizes the *Ichtriebe*, and the ego involved in self-preservation, as a reality-ego, to which he opposes the pleasure-, or sexual, ego: “Just as the pleasure-ego can do nothing but *wish*, work for a yield of pleasure, and avoid unpleasure, so the reality-ego need do nothing but strive for what is useful and guard itself against damage.”⁵ Whereas the reality-ego could be described as utilitarian, calculative, and cautious, the pleasure-ego threatens self-preservation through useless, reckless, and potentially destructive behaviors.⁶ In his first theory of drives, Freud uses the word “libido” to refer to the energy and dynamic of the sexual instincts, and not that of the ego-instincts. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to recognize that he does not equate the life of the psyche with the activity of the sexual instincts, and that he is quite aware of the existence of the group of ego-instincts. Similarly, Freud never claimed that every dream expressed the fulfillment of a *sexual* wish, and often asserted the contrary.⁷ To illustrate his point, Freud, like Krafft-Ebing before him, refers to Schiller’s “Die Weltweisen,” and to the distinction made in that poem between “hunger” and “love” as the two basic human instincts.⁸ At the same time, however, he does not simply oppose those instincts. In fact, he derives sexual instincts from the instincts of self-preservation, and infantile sexuality from biological needs. How, exactly?

Although, as I began by saying, the term “instincts of preservation”

appears only in 1910, it is already implicit in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, and especially in what Freud says regarding the *Anlehnung* or anaclisis (attachment) of sexual drives on other somatic functions. Anaclisis designates the primal relation between the sexual drives and the instincts of self-preservation. Initially, the former rely on vital functions that provide them with an organic base, a direction, and an object: "To begin with, sexual activity *attaches* itself to one of the functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later."⁹ This relation is particularly obvious in the oral activity of the newborn, and particularly in the pleasure derived from sucking the breast: "The satisfaction of the erotogenic zone is associated, in the first instance, with the *satisfaction of the need for nourishment*."¹⁰ And yet, Freud is quick to add, "No one who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a beautiful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life."¹¹ How are we to understand this? A specific bodily function provides sexuality with its source and erotogenic zone; that function points sexuality toward an object, namely, the breast. Yet the pleasure that it provides, while initially experienced as a byproduct of the function of the instincts of self-preservation (Freud calls such a pleasure a *Lustnebensgewinn*, that is, an indirect or secondary gain of pleasure), is ultimately not reducible to the satisfaction of the need for nourishment. It amounts to something like an excess of pleasure, an additional pleasure, so much so that, very quickly, "the need for repeating the sexual satisfaction becomes *detached* from the need for taking nourishment."¹² The source of desire is to be located precisely in the fact that the excess in question amounts to what Lacan calls a *demand*, rather than the satisfaction of a need, and thus generates a range of misunderstandings and pathological behaviors. But as far as sexual activity is concerned, Freud claims that it is dependent on a specific bodily function (nourishment) and a specific organ (the mouth), and, initially at least, its satisfaction is identical with the satisfaction of nourishment. And yet, almost immediately, sexual activity detaches itself from the self-preserving activity of the organic, or purely biological, self. This is made obvious in the activity of thumb-sucking, in which the thumb may be replaced by a toe, another part of one's body, or even by the catching hold of some part of another person (most notably the ear), and which signals the beginning of child, that is to say, auto-erotic, sexuality (which includes masturbation). In its initial

phase, sexuality proper, or true desire, that is, as disconnected from biological needs and life's impulse to preserve itself, is essentially auto-erotic and narcissistic (only later is sexuality oriented toward an external object, in what amounts to a return to, or a repetition of, the original situation of attachment). Such behavior is determined by a search for a pleasure, which was originally experienced as the effect of an organic satisfaction—the satisfaction of a need—and which is now sought for itself, as an end in itself. This is a key development, in that, contrary to the biological (and psychiatric) *doxa*, Freud recognizes pleasure, and not reproduction, as the fundamental aim of sexuality: “In man the sexual instinct does not originally serve the purposes of reproduction at all, but has as its aim the gaining of particular kinds of pleasure.”¹³ As a result, the range of objects—whether physiological or manmade—capable of fulfilling that aim opens up quite radically: mouths, breasts, ears, skin, feet, but also shoes, furs, gloves, and so on are all, potentially at least, erogenous zones. With Freud, then, sexuality begins to detach itself from the biological, and evolves out of a process of detachment from the sphere of needs, and from organs as merely *vital* organs. Freud's position is nicely summarized in the following sentence: “The sexual instincts find their first objects by attaching themselves to the valuations made by the ego-instincts, precisely in the way in which the first sexual satisfactions are experienced in attachment to the bodily functions necessary for the preservation of life.”¹⁴ This is why I suggest we translate Freud's instincts of self-preservation as “instincts,” and the sexual impulses or drives as “drives,” or possibly even “desires.” Thus, if we decide to use the term “drive,” rather than “instinct,” it is only to emphasize the point at which Freud severs the sexual instinct from its object (genitals as a *natural* object), as well as its aim (procreation as a *natural* aim), and understands *normal* human sexuality as otherwise than simply natural, or animal: In the end, human sexuality cannot be understood as analogous to hunger, and thus as a mere need; it cannot be satisfied or satiated—neither entirely nor possibly ever (as Lacan will insist). It can only be *appeased*. Despite his wish, *in fine*, to connect normal sexuality with genital sexuality and heterosexuality, and not to sever the link between the biological and the sexual, Freud introduces all the conceptual tools to do away with this normative model and emphasize the remarkable plasticity of sexuality, its ability to go in many different directions and invest different objects. It is now possible to understand how, five years after the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud speaks of an “undeniable *opposition* between

the instincts which subserve sexuality, the attainment of sexual pleasure, and those other instincts, which have as their aim the self-preservation of the individual—the ego-instincts.” The sexual instinct has moved from an initial relation of anaclysis, or attachment, to one of detachment, and now, finally, to one of opposition, and even conflict.

Perversions Revisited

Let me now turn to Freud’s actual account of sexual perversions in *Three Essays*. The first thing to note is that the word “perversion” occurs only halfway through the first essay, the title of which is “The Sexual Aberrations [*Abirrungen*].”¹⁵ The word *Abirrun* is derived from the verb *abirren*, which, my *Wahrig* dictionary tells me, means *den Weg verlieren*, “to lose one’s way,” or “err” (*irren*). *Abirrun* is thus an exact equivalent of the Latin *aberratio*. It has the sense of deviating from a set path or way, from a pre-established goal, or possibly a norm. In that respect, it is close to the etymology of desire—close, that is, to the erring that follows from having lost sight of the guiding star (*de-siderare*). The extent to which Freud embraces this idea, or on the contrary provides us with the conceptual tools to question it, and thus to shake the foundations of the analytic of sexuality as we have encountered it thus far, remains to be seen. The second point worth mentioning is that Freud does not simply equate perversions with aberrations, but sees the former as a specific form of the latter, as a specific deviation of human sexuality from the normal sexual aim and/or object. Before discussing perversions, Freud speaks of “deviations” in respect of the sexual object and aim, and makes very clear that some of them, such as inversion, the use of the mouth or the anal orifice as a sexual organ, masturbation, and so on, which were previously seen as “perversions,” are not in themselves pathological and should therefore not be defined as perversions. “A certain degree of fetishism,” for example, is “habitually present in normal love.”¹⁶ Which lover hasn’t felt sexually excited by the sight of the beloved’s hair, feet, or even shoes? Which lover doesn’t enjoy “tactile sensations of the skin” before attaining “the normal sexual aim?”¹⁷ And who would dispute that strong visual impressions, whether of the naked or concealed body, “remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused?”¹⁸ Similarly, inversion, which Freud describes as a deviation in respect of the sexual object, and as a complex phenom-

enon denoting a range of sexual variations, is not in itself pathological. First of all, it cannot be attributed to a degeneracy of the nervous system, as some have argued, insofar as it is found in people whose efficiency is otherwise beyond doubt, and who are intellectually and culturally highly developed.¹⁹ But this does not mean that inversion is “innate” or, as we would say today, *genetic*: Too many cases of inversion reveal that a childhood experience had a determining effect on the direction of their libido. Does this mean that inversion is “acquired,” that is, adopted by osmosis or imitation? It does not, and Freud seems to reject the very opposition between nature and culture in relation to homosexuality. Instead, he feels we should look in the direction of, first, a certain bisexual disposition, irreducible to any anatomical hermaphroditism, and, second, “disturbances” that somehow affect the sexual instinct in the course of its development. Which disturbances exactly does Freud have in mind? Few are the topics over which Freud’s position seems to have evolved more dramatically. In the conclusion to his remarks on inversion in *Three Essays* (which dates from 1905), Freud states that “we are not in a position to base a satisfactory explanation of the origin of inversion upon the material at present before us.”²⁰ All that he is able to establish is that previous explanations have been unsatisfactory as a result of overstating the significance of the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object. In a footnote added in 1910, however, while still acknowledging that “psychoanalysis has not yet produced a complete explanation of the origin of inversion,” Freud believes that “it has discovered the psychological mechanism of its development.”²¹ Inversion, he claims in that same footnote, is a matter of a strong identification with a mother figure and, consequently, with the subject itself as its own sexual object. Also significant is the absence of a strong father in childhood. In 1915, Freud adds yet another, more definitive footnote, in which he asserts that “psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of special character.”²² Why? Because psychoanalysis has found that “all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious.”²³ Everything, of course, hinges on the possibility of accessing unconscious desires and demonstrating that, in that freer state of mind, which also coincides with pregenital, infantile sexuality, “libidinal attachments to persons of the same sex play no less a part as factors in normal mental life, and a greater part as a motive for illness, than do similar attachments to the opposite

sex.”²⁴ In other words, the choice of sexual object is in itself irrelevant to decide whether a given person’s sexuality is normal or pathological. Freud goes so far as to say that “a choice of an object independently of its sex—freedom to range equally over male and female objects—as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop.”²⁵ Originally, and in principle, human sexuality is homosexual and/or heterosexual. A key consequence of this view is that there is nothing self-evident about “the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women.”²⁶ It is not simply “a *fact* based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature,” but “a *problem* that needs elucidating.”²⁷ We are now, at least in respect of homosexuality, as far as possible from a biochemical explanation of sexual “deviations.” In a third and final footnote, from 1920, Freud returns to the same point. While describing and acknowledging the significance of recent experiments in biology, which involved the castration of various mammals and the subsequent grafting of the sex-glands of the opposite sex, and revealed a more or less complete transformation of the somatic sexual characters and the psychosexual attitude of the animal in question, Freud is reluctant to see them as putting “the theory of inversion on a new basis,” and especially as offering “a universal means of ‘curing’ homosexuality.”²⁸ The danger, in other words, to which Freud draws our attention, and which we have already come across in the previous chapter, is that of the politics of life and, more specifically, eugenics. Finally, and to complete this brief excursion into the evolution of Freud’s position on homosexuality, let me quote from a letter that Freud wrote in response to a distressed American mother, who was seeking treatment for her homosexual son:

Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them. (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc). It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime—and a cruelty, too.²⁹

All this is to say that deviations, whether in respect of the sexual aim or object, are entirely within the norm: “Attentive examination always shows

that even what seem to be the strangest of these new aims are already hinted at in the normal sexual process.”³⁰ This is a crucial development in that, henceforth, the distinction between the normal and the pathological will no longer be one of kind, but of degree: The norm itself, at least when considered from the genetic point of view, allows for a wide range of “deviations” and “variations” before they can be identified as “aberrations” or “perversions.” There is, however, a critical point or threshold beyond which they become pathological. As far as fetishism is concerned, for example, “the situation only becomes pathological when the longing for the fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object and actually *takes the place* of the normal aim, and, further, when the fetish becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the *sole* sexual object.”³¹ In the case of fetishism, a particular body part, garment, or object, which can be attached to, or associated with, the individual to which the subject is sexually attracted, becomes the sexual object itself, ignoring or bracketing the actual person in the process. Similarly, scopophilia, otherwise known as voyeurism, becomes a perversion when, instead of being preparatory to the normal sexual aim, it actually supplants it. These, Freud concludes, are “the general conditions under which mere variations of the sexual instinct pass over into pathological aberrations.”³²

But, one might wish to object, what about more severe or extreme perversions, such as sadism and masochism? They, too, can be traced back to normal—and especially infantile—sexuality. Who, after all, would dispute that “the sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness—a desire to subjugate,” and that the history of human civilization shows “that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct”?³³ Did Zola’s *La bête humaine* not anticipate and illustrate vividly that very connection? Sadism is not perverse—or at least pathological—in itself. Human sexuality is pathologically perverse not when it manifests itself through an aggressive or violent attitude toward the sexual object, but when its “satisfaction is entirely conditioned on the humiliation and maltreatment of the object.”³⁴

Freud’s overall conclusion is that much of what we normally refer to as “perversions” is actually part and parcel of a “normal” and “healthy” sexual life: “*No healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim; and the universality of this finding is in itself enough to show how inappropriate it is to*

use the word *perversion* as a term of reproach.”³⁵ As a result, and as I have tried to show with a few examples, it is virtually impossible “to draw a sharp line” between mere variations within the range of what is psychophysically normal, and actual (that is, pathological) perversions.³⁶ The difference is, once again, one not of kind, but of degree; one (usually) not of content, but of place. But how secure is that difference, exactly? How can one define the threshold beyond which an attitude becomes pathological? Freud himself seems acutely aware of those difficulties. On the one hand, he says, certain aberrations seem so far removed from the normal that we cannot help pronouncing them “pathological.” On the other hand, the subject suffering from the pathology in question will not necessarily turn out to be insane or abnormal in other respects. It is perhaps the recognition of those difficulties that, in a famous article published five years after *Three Essays*, pushed Freud to privilege the vocabulary of “vicissitudes” (*Schicksale*) over that of “perversions” in relation to the sexual drives.³⁷ Drives, he seems to suggest in that essay, are subject to endless peregrinations and tribulations, and resist any easy division between normal and pathological instincts. Instead, he describes the various transformations to which they can be subjected: repression and sublimation, of course, which he describes as “defences against the instincts,” but also the “reversal” of instincts into their opposite (*die Verkehrung ins Gegenteil*), and the “turning” of instincts against the subject’s own self (*die Wendung gegen die eigene Person*).³⁸ The reversal affects only the aims of the sexual instinct—from activity to passivity (as in the reversal of sadism into masochism, or of voyeurism into exhibitionism), and from love to hate (a phenomenon known as “ambivalence”). The “turning” or redirecting of the instinct, in contrast, concerns the sexual object, and leaves the aim unchanged: It is no longer directed outward, at another, but inward, as in, again, masochism, which is sadism turned against the subject’s own ego, or exhibitionism, which redirects the gaze of the subject toward itself. While the examples of *Verkehrung* are clearly perversions, or perverse tendencies as they manifest themselves in infantile or auto-erotic sexuality, Freud’s purpose in that essay is to show how such impulses—the impulse to subjugate, or to look at—can themselves be reversed or redirected.

Bearing in mind all the difficulties that Freud himself recognizes, and the reservations he expresses with respect to the possibility of drawing a sharp line between the normal and the pathological, let me circle back to the point at which, in *Three Essays*, he singles out the crucial role of

certain physiological and moral feelings in the struggle against perversion: “Shame, disgust or horror,” as he writes in 1905, or “disgust, shame and morality,” as he adds in 1915, act like “dams” or “resistances” against tendencies, such as “licking excrement” or having “intercourse with dead bodies.” The latter perversion, you will recall, afflicted Sergeant Bertrand, whose legal case posed a challenge to liberal penology. Paradoxically, it is those “dams” and “barriers,” those artifacts, which, precisely insofar as they limit or stop the flow and pressure of the libido, make us “normal” or “civilized.” I will return to the conflict between “civilization” and the sexual drives in my discussion of infantile sexuality, and emphasize the relevance of Freud’s highly suggestive hydraulic imagery.

The second half of the first essay (sections 4–7) marks a further development in Freud’s account of perversion. He continues to displace the field of perversions and to clarify the role and reach of the sexual instinct in various pathologies. Thus far, it has become apparent that, on one level, Freud reduces the field of perversions, preferring to characterize many so-called perversions as mere deviations of the sexual instinct and indicative of a normal behavior. But in the second half of the essay, he expands their reach by claiming that a wide range of symptoms—from hysteria to obsessional neurosis, dementia praecox, and even paranoia—can be attributed to a dysfunction of the sexual instinct.³⁹ To be sure, the symptoms themselves are not sexual, or are sexual only in part, but the underlying problems and conflicts are. Symptoms, as he puts it, “constitute the sexual activity of the person.”⁴⁰ More specifically, they are “substitutes—transcriptions as it were—for a number of emotionally cathected mental processes, wishes and desires, which, by the operation of a special psychical procedure (*repression*), have been prevented from obtaining discharge in psychical activity that is admissible to consciousness.”⁴¹ As is well known, Freud calls “neuroses” those “wishes and desires” that have not found a mode of expression acceptable to their conscience (their “super-ego,” as he will eventually call it). The symptoms of the neurotic are thus a substitute for impulses, the source and strength of which are located in the sexual instinct. In the case of the hysteric, for example, the illness is caused by a conflict between the pressure exercised by an exaggerated sexual craving and an abnormal resistance or aversion to the sexual instinct. When faced with a real sexual situation, the neurotic, unable to solve this contradiction, finds refuge in illness. If those sexual instincts could be expressed

directly—whether in fantasy or action—and not subjected to the feelings of shame, disgust, and guilt, already mentioned, they would undoubtedly be seen as perversions. In fact, the sexual instinct of neurotics exhibits all the “aberrations” previously encountered: inversion, perversion of the sexual aim (and fixation on the mouth and anus), scopophilia, exhibitionism, sadism, and masochism. This is why Freud does not hesitate to define neuroses as “*the negative of perversions*,” or as perversions in disguise.⁴² Through repression, they have been “converted” or transformed into pathological states. Therefore, it is not the perversions themselves that are pathological, but their neurotic manifestation through repression. As for repression, it is an entirely internalized mechanism originally introduced by social codes and morality, by conventions and guilt. On that basis, it is easy to understand how the likes of Reich or Marcuse sought the end of neuroses and the psychical well-being of mankind in its ability to free itself from the shackles of social conventions and the liberation of sexuality—a position that Freud himself never adopted or encouraged.

In the end, then, it would appear that Freud broadened the field of perversions considerably, not by discovering new perversions, but by discovering repressed perversions beneath the surface of psychoneuroses: “By demonstrating the part played by perverse impulses in the formation of symptoms in the psychoneuroses, we have quite remarkably increased the number of people who might be regarded as perverts.”⁴³ This broadening also, and perhaps more importantly, corresponds to a profound transformation of the very meaning of perversions: From mere abnormal compartments, attributable to a dysfunction of the natural sexual instinct, they have become a constitutive feature of the sexual instinct itself; yet, all too often, and especially where sublimation cannot be achieved, those socially and morally unacceptable sexual impulses are forced underground, only to resurface as neurotic symptoms. More sexually ill, yet less easily recognizable, the neurotic (and, to a lesser extent, the psychotic) becomes the privileged target of psychoanalysis. Freud concludes his first essay with the following remarks:

It is not only that neurotics in themselves constitute a very numerous class, but it must also be considered that an unbroken chain bridges the gap between the neuroses in all their manifestations and normality. After all, Moebius could say with justice that we are all to some extent hysterics.

Thus the extraordinarily wide dissemination of the perversions forces us to suppose that *the disposition to perversion is itself of no great rarity but must form part of what passes as the normal constitution.*⁴⁴

To put it differently, and more simply: There is a specific disposition to perversion, or “something innate lying behind every perversion,” yet that something is “innate in *everyone*.”⁴⁵ What allows Freud to make that claim is “infantile sexuality.”

“The Germs of All the Perversions”: Infantile Sexuality

Freud begins his essay on infantile sexuality by noting the “strange neglect” from which that crucial topic has hitherto suffered. We should be clear about what this means. As we saw in the previous chapter, a significant amount of the psychiatric literature was precisely devoted to—if not obsessed with—preadolescent and adolescent sexuality, and most concerned to educate parents in observing and disciplining their offspring’s own sexuality. In footnotes from 1910 and 1915, Freud actually acknowledges the recent publication of various works devoted to infantile sexuality: G. Stanley Hall’s monumental *opus* on adolescence;⁴⁶ Eugen Bleuler’s article on the sexual abnormalities of children;⁴⁷ Havelock Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*;⁴⁸ and Hermine von Hug-Hellmuth’s study on the mental life of the child.⁴⁹ But, for the most part, psychiatry tended to see and treat early sexuality as a form of perversion, if not degeneracy. Freud, in contrast, sees infantile sexuality as both natural and free, and as a powerful force that remains active throughout our lives. In addition, he sees infantile sexuality as developing much sooner than previously thought—it peaks, he claims, between the ages of three and five—and casting its net over parts of the body, objects, and behaviors hitherto considered not sexual at all.

But, following Freud himself, we should also note that the neglect in question is not merely an epistemological oversight. Rather, it is a function of our own psychical development, and attributable to a specific *amnesia* that afflicts us regarding those early years. That we seem not to have clear memories of our emotional life before the age of six or eight is a remarkable fact, which has not received sufficient attention. We know from our parents and family that in those early years we had a very rich

emotional life, that we experienced love, jealousy, and other strong, passionate feelings—an experience so rich that it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that it could disappear without a trace and not play an important role in who we become later on. If that is the case, then the amnesia in question is of a very particular kind, one that does not simply erase or abolish those childhood impressions, but forces them underground, as it were. It is a forced forgetting—a “*repression*.” And as we know, the repressed tends to return, albeit in the form of neuroses. Thus far, Freud has introduced the thought that the amnesia of our childhood happens not by chance, but as a result of a necessary mechanism. Why? What is it about *infantile* sexuality that requires this amnesia?

The mechanism in question begins around the age of three or four, during the period that Freud calls *latency*. That period is significant in that it corresponds to the time when “are built up the mental forces which are later to impede the course of the sexual instinct and, like dams, restrict its flow.”⁵⁰ Specifically, the child of that age is exposed to “disgust, feelings of shame and the claims of aesthetic and moral ideals,” which are all directed against the sexual drives.⁵¹ It is those strong and negative feelings that define “civilization” and “normality” itself. But if the sexual drives are thus restrained, inhibited, and redirected, by a force that requires the intervention of feelings as powerful as disgust, shame, and morality, is it not because they were perverse to begin with? Is it not because they arose from erotogenic zones, such as the genital, oral, labial, or anal zones, and from sexual instincts, such as scopophilia and exhibitionism, that are essentially *auto-erotic*, narcissistic, and cruel? Cruelty, Freud doesn’t hesitate to write, “comes easily to the childish nature, since the obstacle that brings the instinct for mastery to a halt at another person’s pain—namely a capacity for pity—is developed relatively late.”⁵² The primary force of desire is not love and benevolence, but possessiveness and the instinct for domination. Crucially, and perhaps not entirely satisfactorily, Freud attributes this specific instinct to the pregenital phase of sexual life. Freud’s growing concern for the origin of the aggressive drive and for the deep-rootedness of human cruelty eventually lead him to posit the existence of an entirely different, autonomous drive, which he calls the death drive. Here we must emphasize that if Freud calls infantile sexuality “perverse,” it is partly because its aim and objects differ significantly from “normal” adult sexuality, defined as the life “in which the pursuit of pleasure comes under the sway of the reproductive function and in which the component instincts, under the

primacy of a single erotogenic zone, form a firm organization directed towards a sexual aim attached to some extraneous sexual object.”⁵³ But it is also, and more importantly, because it harbors the seeds of *perversity*—that is, of aggressiveness, cruelty, and the instinct of domination.

At this point, it is unclear whether the limitation of the flow of the sexual instinct is contingent or necessary, and whether it is a function of the natural (or biological) development of the child or of social norms and values. On the one hand, the constructivist imagery of dams, applied to the naturalistic imagery of libidinal flows, suggests something man-made, an artificial construction that is meant to serve a purpose, contain an otherwise uncontrollable and potentially destructive force: “One gets an impression from civilized children that the construction of these dams is a production of education, and no doubt education has much to do with it.”⁵⁴ Everything Freud will say, in that essay and later on, seems to confirm that interpretation. And yet, faithful to his commitment to a form of naturalism, and to his insistence that, in the end, psychoanalysis will have no real legitimacy if its observations and theories are not confirmed by biology, he adds immediately: “But in reality, this development is organically determined and fixed by heredity, and it can occasionally occur without any help at all from education.”⁵⁵ Freud does not provide any evidence to support this claim. But he does formulate the idea—the hope, really—that “all our provisional ideas in psychology will presumably some day be based on an organic substructure.”⁵⁶ In any event, it seems that, for the most part, the construction of the dams that limit the flow of infantile sexuality, and the education of desire, is a cultural affair. But the reason why Freud wants to ground this evolution and construction organically is to demonstrate its necessity and inevitability. Otherwise, the transformation of an infantile, polymorphously perverse sexuality into a “civilized” and “normal” sexuality would remain open to challenges of various kinds, and altogether escape the lexicon of perversion, aberration, and abnormality.

The image of the dam is a powerful one. It is an image of containment and capturing. As such, it can be applied to the more technical psychoanalytic terms of inhibition, repression, and sublimation. But it is especially useful to describe sublimation, in that it evokes the possibility of protecting oneself from a force of nature, but also, at the same time, of using its energy to our advantage and for the common good. A dam, in that sense, is a construction through which a kind of energy (water) is transformed into a different kind of energy (electricity). Through the process of subli-

mation, sexual impulses and desires are “diverted, wholly or in great part, from their sexual use and directed to other ends.”⁵⁷ This redirecting or rerouting of a purely sexual desire toward higher goals and cultural ideals is the very definition of civilization, and the reason why, as Lacan insists,⁵⁸ the economy of sexual *drives* exceeds the mechanics of natural instincts. Freud argues in “On Narcissism” that sublimation “is a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct’s directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality.”⁵⁹ It is, he adds, a way by which the demands of the ego “can be met without involving repression,”⁶⁰ and, for that very reason, an ideal way. In fact, it is the way of ideality itself: It is the source of art, religion, science, and philosophy; it is the drive behind our will to know, to create, and to bring a sense of purpose and meaning to our lives. Yet it is achieved “only by a minority and then only intermittently.”⁶¹ Repression, in contrast, requires the powerful presence of an ideal of a slightly different kind, namely, a “censoring agency” or “conscience”—Freud will eventually call it the superego—against which the actions, thoughts, and intentions of the actual ego are measured. Elsewhere, though, whether in “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in Love” (1912) or “Civilization and Its Discontents” (1930), Freud presents the fates of sublimation and repression as irreducibly intertwined. Once again, his commitment to a form of naturalism forces him into ambiguous formulations, indicative of an unresolved tension. In 1912, for example, he suggests that we be open to the possibility “that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavorable to the realization of complete satisfaction.”⁶² It is as if “renunciation” and “suffering” were an intrinsic and necessary component of the “development” and “destiny” of the sexual drive, as if desire had no other choice than to experience this frustration *in order* to be able to press ahead and not be entirely crushed. But this brutal necessity is that of “civilization” itself. Everything happens as if it were in the nature of the sexual instinct to negate itself, and, in this very negation, to transform and elevate itself beyond nature, to become something more spiritual—the life of spirit itself, a pure desire. Does this sound too Hegelian? There is much Hegel in Freud, as Kojève, and Lacan who followed him, tried to demonstrate. There are traces of dialectical sublation (*Aufhebung*) in the concept of sublimation, and traces of the inhibition (*Hemmung*) Hegel speaks of in the so-called master-slave dialectic in the Freudian concept of repression (*Verdrängung*). The main—and, indeed,

considerable—difference, however, is that for Freud the pivotal moment of repression, and the moment of absolute prohibition, which resounds like the ultimate “no!” is the prohibition of the Mother (or Father) of all desires, namely, the desire of incest. That desire is the single most important threat to civilization; indeed, it is the Desire that, in its very suppression, opens up the possibility of civilization. Freud likes to quote the following, vivid passage from Diderot’s *Le neveu de Rameau*: “If the little savage were left to himself, preserving all his imbecility and adding to the small sense [*le peu de raison*] of a child in the cradle the violent passions of a man of thirty, he would strangle his father and lie with his mother.”⁶³ It is striking, Freud remarks, that as far as the object of normal sexuality is concerned, “the final object of the sexual instinct is never any longer the original object [namely, the parent of the opposite sex], but only a surrogate for it.”⁶⁴ As a result of repression, and “the barrier against incest,”⁶⁵ the original object of desire is replaced by “an endless series of substitute objects,”⁶⁶ which appeases Desire temporarily, but never brings about the satisfaction that it sought initially. That, ultimately, is the reason why desire cannot be satisfied in the way that hunger can, why it is not merely an instinct. Repression is the term and the inevitable procedure that stands between appeasement and satisfaction. As far as the sexual aim is concerned, namely, pleasure—of which we saw that it was obtained in the oral and phallic phases of infantile sexuality—it, too, is at odds with the demands of civilization. Born of the suppression and repression of the sexual instinct, civilization negates it: Our entire civilization, Freud writes in 1908, “is built up on the suppression of instincts.”⁶⁷ It marks the transition from an early, polymorphously perverse sexuality to the possibility of a common, peaceful life and “the noblest cultural achievements.”⁶⁸

Yet Freud never ceased to wonder about the personal cost of this transformative economy of desire. To be sure, there is bound to be a cost to the ego for the *education* and *normalization* of desire. But is that cost acceptable for the sexual instinct, however necessary it may be from the point of view of “civilization”? Freud remained undecided. “Our present-day ‘civilized’ sexual morality,” he writes, is so restricted, and so deeply rooted in repression, that it generates all sorts of social pathologies. If “sexual freedom is still further circumscribed and the requirements of civilization . . . ban all sexual activity outside legal marriage” and a purely reproductive sexuality, more and more people will “take flight into neurotic illness.”⁶⁹ From the point of view of sexuality, the institution of marriage is a failure,

in that it forces one to choose between one's "desires" and one's "sense of duty."⁷⁰ The "damage done by civilized sexual normality"⁷¹ cannot be underestimated—to the extent that we may be perfectly entitled to ask "whether one's 'civilized' sexual morality is worth the sacrifice which it imposes on us."⁷² But hasn't our sexual morality changed radically, and haven't we heard what Freud had to say? The sexual revolution of the last century had read Freud, and can be said to have liberated sexuality (and sexual perversions) from the highly restrictive and disciplinary normalization of the previous century. Finally, come 1968, desire was allowed to roam free, explore, experiment! As is well known, Foucault wanted none of it. For to free desire from the shackles of bourgeois morality and the repressive analytic of sexuality is to run the risk of reasserting, ever more strongly, the rights of the very civilization of desire that Foucault wanted to question. In addition, and as we have already seen, the science of sexuality keeps "discovering" new paraphilias and replaces old perversions with new ones, thus reinforcing the idea of a sexual force or energy leading to pathologies of various kinds. Finally, from a Freudian point of view, one would need to ask about the narcissistic origin and the perverse consequences of those desires that are supposedly in need of being liberated.

Desire beyond Pleasure: From Perversion to Perversity

In his famous article of 1920, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud calls into question one of the basic tenets of his theory of drives, according to which pleasure is the ultimate aim of psychical life, and one that, for that very reason, is subjected to inhibition, repression, and sublimation. It is perhaps important, at this point, to recall that, in his so-called first theory of drives, Freud had acknowledged that, while there is a strong tendency toward the pleasure principle, it would be foolish to conclude that our psychical life is governed by it entirely. It is obvious, he says, that this tendency is opposed by many other forces or circumstances, such as the reality principle, which forces us to postpone our pleasure and sometimes arrive at a compromise, or the mechanism of repression and neurosis, which signals the presence of a pleasure or desire that ought not to be felt as such or is somehow forbidden. But those examples, or circumstances, do not call into question the reality and force of the pleasure principle, and thus of the primacy of the sexual drive in the general economy of psychi-

cal life. As late as 1930, Freud claims that “the purpose of life is simply the program of the pleasure principle,” a principle that “dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start.”⁷³ The 1920 essay itself begins by reasserting the idea that mental events are “automatically regulated by the pleasure principle,” and generally “set in motion by an unpleasurable tension,” which the psyche does everything in its power to lower and keep to a minimum.⁷⁴ This, in turn, means that the so-called pleasure principle is primarily and minimally defined as a general tendency to avoid unpleasure. It is, to use Fechner’s vocabulary, a “tendency towards stability” and a “principle of constancy.”⁷⁵ Following Barbara Low, Freud also calls it the Nirvana principle.⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, Freud mentions elsewhere the worldly wisdom of the East, and the practice of yoga in particular, as techniques through which one is supposedly able to fend off suffering and arrive at a stable, quiet state, far away from the tumult of life and the unease of desire. In “The Economic Problem of Masochism” (1924), however, Freud identifies the main problem with the view he expressed in 1920: As the tendency to reduce all tensions and excitations, and thus avoid unpleasure, the Nirvana principle is actually very different from, if not opposed to, the pleasure principle, and especially sexual activity, which thrives on tensions and excitations. The latter, as various schools of philosophy, whether of the East or the West, would argue, is precisely the source of much suffering and, as such, the primary target of the technologies of the self they promote. For Freud, however, sexual love is and will always be the highest expression of our ability to experience pleasure, and thus the ultimate standard by which we measure what we call happiness. From the psychoanalytic perspective, then, insofar as a structural tendency to equalize or reduce differences can be detected at the organic level, one is entitled to speak of a death instinct at the heart of life itself, entirely distinct from the libido and the life-preserving instincts. But it is also important to recall that Freud had presented his first theory of drives, which distinguished the life-preserving instincts from the sexual ones, as one that was not set in stone, and could be revised, should it prove necessary or simply useful to do so. This is precisely what “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” does. Yet the second theory, which distinguishes the sexual *and* self-preserving drives from the death drive, or *eros* from *thanatos*, is equally, if not more, fragile. Freud himself does not hesitate to describe it as “speculation, often far-fetched speculation,”⁷⁷ and to admit, toward the end of his essay, that he is not entirely “convinced of the truth of the hypotheses” he has put

forward.⁷⁸ Speculation is indeed the right word: Freud speculates about the relation between life and death from a biological and metaphysical (especially Schopenhauerian) perspective, and about the possibility of bringing together a metaphysics of desire and a biology of drives. Yet, in the years that followed his essay, and until the very end of his life, Freud became increasingly convinced of the existence of the drive or inclination in question. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), for example, Freud reminds his reader of the conclusion at which he arrived ten years earlier, according to which “besides the instincts to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primeval, inorganic state.”⁷⁹ But most striking is that Freud does not hesitate to qualify the instinct or drive in question as “daemonic” and “evil,” and thus brings together the biological and the religious, the clinical and the moral.

Before I turn to the theory in question, let me identify some of the motivations that led to it. Obviously, there needs to have been something, at the practical, clinical level that resisted being integrated into the initial distinction and typology, something that escaped the economy of both the sexual and self-preservation instincts, both the principle of pleasure, or utility, and that of reality, or survival. There must have been a particular problem or comportment that Freud had overlooked, or had never looked at from the right angle, in order to warrant such a flight of the imagination. In fact, there were several. There was, to begin with, a phenomenon of a particular kind, namely, the compulsion to repeat. But there were also certain feelings, such as ambivalence, aggressiveness, cruelty, sadism, and masochism, which Freud had already discussed at length, but in a way that was not entirely satisfactory. Finally, there was a certain (traumatic) event, namely, the Great War. Yet—most problematically, in my view—Freud thought those clinical phenomena and experiences to be sufficiently united, sufficiently anchored in the depths of the human psyche, and sufficiently recurrent to reveal the existence of a single, essentially destructive drive. This is how the dualism of love and hunger, inspired by Schiller, was eventually replaced by that of *eros* and *thanatos*, partly inspired by Heine who, in his *Gedanken und Einfälle*, asks God to grant him, in addition to a humble cottage with a view, “the joy of seeing six or seven of his enemies” hang from the trees before his windows.⁸⁰

Let me analyze those motivations in turn. The first phenomenon that seems to escape the economy of the pleasure principle, and that eventually

led Freud to posit the existence of a death drive, is what he calls the compulsion to repeat (*Wiederholungszwang*). Very early on, if not from the start, psychoanalysis was confronted with phenomena of repetition, notably through the phenomenon of repression. Neuroses, we recall, are failed repressions, or repressions that return as pathologies. But the *compulsion to repeat* designates a phenomenon of a different kind. It signals an urge to return to, or revive, negative, even traumatic experiences, and thus constitutes a type of repetition that cannot be reduced to a wish for libidinal satisfaction, or to a mere attempt to master and dominate unpleasant experiences. This is the substance of the first section of “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in which Freud calls into question his own previous belief in the regulation of mental events by the pleasure principle, and even in the reality principle as interfering with, but never replacing, the pleasure principle: unpleasure for one system, for example, the ego, is simultaneously pleasure for another, for example, the superego. Progressively, then, Freud came to the conclusion that the reality principle, and even the theory of repression, which involves a conflict between various tendencies of the psychological apparatus, is not sufficient to account for all unpleasurable experiences. What we are now faced with, Freud goes on to say, is a *compulsion to repeat* that includes “no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctual impulses which have since been repressed.”⁸¹ There is, as if built into the human psyche, Freud concludes, a tendency toward unpleasure as such. How, otherwise, could we explain the fact that traumas tend to recur, in dreams, for example:

The study of dreams may be considered the most trustworthy method of investigating deep mental processes. Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little.⁸²

It astonishes people far too little, because they fail to understand that, for the most part, the function of dreams, at least as presented by Freud since *The Interpretation of Dreams*—is wish-fulfillment (*Wunschbefriedigung*).⁸³ Now, it is precisely this function that is upset or diverted in the case of trauma, and in the dreams of patients suffering from traumatic neurosis. Childhood traumas, such as the loss of a loved person, or a deep sense of

failure, which contribute to the sense of inferiority so common in neurotics, are also subjected to the same repetition, in analytic transference in particular:

Patients repeat all of these unwanted situations and painful emotions in the transference and revive them with the greatest ingenuity. They seek to bring about the interruption of the treatment while it is still incomplete; they contrive once more to feel themselves scorned, to oblige the physician to speak severely to them and treat them coldly; they discover appropriate objects for their jealousy . . . None of these things can have produced pleasure in the past, and it might be supposed that they would cause less unpleasure today if they emerged as memories or dreams instead of taking the form of fresh experiences. They are of course the activities of instincts intended to lead to satisfaction; but no lesson has been learnt from the old experience of these activities having led instead only to unpleasure. In spite of that, they are repeated, under pressure of a compulsion.⁸⁴

All this is to say that the repetition or return of an experience of unpleasure is, from the point of view of the analytic of sexuality, a mystery, and possibly the indication of an altogether different form of urge, compulsion, or drive. The question, of course, is why. What force overrides, or perhaps precedes, this deeply rooted search for pleasure, which is the very aim of our sexual activity, and which Freud spent so much time and energy analyzing? What is this force that disrupts the entire libidinal economy, and opens onto a kind of anarchic aneconomy?

The second motivation behind the positing of a drive that is simply otherwise than sexual stems from a reassessment of feelings and perversions that Freud had examined in some detail throughout his life, especially feelings of ambivalence, and aggressive and cruel comportments, such as sadism and masochism. Until 1920, Freud had attributed those feelings and perversions to a natural, though perverse infantile sexuality, and to its narcissistic or auto-erotic tendencies. They could all be traced back to a particular phase (oral, anal, and so on) and a particular type of object, and shown to stem from an inability to move beyond it and follow the normal evolution of the sexual instinct. Yet, either because we are never quite able to overcome our original narcissism or, most likely, because we are inhabited by an irrepressible desire for sovereignty and domination, we desire the death and suffering of others, even — perhaps especially — of

those we love. This is what Freud calls ambivalence. On the one hand, “the death, or the risk of death, of someone we love, a parent or a partner in marriage, a brother or sister, a child or a dear friend” is a cause of great sorrow. This is because they are “an inner possession,” or “components of our own ego.” On the other hand, though, “they are partly strangers, even enemies.” They threaten our own ego. And for that reason, we often wish them dead, or harmed: “With the exception of only very few situations, there adheres to the tenderest and most intimate of our love-relations a small portion of hostility which can excite an unconscious death-wish.”⁸⁵ Those unconscious death wishes inevitably provoke a feeling of guilt, and often lead to neurosis. That is why they can also be expressed in the form of an exaggerated worry over the well-being of relatives, or with entirely unfounded self-reproaches after the death of a loved person. But the question, which Freud is now concerned to tackle, is one of knowing how those impulses, and the sadistic or masochistic instincts in particular, “whose aim is to injure the object, be derived from Eros, the preserver of life?”⁸⁶ How, if not by positing the existence of something like a primary or original sadism, attributable to an altogether different instinct? How, if not by finally recognizing a natural, deeply rooted inclination for aggression and destruction, independent of the sexual instinct? In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud shares his puzzlement at having overlooked the ubiquity of nonerotic aggressiveness, destructiveness, and cruelty for so many years, and having remained somewhat blind to “the undeniable existence of evil.”⁸⁷ Was it because he, too, believed that God had made human beings in the image of his own perfection?

There is, finally, the experience of the Great War, and the immense disillusionment it brought about—a disillusionment caused, on the one hand, by “the low morality shown externally by states which in their internal relations pose as the guardians of moral standards,” and, on the other, by “the brutality shown by individuals whom, as participants in the highest human civilization, one would not have thought capable of such behavior.”⁸⁸ Until then, as I have shown, Freud had seen “civilization” as a combination of necessary repression and sublimation—that is, as a way of overcoming the essentially narcissistic and, as such, potentially destructive and abusive tendencies of infantile, perverse sexuality. He recognized the necessity and inevitability of that process, while also considering the disproportionate cost for the libido, and for the general happiness of mankind. But he did not doubt its efficacy. The situation is now different, for the cruelty and

barbarity that he thought was reserved to infantile sexuality, and could continue to manifest itself in adult life, but precisely as sexual abnormalities, has actually become public policy, and been institutionalized—in Europe, naturally, as Freud wrote his “Thoughts on the Times on War and Death” one year into the Great War, but also in the Ottoman empire, where the genocide of Armenians was being carried out. Naturally, everything that Freud says about World War I pales in comparison with what eventually happened in Germany, and across Europe, between 1933 and 1945. But his overall diagnosis would have remained the same. That terrible and cruelest of wars, he writes about the Great War, “disregards all the restrictions known as International Law . . . ignores the prerogatives of the wounded and the medical service, the distinction between civil and military sections of the population . . . It tramples in blind fury on all that comes in its way, as though there were to be no future and no peace among men after it is over.”⁸⁹ Ultimately, this war demonstrates the failure of the rationality and politics of interest to counter the most destructive desires of human beings: “We had hoped, certainly, that the extensive community of interests established by commerce and production would constitute the germ of such a compulsion, but it would seem that nations still obey their passions far more readily than their interests.”⁹⁰ *What* passion, exactly, does Freud have in mind? The passion to wage war, wreak havoc, destroy, kill, and humiliate. It seems that, in the face of events such as that—to say nothing of the genocides of the twentieth century, or the history of slavery—the “dams” and “barriers” of “civilization,” which deal perhaps adequately with the force of our *sexual* instincts, count for virtually nothing. Ten years after “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in a text that seems to anticipate the atrocities that were about to take place in Europe, Freud comes to the conclusion that “men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved,” but “creatures endowed with a powerful share of aggressiveness,” who see in their neighbor an opportunity “to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him.”⁹¹ It seems that “civilization” flies easily by those dams, whether of “self-interest” or “duty.” How could “civilization” protect us from itself? Or should we continue to attribute those traumas and abhorrent acts to an external force, a threat that “civilization” alone could oppose?

Together, those phenomena lead Freud to posit the existence of a death

drive independent of the sexual and life instincts hitherto recognized. The difficulty and, I believe, highly speculative nature of Freud's hypothesis regarding the existence of a *Todestrieb* comes from the fact that he seems to have confused two different questions, or wanted to attribute two different questions to a single cause.⁹² There is, first of all, the—to this day unresolved—complex question of the meaning, role, and origin of aging and death in living organisms.⁹³ Second, there is the question of specific human tendencies—aggressiveness, cruelty, hatred—that seem to be entrenched in the human psyche, yet not regulated by the pleasure principle. The reason why Freud sees a connection between the two, of course, has to do with the role of the sexual instinct, or rather, of its absence.

In certain (but not all) living organisms, the sexual instinct is identical to the life-instinct, in that it is the mechanism through which life reproduces itself. *Eros* is the force that unites and binds individuals. But that instinct seems to be challenged, or negated, by another, equally strong instinct, which draws life toward the inanimate. Now, perhaps surprisingly, there seems to be a growing consensus among biologists to view the process of aging, and the death to which it inevitably leads, in precisely those terms: not, as was thought for a long time, and still by some, as a process of degradation or physical deterioration attributable to the second principle of thermodynamics; not, that is, as a relation between a biological mechanism, controlled by genes, and a purely stochastic and entropic process, leading to inevitable “wear and tear” and loss of mechanical activity; but as a *normative* property and a *self*-destructive process, or a tendency, on the part of organisms, “to lose their normative power, that is, their ability to change their norms and generate new ones.”⁹⁴ The death instinct that Freud speaks of in his essay is precisely that, namely, an instinct—a force, drive, or impulse—internal to life itself, yet opposed to it. In the contemporary context, it would perhaps be best defined as an internal, destructive constraint, through which the biological norms of an organism are *irreversibly* altered, and its “propulsive” constraints, to use Canguilhem's vocabulary, changed into “repulsive” ones.⁹⁵

In the case of aggressiveness, hatred, and cruelty, and their possible manifestation in sadism, masochism, or ambivalence, the sexual instinct is also neutralized, and another instinct is made to speak in its place. To be sure, its logic is also one of destruction: It seeks to harm, hurt, and possibly annihilate. As such, its horizon is death. But can it be attributed to the same death instinct or “constraint” as that revealed by biology?

Once again, Freud's commitment to a—then still absent—physiological and biological basis for his meta-psychology seems to get in the way of an in-depth analysis of certain aggressive tendencies specific to human life. Isn't it by separating human sexuality from the biological urge to reproduce, and desire from need, that Freud was able to reveal sexuality as the complex and polymorphous site of human desire? Similarly, should our aggressive and destructive tendencies not be distinguished from the—equally complex, but different—biological process leading to the deregulation and destruction of organic life?

There is evidence of such a separation in Freud. In "The Ego and the Id" (1923), to begin with, Freud asserts that sadism epitomizes the death instinct, which he also defines as an "instinct of destruction."⁹⁶ He also mentions feelings of rivalry—often of a homosexual origin—leading to aggressive behaviors. In "The Economic Problem of Masochism," however, Freud reasserts his biological interpretation of the death drive, and interprets masochism on its basis: "In (multicellular) organisms the libido meets the instinct of death, or destruction, which is dominant in them and which seeks to disintegrate the cellular organism."⁹⁷ When the instinct in question is turned not inward, but outward, and as a way of making the destroying instinct innocuous, it is called "the instinct for mastery, or the will to power."⁹⁸ If and when the instinct in question is placed in the service of the sexual function, we enter the field of sadism. This idea is even more clearly formulated in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "It is in sadism, where the death instinct twists the erotic aim in its own sense and yet at the same time fully satisfies the erotic urge, that we succeed in obtaining the clearest insight into its nature and its relation to Eros."⁹⁹ If the same instinct, also placed in the service of the sexual function, is turned inward, we enter the field of masochism. Both sadism and masochism are now clearly presented as expressions of the death instinct, yet related to the sexual function. This is a significant evolution from the 1920 essay, in that the opposition and struggle between death and sexual instincts, or between destruction and creation, is no longer presented as a mutually exclusive struggle, but as a negotiation or, in Freud's terms, a "mixture" and "fusion."¹⁰⁰ This means that, for the most part, the sexual instinct is mixed with varying degrees of the death instinct, and vice versa. Even where the death instinct emerges without any explicit sexual purpose, "in the blindest fury of destructiveness," the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by a remarkably high degree of narcissistic

enjoyment, which reveals the ego's wishes for omnipotence. This, in turn, means that sexuality, to the extent that it is mixed with an aspect of the death drive—and Freud's view is now that it almost always is—is intrinsically perverse. But the meaning of perversion has changed: It no longer refers to a deviation from a sexual norm—with respect to both the sexual aim and the sexual object—that can be traced back to infantile sexuality, and shown to emerge from a slow and costly process of sexual normalization, or an education of desire, but to an intrinsic perversity or wickedness, attributable to a natural inclination to harm, humiliate, and destroy. Freud was never quite capable of accounting for the origin—and by that I mean the emergence—of that instinct. In a way, by calling it an instinct, he suggested that it was innate, and thus rooted in the fabric of life itself. Yet he never accounted for the leap from biological considerations regarding the process by which life turns against itself, and eventually leads to its own demise—a process that, once again, is better known today, yet still the subject of intense debate—to metaphysical considerations regarding the “evil” or “daemonic” instinct of the human psyche. With more time, we could show how Lacan sought to provide a more coherent account of the aggressive instinct, at the cost of severing it from the biological foundation that Freud found necessary, and in a way that allowed him to shed a different light on the question of crime and punishment, irreducible to the assumptions of both liberal, bourgeois penology, and the psychopathology of natural instincts.¹⁰¹

But what matters, in the end, is that the place of desire has shifted within the analytic of sexuality itself: From the expression of a purely biological norm, from which follows the identification of the sexual aim and the sexual object, it evolved into a complex, in fact polymorphous, reality, which, for essential reasons, requires its own education and normalization—one known as “civilization.” Yet that evolution eventually gave way to another configuration of sexuality, and thus of desire. While still for the most part attached to the libido and sexuality, desire also reveals an altogether different, far more threatening and perverse origin, one that is by far “the greatest impediment to civilization.”¹⁰² Through the recognition of the death drive, Freud opens a breach into, and a way out of, the analytic of sexuality, and makes possible another articulation and rationality of desire, the roots of which are ancient. For the desire in question is one that is met by the force of the Law and prohibition, by the necessary sense of guilt and remorse, the construction of a moral conscience, and the need for

punishment, in short, by the sovereign order of morality, and the juridico-discursive model of power. One question, which I will address in my conclusion, is whether this twisting free of the economic *and* sexual regimes of desire necessarily leads to inscribing desire back into the order of the Law, or whether another regime—if that is still the right word—can be imagined. Is sexual desire bound by the normativity of the natural instinct, on the one hand, and the legislative power of prohibition, on the other, or could one imagine an erotics that would exceed them both?

PART THREE

Homo Symbolicus

6

Recognition, That “Most Ardent Desire”

On 5 June 1689, Thomas Tenison, then archdeacon of London but soon to become archbishop of Canterbury, delivered a sermon before the House of Commons. Published the same year, *A Sermon against Self-Love*, in which its author “Implore[s] the Blessing of Almighty God upon their Majesties Forces by Sea and Land, and Success in the War now declared against the French King [Louis XIV],” became somewhat of a bestseller.¹ It opens with the following passage from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy: “This know, also, That, in the last Daies, perillous times shall come: For men shall be lovers of their own selves.”² If one is seeking to draw on the Scriptures to condemn self-love (*philautia*), the passage from Timothy is a good—in fact, the only—place to start. The main sources for the Christian critique of self-love, however, can be traced back to a line of thought that runs from Philo of Alexandria to St. Augustine. The former, a Hellenized Jew who produced a synthesis of Greek philosophy (especially Platonism and Stoicism) and Hebrew messianic thought, regards *philautia* as the central impiety from which other vices flow. His view became popular among various Greek Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the Cappadocian Fathers.³

By focusing his sermon on “inordinate self-love” as the “one Evil, which seems to be the root of all the rest,” and “to which St Paul attributes those Troubles and Miseries which make the world for uneasie a Place,”⁴ Tenison situates himself within that tradition. The self-love in question, Tenison is quick to clarify, is not the self-love that allows every man to “preserve or improve himself,” that is, to take care of himself, of his body and health.⁵

That is the natural and necessary self-love that Rousseau will later call *amour de soi*, and which he distinguishes from the inflamed (or inordinate) and distinctively social form of self-love, which he calls *amour-propre*. What Paul condemns, then, Tenison tells us, is that “false and unnatural self-love,”⁶ that “narrow wicked Affection, which either wholly or principally confines a Man to his seeming personal Good on Earth,” and which opposes the public Good.⁷ In the grip of such an affection, people become “covetous: their Heart is like the Mouth of a devouring Gulf, which sucks in all into itself with deep and insatiable desire.”⁸ This insatiable desire, as I argued earlier, precisely became a key mechanism of the free market and of (neo-)liberal governmentality. But—and this is what I shall argue here—liberalism also rests on self-love as another, equally key mechanism of government, which exceeds the purely economic regime of desire: The role of the state has also become to facilitate, encourage, and educate self-love—self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem—through a variety of techniques and measures, to which I shall eventually turn. What matters, at this early stage, is to emphasize how both techniques of government contrast remarkably with the true expression of desire according to Christianity, which has to do with desiring oneself in God, and with expressing that desire through *caritas*. For only when God—in his infinite benevolence—has been recognized as the true object or correlate of my desire can desire be satiated. We should not be surprised, therefore, to see Tenison condemn self-love as the greatest threat not only to individual lives, but to the social and political order as a whole: “This trait and uncharitable Affection is so malignant an Influence, that where it prevails, no Age can be calm, no Government Stable, no Reform Secure.”⁹ Inordinate self-love spreads “Discord” and “separates Brother from Brother”; it divides friends and introduces hatred where there was love; it leads to murder and theft.¹⁰ To govern well, therefore, is to govern not through self-love, but against it, and according to the principles of charity, “the Soul which animates Society.”¹¹ For “as far as Men do mind and seek themselves alone, so far they dissolve Society, and lessen its benefits,” which are mutual aid and cooperation, or everything that helps them “in times of Sickness, Lameness, Delirancies, and decrepit Old Age.”¹² Furthermore, “if all stood up upon as narrow a Bottom as some do, Government itself would fail, till Men (learning Wisdom by Affliction) finding their personal Interest in the Common Good, should again enter into the Covenants of it.”¹³

Tenison's sermon was by no means an isolated phenomenon. Other sermons with a very similar title, and often the same references to Paul's letter to Timothy, were delivered and published at the time, some at the king's request.¹⁴ Lilly Butler, a contemporary of Tenison, sees in self-love "the Root of all our Evils, of our personal Injuries and publick Mischief, of that Contempt of God and his holy Worship, and of those notorious Violations of the Laws and Rules of Religion and Conscience, which are the just Reproach of our degenerate Age."¹⁵

Across the Channel, and only a few years before those sermons, Pascal, who had abandoned the pursuit of mathematics and physics to dedicate himself entirely to the pursuit of religious truth and the apology of his Christian (Jansenist) faith, held a very similar position:

All Jesus did was to teach men that they loved themselves, that they were slaves, blind, sick, unhappy and sinful, that he had to deliver, enlighten, sanctify and heal them, that this would be achieved by men hating themselves and following him through his misery and death on the cross.¹⁶

We must love God alone and ourselves alone.¹⁷

Anyone who does not hate the self-love [*amour-propre*] within him and the instinct which leads him to make himself into a God must be really blind. Who can fail to see that there is nothing so contrary to justice and truth?¹⁸

As for the specific aspect of *amour-propre* that consists in "our desire for the esteem of those around us," Pascal thought that it was as toxic as it was pervasive: We are so in thrall to pride, he remarks wittily, that "we even die gladly provided people talk about it."¹⁹

None of those attacks on self-love, however, would have been possible without Augustine's canonical condemnation of *amor sui*. A well-known prayer of his, echoed throughout his writings, reads thus:

Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know Thee,
 And desire nothing save only Thee.
 Let me hate myself and love Thee.
 Let me do everything for the sake of Thee.
 Let me humble myself and exalt Thee.
 Let me think of nothing except Thee.

Let me die to myself and live in Thee.
 Let me accept whatever happens as from Thee.
 Let me banish self and follow Thee,
 And ever desire to follow Thee.²⁰

For Augustine, desire (*appetitus*) in its most fundamental form is the manifestation of a radical lack of self-sufficiency, which characterizes human beings. Because human beings are not self-sufficient, and are thus, in quite a fundamental way, separated from themselves, they always desire something outside themselves. Their being is entirely dominated and determined by the object of their desire, that is, by the presence or promise of the desired object, and not, as the Stoics believed, by the suppression of the impulse of desire itself, which leads to contentment in the form of apathy. *Caritas* and *cupiditas*, *amor dei* and *amor sui* are the two basic forms that this craving takes. Happiness, or “enjoyment” (*frui*), occurs when the gap between lover and beloved has been closed, that is, when desire reaches its own end. The question, then, is whether *cupiditas*, the love of this world and of oneself as inner-worldly, can ever attain it. Augustine’s answer is unequivocal: Surrender to the world is never the true end of love, since “temporal things cannot extinguish *cupiditas*.”²¹ In belonging to the world, human beings are “dispersed”;²² they are “estranged” and “exiled”—today, we would say “alienated”—from themselves.²³ They are distracted and curious about the world, that is, oriented toward the things of the world for their own sake, without reflecting on the self itself. This is why, in the *Confessions*, Augustine implores God “to gather [him] from the dispersion [*dispersione*] wherein [he] was torn asunder” and lead him down the path of self-discovery.²⁴ In withdrawing from the world and into himself, Augustine reaches a state not of apathy and *ataraxia*, but of absolute desire: In finding and loving God, he finds what he lacks, the very thing that he is not, namely, an eternal essence, which his very temporal existence precisely threatens.

This, then, is the sense in which God is “the highest good.” It is the good that is not for the sake of another good, but for its own sake (*propter se ipsum*), or the good we actually desire in the pursuit of all other goods. But in desiring this highest good, we love no one but ourselves, that is, our own essence. This is why *amor sui* is not entirely opposed to *amor dei*, but realized only in and through the love of God. For that same reason, however, human beings must learn to hate their temporal, worldly self, and the present to which it is attached. The paradox is that true self-love can be actualized only in self-hatred:

He who knows how to love himself, loves God; but he who does not love God, even though he loves himself as nature bids him, is better said to hate himself since he acts in a way to be his own adversary.²⁵

If, as Augustine says elsewhere, *amor sui est causa omnis peccati*, it is because self-love distracts us from the path of God.²⁶ *Caritas* is not the highest good as such, but the road that connects us to that good. It is not the love that is directed at myself, or the disordered desire for temporal or mutable goods, but the desire for the highest good.²⁷

Imagine, then, the dismay of those Fathers of the Church and men of faith, or the reaction of mystics such as Catherine of Siena²⁸ or Jean-Joseph Surin,²⁹ had they known of the initiative by the California State Department of Education in the late 1980s to set up a “Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility.” In January 1990, the task force, composed of twenty-six members, produced a report entitled *Toward a State of Self-Esteem*.³⁰ The report is dedicated to one of its members, Virginia Satir, who died before its publication. A social worker, family therapist, and cofounder of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, she was herself the author of a widely read book called *Self-Esteem*.³¹ In it, we find her very own “declaration of self-esteem,” initially written in response to an adolescent in distress: “In all the world,” she writes in her wisdom, “there is no one else exactly like me. Everything that comes out of me is authentically me. Because I alone chose it—I own everything about me. My body, my feelings, my mouth, my voice, all my actions, whether they be to others or to myself . . . I own me, and therefore I can engineer me. I am me and . . . I AM OKAY.” What a relief to know that she is, the cynic might think, and a greater one still that there is no one else like her!

Remarkably, and in direct opposition to the documents previously mentioned, the report identifies low self-esteem as the cause of “the major social ills that plague us all today” and, quite logically, high self-esteem as a “social vaccine.”³² What the social body suffers from, fundamentally, is precisely what was once seen as the root and foundation of all sins: Educational failure, violence, crime, delinquency, failed relationships, depression, drug dependency, child abuse, teen pregnancy and eating disorders are all, directly or indirectly, the result of low self-esteem. And the role of the state of California is “to educate all Californians” to attain higher levels of self-esteem, or inject a good dose of the real thing into its sick social body.³³ How? Through the family and well-designed media campaigns, by teaching parents about self-esteem, and the importance of instilling it in

their children; through schools, by raising awareness among teachers, and creating specialized workshops and seminars; through local communities, whether secular or religious, and their ability to give young people the acceptance and affirmation, the sense of belonging they seek (and often find in gangs and other criminal organizations); through an adequate (but limited) welfare system, which discourages “learned helplessness”; through the workplace, finally, and its ability to put in place mechanisms of recognition.³⁴ In the end those recommendations were not implemented, and the task force was shut down. Still, *Toward a State of Esteem* was the best-selling state document of all time, at 60,000 copies; and more than forty of California’s fifty-eight counties formed self-esteem task forces.

The temptation to dismiss this entire experiment as, well, “Californian” is, I agree, great. We’d be hard pressed to imagine a similar task force being set up in Texas or Wyoming. Still, I see an initiative such as that one, which is taken up by, and carried out in, numerous publications, websites, and television shows, as well as more traditional institutions such as the family, the school system, and psychotherapy, as requiring a fundamental shift in the way that we understand self-love, and the self’s relation to itself.³⁵ In other words, I want to ask about the transformation, internal to the history of the self, such that the self can not only become the object of its own desire (as opposed to desire being directed at God, or my neighbor) but can also be encouraged, even celebrated as such.

What happened? What transformations must have taken place, what conditions met, for this reversal of the role and value of self-love—of self-confidence and self-esteem—to come about? To what should we attribute the positive affirmation of a type of desire that was combated for over a thousand years? How did we end up governing ourselves—our own self and the self of others—through categories and practices once decried as unnatural and anti-Christian?

The Emergence of Recognition: Rousseau on Self-Love

It seems to me that the roots of this remarkable reversal of fortune of self-esteem and, more broadly, of self-love run deep. They can be traced back to philosophers of the late eighteenth century, and to Rousseau in particular. Under the notion of *amour-propre*, and later on, under that of “recognition,” self-love came to be seen as a natural and necessary dimen-

sion or moment of the constitution of the self, and of the self's relation to others. The concept of recognition was introduced precisely to point out the necessarily intersubjective dimension of the self, that my sense of self is *irreducibly* bound up with the manner in which others see me. To the extent that it signals the emergence of a new *regime* of desire—as opposed to the recognition of a form of desire that tears us away from the highest desire, or the good life—it is a desire with and according to which one is expected to govern oneself, as well as others. At the same time, philosophical discourse itself would have remained ineffective had it not found active relays in other discourses and practices, such as the law or psychology, as well as in an entire social semiotic, which includes its own grammar, symbols, and representations.

The case of Rousseau is particularly relevant because it articulates clearly this reversal of fortune of self-love, and opens up the different ways in which the question of recognition has been taken up. In that respect, I find Frederick Neuhouser's claim that “Rousseau is the first thinker in the history of philosophy to place the striving for recognition from others at the core of human nature” persuasive, and I will use his detailed and subtle analysis as a guiding thread.³⁶ There are two key aspects, however, that, from the point of view of a genealogy of desire, Neuhouser leaves undeveloped, and which thus require greater clarification. First of all—and this, I think, has to do with the naturalization of desire I have just mentioned—Neuhouser uses the terms “desire,” “drive,” “striving” and “need” for recognition interchangeably, where Rousseau himself, using a more classical vocabulary, speaks of a “*désir* [desire] *universel de réputation, d'honneurs, et de préférences*,” an “*ardeur* [eagerness] *de faire parler de soi*,” and a “*fureur* [obsession] *de se distinguer*.” The natural desire that is at stake here needs to be distinguished very clearly from the natural sexual instinct or drive, analyzed previously, and even the natural self-interest of individuals (to which it is nonetheless intimately related).³⁷ Yes, it is presented as constitutive of human nature. At the same time, however, it is introduced as a kind of supplement to nature, in that it is not found in the state of nature, but only in the state of culture, in which human beings find themselves from the start.

Second, by speaking of a “human drive for recognition” in Rousseau, Neuhouser is begging the question, for it is precisely in the passage from *amour-propre* to recognition that self-love enters its distinctively modern phase and becomes an agent of social progress, an objective (and not just

an object) of government, a way of understanding and experiencing the self that requires assistance, practice, specific technologies, and a new legal framework. If our age is indeed that of the ethics and politics of self-love (or recognition), that age came into being over time and met considerable obstacles along the way. Only when we recognize the role of biopower in the understanding of ourselves as natural, living entities can we understand the significance of the shift from *amour-propre* to recognition, from a desire that aims to minimize the self in order to make room for its relation to God, to a desire that is oriented toward, and addressed to, the self and aims to maximize its effects.

To what extent, then, is Rousseau a pivotal figure in the appreciation of self-love, and the first thinker of recognition? On the one hand, he reiterates and reformulates the classical distinction between a natural form of self-love (*amour de soi*), aimed at preserving one's life and physical integrity, and excessive or inordinate self-love (*amour-propre*), aimed at gaining the esteem and recognition of others through artificial (*factices*) means. The latter, he argues in detail and in a manner that, again, echoes the criticisms of his Christian predecessors, is responsible for all the social and political ills, chief among them inequality of wealth and social injustice.³⁸ Even private property, which Rousseau clearly sees as a main source of inequality, can be explained by the desire of individuals to be esteemed and admired or, in his own words, "to have a position, to be a part, to count for something."³⁹ Writing only a few years after the publication of Rousseau's Second Discourse, Adam Smith agrees:

It is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty. For to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power, and preheminance? To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation . . . to be the object of attention and approbation.⁴⁰

This, he concludes, is "the *most ardent desire of human nature*." It is therefore not the urgency of self-preservation, but this desire for reputation, honors, and preferences that "make[s] all men competitors, rivals, or . . . enemies."⁴¹ It is not the struggle for scarce resources, but the unfulfilled desire and struggle for recognition that is responsible for antagonistic relations among human beings. Unlike *amour de soi*, which "is content when

our true needs are satisfied,”⁴² *amour-propre* generates an infinite number of desires and artificial needs, which we are never in a position to satisfy, and which, therefore, lead to unhappiness. Furthermore, *amour-propre* demands of others that they love me more than they love themselves, which is impossible, and encourages me to want to become more lovable than anyone else, at least in the eyes of the person I love, which generates feelings of envy, jealousy, and hatred.⁴³ As Rousseau puts it, everyone could not want preference “without there being many malcontents.”⁴⁴ To conclude this first point regarding the evils associated with *amour-propre*, we could say that, contrary to the “savage,” who “lives within himself,” “sociable man . . . knows how to live only in the opinion of others,” and derives “the sentiment of his own existence from their judgment alone.”⁴⁵ As such, he seems to lack all internal resources for self-affirmation, all autonomy, all sense of self that would not be generated by an other: In addition to being unhappy, he lives in a state of alienation, separated from himself. So far, one might think, so Augustinian.

Yet—and therein lies the intrinsic ambiguity—Rousseau sees *amour-propre* as the most basic and irreducible social phenomenon, beyond any illusion to return to, or indeed bring about, the state of nature. In that respect, he opens up a line of thought that will include figures such as Hegel, Kojève, Honneth, and Taylor, a line of thought that sees human desire as intimately bound up with recognition and, consequently, as the drive behind the constitution of a just and equitable social order: I cannot see myself independently of the way in which others see me; it is from the gaze of the other that I gain my own sense of worth and derive the “sentiment of [my] own existence.”⁴⁶ This desire for recognition (and superiority), Rousseau claims, can never be eradicated. Elsewhere, Rousseau speaks of an entirely different “sentiment of our existence,” one that is born not of our comparison and rivalry with others, but of our ability to live and “feel” (*sentir*) life to the full, that is, to make the best possible use of our senses and faculties.⁴⁷ It is rooted in *amour de soi*, rather than *amour-propre*.

The problem that Rousseau identifies here, and tries to solve through the constitution of a republican system of government and an individual or domestic technology of government, is that of a desire that can be satisfied only through the recognition of itself *qua* desire by an other. Far from condemning *amour-propre* outright, then, and calling for its eradication, Rousseau seeks the conditions under which it can be socially and politi-

cally viable, and the ways in which its negative effects can be minimized. As Neuhouser puts it, “his solution to the many problems or evils caused by ‘inflamed’ amour-propre—a solution articulated in *The Social Contract* and *Émile*—requires not the extirpation of amour-propre, but, instead, its proper cultivation so that the quest for recognition is rendered compatible with universal freedom and happiness.”⁴⁸ To eliminate *amour-propre*, he argues further, would thus be to eliminate the conditions of rationality, of love—of subjectivity itself. Consequently, Rousseau’s aim will be to find a way of cultivating it so that it continues to motivate human beings without giving rise to the evils it tends to produce in its uneducated form.

While the terms “education” and “cultivation” refer to a general technology of desire, the two main concepts of “respect” and “esteem,” which I will distinguish and define shortly, designate the two main directions in which recognition is developed, or the two tendencies and domains to which this technology is applied. More specifically, I shall argue that the fate of *amour-propre*, and of its more modern equivalent, namely, recognition, was twofold: On the one hand, and through its close association with the moral and legal concepts of respect and dignity, it was universalized; on the other hand, through the concepts and mechanisms of social prestige and cultural esteem, it was individualized.

Having said that, let me emphasize from the start that the boundary between “respect” and “esteem” is far from stable, and that the same term can be used to point to the two, essentially different, logics mentioned above. Rousseau, for one, uses those terms interchangeably.⁴⁹ A distinction was first—and, I would claim, still tentatively—introduced by Kant in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. *Achtung* (*reverentia*), he claims, at least insofar as it designates the respect that we owe others, differs from esteem and admiration (*Verehrung*), in that it is not a feeling, but a maxim: Respect “is not to be understood as the mere feeling that comes from comparing our own *worth* with another’s . . . but as the maxim of limiting our self-esteem [*Selbstschätzung*] by the dignity of humanity in another person, and so as respect in the practical sense.”⁵⁰ The connection between respect and dignity is key:

The *respect* that I have for others or that another can require from me is therefore recognition of a dignity (*dignitas*) in other human beings, that is, of a worth that has no price . . . Every human being has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow human beings and is in turn bound to respect

every other. Humanity itself is a dignity; for a human being cannot be used merely as a means by any human being (either by others or even by himself) but must always be used at the same time as an end. It is just in this that his dignity (personality) consists [and] he is under the obligation to acknowledge, in a practical way, the dignity of humanity in every other human being.⁵¹

Beyond any interest and calculation, any positive or negative feeling, there is the recognition of a worth that has no price, and the desire in every human being to be recognized as such. We esteem or admire (*verehren*) others for their particular attributes and achievements, and think them worthy of praise or admiration as a result.⁵² But we respect them universally, that is, by virtue of the fact that they are our equal, or that they are rational beings, with duties and responsibilities toward others.

Respect (the Aim) and the Law (the Mechanism)

To begin with, and as Neuhausser notes, the quest for standing in the eyes of others takes the proto-Kantian form of wanting to be recognized as an equal—as a human being, say, who has the same rights and dignity as every other.⁵³ Being “somebody” or “counting for something,” in that context, involves the recognition that one has “a non-instrumental worth or dignity superior to the value accorded to mere things.”⁵⁴ One of the main accomplishments of the legitimate state, Rousseau argues in *The Social Contract*, is to guarantee all its members a substantial form of recognition—namely, the equal legal respect accorded to citizens of a republic. In other words, through the law, the political community itself becomes a major source of the recognition individuals seek as a consequence of *amour-propre*. The role of *amour-propre* is, in that respect, subtle but crucial: Were it not for its propensity to compare the worth of individuals, the more specific idea of *equal* worth would not emerge in the first place. This means that the principles of equality and universality are inscribed, if only potentially, in the desire to count for something—or, better still, someone—in the eyes of others. The role of the law is here distinctive, and different from the one we saw operating as a result of the emergence of the economic rationality of government. What motivates it is less the rationality of interest and utility, and more that of the respect and recognition of the intrinsic worth

and dignity of the human person (an idea that Fichte also developed in his *Foundations of Natural Right*).⁵⁵ In the words of Neuhaus: “In a republic, laws also recognize citizens as free agents (or persons), and the importance of their individual agency is expressed in a system of established rights that impose constraints on permissible legislation and assure each person a determinate and equal sphere of ‘civil freedom’ (S[ocial] C[ontract], I.8.ii) in matters where the general will is silent.”⁵⁶

To respect a person is to recognize him or her as possessing a set of rights that he or she possesses not by virtue of ethical traditions, or as a result of feelings of liking and affection, but by virtue of being a free, rational agent: “Respecting others, then, involves recognizing their fundamental dignity as human beings—as beings whose interests and desires place moral constraints on others’ actions.”⁵⁷ And respect, understood in that way, is also a moral obligation for all such agents: It is a universal that suffers no exception.⁵⁸ Hegel is perhaps most explicit in articulating the reciprocity involved in this process of recognition, or in emphasizing that we can understand ourselves as legal persons only insofar as we recognize the other members of society—and the very idea of humanity—as themselves bearers of rights. In *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, he writes:

In the state . . . man is recognized and treated as a rational being, as free, as a person; and the individual, on his side, makes himself worthy of this recognition by overcoming the natural state of his self-consciousness and obeying a universal, the will that is in essence and actuality will, the *law*; he behaves, therefore, towards others in a manner that is universally valid, recognizing them—as he wishes others to recognize him—as free, as persons.⁵⁹

In other words, the struggle for recognition, which, in the *Phenomenology*, confronts one self-consciousness with another and initially takes the form of a purely *natural* desire to negate or destroy the other, is completed only in and through the universal mediation of the law and the recognition of the other as intrinsically worthy of dignity and respect. In that respect, recognition is the “truth” of desire.

Similarly, once his pupil’s *amour-propre* has been aroused in adolescence, the main challenge of Émile’s tutor is to direct that self-love “towards the specific end of fostering a sense of the moral equality of all human beings,”⁶⁰ and to instill in him “a sense of his essential equality with

all members of his species.”⁶¹ Specifically, by “extending *amour-propre* to other beings” — that is, by according them a kind of dignity that one’s own *amour-propre* makes one seek for oneself, the dignity of a human being as expressed in the idea of moral equality — the hope of Émile’s tutor is to “transform it into virtue.”⁶² Crucially, through this extension, intersubjectivity is taken beyond the point of view of pity, which precedes the emergence of *amour-propre* and signals our ability to recognize the other as a sentient, passive being, sufferer of pleasure and pain, and extended into that of reason, or virtue: If and when we are properly educated, *amour-propre* compels us to abandon what Neuhausser calls our “natural solipsism,”⁶³ and to acquire a perspective on the world that takes into account, or acknowledges, the subjectivity of others. More important still, through this extension, which requires specific training and education, I am able to see myself as if by an other for the first time, and become a subject that judges itself from an abstract, impartial point of view.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, and partly under the banner of human rights, the moral concepts of dignity and respect have come to play an increasingly important role in recent legal history. “The image of another, better world of dignity and respect,” Samuel Moyn remarks, underlies the “appeal” and “utopian dimension” of human rights.⁶⁴ Dignity and respect are even the cornerstone on which some democratic constitutions were erected. But the translation of those philosophical concepts into juridical norms did not happen overnight. To be sure, the French Declaration of Human Rights and the Citizen of 1791 (art. 6) establishes the principle of an equality before the law for all citizens, irrespective of their “dignity” — that is, their rank and social status. But, in this instance, “dignity” does not yet have the moral, Kantian sense it has today. Still, what we begin to witness in the eighteenth century is the separation of individual rights from the ascription of social status, and the emergence of a general principle of legal equality that tolerates no exceptions or privileges.⁶⁵ The so-called Weimar Constitution of the German Reich of 1919 comes closer to recognizing the principle of dignity, but only indirectly, and under the heading “Economic Life” (art. 151). The Irish Constitution of 1937 is really the first example of a constitution that inscribes human dignity as one of its fundamental principles, albeit in a manner that is shot through with religious, Christian vocabulary. Its preamble clarifies its purpose, which is to seek “to promote the common good, with due observance of Prudence, Justice and Charity, so that the dignity and freedom of the individual be

assured, true social order attained, the unity of our country restored, and concord established with other nations.”

Not until after 1945, however, and perhaps only partly as a response to the Nazi genocide, does the moral value of human dignity begin to triumph as a political and juridical principle.⁶⁶ The new idea, now a principle of positive law, is that the human person possesses an inalienable dignity, leading to a necessarily open set of fundamental rights, which can be upheld against the reason of state, while also being guaranteed by the state. Following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which recognizes “the inalienable dignity of the human person,” the world witnessed a normative inflation in the area of the rights of people and groups. The notion of person is itself bound up with the principle of dignity, and the latter roughly corresponds to its Kantian meaning: It designates the respect that is owed to all human beings, irrespective of their race, religion, ethnic origin, nationality, age, mental or physical state, sexual orientation, and so forth. Dignity soon became not only a fundamental right, but the very foundation for all human rights. The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of the Federal Republic of Germany of 1949 is, in that respect, exemplary. Its first article stipulates that:

(1) Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. (2) The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world. (3) The following basic rights shall bind the legislature, the executive and the judiciary as directly applicable law.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which is legally binding for all the members of the union, states something very similar. Its preamble affirms that the union is founded on certain “indivisible, universal values,” the first of which is human dignity. Title I (there are seven titles in all) is entitled “Dignity,” and article 1 stipulates that “human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.” In the “Explanations Relative to the Charter of Fundamental Rights,” it is also stipulated that “the dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right; it is also the foundation of all fundamental rights.”

The normative and foundational value of the principle of dignity is thus essential. Unlike dignity in the old sense, which referred to one’s rank, sta-

tus, and esteem, and which could thus be compared and was only relative, dignity in the moral and legal sense is absolute and universal. This is the new, modern sense, which Rousseau anticipated, Kant formulated quite explicitly in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, and Axel Honneth, in his discussion of Hegel, also stresses. Honneth writes: “From that point on, recognition of someone as a legal person . . . comes to be sufficiently separated from the level of social esteem for that person, so that two different forms of respect emerge, whose manner of functioning can also be analyzed only separately.”⁶⁷ Unlike self-esteem, self-respect requires the recognition of individual rights and the constitution of a universal legal order. This is how Joel Feinberg summarizes it:

Having rights enables us to “stand up like men,” to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone. To think of oneself as the holder of rights is not to be unduly but properly proud, to have that minimal self-respect that is necessary to be worthy of the love and esteem of others. Indeed, respect for persons . . . may simply be respect for their rights, so that there cannot be one without the other. And what is called “human dignity” may simply be the recognizable capacity to assert claims.⁶⁸

Although Feinberg fails to distinguish between the concepts of self-love, self-esteem, and self-respect, he clearly emphasizes the manner in which, and the reasons why, the granting of equal rights enables the development of self-respect. Through the recognition of rights, I am recognized as an equal, and this means as an autonomous, rational or morally responsible agent.

Unlike philosophy, however, the law defines human dignity only negatively—that is, by taking its point of departure in that which is contrary to human dignity and examining the specific instances in which it is violated. It recognizes cases of disrespect, which violate the basic norm of dignity, without which one is no longer recognized as a human being, and imposes that the guilty party, which can be the state itself, transform itself and compensate the injured party. A situation of disrespect, or *Mißachtung*, to use Honneth’s term, is one in which the moral status of a person is violated—through manipulation, degradation, humiliation, or exploitation—and his or her legal existence denied by being excluded

from the possession of certain rights.⁶⁹ And, as the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States indicates, it is through organized, active protest and resistance that those situations are reversed.

Esteem (the Aim) and Solidarity (the Mechanism)

The other main dimension of recognition to have come out of thinkers such as Rousseau, Kant, and Adam Smith is that of esteem. Unlike respect, which involves the recognition of rights enjoyed by all human beings on the basis of properties they have in common, esteem is accorded to persons “for particular qualities, capacities, and achievements that vary widely from individual to individual.”⁷⁰ And unlike respect, which is due to all by virtue of being who they are, that is, free, rational agents, esteem is not something that is due, or due equally. We esteem others for their difference, whereas we respect them on the basis of the universal duties and responsibilities we share with them. Following the Kantian distinction, introduced earlier on, we could say that whereas respect is a maxim, expressed in the moral and legal sphere, esteem is a social phenomenon, long—but no longer, or simply—associated with a form of excellence.

As we have already suggested, Rousseau sees the law as a major instrument through which citizens of a state are guaranteed a substantial form of social recognition, different from esteem, and which compensates for the excesses of the latter: Equal legal respect is a basic feature of the republic, and were it not for *amour-propre*'s propensity to compare one's worth with that of others, the idea of *equal* worth would never emerge in the first place. But the moral respect provided by the republic cannot satisfy *amour-propre*, which seeks signs of one's worth in the eyes of others. This desire to count in the eyes of others, this desire to be recognized by an other, indicates the symbolic (yet vital) dimension of desire, which the legal mechanism of equal respect satisfies only partly. Esteem from others, Rousseau insists, is an enduring and significant human need. As Neuhaus puts it: “A person who lacks standing in the eyes of others is, in some meaningful sense, a ‘nobody.’”⁷¹ As a result, *amour-propre* can never be entirely eliminated, or even neutralized, and replaced with a different type of desire, such as *amor dei*. To govern, whether oneself or others, also means to take into account this deep longing for recognition, which includes self-esteem.

It means to create the environment in which, and the mechanisms through which, each individual life will, in principle (if not always in fact), be valued. This is why, as Rousseau insists in *Émile*, through learning, playing, and working in isolation from others, in accordance with “true” or “natural” values that have not been tainted by fashion and arbitrary opinion, domestic education “must develop in children, before they have learned to give weight to the opinion of others, a significant reservoir of self-esteem,”⁷² or an *amour de soi* that provides the self with the solidity it deserves, and which society, later on, will no doubt test. In other words, the more *self-esteem* we acquire at a young age, the less dependent we are on the esteem of others later on, when it is no longer possible to prolong the dormancy of *amour-propre*.

However, *amour-propre* can also be educated in such a way that human beings are encouraged to “seek esteem from others by becoming useful and (externally) virtuous members of society.”⁷³ In other words, “through education and social reform, the desire to count in the eyes of others can be harnessed and placed in the service of collectively beneficial ends.”⁷⁴ This desire, Rousseau notes in the Second Discourse, generates the noblest and lowest tendencies in human beings: “our virtues and vices, our Sciences and errors, our Conquerors and Philosophers, in short, a multitude of bad things and a handful of good ones.”⁷⁵ Given the right circumstances, this desire can become a force that promotes rather than impedes the human good. It can give rise to “estimable qualities,”⁷⁶ and it encourages citizens to sacrifice themselves for their country by making them sensitive to the reward of honor.

Drawing on this Enlightenment legacy, and on an essay by Stephen L. Darwall entitled “Two Kinds of Respect,”⁷⁷ Honneth formulates the difference between legal recognition (or respect) and social esteem in very similar terms:

What makes esteeming someone different from recognizing him or her as a person is primarily the fact that it involves not the empirical application of general, intuitively known norms but rather the graduated appraisal of concrete traits and abilities. It thus always presupposes . . . an evaluative frame of reference that indicates the value of personality traits on a scale of more or less, better or worse . . . In both cases, human beings are respected because of certain traits. In the first case, however, this is a matter of the

general feature that makes them persons at all, whereas in the second case, it is a matter of the particular characteristics that distinguish them from other persons.⁷⁸

A few pages later, he reiterates the distinction, but this time contrasting the order of the law and that of the symbolic expression of the desire for recognition:

Unlike modern legal recognition, social esteem is directed, as we have seen, at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference. Thus, whereas modern law represents a medium of recognition that expresses the universal features of human subjects, this form of recognition demands a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences among human subjects in a universal and, more specifically, intersubjectively obligatory way. This task of mediation is performed, at the societal level, by a symbolically articulated—yet always open and porous—framework of orientation, in which those ethical values and goals that, taken together, comprise the cultural self-understanding of a society, are formulated.⁷⁹

This “symbolic,” “always open and porous” dimension of desire has by now become a central political stake, one that is driving many social and political struggles, and one also, and by virtue of its openness, that requires the constant invention of new mechanisms and technologies of recognition. It requires the constitution of a community of value, and the recognition of the abilities and achievements of its members according to the degree to which they help realize those cultural values. In other words, the desire for recognition is one that, in this instance, takes the form of the recognition of one’s “contribution.” Naturally, this tendency, as Rousseau emphasizes, has existed ever since society was invented. The very existence of a societal order can be attributed to the deep-seated tendency of *amour-propre*. If that desire is, as Adam Smith claimed, “the *most ardent desire of human nature*,” the question is what form it takes today.

Honneth locates the point of emergence of social esteem in modernity in the break with honor, which defined social status in traditional societies. Within the ethical life of such communities, organized vertically according to a strict distribution of roles and scale of social prestige, honor designates the relative level of standing that people can attain. It is

defined by their social status, rather than by their individual personality traits. No doubt, Honneth adds, this relatively stable system of recognition does not exclude certain struggles, through which certain groups challenge “an unjust appraisal of the worth of their collective characteristics.”⁸⁰ But, he adds, “all of these dimensions of an everyday struggle for honor remain bound to the framework of a corporative system of recognition relations, as long as it does not directly put into question the substantive value-hierarchy that marks the cultural self-understanding of traditional societies in general.”⁸¹

It is therefore not enough to emphasize, as we have thus far, that in the transition to modernity, relations of recognition became detached from the hierarchical order of social esteem. It is also important to show how honor, as the value that determined the scale of social prestige, progressively gave way to another form of social recognition, and thus, as Honneth himself says, another way of governing conducts.⁸² Specifically, it is a matter of recognizing that “the struggle against the nobility’s notions of honor that the bourgeoisie took up at the threshold of modernity represents not only the collective attempt to establish new value-principles but also the initiation of a confrontation over the status, in general, of such value-principles.”⁸³

Now, agreeing in part with Charles Taylor, Honneth claims that a significant part of the social esteem once guaranteed to individuals through stratified principles of honor migrated into the newly formed legal relations, and the concept of human dignity in particular. But legal relations, as Rousseau had well understood, cannot integrate all the dimensions of *amour-propre*, and mechanisms of respect cannot satisfy entirely the desire for social recognition. Social esteem (consideration, approbation, prestige) “can only apply to those traits and abilities with regard to which members of society differ from one another.”⁸⁴ With the gradual dissolution of the traditional hierarchy of values, however, one’s level of social honor is no longer tied to one’s membership in a status group: “The bourgeoisie’s struggle against the compulsion to conduct oneself in a manner suitable to one’s ‘estate,’ to which they had been yoked by the old system of recognition relations, led to an individualization of the notion of who contributed to the realization of societal goals.”⁸⁵ No longer—or at least not to the same extent—are certain ways of leading one’s life and conducting oneself defined in advance as ethically admissible. As a result, social esteem no longer revolves around the recognition of collective traits, or around the

collective honor and group-pride that comes with the sense of belonging to a specific group (corporations, trade unions, religious organizations), but rather centers on the recognition of the capacities and achievements of the individual in the course of his or her life. This “individualization of achievement,” Honneth notes, “is inevitably accompanied by the opening up of societal value-ideas for differing forms of personal self-realization.”⁸⁶ As a result, “the individual no longer has to attribute to an entire collective the respect that he or she receives for accomplishments that fit social standards but can refer them positively back to himself or herself instead.”⁸⁷ A new ethics and, as we saw from the example of the Department of Education of the state of California in the late 1980s, a new politics of the self was thus born. Who I am, the way in which I understand and experience myself, and my sense of social worth, is now increasingly defined by an open-ended, pluralistic cultural framework. The desire for recognition, or one’s *amour-propre*, remains intact, but it is now mediated by the demand—emanating from, but also addressed to, the individual—to be acknowledged as an individual, and from the point of view of one’s “difference.” This is how, according to Honneth, “the concept of social ‘honor’ gradually becomes watered down into a concept of social prestige,”⁸⁸ and “designates only the subjectively definable standard for those aspects of one’s self-understanding that unconditionally deserve to be defended.”⁸⁹ Esteem is now a private (yet necessarily intersubjective) norm through which the accomplishments and abilities of individuals are recognized. No longer linked to legal privileges, or indicative of the moral quality of a person, esteem (as standing or prestige) “signifies only the degree of social recognition the individual earns for his or her form of self-realization.”⁹⁰ Honneth qualifies this relation of the self to itself, or this relation-to-self, indicative of our sense of self-worth, as “self-esteem,” and the social mechanism through which it is achieved as “solidarity.”⁹¹

Yet recognition will take place only to the extent that the self-realization in question contributes to the realization of the goals of society, however abstractly defined. Everything, therefore, hinges upon the definition of this “general value-horizon,” which is supposed to be open to various forms of self-realization and, at the same time, to serve as an overarching system of esteem. And this, Honneth claims, is where the space for conflict and struggle emerges. Indeed, the “abstract guiding ideas of modern societies provide so little in the way of a universally valid system of reference with which to measure the social worth of particular traits and abilities

that they must always be made concrete through supplemental cultural interpretations before they can be applied in the sphere of recognition.”⁹² It doesn’t take a hardened Nietzschean to note that “interpretation” is a form of appropriation, and appropriation is a form of domination: Given the lack of a universally valid horizon of values, Honneth claims, “the worth accorded to various forms of self-realization and even the manner in which the relevant traits and abilities are defined fundamentally depend on the *dominant* interpretations of societal goals in each historical case.”⁹³ The interpretations in question depend in turn on which social groups, at a given time, manage to impose their own accomplishments and forms of life as especially worthy of esteem. In other words, the symbolic space, in which self-esteem is acquired, is itself a space of conflict and power: “In modern societies, relations of social esteem are subject to a permanent struggle, in which different groups attempt, by means of symbolic force and with reference to general goals, to raise the value of the abilities with their way of life.”⁹⁴ The conflicts, then, and the possibility of esteem revolve around the capacity of certain social groups and movements to draw the public sphere’s attention to “the neglected significance of the traits and abilities they collectively represent.”⁹⁵ The terms “traits” and “abilities” are themselves extremely general and open-ended, and can be interpreted in just about any way. In fact, they designate a basis for recognition that goes beyond the traditional—Rousseauist, Kantian, or Hegelian—sense of achievement or accomplishment, and can now point to a very loose sense of identity and authenticity, associated with one’s sense of “uniqueness.”

Since it first entered the discourse of the human sciences in the late nineteenth century, and in the work of William James in particular,⁹⁶ self-esteem has become one of the most influential concepts of psychology and psychotherapy.⁹⁷ But it has also become a societal issue and a key concern for governments. By producing a wealth of research data, as well as precise (or at least practical) ways of defining and measuring self-esteem, the self-esteem movement progressively made its way into popular culture, schools and universities, law courts, and mental health services. Starting in the 1960s, it became ubiquitous, and an object of government in the broadest sense. Today, the industry of self-esteem and self-help is thriving. The reason for this considerable attention, I shall claim, is that self-esteem has turned out to be a key mechanism and objective of biopower: It is associated with important life outcomes, including psychological adjustment,⁹⁸ academic success,⁹⁹ physical health, a healthy sex life,¹⁰⁰ and relationship

satisfaction.¹⁰¹ By contrast, and as indicated in the report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem, low levels of self-esteem have been linked to a broad range of personal and social problems, such as teenage pregnancy,¹⁰² suicide,¹⁰³ pyromania,¹⁰⁴ and homicide¹⁰⁵—in short, with socially and personally destructive tendencies. Low self-esteem among girls, one manual tells us, can lead to experiencing depression, developing eating disorders, being a victim of crime, becoming involved in destructive relationships, practicing unsafe sex, or being unable to compete in the job market.¹⁰⁶ Self-esteem is thus seen as a powerful indicator of the health and well-being of individuals, and of society as a whole. As such, it is a natural phenomenon that needs to be monitored and improved, and one of the key mechanisms through which the health of individuals and of society can be measured: “By determining the degree of self-esteem possessed by an individual, it becomes possible to assess, predict, control or enhance an individual’s life.”¹⁰⁷ It has thus become the responsibility of parents, schools and colleges, social workers and therapists, as well as governmental agencies, to put in place the conditions for the growth of the self-esteem of individuals.

Still, the ethics and politics of self-esteem, and the various technologies it is now associated with, did not happen overnight.¹⁰⁸ A first wave of clinical and experimental studies began in the 1940s.¹⁰⁹ It was followed, in the 1950s, by a flurry of studies devoted to the relationship between self-esteem and issues such as schizophrenia, Rorschach characteristics, marital happiness, and the attitudes of psychiatric patients. At that time, and through the work of Carl Rogers in particular, self-esteem became linked to success in therapy.¹¹⁰ But that decade also saw the emergence of a range of studies in social psychology, concerned with the connection between self-esteem and class,¹¹¹ stress,¹¹² performance,¹¹³ aspiration and motivation,¹¹⁴ delinquency,¹¹⁵ and private and public failure.¹¹⁶ The movement gathered further steam in the 1960s, especially through the work of Morris Rosenberg and Stanley Coopersmith. In his *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image* (1965), Rosenberg used large-scale surveys to identify various elements that influence the self-esteem of adolescents, such as family structure, social class, ethnicity, and religion. He also tied personal and social problems, such as anxiety, low occupational motivation, and social isolation, to low levels of self-esteem and recommended parenting and educational strategies to develop self-esteem in children and adolescents. Coopersmith reached similar conclusions in *The Antecedents of*

Self-Esteem (1967), and saw in parents' ability to instill self-esteem in their children a key to their future success in life.

The works of Rosenberg and Coopersmith were also instrumental in promoting self-esteem outside psychology: “Rosenberg was able to introduce self-esteem into the concerns of policy makers interested in increasing performance and discipline. Likewise, Coopersmith was able to link self-esteem with parental roles and obligations. Both of these works would later prove essential in the expansion of self-esteem into self-help literature, parenting manuals, social policy, educational pedagogy, and the discourse of TV talk shows.”¹¹⁷ Today, the pedagogy, politics, and industry of self-esteem are thriving. Self-esteem, one manual tells us, is “the greatest gift you can give your child—and yourself . . . it is the cornerstone of mental health, learning, and happiness.”¹¹⁸ The new categorical imperative now reads: Do to yourself what you would like others to do to you. Or, in the less Kantian formulations of our self-help gurus, whose wisdom is enjoyed by millions throughout the world: “Have a love affair with yourself”;¹¹⁹ “Practice celebrating your magnificence”;¹²⁰ “You Must Love Yourself First”;¹²¹ and “the first natural step you must take is to learn to love, honor, and cherish yourself.”¹²² Why? Because “cherishing yourself is your birthright.”¹²³ Or, as L'Oréal prefers to say in its advertising campaign, “Because you're worth it.” Not because of what you do or think, but by virtue of being who you are (someone “unique” and “special”), by virtue of your potential (“infinite”), by virtue of being—full stop. More recently, the American company Dove created a “Self-Esteem Project” aimed at correcting the low self-esteem that many girls feel as a result of their systematic exposure to ideal body-types and ways of life to which they are supposed to conform, and thus as a way of compensating for the desires generated by the advertising industry. Its mission is “to help girls raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential,” and to help parents “talk about body confidence with [their] daughter and support her to become a self-assured individual who values her uniqueness.”¹²⁴ Naturally, such projects and initiatives would not be necessary if, as Blackburn pointedly and wittily remarks, the L'Oréals of this world weren't there to give us the distinct impression that we're *not* worth it—not, that is, unless we buy their products and embrace the desires they create in us.¹²⁵ The education of self-esteem, the embracing of a uniqueness and authenticity that is as empty as the slogans it tries to oppose, is only a counter-desire, one born of a sense of lack and inadequacy generated by the market.

Thus, a notion and attitude once decried as anti-Christian and unethical has become the object of a discourse of truth, which now involves charts, graphs, tests, and statistical models; enlisted a wide range of institutions, the purpose of which is to develop it; and, last but not least, generated a new form of subjectivity. It is no longer a matter of being *saved*, through charity and self-hatred. It is now a matter of being *recognized*, through self-esteem and self-respect. Rather than obeying pastoral power and arriving at a position of humility, the goal is affirming the self as “unique,” “authentic,” and “special.” It is a different kind of power, a different normativity. A celebration and new ethics of the self has emerged.

Conclusion

The central claim I shall draw from this genealogy is that, taken together, the norms of dignity, self-respect, and self-esteem amount to an affirmation of self-love and an extraordinary rehabilitation (and transformation) of what, under the term *amor sui*, Christian theology and psychology, Christian pastoral power, often saw as the cause of all sins. The new normative framework in which self-love is inscribed constitutes a distinctively modern technology of the self—the origins of which, I have argued, can be traced back to Rousseau—and a specific, symbolic regime of desire, at the heart of which figures the gaze of an other that is at once indispensable and unbearable, at once unavoidable and disturbing. It has led to what I can only call an ethics and politics of self-love. It also corresponds to a specific type of power, which is individualizing, in that it focuses not on an entire population, or a territory, but on individuals themselves. In that respect, it is not unlike the individualizing power of interest and utility. But it is also irreducible to it.

Like the other two regimes of desire, to which it is obviously related, and with which it overlaps, the regime of recognition requires an education: Self-confidence (about which I will say very little), self-respect, and self-love require the creation of various mechanisms and the collaboration (and transformation) of various institutions, such as the law, the family, community centers, schools and universities, and the workplace, as well as the symbolic semiotic with which we represent our national, local, religious, or cultural identities. Desire is not so much the desire *for* recognition, but *qua* recognition. By this, I mean that just as, in the context of the

emergence of political economy, desire was related to the newly formed concepts of individual interest and utility and, in the context of the birth of psychopathology, with those of the natural sexual instinct and drive, it is now, in the context of its symbolic reconfiguration, associated with a family of concepts that includes self-love, self-confidence, esteem, respect, and dignity. Recognition is not so much the intentional correlate of desire as a new epistemological and normative framework within which it is put to work. It is presented and experienced as a—if not the—fundamental social mechanism, and thus as a space of dispute and struggle, as well as an ideal to be achieved. At the same time, and crucially, it is viewed as a vital mechanism, or a mechanism in which human life as such is at stake, over and beyond its merely biological needs. It thus also partakes of the politics of life that Foucault recognizes, yet in a sense that he perhaps never fully developed. Still, I feel that he intimated those developments, many of which occurred after his death. In *The Will to Know*, and in the context of his discussion of the emergence of biopower, he speaks of “the great struggles” of the last two centuries as focusing no longer, or primarily, on rights (as extracted from sovereign power), and directed against oppression and exploitation (still rife today), but on life itself. But life, he seems to suggest, is to be understood in a very broad sense. To be sure, those struggles focus on the basic, vital needs of men and women. But they are also about “man’s concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plenitude of the possible.”¹²⁶ Life itself and as a whole has become the focus of political struggles, “even if the latter were”—and I believe they still are—“formulated through affirmations concerning rights,” such as the “‘right’ to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or ‘alienations,’ the ‘right’ to rediscover what one is and all that one can be.”¹²⁷ The last of these is one that can indeed be written in quotations marks only, as it escapes the domain of the law, while capturing something like a demand or an assumption regarding something without which life would not be quite human. In that context, the concept of recognition (as a transformation of the concept of self-love, which involves self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem) can be seen as the placeholder for a symbolic and cultural—yet vital—desire that seeks to express itself outside the classical right of sovereignty and is not reducible to the sphere of economic interests, despite the market’s increasingly successful attempts to present itself as the place of its full realization.

This aspect is perhaps most explicitly formulated by Axel Honneth, for

whom social struggles of the modern age find their point of departure in “moral feelings of indignation, rather than pre-given interests.”¹²⁸ To be sure, Honneth argues further, there is no denying that some social struggles follow a logic of collective interests, and that massive protests and revolts are launched to secure economic survival. But we must equally recognize that other struggles stem “from collective feelings of having been unjustly treated” and having been denied legal or social recognition.¹²⁹ It is only because social theory—including, if not primarily, that of the Frankfurt School itself—has been fixated on the dimension of interests for so long that it has remained blind to what I would call the other, sociosymbolic dimension of desire, which Honneth seeks to formalize. Thus, “unlike all utilitarian models of explanation,” the concept of social struggle to which his normatively substantive social theory is committed suggests the view that “motives for social resistance and rebellion are formed in the context of moral experiences stemming from the violation of deeply rooted expectations regarding recognition.”¹³⁰ In that respect, we need to qualify further Foucault’s claim, which I referred to in my opening chapter, and according to which, with the birth of biopower, desire becomes a key mechanism of governmentality, or that *with* and *through* which one is henceforth to govern.¹³¹ The problem for those who govern, Foucault argues in that passage, is now one of knowing how to say yes to this desire. And this is the precise point at which, crucially, but also somewhat confusingly, Foucault equates desire as interest and utility with desire as self-love: “The problem is not therefore the limit of concupiscence or the limit of self-esteem in the sense of love of oneself, but concerns rather everything that stimulates and encourages this self-esteem, this desire, so that it can produce its necessary beneficial effects.”¹³² I have tried to show how and why those two regimes of desire—economic and symbolic—overlap, and how they are both key mechanisms and goals of liberal governmentality. But I have also tried to show that their origin differs.

Recognition is not simply a further normative framework within which “the man of desire” finds himself caught today. It is also the other face or pillar of liberalism, and one about which we can wonder, as Nancy Fraser does, whether it is all the more free to show itself now that the older politics of economic egalitarianism and redistribution has been sidelined by neoliberal governmentality. In other words, one of the questions I pose is whether, far from operating as a limit and critique of neoliberal governmentality, the ethics and politics of recognition have been absorbed by

it, and become one of its key mechanisms: Not only does the neoliberal workplace operate with the managerial promises of the recognition of the creativity and autonomy of flexible labor, but the market has also proven remarkably adept at capitalizing on, and even promoting, cultural distinctiveness and difference.

It would be illusory, however, to decouple the symbolic from the economic and act as if those two spheres—the “system of needs” and the “struggle for recognition”—were entirely heterogeneous: While they are not entirely reducible to one another, their fate has tended to overlap in the age of capitalism, and especially of neoliberal governmentality. Adam Smith claims that it is our deep-seated “desire for reputation, honors, and preferences” that drives our tendency to pursue riches and avoid poverty, and that this systematically trumps the other, nobler path of social recognition, namely, “humble modesty and equitable justice.” And Rousseau, under the category of “inflamed” or “immoderate” *amour-propre*, condemns the accumulation of wealth as a way of satisfying one’s desire for social recognition. Closer to us, and following Simmel, Honneth sees contemporary relations of social esteem as “indirectly coupled with patterns of income distribution,” with the result that “economic confrontations are also constitutive for this form of struggle for recognition.”¹³³ I would take this point further, and in a slightly different direction, by suggesting, as I had begun to do in chapter 3, that part of the *tour de force* of neoliberalism consists in having integrated sophisticated mechanisms of recognition and esteem within the endlessly differentiated hierarchy of the corporation, and having extended the model of the enterprise to the whole of human life. So, yes, money continues to operate like the meta-desire, to which all others are subordinated, but an entire system of recognition—of “false” or “alienated” recognition, Honneth would no doubt argue—is also constructed to facilitate *and* limit the access to that promised land. Money and, more generally, market norms translate the symbolic desire for recognition into an economic one.

7

Struggles for Recognition

In his now famous “The Politics of Recognition,” Charles Taylor remarks how “a number of strands in contemporary politics,” especially in the context of Canada’s relation to its Indigenous peoples, “turn on the *need*, sometimes the *demand* for recognition,” before adding that “due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need.”¹ Responding to Taylor’s essay, K. Anthony Appiah agrees that “much of modern social and political life turns on questions of recognition,” and that “people have the right to be acknowledged publicly as what they already are.”² “Recognition” has thus become a key, almost unavoidable word of our time, and seems to capture the very nature of today’s social and political struggles. In the words of Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, “Whether the issue is indigenous land claims or women’s carework, homosexual marriage or Muslim headscarves, moral philosophers increasingly use the term ‘recognition’ to unpack the normative bases of political claims.”³ Honneth himself, as we know, anchors his theory of social justice and strand of liberal politics in the concept of recognition, which he connects, crucially, with that of difference: “Whether in discussions about multiculturalism, or in the theoretical self-clarification of feminism,” the last few decades have seen the emergence of the normative view that “individuals or social groups have to be accepted and respected in their difference.”⁴ Fraser agrees and draws on the concept of difference to bring together the categories of universal respect and individual esteem, which I distinguished and analyzed in the previous chapter: “Claims for the recognition of difference now drive many of the world’s social conflicts, from campaigns for national

171

sovereignty and subnational autonomy, to battles around multiculturalism, to the newly energized movements for international human rights, which seek to promote both universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness.”⁵ The claim, in other words, is that for too long, and regularly, “members of marginalized and subaltern groups have been systematically denied recognition for the worth of their culture or way of life, the dignity of their status as persons, and the inviolability of their physical integrity.”⁶ As Honneth puts it, we need finally to take into consideration “that the moral quality of social relations cannot be measured solely in terms of a fair or just distribution of material goods,”⁷ and that even if conflicts over interests were justly resolved, and the politics of redistribution carried out to the full, a society would remain normatively deficient so long as its members are systematically denied the recognition they deserve.

Those authors agree on the idea that “difference-blind” liberalism has become increasingly untenable in multicultural societies. It is no longer enough to accept and respect individuals or groups *despite* their difference. In order to be salvaged, liberalism needs to account for the possibility, indeed the necessity, on the part of the state to recognize and accommodate a wide range of group- or difference-specific claims without having to abandon the commitment to a core set of fundamental and universal rights.⁸ With the politics of difference, Taylor claims, “what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else.”⁹ And “where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of non-discrimination that were quite ‘blind’ to the way in which citizens differ,” the politics of difference “often redefines non-discrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment.”¹⁰ So, while the concept of recognition is associated with the moral and legal vocabulary of respect and dignity, and is intrinsically universalist, it is also associated with a related but ultimately different set of concepts and concerns—that is, with what, in the passage previously mentioned, Fraser calls “esteem for cultural distinctiveness.”¹¹ This is how, for example, “racialized groups have resisted assimilation as the price of racial and ethnic equality and equal citizenship,” and how, for many gays and lesbians, “equal citizenship is not about incorporation into heterosexist norms, but recognition of ‘a plurality of relationships without a hierarchical ordering of them.’”¹² There follows from this longing to be recognized for what one is the moral and political demand that we all

recognize the equal value of differences thus defined—that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their intrinsic worth.

Like respect and dignity in the legal sense, which the law recognizes only *ex negativo*, that is, through situations of disrespect, the experience of being socially denigrated manifests itself in feelings of indignation, anger, and social shame, which, to the extent that they diminish or destroy one's feeling of self-worth, amount to at least moral "scars" and "injuries," if not, in the most extreme cases, to "social death."¹³ A few decades earlier, and in the specific context of race and racism, Frantz Fanon had explored the ways in which misrecognition, imposed by the colonizers, becomes part of the self-identification of the colonized, from which they need to learn to extract themselves. In other words, one can misrecognize oneself as a result of the manner in which one is (mis-)recognized by a dominant power structure. This pathological vocabulary, now widely used, is not a coincidence: It indicates the harm done to a form of life—a "race" or ethnicity, of course, but also, and increasingly, a "way of life"—that is now considered as vital, as intrinsic to what it means to be human, as biological life itself. In fact, and as Hegel saw very well, so long as desire (*Begierde*) operates as if it were a mere biological need and seeks to affirm itself as self-consciousness through the consumption and negation of another consciousness—a situation that can only lead to death or slavery—human life itself has not yet begun to emerge. Only when the meaning of life itself changes, negates itself as pure or bare life, and enters the long and fraught process of symbolic recognition—a process that requires the construction of the self through intersubjective relations of love, respect, and esteem—does desire become truly human. We should not be surprised, in that context, to see the previously mentioned Final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem speak of self-esteem as "the likeliest candidate for a social vaccine" that "inoculates us against . . . most personal and social ills."¹⁴

Jan Pakulski summarizes the demands and politics of difference with the notion of cultural citizenship rights. They constitute, he claims, "a new set of citizenship claims that involve the right to unhindered and legitimate representation, and propagation of identities and lifestyles through the information systems and in public fora." The rights in question involve "the right to symbolic presence and visibility (vs. marginalization); the right to dignifying representation (vs. stigmatization); and the right to propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles (vs. assimilation)."¹⁵ Thus, across

university campuses in the United States or the United Kingdom, we see a multiplication of disputes and struggles—often related to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and the colonial history of those countries—around which speakers to invite (or disinvite); the language and syntax we use; the emblems, flags, or statues that have traditionally represented our academic institutions; as well as the creation of “safe spaces” and the use of “trigger warnings,” introduced to recognize the difference and singularity of individual groups and minorities. Mostly, those struggles have to do with the demand to rid academic institutions of their postcolonial, racist, patriarchal, and phallogocentric structures. The social field is also the space in which signs are produced, appropriated, and fought over. It is the space of a symbolic violence and, as such, requires something like a recognition of the many ways in which individual groups can be misrecognized.

Although cultural citizenship rights are about the recognition of difference, Pakulski interprets them as also contributing to the further universalizing of citizenship. In this regard, they provide a bridge to the other dimension of recognition demands—that is, demands for recognition of the *common* humanity of different groups and the equal worth of each citizen, which flows from that. As a result, many see the task of liberalism today as having to embrace the two sides of the demand for recognition: on the one hand, the universalist principle of a humanity shared by different groups and the equal worth of each citizen; on the other, the demand to recognize the intrinsic worth and value of traditionally marginalized and subordinated groups. A case in point would be the success of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition in writing into the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement a statement that could be taken as a paradigm of such an approach, even if only at the level of aspiration. The agreement declares that power:

shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities.¹⁶

There is, it seems, ample empirical evidence to support the claims I have just made. In what follows, I shall focus on three different examples, which

touch on different aspects of the politics of recognition: the emancipation of Jews in early nineteenth-century Prussia; the recognition, beginning in the 1970s, of First Nations in Canada; and the growing understanding of social exclusion, and especially poverty, as a social injury or misrecognition involving denigration and disrespect. I will return to questions of sexuality and gender in chapter 8, by drawing on statements and arguments made by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. What will progressively emerge from the symbolic regime of recognition is how interconnected it is with the other two I have already analyzed, and thus the extent to which it is indeed a key dimension of liberal power. The critical conclusion toward which I am working, and which I present here in preliminary, concise, and somewhat provocative terms, is that *every* recognition is a misrecognition. Contrary to what liberal thinkers such as Honneth, Taylor, or Kymlicka claim, the line between recognition and misrecognition is not one that is easily drawn, precisely to the extent that the struggle for recognition is always asymmetrical, and the power relations that define it are unevenly distributed.

Jewish Emancipation in Prussia

In *Bound by Recognition*, Patchen Markell reads the question of Jewish emancipation in early nineteenth-century Prussia and other German-speaking lands through the prism of recognition.¹⁷ Following the distinction I have introduced between two types of recognition—namely, universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness—I shall argue more specifically that Jewish emancipation corresponds to the former type, and thus fulfills only in part the criteria for genuine recognition advocated by the authors I have mentioned. This is not surprising, as multiculturalism had not yet been recognized as a concept, and the dynamic of recognition seemed to take place exclusively within the paradigm of sovereignty and sovereign power. As such, and since my overall claim concerns the manner in which recognition is a key mechanism of biopower, the study of that particular case would seem to fall outside, if not to call into question, my general framework. To this objection, my response is twofold. First, and as I have already claimed, biopower is not external to sovereign power, but transforms it from within and, in certain circumstances, intensifies it. Second, the example I am about to discuss is

telling in that it reveals tensions that, ultimately, should be attributed not to contradictions internal to Prussian sovereign power, as Markell claims, but precisely to the emergence of biopower, with its emphasis on population and use of statistics, within the economy of sovereign power.

The case of Jewish emancipation is, of course, an interesting one, in that what came to be known as “the Jewish question” animated many European countries throughout the nineteenth century and gave rise to waves of anti-Semitism interspersed with periods of tolerance. But it is also interesting in that the period at which it took place corresponds exactly with Hegel’s claims about the struggle for recognition as a vehicle for historical progress and the formation of the modern rational state, key elements of which, he thought, could be identified in the Prussia of Friedrich Wilhelm III. Hegel himself supported the new legislation.¹⁸ Markell’s ultimate claim is that the social and political dynamics of recognition in general, and as applied to the relation between the Jewish community and Friedrich Wilhelm’s Prussia in particular, are in fact a medium and vehicle of injustice. There is, he claims, “a profound irony involved in the ideal of recognition: the very desire that makes that ideal so compelling—the desire for sovereign agency, for an antidote to the riskiness and intermittent opacity of social life—may itself help to sustain some of the forms of injustice that many proponents of recognition rightly aim to overcome.”¹⁹ I am less concerned with the question of justice as such, and more with highlighting the manner in which processes of recognition, and the supposed longing for recognition that all human beings share, take place within a certain economy of power, which is generally reinforced through that very process.

On 11 March 1812 Friedrich Wilhelm III, king of Prussia, signed an “Edict Concerning the Civic Conditions of the Jews in the Prussian State,” which was followed by further legislation.²⁰ In a single stroke of the pen, the king swept away “thickets of unjust legislation that had helped keep Jews confined to certain occupations, restricted them to certain regions, towns, and neighborhoods, artificially constrained the size of their families, and left them generally poorer than their Christian neighbors.”²¹ They were now considered “natives” (*Einländer*) and granted full citizenship, with the rights and obligations—including military—associated with it. With this “enlightened” legislation, Jews were finally recognized with a measure of dignity. Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, whose seminal *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* set the terms of the debates con-

cerning the “segregation” and “separation” of the Jews from their Christian neighbors, famously wrote that “the Jew is a human being even more than he is a Jew.”²² He must therefore be treated like one, that is, with the respect and dignity he deserves.

A closer look at the situation, however, reveals that, in the words of Markell, “emancipation legislation was not conceived merely as the fulfillment of liberal principles of fairness or equality,” or indeed as “the gift of an indifferent king who expected nothing in return.”²³ Markell’s specific claim, which I endorse in part, while disputing that it exhausts the power dynamics involved, is that the legislation in question “served as a tool through which the state could mould its Jewish population into a shape consistent with the requirements of modern government—by which, that is, it could perform the work of *identifying* Jews as citizens, *and* identifying itself as sovereign.”²⁴ In other words, it lifted restrictions on Jewish life, but only to exercise more—or, better said perhaps, a different kind of—control over it. The crucial question, of course, is knowing what is meant here by “modern government” and “Jewish population.” Is “government” to be understood solely as the government of citizens by the king? Is “population” entirely equivalent to “citizens”? Markell’s answer is that the problem the Prussian state faced at the time, and the logic behind the legislation regarding the emancipation of the Jewish community, was one of sovereignty. Specifically, the problem was to know how, given their widely perceived parochialism—that is, is their “distinct customs, adherence to the Mosaic law, and the messianic hope for political redemption,” which, taken together, amounted to the threat of a “state within a state”—the Jews could be integrated into, and subordinated to, the power of the Prussian state.²⁵ In other words, how could the Jewish population, to borrow Dohm’s own expression, be “dissolved” into “the great harmony of the state”?²⁶ More specifically still, the question—which resonated strongly with what, in his *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza says about the specific mechanism through which the first Hebrew state was created—was how Jews could be made to *love* the state, and to identify with the German *Volk* as a whole.²⁷ Well, by appealing to their “heart” and their “gratitude” for their “good fortune,” that is, their new civil rights. By granting Jews citizenship rights, Minister Schrötter wrote to the king in 1808, the state would “undermine and abolish their nationality, and gradually . . . produce a situation in which they will no longer seek to form a state within a state.”²⁸ In effect, this “denationalization” of the Jews meant the transfor-

mation of Jewish identity and culture into a (mere) religion, directed—like Protestantism—solely at the spiritual welfare of its members. In particular, the rabbi was no longer to be the judge of a community governing itself according to religious law, as he had been before emancipation, but a religious leader, or a minister of souls (a *Seelsorger*). Thus, the Jews gained a visibility that, to be sure, can be understood as a moment of recognition, but also, and at the same time, can be seen as a way of making visible, recording, and controlling various aspects of Jewish *life*, which, up until that point, had remained unregulated. Emancipation through “assimilation” is indeed one model of recognition, which multiculturalism, and the distinctive model of recognition it promotes, seeks to both complement and overcome. But it is one that is still operative in some countries, such as France, whose relation to its own North African and Muslim population today is not unlike that of Prussia in the nineteenth century.²⁹

In the end, Markell identifies a tension, and even a “contradiction,” within this particular dialectic of recognition, in which the role of the state and that of the Jewish population were transformed. The Prussian state, he argues, was faced with a twofold, contradictory task. On the one hand, it aimed to assimilate or dissolve the Jewish “state” or “nation” into the German one. On the other hand, it never allowed the Jewish *population* entirely to dissolve within the Christian population, and made sure, in the end, that it could always distinguish between a Jew and a Christian. This is how, surprisingly perhaps, the king opposed the reformers’ plan to reform traditional Jewish religious services, including substantial changes in prayers and songs, and the abandonment of Hebrew in favor of German. Similarly, the citizenship documents that were issued following Friedrich Wilhelm’s edict differed from those of the non-Jews, so that the authorities would always be able to differentiate a Jew from a non-Jew. Jews had to assume strictly fixed and Western-style surnames, and adopt German or Latin scripts for their signature. At the same time, when many Jews embraced the terms of their own emancipation and began to give “Christian” first names to their children, the king felt the need to intervene and issued a series of orders to correct the situation. But there is no contradiction, I feel, if we distinguish between two different logics and types of power, and realize that, with the birth of biopower, the rationality of the state had itself begun to shift: Naturally, it was still a matter of asserting the power of the sovereign over its subjects and making sure that—whether through taxation or military service—the population as a whole

could contribute to the overall power of the state. But the meaning and understanding of what a population is had begun to change: Jews were seen as a distinctive population, imbued with a certain naturalness, traits, and characteristics, which the state had to know and take into account, if it were to govern properly, that is, rationally and effectively.

Earlier on (in a note to chapter 1), drawing on Ian Hacking's *The Taming of Chance*, I sketched very briefly the emergence of statistical offices in eighteenth-century Prussia, and the idea that proper knowledge of its population was key in asserting its own power. After the Seven Years' War in 1757–63, which killed roughly a third of the people, and left many regions almost empty, the pressing issue was depopulation or underpopulation. Many features of Prussian statistics originate with this objective concern: A large number of categories of things were counted, many of which, as one would expect from a mostly agricultural state, were natural. But there were also idiosyncrasies, such as the division of the entire population between civil or military. This was understandable, as the civilian population tended to stay in one place, whereas the military were essentially mobile. Another, and for our purposes key, innovation was introduced in 1745, when tables for immigration, emigration, nationality, and race were first drawn. Thus, on the civilian side of the list, and in addition to nine basic categories, a subtabulation for people who were Walloons, French, Bohemians, Salzburger, or Jews was introduced.³⁰ Of those, the Jews were the only minority group that was systematically identified, and precisely not as a religious group. "Soon," Hacking adds, "there was a completely separate and regular enumeration of all Jewish households."³¹ Complete tables, known as the *General-Judentabellen* or *Provinzial-Judenfamilie-Listen*, had become a routine part of the Prussian system of counting people by 1769. Far from disappearing, then, the desire to accumulate statistical facts about Jews grew in that period of emancipation, and far from amounting to their "dissolution" in the German nation, statistical power made them more (and also differently) visible: "Christian and Jewish 'biostatistics' were regularly compared."³² Thus, it appeared that the excess of male over female births among Jews was larger than in the total population, and the Jewish birthrate itself was higher than the average. My point, here, is that at the same time as Jews were emancipated—that is, recognized as human beings or subjects of right, and thus integrated into the sovereign economy of power—they were beginning to be constructed as a population or, to be more precise, as a subpopulation, at once part of, and yet somehow dis-

tinct from, the Christian, Germanic population. At the same time at which Jewish emancipation was taking place, the foundations for an understanding of Jews as a biostatistical reality were being laid: How many are they? Where do they live? How many are coming in, and from where, and how many are leaving? What is the rate of their birth, mortality, morbidity? The bionormalization of Jews was under way. On the one hand, this biopolitical turn was to enhance the power of the king and the state: Better knowledge of the numbers, habits, and behaviors of a given population could translate into better, more efficient rule and greater resources. On the other hand, this new construction of power and new way of governing meant that, depending on the circumstances, any segment of the population, any group or minority, could be singled out as a threat to the fragile biopolitical order, and require an adequate—that is, equally biopolitical—response. As we know all too well, the history of European anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincided largely with the latter.

The conclusion we must draw, then, is that far from being “blind to the way in which citizens differ,” to use Taylor’s expression, legal, universal recognition *generates* a type of difference. Recognition is itself productive and normative: While granting Jews equal rights, the Prussian state insisted on defining what it meant to be Jewish, the extent to which Jewish identity could be accommodated, and the extent to which it needed to be transformed, if not neutralized. A Jew is a human being, a Prussian citizen, and then someone with a specific religion, name, and identity, which involves elements that, right around the time of the edict, and increasingly in the years that followed, are defined as natural, and inscribed within the biopolitical framework that redefines sovereign power itself. Those traits need to be recorded; they need to be made visible, not erased. In the end, it is essential that one be able to tell the difference between a Jew and a non-Jew. Liberal governmentality is a power of differentiation as well as integration (or identification).

Postcolonial Struggles for Recognition

Is it with the recent politics of difference, then, rather than the universalist politics of assimilation, that the vital desire for recognition and the liberal principles of fairness or equality were eventually fulfilled? It would seem so. Consider, for example, the Canadian situation that Charles Tay-

lor has in mind when discussing the politics of recognition. Both the Québécois and Indigenous peoples of Canada, he claims, illustrate the types of threatened minorities that make them eligible for some sort of recognition, aimed at accommodating their cultural distinctiveness. For Indigenous peoples specifically, this might mean delegating political and cultural “autonomy” to Native groups through the institutions of “self-government.”³³ Elsewhere, Taylor suggests that this could mean “in practice allowing for a new form of jurisdiction in Canada, perhaps weaker than the provinces, but, unlike municipalities.”³⁴ As Coulthard puts it in his own exposition of Taylor’s position: “Accommodating the claims of First Nations in this way would ideally allow Native communities to ‘preserve their cultural integrity’ and thus help stave off the psychological disorientation and resultant unfreedom associated with exposure to structured patterns of mis- or nonreconciliation.”³⁵ Through the liberal regime of reciprocal recognition, Taylor argues, Indigenous peoples (and minorities in general) would see their status as self-determining actors finally realized. Isn’t this what the Indigenous peoples of Canada (and elsewhere) struggled to obtain? Consider, for example, the following declaration, which the Dene people of Canada issued in 1975:

Our struggle is for the *recognition* of the Dene Nation by the Government and people of Canada and the peoples and governments of the world . . .

And while there are realities we are forced to submit to, such as the existence of a country called Canada, we insist in the right to self-determination and the *recognition* of the Dene Nation.³⁶

This struggle, Coulthard goes on to explain, has not been easy to ignore:

Because of the persistence and dedication of countless Indigenous activists, leaders, communities, and organizations, we have witnessed within the scope of four decades the emergence of an unprecedented degree of recognition for Aboriginal “cultural” rights within the legal and political framework of the Canadian state. Most significant on this front was Canada’s eventual “recognition” of “existing aboriginal and treaty rights” under section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982. This constitutional breakthrough provided the catalyst that led to the federal government’s eventual recognition, in 1995, of an “inherent right to self-government,” as well as the groundswell of post-1982 court challenges that have sought to both clar-

ify and widen the scope of what constitutes a constitutionally recognized Aboriginal right to begin with. When considered from the vantage point of these important developments, it would certainly appear that “recognition” has emerged as the dominant expression of self-determination within the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada.³⁷

In a more recent document (2005), Canada’s largest Aboriginal organization, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), speaks of a “consensus” that has emerged “around a vision of the relationship between First Nations and Canada which would lead to strengthening recognition and implementation of First Nations’ governments.”³⁸

Beyond the Canadian situation, the struggle for recognition seems to inform Indigenous movements across the globe. In 1986, the Australian Law Reform Commission produced a report (Report 31) entitled “The Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws and Traditions Today,” in which it recommended the systematic and complete recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws and Traditions. In Mexico, the Zapatista movement struggles for the recognition of the rights and dignity of the Indigenous people of Chiapas, “who are not recognized as citizens or nationals, who are not part of the imaginary of the Mexican nation and who are therefore excluded and denied in relation to citizenship rights, individually and collectively.”³⁹ Similarly, one of the best organized and most articulate Indigenous movements in Latin America, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador (CONAIE), fights for the recognition of not only Indigenous rights over land, but also of cultural difference, languages, and nationalities.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

A similar trend can be identified in the discourse on social exclusion, and on poverty especially. Poverty, traditionally thought of as a purely economic problem, has begun to be perceived as one of recognition, or, better said perhaps, as a failure to recognize equal dignity for all. Of course, in this instance, a politics of recognition cannot be about the assertion of group difference, as in the case of women, racialized groups, lesbians and gays, or disabled people (remembering that we are not, of course, talking about discrete groups). Indeed, a successful politics of redistri-

bution could remove the category altogether, as “the poor” are a group that is the product of the unequal distribution of resources. A politics of recognition in this context is, instead, about the assertion of recognition in the sense of equality of status and respect, which requires that hitherto marginalized and precarious forms of life be reintegrated into social normativity. Increasingly, demands emanating from those suffering from that social ill, as well as those struggling for the betterment of their condition, revolve around their desire to be treated with greater respect and to see their dignity recognized. Ruth Lister mentions a National Poverty Hearing in London, organized by Church Action on Poverty (an ecumenical antipoverty group), at which “one of the most common refrains among those with experience of poverty was the desire to be treated with greater respect. ‘I just wish people would give us a chance and treat us with some respect’ and ‘I just feel very angry sometimes that people are ignorant to the fact that we are humans as well and we do need to be respected’ were typical of the comments made.”⁴⁰ They too, the claim goes, face denigration, which translates into feelings of shame and anger, and the erosion, if not the destruction, of their sense of self-worth.⁴¹

The reason for that is, in part at least, a function of the relativistic approach to poverty that is favored: Poverty is not an absolute state, but very much a function of the difference between rich and poor, and the perception of one’s situation in relation to that of others. Poverty is, from the start, a matter of esteem, and self-esteem. In the words of Anne Phillips:

A society that condones excesses of poverty in the midst of wealth, or arbitrarily rewards one skill with one hundred times the wages of another, is not recognizing its citizens as of equal human worth . . . When the gap between rich and poor opens up too widely, it becomes meaningless to pretend that we have recognized all adults as equals.⁴²

The point here concerns not just the exclusion from the bonds of common citizenship of those at the bottom, but also the ways in which those at the top can exclude themselves from these bonds and thereby fail to recognize the equal worth of their fellow citizens. In other words, differences in wealth translate into differences in worth. On the one hand, the argument goes, poverty is quintessentially the product of socioeconomic injustice, and the politics of redistribution need to remain at the center of antipoverty campaigns. On the other hand, these campaigns increasingly

deploy a discourse of recognition as well as of redistribution: those in poverty (who also include, let's not forget, many who are actually employed) desire recognition in the sense of equality of status and respect. Nonrecognition and disrespect, which Fraser identifies as two basic instances of cultural or symbolic injustice, are the typical experience of those in poverty, especially when labeled pejoratively as an "underclass" or as inhabiting a "dependency culture." As Fraser acknowledges, economic and cultural forms of injustice tend "to reinforce each other dialectically" so that "economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres, and in everyday life."⁴³ In her critique of Fraser, Iris Marion Young places greater emphasis on the interrelationship between the two forms of injustice and politics. She maintains that "we should show how recognition is a means to, or an element in, economic and political equality" and that "so long as the cultural denigration of groups produces or reinforces structural economic oppressions, the two struggles are continuous."⁴⁴

The question, from a genealogical perspective, and leaving aside the critical dimension of the question for the time being (I'll return to it in the next chapter), is knowing what it might mean to meet those demands. What, in the age of advanced liberal democracies, does such a process of recognition entail? What can it mean to treat those thought to suffer from poverty as equal citizens and with equal dignity, when the system as a whole is increasingly, if not entirely, oriented toward the construction, appreciation, and management of oneself as a consumer and an entrepreneur? After all, there was a time when, in Europe at least, poverty, misery and begging were closely associated with the figure of Christ, and thus were valued and respected in themselves. There was a time when poverty was even seen as a possible, if not necessary, way to the good life. By contrast, in the Renaissance, as Foucault shows in his *History of Madness*, beggars were persecuted, driven away, whipped, and marked physically.⁴⁵ Not until the seventeenth century did poverty become a matter of public order and policy—a matter, that is, for the state and its police. The question of what to do with the poor, or how to govern them, was given an answer through the creation of "houses of correction" in Britain and "general hospitals" in France, the purpose of which was to organize and administer charity, that is, to provide for the poor, educate them, and find them an occupation, in exchange for their institutionalization. Those who accepted those terms were thought deserving, while the rest were thought unde-

serving and lazy. Thus, a typology of the poor was created, one that was moral as well as social, and that still holds: the good versus the bad, the industrious versus the lazy, the worthy versus the unworthy. As the royal edict that created the institution of the general hospital in France reveals, begging and idleness were singled out as “the source of all disorders,” and thus as a direct threat to public order.⁴⁶

Today, at a time when the government and administration of the poor is a matter for the welfare state, and charity is replaced with self-love—self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem—the status of poverty is transformed, so that poverty is seen as an obstacle to the good life and understood as bound up with one’s sense of self-worth. Poverty is no longer the face of dignity. Increasingly, it is detached from the religious or spiritual ideal of charity, and even solidarity. The welfare state, and the way it deals with social exclusion, has an ethical dimension: It seeks to rectify a deficiency in self-worth and self-esteem; rather than distribute charity, it develops training programs and support groups, the aim of which is to bring individuals (in fact, consumers) back into the fold of a normative system of economic opportunity, risk calculation, and management of one’s human capital. Its imperative is no longer: “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land”⁴⁷ but: “You will not be dependent, assisted, passive. You will be proactive, self-reliant, self-empowering.”

In the next chapter, I shall focus on the connection between the politics of recognition, which I have just briefly sketched, and the power relations within which they take place, and thus reveal a limit of that strand of liberalism that relies on, and promotes, the symbolic regime of desire.

8

The Consolations of Recognition

Let me return to Appiah's remark regarding people's "right to be acknowledged as what they already really are." If I've been at all on the right track in this book, and in my attempt to show the manner in which the subject of desire is constructed, through the emergence of specific rationalities and their connection with specific institutions and technologies of government, there cannot be anything as straightforward as the recognition of what people "really are." The reason is that what people really are, the categories through which they identify themselves—categories, Appiah is right to claim, of gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexuality—are generated not by the oppressed or the subordinated, but by the systems of power that generate the subordination.¹ Misrecognition presupposes a recognitive typology that is itself entirely bound up with structures of power. As a result, the struggle for recognition remains internal to the very rationality it seeks to challenge, and to the sphere of power it disputes. It is never closer to that rationality than when it opposes it, not because of a dialectical logic, but because the categories it appeals to are not its own. Through this logic of ownness and ownership, struggles for recognition can end up being struggles for voluntary servitude. In other words, the desire and struggle for recognition is not critical enough. That is why it is only recognitive, rather than creative. In the end, a truly critical approach would dispute the very categories that are put forward as defining who or what one really is, denounce the assemblages of knowing and power they help secure, and seek to create the concepts, technologies, and connec-

tions through which one can become a different kind of self, a different modality of desire.

This, in fact, is what Appiah himself articulates. He argues that processes of recognition must play a role in social progress. How could they not? How can we not embrace the politics of equal dignity—toward women, people racialized as black, homosexuals, transgender people, as well as any religious or ethnic minority—and recognize that the insults and injuries to which they were subjected were seriously wrong?² To do so requires that we cease to understand those identities negatively, and construct, or embrace the construction of, “positive life-scripts” instead. This is how, Appiah remarks, an “African-American after the Black Power movement takes the old script of self-hatred, the script in which he or she is a nigger, and works, in community with others, to construct a series of positive Black life-scripts.”³ Thus, “being a Negro is recoded as being Black,” and this, in turn and among other things, requires “refusing to assimilate to white norms of speech and behavior.”⁴ Fanon argued something very similar in his positive appreciation of the *négritude* movement.⁵ The same process applies to gay identity. After Stonewall and gay liberation, the American homosexual “takes the old script of self-hatred, the script of the closet, the script in which he is a faggot,” and begins to write a positive life-script, in which the homosexual is recast as gay, and being gay requires refusing to stay in the closet. In both instances, what is affirmed is that it is not enough to be treated with equal respect despite being homosexual or black. Instead, the demand is that one be respected as homosexual or black.

Yet those processes of recognition carry with them risks and limitations—the very risks of exclusion and domination carried by any symbolic order—and the politics of equal dignity must be followed by another step. Once this has been established and agreed on, everything remains to be constructed. For what does “black” or “gay” mean? The problem, as Appiah sees it, lies in the irreducible normativity of the new scripts: “Demanding respect for people as blacks and as gays requires that there are some scripts that go with being an African-American or having same-sex desires. There will be proper ways of being black and gay, there will be expectations to be met, demands will be made.”⁶ Have we not, he asks, replaced one kind of “tyranny”—I would say, one power structure—with another? As a “gay black man,” Appiah remarks, he will always choose the world of gay liberation over that of the closet, and Black Power over the world of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. But stronger than his desire to be recog-

nized or respected as a black gay man is his desire not to have to choose between those options, to have his sense of self not so “tightly scripted” in advance, so narrowly (and normatively) defined. What Appiah desires, and what he seems virtually unable to do, given the normative framework in which he is made to live, is to define his skin not according to its color (or at least not only, or primarily), and his body not according to his sexuality (or at least not only, or primarily). He wants to resist having to organize his life around his “race” or sexuality. He would prefer, as an expression of his own freedom, not to have to engage in the process of recognition that he is forced to embrace. What he is acknowledging, I believe, is how, far from signaling the end of power struggles in a moment of final reconciliation, the many and varied processes of recognition that are part and parcel of our social reality constitute mechanisms of subjectivation and individualization through competing normative paradigms.

In that respect, and despite Nancy Fraser’s critique of Judith Butler’s position as a “poststructuralist anti-dualism” that deprives one of the very possibility of distinguishing between struggles for recognition and struggles for redistribution, or differences of status and class, I am inclined to agree with Butler’s nuanced position, especially as it is expressed in texts and interviews written or given since Fraser’s critique.⁷ In part inspired by Foucault’s views on power, they recognize the complexity and, one should say, the double bind of recognition. When asked in an interview whether it is possible to attribute the current flurry of interest in the topic of recognition to specific empirical—social and historical—developments,⁸ Butler answers that the struggles in question come from the fact that many are indeed excluded from the structures and vocabularies of political representation, or enter them only by assuming a position that negates their historical and cultural agency. But her response, it seems to me, is more significant and persuasive in the formal dimension of the struggle for recognition that it brings out. And that is the dimension of struggle as such, which is systematically downplayed in its liberal interpretation, whether it be that of Honneth, Taylor, or even Fraser: Any scheme of recognition, Butler argues, determines, though in a relative and general way, who will be regarded as a subject worthy of recognition. In other words, she is arguing that any process of recognition is normative and, as such, involves a dispute over the criteria or terms on the basis of which processes of recognition can be established. Every process of recognition generates its own risks of exclusion, fixed identities, and excesses of power, as well as

new possibilities of resistance. This, in turn, means that “the schemes of recognition that establish who will and who will not be ‘recognizable’ have to be considered critically.”⁹ Critique, in this instance, is the position or attitude that asks about the specific operations of power through which those schemes work, and the effects they produce. At the same time, she is saying that being excluded from such struggles is tantamount to being excluded from the very process of political representation, and thus from political life itself. A critical attitude to recognition, then, would not mean one that rejects it altogether, but rather one that seeks to ask about the necessary limits, and even the operation of exclusion, that constrain it, and one that, in turn, demands its own transformation.

Gender, Sexuality, and Recognition

This is basically the position Butler articulates in *Undoing Gender*. In that book—and perhaps unsurprisingly, given her earlier *Subjects of Desire*¹⁰—Butler approaches *gendered* desire through a problematization of desire in a Hegelian sense, and with a critical attitude that echoes Fanon’s own in the section of *Black Skin, White Masks* entitled “The Negro and Recognition.” This comes across already in her introduction: “The Hegelian tradition,” she writes in her Kojève-inspired interpretation, “links desire with recognition, claiming that desire is always a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings.”¹¹ The rest of Butler’s argument unfolds as follows:

That view has its allure and its truth, but it also misses a couple of important points. The terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable. And sometimes the very terms that confer “human-ness” on some individuals are those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a differential between the human and the less-than-human. These norms have far-reaching consequences for how we understand the model of the human entitled to rights or included in the participatory sphere of political deliberation. The human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognizability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of

that ethnicity. Certain humans are recognized as less than human, and that form of qualified recognition does not lead to a viable life. Certain humans are not recognized as human at all, and that leads to yet another order of unlivable life. If part of what desire wants is to gain recognition, then gender, insofar as it is animated by desire, will want recognition as well. But if the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that “undo” the person by conferring recognition, or “undo” the person by withholding recognition, then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced.¹²

I might think of myself as “having” a sexuality or a gender, and in such a way that sexuality and gender are there for me to call my own and to possess as an attribute. But what if they are precisely “the means by which I am dispossessed”?¹³ What if, she asks, echoing Appiah’s concerns, “I” am precisely undone through this process of recognition, and by the very sexuality that I claim to have? What if the norms by which recognition takes place amount to a disowning, and to a weakened form of life? “To twist the Hegelian argument in a Foucauldian direction,” Butler suggests, “norms of recognition function to produce and to deproduce the notion of the human.”¹⁴ Ultimately, this means that “to the extent that desire is implicated in social norms, it is bound up with the question of power and with the problem of who qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not.”¹⁵ In other words, the struggle is not over recognition as such, defined in terms of one’s desire to be recognized by the dominant normative paradigm, but over the norms through which recognition takes place. It is in the context of a struggle for recognition—but one in which the subject of desire (in this instance, the gendered subject) struggles to have her desire recognized, rather than conform to the established norms—that the connection between desire and power becomes apparent.

Ultimately, however, the question involves knowing whether recognition exhausts the power of desire, whether it is indeed the social, ethical, and legal—in short, *sittlich*—form in which desire is realized, or whether the force of desire, including its political force, can exceed or bypass recognition. It is a matter of knowing how, if at all, desire can organize or construct itself according to a different distribution and along different axes. It is possible, as Butler says, that “part of what desire wants is to gain recognition.” But that is not the whole of desire—nor, I suggest, the most significant aspect of desire.

Foucault argued something very similar when questioned on the issue of gay rights and life.¹⁶ The struggle for gay rights, he argues in “The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will,” should be seen as an important “episode,” but not as the final stage of the struggle.¹⁷ For the moment of recognition is one that merely acknowledges, within a more general way of life, the right to make love with someone of the same sex. Is Foucault arguing for recognition in the second sense I have sketched thus far, that is, for the recognition of cultural distinctiveness and esteem? Or is he arguing for a life, and the creation of norms, outside those dictated by recognition?

Above and beyond the moment of recognition, and the desire to have one’s identity and dignity as a homosexual recognized, there is, he says, the desire to “create another way of life,” to see homosexuality as the expression of a desire to create “new cultural forms.”¹⁸ This desire exceeds the realm of individual rights, and enters that of *Sittlichkeit* as a whole: Can “homosexuality” create ways of being together outside marriage and the family structure? What, Foucault asks in “Friendship as a Way of Life,” does it mean for two people of the same sex to be together, to share their time, meals, bedroom, leisure, sorrows, and secrets outside the traditional institutions and normative frameworks of marriage, work, or camaraderie?¹⁹ Has anything substantial been gained if, in order to be recognized, homosexual relationships are asked to reproduce the bond of marriage? What, *exactly*, is being recognized in gay marriage today? Is it homosexuality, or is it the bourgeois institution of marriage, and the state’s desire? In a similar spirit, Butler argues that some may feel that their homosexual kinship cannot be viable outside marriage. Others, by contrast, feel that marriage, even gay marriage, is an obstacle to the mode of life that the term “gay” implies, and amounts to “desiring the state’s desire.”²⁰ And this, she argues, “is the juncture from which critique emerges, where critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living.”²¹ In this instance, critique is concerned not so much with recognition as with a desire to invent new forms of life, and to open up a space of thought and life—a “sexuality”—that escapes the disjunction and struggle of the legitimate and the illegitimate. It is concerned with wresting sexuality from marriage as the legitimate frame for kinship, and asking whether what the gay (or queer, or trans) community desires is indeed state legitimation—that is, a place in the symbolic order—or something altogether different. It involves a desire that is suspicious of the desire for recognition as a form

of state (or, I would argue, market) legitimation. To be sure, Butler argues, denying someone access to the symbolic order amounts to more than “hurting someone’s feelings or causing offense to a group of people.”²² It can mean, for example, that “when you arrive at the hospital to see your lover, you may not”; or “when your lover dies, you may not be permitted to receive the body”; or that “you may not be able to provide health care benefits for one another.”²³ This sense of delegitimation can, in turn, take its toll on a relationship, and generate a sense of self-doubt and self-alienation. At the same time, to seek to repair these injuries through state legitimation and recognition can create problems of a different kind, and can generate new forms of subjectivation, insofar and as long as the state monopolizes the norms of recognition. The question then becomes one of knowing how to oppose homophobia, yet “without embracing the marriage norm as the exclusive or most highly valued social arrangement for queer sexual lives.”²⁴ Furthermore, a “critical relation to this norm involves disarticulating those rights and obligations currently attendant upon marriage so that marriage might remain a symbolic exercise for those who choose to engage in it, but the rights and obligations of kinship may take any number of other forms.”²⁵ They might, for example, raise anew the question of friendship and partnership, of adoption, of where and how children come into being, of what a “viable” (socially, psychologically, economically) kinship means.

In an interview from 1981, Foucault wonders why it would not be possible for one adult to adopt another, younger or older, and why it would not be possible to imagine and create new rights, which would allow all possible types of relationships to exist and not be blocked by the “honorable” but relationally impoverishing institutions of marriage and parenthood.²⁶ Most significant, in this context, is the question of “gay culture,” of its ability to invent modes of existence, types of relations and values, and forms of exchange between individuals that are not reducible to, or subsumable under, existing cultural forms or clinical discourses. That—the homosexual way of life, rather than the sexual act—is what makes homosexuality “troubling.” If that can happen, he says, then gay culture won’t simply be a matter for homosexuals. It will also transform, or at least generate the power to transform, heterosexual relations. In that respect, and crucially, it is not for gay men and women (or for any “minority”) a matter of creating a culture that they can call their own (*propre*), of writing gay novels or making gay films, for example.²⁷ Rather, it is a matter of

creating a culture. In that respect, and *pace* Lacan, the becoming gay (or gay becoming) in question also exceeds the psychoanalytic view of homosexuality as sublimation.²⁸

Consequently, the problem, as Foucault says elsewhere, is not to discover within oneself the truth of one's desire; it is not to recognize oneself as this or that, or to want to be recognized as this or that, but to use one's sexuality to arrive at a multiplicity of relations. What we have in the West, Foucault claims, is a discourse of truth about sexuality, a science of sexuality. We produce manuals and treatises on sexuality. But we don't learn how to make love, how to give pleasure. We lack an art or ethos of pleasure, organized around the question of how to give, intensify, and maximize pleasure through sexual relationships. And that, he says, in what amounts to a key displacement of the problem of desire, is the reason why homosexuality—but here, a different term should be invented—is not a (natural *or* unnatural) type of desire, but something that is itself desirable, that is, an ethical enterprise. It is not, then, a matter of “obsessively recognizing” that we are homosexuals, of “discovering” our “true identity,” but of doing everything in our power to “become” homosexual.²⁹ And this difference—the difference between recognition and becoming—is precisely the point of bifurcation between one type of desire and another, between the liberal type and the type that is more an “unease” (*inquiétude*), an “unease-desire” (*désir-inquiétude*).³⁰ It is the point of bifurcation internal to desire itself: not the point at which a regime of desire turns into another regime, but the point at which desire begins to mean and imply something else altogether. It might involve the redefinition of homosexuality as “friendship,” and another way of problematizing friendship. It is conceivable to imagine the latter as a new *ascèse* (which Foucault is careful to distinguish from “asceticism,” which renounces pleasure), through which individuals relate to themselves and others differently, and which might include the eroticization of certain parts of the body, the use of certain objects in relation to those parts, as well as the use of drugs.³¹ That would amount to a true “gay becoming [*un devenir gay*].”³² But this difference between recognition and becoming is also the question of difference itself. For so long as homosexuals—and, I would claim, gender or racial minorities—see the central problem of their sexual existence, or their existence as a woman or a person of color, as the problem of their own identity, so long as identity constitutes the guiding principle or law of their sexual existence, they will perpetuate the traditional heterosexual (or male, or

white) norm. The “gay” connections and relationships we need to develop are not relations of identity, but of “differentiation, creation, and innovation.”³³ Those are the true acts of resistance, that is, the acts that transform relations of power and undermine the normative *status quo*. They are the acts that move beyond the mere “no!” that we might also want to, and most often need to, utter in the face of a situation of domination or exclusion. In that respect, the construction of a new form of friendship, which might disrupt the traditional relational order of institutions such as the army, the bureaucracy, the administration, or the church, can be a greater act of resistance, and a far more significant conquest, than the affirmation of one’s right to engage in same-sex marriage or even in socially subversive practices such as sadism or masochism. In my introduction, I referred in passing to Hockney’s highly erotic paintings of the very early 1960s, which picture homosexual desire. From 1963, however, he began to paint “domestic scenes” that evoke the everyday intimacy, tenderness, and companionship of men living together.

Recently, and in the context of feminist thought and struggles, Elizabeth Grosz has advocated a similar move away from the politics of recognition and identity politics.³⁴ The key struggle for women, as well as for other groups, is not to gain recognition from white, male subjects, but to “render more mobile, fluid and transformable the means by which the female subject is produced and represented.”³⁵ This struggle, she states, “is not a struggle by subjects to be recognized and valued, to be and to be seen to be what they are, but a struggle to mobilize and transform the position of women, the alignment of forces that constitute that ‘identity’ and ‘position,’ that stratification that stabilizes itself as a place and an identity.”³⁶ The struggle, in other words, is not for the recognition of what one is, but for the creation of what one can be.

The Postcolonial Politics of Recognition

I now turn to another critique of the politics of recognition. It comes from postcolonial theory and the recent historical context, whether in the Americas, Africa, or Australia, in which recognition is often presented as the most adequate liberal-democratic vehicle for decolonization. As we saw in the last chapter, recognition acts and bills have proliferated since the late 1970s and early 1980s. As is so often the case, Frantz Fanon had

already identified the problem clearly in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and responded in advance to the Hegel-inspired liberal positions formulated in the 1990s. Like the figure of self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Fanon argues, the colonized subject demands to be considered as Desire. He demands to be considered not as a thing, or as something that is merely here and now, but as pure negativity, that is, as a force that exceeds *mere* life and aspires to belong to a genuinely *human* life, or a world of mutual recognition. Isn't that precisely what he eventually achieved, through the process of decolonization? Fanon is skeptical. Recognition was *bestowed* on the colonized subject, but from without. He did not have to struggle for it, and so did not have to define its terms, either. He was "acted upon. Values that had not been created by his actions, values that had not been born of the systolic tide of his blood, danced in a hued whirl round him."³⁷ The "Negro's" recognition was his own (and further) undoing. His way of life may have changed; but his life has not. Is the situation significantly different when he does not simply remain passive, but actually fights "for Liberty and Justice"?³⁸ Not really, at least so long as the fight does not amount to a "break" with the very structures of colonial power as such. Then, all the colonized subject can hope for is "white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by his masters."³⁹ The real struggle, then, concerns the terms in which recognition is granted. Without this necessary conflict, Fanon suggests, the terms and meaning of recognition will remain in the hands of those in power (as we saw in the different but related case of Jewish emancipation through assimilation). Recognition will be granted where and when they see fit, but also, and crucially, in such a way that the colonized will identify with those terms. Far from seeing recognition as a source of freedom and dignity for the colonized subject, Fanon sees it as the field of power through which colonial relations are perpetuated. Therefore, the politics of recognition are not sufficient to overturn and undo structures of colonial domination—or any structure of domination, for that matter.

More recently, Glen Sean Coulthard has taken up this critique and developed it in the context of the relation between the state and the First Nations of Canada. A similar analysis, I believe, could be applied to the situation in Australia, or Central and South America.⁴⁰ Coulthard analyzes the manner in which, in the postcolonial context, the desire for recognition is the instrument through which colonial power perpetuates itself and produces a new type of colonized subjectivity. His main thesis is that "the

politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.⁴¹ In effect, this means that the power structure between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and what eventually became Canada has changed: From a relationship based on coercion and domination—on forced exclusion, elimination, and assimilation—it has shifted to one based on recognition. And Coulthard does not hesitate to equate the latter with a specific form or aspect of “governmentality.”⁴² Although Marx and Fanon are the two main philosophical references guiding his study, the influence of Foucault is also palpable. “What,” he asks, “are we to make of contexts where state violence no longer constitutes the regulative norm governing the process of colonial dispossession, as appears to be the case in ostensibly tolerant, multinational, liberal settler polities such as Canada?”⁴³ Or, to put it in more Marxist terms, “if neither ‘blood and fire’ nor ‘the silent compulsion’ of capitalist economies can adequately account for the reproduction of colonial hierarchies in liberal democratic contexts, what can?”⁴⁴ The desire for recognition is precisely the mechanism through which, in this specific context, liberal governmentality reconfigures its colonial power. Far from assuming, as Taylor and Honneth do, that “a more accommodating, liberal regime of mutual recognition might be capable of addressing the power relations typical of those between Indigenous peoples and settler states,”⁴⁵ we need to acknowledge that the liberal regime reinforces it. In the words of Mohawk political scientist Taiaiake Alfred, while *appearing* to address its colonial history through symbolic acts of redress, the colonial politics of recognition further entrench “in law and practices the real bases of its control.”⁴⁶ How, exactly?

To speak of “colonial governmentality,” as Coulthard does, is to recognize the normalizing and subjectifying process at the heart of the process of recognition. To be more specific, it is to recognize a key difference between a form of power that is coercive and another, possibly more effective form, which is essentially productive: To assert itself, and affirm anew its politics of dispossession, it relies on “its ability to produce *forms of life* that make settler-colonialism’s constitutive hierarchies seem natural.”⁴⁷ Drawing on the work of Alfred and Anishinaabe feminist Leanne Simpson, Coulthard further defines “governmentality” as “a relatively diffuse set of governing relations that operate through a circumscribed mode of recognition that structurally ensures continued access to Indigenous

peoples' lands and resources by producing neocolonial subjectivities that coopt Indigenous people into becoming instruments of their own dispossession."⁴⁸ This, in effect, means that, like neoliberalism, contemporary colonialism "works *through* rather than *against* freedom."⁴⁹ So much so, Alfred fears, that "many Indigenous people, particularly those leaders and community organizers heavily invested in the colonial politics of recognition, have come to associate this externally imposed field of maneuver with freedom or decolonization itself."⁵⁰

I shall illustrate Coulthard's claim by returning to the specific examples of the Dene nation's struggle for recognition in the 1970s and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) of Canada, which I began by evoking. When reading the language of the Dene Declaration or that of the AFN, which was followed by further proposals, we feel that the struggle for recognition at stake is one of sovereignty, involving territory, nation, and land, between a colonial power (and state) and Indigenous peoples. If we look more closely, however, we see that the terms of recognition, what recognition means, are different on each side: For the state of Canada, it means (relative) sovereignty over a well-defined territory, access to resources, and the recognition of certain rights, especially property rights. For the Indigenous peoples, it means the capacity to perpetuate a "way of life" and a "system of values," summarized in the idea of "land." To be sure, "land" refers to the natural resources, technology and labor necessary for a people to sustain itself over time. But "land" also designates a cultural identity and a set of relationships. Land is something that one lives *with*, not just *from*. Yes, the land takes care of the Dene. But the Dene, in return, take care of the land. The Dene's attitude to the land is not one of accumulation and exploitation, but one of *care*. The land, they say, is something we inherit, and then pass on to future generations. It is not something we own or possess. It is, Heidegger would say, both earth and world: It sustains life, but also opens up a world of values and relations, based on solicitude. What the Dene, the various First Nations of Canada, and the Indigenous peoples of Central and South America desire to see recognized is not only a territory, a property, of which they were dispossessed. It is first and foremost a "mode of life" or a "culture." Through their negotiations of land claims, what they seek, what they really desire, is "cultural recognition."⁵¹ "Culture," in this context, does not mean—as is often the case, especially when understood from the point of view of the liberal-capitalist industry of culture and tourism—folklore, customs, clothing, or even language, but

“the interconnected social totality of a distinct mode of life encompassing the economic, political, spiritual, and social.”⁵²

When measured against that strong yardstick, the Canadian response proved—unsurprisingly perhaps—disappointing. The state responded to the Dene Declaration of 1975 by “circumscribing the terms and content of the recognition it was willing to make available to [them] through the negotiation of a land settlement.”⁵³ Canada and the Canadian Northwest Territories (NWT) negotiated a land settlement based on two principles, which do not meet the broad criteria of culture previously identified: “First, that a Dene political claim to self-determination was invalid; and second, that any settlement reached must attain ‘finality’ through the extinguishment of what remained of Dene rights and title in exchange for the institutional recognition and protection of certain aspects of Dene ‘culture.’”⁵⁴ While the state recognized and accommodated Dene “culture” through the negotiation of land, the negotiation in question did “*not* involve the recognition of alternative Indigenous economies and forms of political authority . . . instead, the state insisted that any institutionalized accommodation of Indigenous cultural difference be reconcilable with one political formation—namely, colonial sovereignty—and one mode of production—namely capitalism.”⁵⁵ The goal was to limit and neutralize the broad and undefined rights and title claims of the Dene by incentivizing a capitalist approach and ensuring that “alternative socioeconomic visions do not threaten the desired functioning of the market economy.”⁵⁶

This goal met with even greater success in the last two decades, and testifies to the ability of liberal governmentality to adapt to, and even appropriate, the terms of its critics. Thus, “sustainable development” no longer refers to the set of political and economic relations required to “foster the well-being of people, communities, and the land over time,” as it did in the Dene discourse of the 1970s.⁵⁷ It now designates the *economic* sustainability of capital accumulation itself: “The longer the projected lifespan of a proposed project—that is, the longer period that a project proposes to exploit a community’s land, resources, and labor, the more ‘sustainable’ it is said to be.”⁵⁸ Similarly, in the process of negotiating land claim agreements, First Nations people find themselves having to “translate their complex reciprocal relationship with the land into the equally complex but very different language of ‘property.’”⁵⁹ As Coulthard puts it, a struggle that was once deeply *informed* by the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations, and that challenged the techno-capitalist mode of

production, is increasingly becoming a struggle *for* land, understood now as a material resource to be exploited in the capital accumulation process.⁶⁰ The true battle, as Foucault understood very well, is for the terms in which the process of recognition takes place, and the (at times incompatible) forms of life they designate. This, as Coulthard puts it, means that “without transformative struggle constituting an integral aspect of anti-colonial praxis the Indigenous population will not only remain subjects of imperial rule insofar as they have not gone through a process of purging the psycho-existential complexes battered into them over the course of their colonial experience—a process of strategic desubjectivation—but they will also remain so in that the Indigenous society will tend to come to see the forms of structurally limited and constrained recognition conferred to them by their colonial ‘masters’ as their own.”⁶¹

Governing the Poor

A similar type of argument can be made regarding the manner in which, today, the problem of poverty—and, more widely, that of social exclusion—is envisaged. My claim, here, is that, contrary to the claims made by various liberal social and political thinkers, the poor are indeed being recognized—that is, identified as a group suffering from a lack of self-esteem and self-worth, and in need of support—yet in ways that deserve scrutiny. As in the case of postcolonial struggles, the key question revolves around the terms on the basis of which this process of recognition takes place, and the type of power dynamics that animates it. The case of the poor, introduced in the previous chapter, is especially interesting, in that it occurs at the junction of economic, especially neoliberal, governmentality and the symbolic desire for recognition. As such, and after the overlap of the sexual and symbolic regimes of desire, it reveals one way in which the economic and symbolic regimes intersect.

Let me turn to the example of contemporary Britain, and of New Labor’s reform of the welfare system, in particular. Published during New Labor’s first year in office, the Welfare Reform Green Paper seemed to favor an inclusive, participatory approach, aimed at “listening to the people.”⁶² The idea was to empower those concerned by involving them in the decisions affecting them. On closer inspection, we see that it did very little to involve those concerned in the development of policies designed to tackle poverty

and social exclusion. Or rather, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the status of the subject of the new welfare state was transformed: From a citizen bound to other citizens through relations of mutual dependency, obligation, and solidarity, he or she became a customer and an informed consumer having to use a service provider, whose goal is to provide him or her with a good “customer experience.” He or she is now seen as the manager of his or her own life and skills, who needs to make informed decisions in a complex and constantly evolving environment. Despite the language of the Welfare Reform Green Paper, which spoke of “the rise of the demanding, skeptical, citizen-consumer,” its proposals for “an active modern service” appealed to a consumer rather than a citizenship ethos. Thus, in what amounted to a pivotal moment in the government of the poor, consumerism and human capital, rather than citizenship, became the norm. This shift was clearly reflected in the following, seemingly descriptive, yet ultimately normative statement, which Tony Blair made in the government’s first Annual Report: “In all walks of life, people act as consumers not just citizens.”⁶³ This contradictory construction of benefit claimants as customers, and of governmental agencies and departments as businesses, is a further manifestation of the success of the economic and specifically neoliberal paradigm, which, as we saw earlier, has become the grid of intelligibility or *mathesis universalis* through which all social and political phenomena tend to be read. Like many such agencies, Jobcentre Plus is to ensure that “the service is customer-focused and tailored to individual needs”⁶⁴ and that staff in the Pensions Service “manage and support the entire customer experience” and “deliver the best customer experience.”⁶⁵ Recent developments in higher education in the United Kingdom follow the same pattern.

The basic idea behind welfare reform was that the solution to poverty lies not in redistribution (“cash hand outs”), but in “opportunity.” The former became associated with a culture of “dependency” and “learned helplessness” leading to low self-esteem and a passive life; the latter, by contrast, was and still is seen as a way of empowering people, that is, of making them become “experts of themselves,” and thus responsible for their own condition and sense of self-worth. In the words of Nikolas Rose, those excluded from a life of choice and self-fulfillment are to be “assisted not through the ministrations of solicitous experts proffering support and benefit checks, but through their engagement in a whole array of programs for their ethical reconstruction as active citizens—training to equip

them with the skills of self-promotion, counselling to restore their sense of self-worth and self-esteem, programs of empowerment to enable them to assume their rightful place as the self-actualizing and demanding subjects of an 'advanced' liberal democracy."⁶⁶ The goal of the welfare state, then, has changed: From providing a safety net to those who fall on hard times, it has moved to providing the conditions for the (re-)insertion of the poor as producers and consumers—of goods and services, but also of themselves. It is not difficult to see the neoliberal logic at work behind this shift. The idea of security itself has changed: From an economic solution provided by the state, based on solidarity and the recognition that each deserves a helping hand (in return, no doubt, for duties of social obligation and responsibility), it has become a matter of engineering "secure people—secure in their finances, their abilities, their communities" who can cope with a life that is intrinsically risky, inasmuch as it is defined by a global economy and a norm of competition, which is relentless, constant, and always increasing.⁶⁷

Security, then, which the neoliberal welfare state is to support and facilitate, is a necessary condition for economic agency, but one that does not exclude risk. On the contrary, risk is now at the heart of the rationality (or calculation) of security, whether social or national.⁶⁸ The permanent evaluation, assessment, and management of risk, one could argue, is now an intrinsic part of what it means to be alive, and a distinctive feature of biopower. It requires a new science, statistics, aimed at revealing the laws of chance, and oriented toward the control and management of society. In the neoliberal context, however, the responsibility for managing risk is no longer that of the state and its socialized securities, but of the individuals themselves. As Rose puts it, "'social insurance' is no longer a key technical component for a general rationality of solidarity: taxation for the purposes of welfare becomes, instead, the minimum price that respectable individuals and communities are prepared to pay for insuring themselves against the riskiness now seen concentrated within certain problematic sectors."⁶⁹ Thus, the welfare state is not to protect one against risk, but to encourage one to engage in a permanent and private *calculation* of risk, with a view to maximizing one's quality of life. In the words of former secretary of state for education and employment, David Blunkett, the welfare state is an "enabling force" designed to help men and women "overcome fear of change, minimize risk and seize the opportunities of the new economy."⁷⁰ The responsibility of the state is that of an "enabling

force” that collects and disseminates the necessary data and information, and provides the relevant incentives, to allow the poor or the unemployed to identify and grasp the economic opportunities generated by the free market, and the general population to protect *themselves* from excessive risks. The state’s responsibility is to generate what has been referred to as the “prudent” self.⁷¹

To claim, in this context, that the poor and the disenfranchised are not being recognized, or are being simply misrecognized (in their dignity and humanity), is to fail to understand the normative and productive nature of neoliberal governmentality, in excess of power effects that could be ascribed to a simple logic of domination. This is not—to borrow Rose’s words once again—“to minimize the intensification of misery and impoverishment that these changed specifications of the responsibilities of individuals for their own fate have brought about.” It is difficult, he remarks further, “to contemplate the terminological change in which the unemployed person has come to be designated a ‘jobseeker’ and the homeless person a ‘rough sleeper’ without cynicism and repugnance.”⁷² Yet there is no question that something like a process of recognition has taken place, and that the poor and the unemployed constitute a specific focus of biopower. The question, rather, is one of knowing what is being recognized, and thus the sort of subject that is generated as a result of that normative recognition. And in that respect, the role of neoliberal governmentality is to manage and govern those in need, but by steering them to act as “risk and opportunity-takers,” that is, as the entrepreneurs of their own life.⁷³ What they are “excluded” from, neoliberal power tells us, is the benefits of a life of choice and self-fulfillment, which naturally brings about self-esteem. They are, Nikolas Rose observes, “people whose self-responsibility and self-fulfilling aspirations have been deformed by the dependency culture, whose efforts at self-advancement have been frustrated for so long that they suffer from ‘learned helplessness,’ whose self-esteem has been destroyed.”⁷⁴ My claim, here, is that neoliberalism is *also*, and even primarily, a technology of government through self-love and self-esteem, and that it is precisely in the name of self-esteem that it dismantled a range of institutions within which welfare government had operated for decades. In many ways, and contrary to what Honneth claims, neoliberalism is perhaps the greatest advocate and producer of self-esteem; it has been particularly adept at giving a precise content to the desire for recognition, and shaping a new subject of esteem through a large spectrum of tech-

niques. It is quite possible that the poor and homeless desire recognition in the sense of self-esteem and respect. But it is also possible that they desire something else, a model of the self other than that of the prudent, empowered individual who takes care of him- or herself—of his or her body, mind, and conduct—by becoming an expert of him- or herself.

Conclusion

Contrary to what many movements that focus on promoting recognition believe, processes of recognition do not merely bring to consciousness what already exists in a latent form within the self. Recognition does not lift the veil of identity and reveal a formation that was there all along. Identities—sexual, racial, cultural—are recognized through discourses and power structures that make them visible and, at the same time, normalize them. The conditions of visibility of a given group, type, or population are also the conditions of its control, or, minimally, of that through which it becomes governable. We have seen how, through a complex and varied combination of legislation—involving land titles and property rights, edicts of emancipation, consumer laws—and the formation of ways of life (a new form of pastoral care, a new relation to the land, a prudential ethics), recognition turns out to be a distinctive way of governing the desiring self. Recognition generates its own subjects. It is a process of subjectivation. It recognizes an object or phenomenon—a homosexual, a Jew, a poor person—but on the basis of concepts that are themselves normative. At the same time that it recognizes them legally, it differentiates them epistemically, socially, ethically. Thus, while the homosexual movement fought for recognition, its members nevertheless fought to be recognized in the terms of the discourse that had marginalized them, and thereby affirmed that discourse. So long as political struggle remains within the logic of resistance, it will always only be a reactive politics, always defined in relation to the power that it struggles against—and for this reason, as we have seen, always inclined to reproduce that power. If struggles for recognition are to avoid the logic of a politics of resistance, they need to learn to repudiate the categories in which they are recognized; they will need to struggle to be *unrecognized*, and possibly to draw new lines of differentiation.

With hindsight, we should perhaps not be entirely surprised to see Foucault question the validity of the ethics and politics of recognition as early

as “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” “Humanity,” he writes in that essay, “does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.”⁷⁵ To be sure, when not referring to Nietzsche, and addressing the specificity of our own economy of power, Foucault prefers to speak of processes of subjectivation. But this subtle displacement does not call into question the fundamental idea according to which struggles for recognition stem not from a desire for universal reciprocity, but from a desire to introduce a differentiated force, and a set of norms and values, in an already constituted field of forces. “Nothing in man — not even his body —,” Foucault adds a few pages later, “is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men Necessarily, we must dismiss those tendencies that encourage the consoling play of recognitions.”⁷⁶ Greater — for life — than the consoling play of recognition is the play (or desire) of becoming and creation.

This position brings us closer to that of Deleuze and Guattari, and I shall conclude by turning to some of their collaborative work. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* introduces the idea of “minor literature” and raises the question of what it means to *be* a minority.⁷⁷ Specifically, the book shifts the center of gravity of the question of minority from *being* to *becoming*. Given the significance of the concept of becoming in their work, it would not be surprising if Foucault’s appeal to a “gay becoming” as a way of life were an implicit reference to, and philosophical use of, that Deleuzo-Guattarian concept. Like Foucault, they insist on the constructive or creative dimension of becoming, which is the true expression of desire, and which they contrast with the desire for recognition. They write that “a minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority *constructs* within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization.”⁷⁸ Up until that moment of construction, there is a minority, to be sure, but there is no minority politics. Thus, Prague (Jewish) German, like the English language constructed by people racialized as black in America today, is a deterritorialized language. The second characteristic of minor literatures, Deleuze and Guattari insist, is that everything in them is political from the start. Individual concerns are immediately political. For example in the case of Kafka, the family triangle connects to other triangles — commercial, economic, bureaucratic,

juridical—that are sites of power. Yet through the construction of a minor use of language, those triangles of power are exposed to their own exteriority, their own lines of flight, their “deterritorialization.” “Literature,” Kafka writes in his *Diaries*, “is less a matter for literary history than for the people.”⁷⁹ Thus, it becomes a matter of writing not in the vernacular, in a language other than the dominant one, but in that language itself, like a Czech Jew writing in German or, perhaps, a Québécois writing in English. A Québécois line of deterritorialization is one that does not try to affirm or reterritorialize the French language over the English one, but one that traverses, disrupts, and transforms the Canadian-English language, culture, and norms. It becomes a matter of writing “like a dog digging a hole, a rat digging its burrow,” with a view to “finding one’s own point of underdevelopment, one’s own *patois*, one’s own third world, one’s own desert.”⁸⁰ The desert in question is the one that grows as a result of a drying up and sobering of language, an expression that is made of pure intensities, that is devoid of all symbolism, metaphor, and even signification. This, after all, is perhaps what distinguishes Beckett from Joyce, and specifically the latter’s idiosyncratic use of English and of every language, and the former’s use of French: Whereas Joyce “never stops operating by exhilaration and overdetermination and brings about all sorts of worldwide reterritorializations,” Beckett “proceeds by dryness and sobriety, a willed poverty, pushing deterritorialization to such an extreme that nothing remains but intensities.”⁸¹ Still, toward the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus finds himself in conversation with the Irish nationalist Davin, who exhorts him to join his struggle: “Try to be one of us,” he says. “Why don’t you learn Irish?”⁸² “Ireland first, Stevie.”⁸³ Stephen’s reply is as ambiguous and open-ended as it is well known: “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.”⁸⁴ Shouldn’t we all attempt to fly by the very nets that hold us back—not by reverting to the local, the vernacular, or the national, but by eating away at its mesh, or by turning it inside out, loosening it, subverting it? Yes, we should fly by the norms of the power that stifles desire, but not by returning to who or what we really are, our origin and essence, our “ownness” or “authenticity.”

To have a go at power, then, is not to seek its recognition, to exist in its eyes, but to work and empty it from within, to traverse it with tunnels and galleries, until it crumbles. It is this *becoming* minority, even where

and when one already is one, that becomes necessary. It is not only a matter of saying: See my language (or the color of my skin, or my sexuality), recognize it, it is as valid as yours. Rather, it is also a matter of asking: How can we extract a minor literature from our own language, a minor sexuality or race from a major one? “How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gipsy in relation to one’s language,” culture, or group? How to inhabit one’s own language as a foreigner? Only the minor is great and revolutionary, Deleuze and Guattari claim.⁸⁵ Why? Because all identities generate their own triangles of power; all risk falling into reactive, if not reactionary positions. Only at this price can micro-fascisms of all sorts—linguistic, racial, sexual, ethnic—really be avoided. For example, one could imagine that, given that English has become the worldwide “vehicular” language, we should embrace the persistence of the vernacular in the Breton bard or the French Canadian singer. But the Canadian singer can also “bring about the most reactionary, the most Oedipal of reterritorializations, oh mama, oh my native land, my cabin, olé, olé.”⁸⁶

This is the opposite of, and a real alternative to, identity politics. It is the end of the politics of recognition, and the beginning of another politics of desire—the desire that will not allow itself to be trapped within the commercial, bureaucratic, entrepreneurial, and even sexual triangle of desire. It is the desire that is essentially creative, not normative. It is, for example, the desire of the teacher, his or her desire to teach, and it refuses to be trapped in the new (neoliberal) bureaucratic and entrepreneurial structures of power that try to capture it. It is the desire of the indeterminate, neutral gender that refuses to be trapped in gender identity. It is the desire of the worker—or, perhaps, of the idler—who refuses to become the entrepreneur of his own working condition and life. There is no central point of power. There are only multiple sites of power, each with its own specific situation, which calls for a specific answer, and a specific politics. Each needs to invent its own line of flight. This is how Deleuze and Guattari understand the proliferation of animals in Kafka’s work, and the idea of metamorphosis, in particular. It is not, they say, a matter of establishing a resemblance between the behavior of an animal and that of human beings. Nor is it an image, a metaphor, with a hidden meaning to be interpreted. The animal does not speak “like” a person, “but extracts from language tonalities without signification.”⁸⁷ In truth, “there is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other.” What we have, instead, is “a becoming that includes the maximum of difference as

a difference of intensity, the crossing of a threshold.”⁸⁸ A few years before the work on Kafka, Deleuze spoke of recognition in the Kantian, epistemological sense of *Rekognition*, as the very operation of thought that is capable only of identifying what it already knows, and thus never of grasping the new, or difference as such. The new, he said, in a way that applies equally to a critique of recognition as *Anerkennung*, calls upon forces “that are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita* . . . By contrast, how derisory are the voluntary struggles for recognition.”⁸⁹ Why derisory? Because recognition struggles only for the attainment of established values and norms, rather the creation of new ones. In the end, the dividing line is not between majority and minority, or even between minorities, but between systems of power, and the manner in which they frame, organize, shape, and trap desire, and individual or collective constructions or assemblages of desire, which question, undermine, and escape those regimes. This, I believe, is what Foucault meant when he spoke of a gay becoming: not a desire to be recognized as gay, not the desire to be recognized by the power of recognition, but the sovereign desire to live by new codes, new assemblages, new connections. A true politics of difference is one that privileges the production of becomings, or becoming-minor, over the production of fixed identities and norms.

CONCLUSION

Desire, Again . . .

Critical Summary

209

I began this book by suggesting that if we want to understand who we are today and how we experience, understand and conduct ourselves, and thus contribute to the ontology of the present with which Foucault associates the task of philosophy, we need to look at the historical problematization of desire. More specifically, we need to look at the way in which, starting in the eighteenth century, desire, which for centuries had already been understood as the universal key to understanding who we are and the technology through which our subjectivity is shaped, undergoes a radical transformation: It is no longer what needs to be governed properly in order for the true or good life to flourish, no longer an *object* of pastoral and spiritual care, but an *instrument* of government, that is, a way of conducting conducts and achieving certain (biopolitical) goals. The government *of* desire is also, and especially, the government *by* and *for* desire. A further claim I made was that, as a result, the Western subject of desire—the origins of which Foucault traces back to late antiquity and early Christianity—is itself given a new meaning, a new direction, and a new life. It is the life of life itself, understood in a natural sense. But this onto-historical shift, I argued, does not amount to a discovery or straightforward liberation of desire. For desire is made visible, and subsequently governed, according to very specific rationalities, each of which frames it in a precise way and works alongside institutions—the courtroom, the

market, the family, schools, the office, and so on—that correspond to specific ways of organizing and distributing power. Together, they amount to a formidable operation of normalization, through which a new type of subjectivity, a new way of experiencing and understanding the self, was introduced; they constitute a new ethics, economics, and politics of the (desiring) self. All this is to say that the nexus of concepts, practices, and institutions associated with the term “desire” should be viewed not as a mere ideological effect, but as a phenomenon constitutive of the substructure itself.

In my introduction, I also claimed that the three regimes of desire I have focused upon—economic, sexual, and symbolic—overlap and intersect in various ways, which cannot be defined in advance and vary according to specific historical and local situations. That, as well as how they intersect, became apparent at various points. Chapter 4, for example, revealed how, from within the rationality of interest and motive, characteristic of the economic framing of desire, and as its limit, emerged another rationality of desire, that of the sexual instinct. It revealed how our understanding of desire in terms of sexuality presupposes the emergence of psychiatry, while claiming that the “psychiatric style of reasoning,” together with its concept of sexuality, were made possible by a crisis, tension, or limit internal to the liberal style of reasoning. The space of sexuality, and of its inscription within the clinical distinction between the normal and the pathological, was, we saw, very much the result of a development internal to the legal and penal system of bourgeois governmentality. Chapter 8, to turn to another example, showed how the model of recognition, which for many represents a genuine alternative to economic liberalism and the repressive analytic of sexuality, reasserts the rights of one or the other, or both. Processes of, and struggles for, recognition take place around issues of sexuality, and can end up reinforcing the very institutions they combat. Equally, they overlap with socioeconomic problems, such as poverty and social exclusion; the mechanisms of self-esteem and self-love, thought to be central to the symbolic regime of desire, are also central to neoliberal market rationality and governmentality.

In an effort to bring out the more critical dimension of this genealogy, let me return briefly to each one of those regimes, and use them as a springboard to open up alternative ways of thinking about desire, other possible regimes—or, better said perhaps, assemblages—of desire.

Liberalism presents itself as the system of freedom in which individuals

are free to pursue their own interests and desires. But we saw how, under the neoliberal paradigm, which has gained considerable ground in the last thirty years and has transformed our view of subjectivity, freedom is not the ultimate goal of government, but that through which a specific way of governing—the way that sees every subject as a *homo economicus*, in charge of his or her human capital and responsible for his or her own promotion and self-esteem—is implemented. Yes, neoliberalism stands for less government, if by government one means that of the state. But governmentality is not reducible to state government. Furthermore, and as we saw in some detail, far from leaving the question of government open, this governing less has defined and shaped it in a very specific way, implemented in fields as different as the government of the poor, the workforce, or the family, to say nothing, of course, of the individual as consumer and producer of his or her own life. It has taken hold of life as a whole, which is now measured, regulated, and judged by the axioms and rationality of the market. As Saul Newman puts it: “We are inserted into an apparatus which seeks to capture every facet of existence and desire within its circuits—of consumption, communication, spectacle, hyper-visibility, idiotic enjoyment, endless and meaningless work, debt and constant insecurity.”¹ And we saw how the role of the state, far from being minimal, is actually crucial in providing and expanding the conditions for this transformation of the individual. Its role is that of an enabling condition, rather than a coercive force, and thus one that cannot function without our own consent and power of agency. It requires that we be free in order to operate as economic agents, and thus as adopting the normative framework of the market. If anything, the system of freedom to which neoliberalism gives rise amounts to a precise and systematic normalization of the subject of desire, or to what we could call a complex and sophisticated “epithumotechnics.” Through a strict and highly sophisticated government of desire, advanced, technological capitalism has managed to blur the boundary not only between labor and leisure, the public and the private, but also, and to turn to another example, between freedom and surveillance. To be sure, we have now overcome discipline in Foucault’s sense, and, in the words of Bernard Harcourt, “freed ourselves of the institutional strait-jacket, reached a privileged space of utter freedom where we get to do everything we desire—to tweet, to write in emoticons, to work remotely from our beds, to text and sext, to play Candy Crush on the subway or in the classroom, to stalk our friends and lovers on Facebook.”² But this free

space of desire and pleasure comes at a price, inasmuch as all the formerly coercive surveillance technology has been woven into it:

Some of us are forced to wear electronic ankle bracelets, others lustfully strap Apple Watches onto their wrists, but in both cases, all of our daily motions, activities, and whereabouts become easily accessible to those with rudimentary technology—that is when we are not actively broadcasting our heartbeat to our loved ones, living reality on camera, or tweeting our lives minute by minute . . . In these ways, ordinary life is uncannily converging with practices of punishment.³

Never have we been freer, and yet never more closely watched, monitored, scrutinized, or evaluated. Never have we had our intimate self so systematically exposed, plundered, and exploited.

Furthermore, if we define freedom not as the anarchic and conflictual development of our desires, but as a certain peace of mind and a form of contentment, we can wonder at the extent to which the government of desire by market norms and axioms, that is, by competition and covetousness, fear and hope, does not harm freedom, and thus the democratic organization of the multitude. We can wonder at the extent to which the mechanisms of democracy are not diminished, not undermined, by a governmentality so reliant on insecurity and fear, and by its emphasis on “resilience”—our capacity to face adversity, “bounce back,” and “win”—as the basic engine of social progress. How does that freedom differ from voluntary servitude?

The only question, then, would be one of knowing whether we could imagine a way of being governed not simply less, but differently, that is, outside the economic form of government, without, for that matter, returning to the older, juridical model of sovereignty. We would need to know whether the subject of desire can be structured, and flourish, outside the double constraints of its economic and sovereign dimension, and what form those other configurations or regimes might take. Can we imagine a model of desire that escapes both the normative discourses of truth of governmentality and the (phallogocentric) discourse of sovereignty, articulated around the law, prohibition, and transgression? Or should we seek to extract ourselves from the governmentality of desire altogether, that is, from the problem of government as a problem of desire?

In that context, could the so-called sexual revolution of the last fifty years be seen as a model of political liberation, and a way out of the eco-

nomic regime of desire? As a good example of a sphere of life that is less governed, less subjected to the normative power of veridiction and bourgeois institutions? There again, and as already indicated, I see reasons to remain cautious, if not skeptical. Two different types of answer are called for. On the one hand, we understand why Foucault rejected the repressive hypothesis and the Freudo-Marxist solution: Contemporary society, and capitalism itself, the argument goes, is built on the repression of libidinal drives, which, should they be liberated, would naturally lead to greater social harmony. Foucault's response is that this sexual energy, and the *homo sexualis* in general, is very much a construction of the analytic and *dispositif* of sexuality, which are themselves normative and normalizing: Power—including psychiatric and psychopathologic—is not simply repressive, but productive. The sexual construction of desire is precisely that, a construction, irreducibly bound up with its own normativity, and founded on naturalistic principles; yet there is nothing to be uncovered or discovered beneath it, nothing like a more natural, more authentic sexuality, a truer sexual self. In a way—and this is my second point—sexual liberation has indeed taken place: Sexuality is no longer repressed, or at least no longer subordinated exclusively to the heterosexual, procreative, and genital norm. It is no longer policed in the same way, or at least to the same extent, by doctors, families, and schools. But it remains indexed to a form of naturalism, which has transformed our understanding of what is normal and what is not, what should be normalized and what should not, yet without calling this normative foundation into question: Sexuality is precisely the object of a constant and endlessly evolving self-discovery, a privileged access to who we really are, and an essential mechanism in understanding our true, innermost self. Sexuality is a truth by which we live, and, it seems, one by which we cannot *not* live. We saw the difficulties that Foucault had in describing himself, his own erotic practices, in the language of homosexuality, and the desire he expressed to invent new ways of being together—new organizations of desire, I would say—outside the sexual analytic. In addition, we saw how the market is remarkably effective in adapting to this evolution, how it manages to turn sexuality into an industry and encourages the multiplication of sexual identities and practices, so long as it can capture them: Sexual desire is constantly reinforcing economic desire, and our economy has become entirely libidinal. Far from provoking a crisis of capitalism, the sexual liberation has opened up new opportunities for it.

As for the symbolic regime of desire, my critique was twofold: First, and

perhaps not unlike neoliberalism, its advocates fail to acknowledge the power dynamics at work in processes of recognition. In other words, they fail to acknowledge that the so-called desire for recognition takes place within a space defined according to power coordinates that are unevenly distributed and asymmetrical, and thus fail to see that every recognition is a misrecognition. Second, as a technology of the self, this regime has proven eminently compatible with neoliberal normativity and its emphasis on self-esteem as a necessary component of a socially responsible and economically well-adjusted subject. In that respect, my reservations regarding the tendency to read contemporary social and political struggles through the lens of identity politics resonate strongly with Saul Newman's critical assessment in *Postanarchism*:

With some possible exceptions, nothing could be less challenging to the neoliberal order than the desire for recognition on the part of particular identities, whether cultural, sexual or otherwise . . . Such claims for political and cultural recognition are now simply inscribed within the neoliberal state order, incorporated through its logic of representation in which differences and particularities, so long as they are identifiable and representable, are simply accommodated by many institutions. Identity politics risks falling into an essentialist trap where one is in a sense imprisoned within one's own subjectivity, whose interests and desires have been carved out for it by power . . . Moreover, the assertion of a particular marginalized identity often produces forms of *ressentiment* based on the perception of one's own suffering and victimization . . . There is a kind of narcissism at work in certain types of identity politics, in which the insistence on one's discrimination at the hands of sexist or heteronormative institutions comes to be the thing that defines one's identity. At best, identity becomes a benign form of liberalism, obsessed with the representation of ever more particular and marginal identities—L.G.B.T.Q. At worst, in the insistence of an identity that is constantly victimized, identity politics becomes akin to a kind of fundamentalism. Either way, this kind of politics of representation and recognition has reached a point of exhaustion.⁴

Wendy Brown had already drawn attention to the dangers of reducing political claims to claims of recognition, and anchoring the latter in a sense of identity born of injury.⁵ To the extent that modern identity politics relies heavily on a moralizing sense of injury caused by exclusion from

the well-intended, benign, and protective modern liberal state, it can end up reinforcing the injured identity itself. Furthermore, identity becomes itself defined by injury, and recognition operates less with a view to overcoming injustice or oppression, and more with a view to acknowledging (and perpetuating) a wounded identity.

Sites of Resistance

I also began this book by pointing out that the critical ontology of ourselves that Foucault seeks to carry out, and to which this book is a contribution, needs to be considered not as a mere theory or doctrine, or even as a permanent body of knowledge, but, in his own words, as “*a philosophical life* in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”⁶ To recognize the limits that are imposed on us is not, as Foucault hastened to add in 1983, to say “that everything is bad,” or inevitable for that matter, but that

everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper—and pessimistic—activism.⁷

Freedom, in other words, takes place where danger looms, and as a response to it. Over and beyond its ability to diagnose, critique is an act of resistance. Recall Foucault’s call for a philosophical life of resistance: “We need to promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing the type of subjectivity that has been imposed on us for several centuries.”⁸ By resistance and counter-conduct, Foucault means the possibility of another way of conducting oneself and being conducted, and one in which the problem of freedom is played out differently—not as a metaphysical or even juridical problem, but as a strategic one.⁹ This possibility is all the more difficult to address in that the regimes of desire we have explored, and that are constitutive of liberal governmentality, rely on our constantly renewed consent to be governed in that particular way, and on a seemingly unshakable “I want” that is the source not of the legitimacy of that particular way of being governed, but of its efficacy. This is the point at which the task of critique becomes ethical as well as political. For if (as Foucault puts it

in “What Is Critique?”) “governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth,” then “critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth.”¹⁰ Reversing La Boétie’s proposition, Foucault qualifies it further as “the art of voluntary insubordination [*inservitude volontaire*], that of reflected intractability [*indocilité réfléchie*].”¹¹ The goal of critique, in that respect, would be nothing other than the “desubjugation [*désassujettissement*] of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.”¹² This operation will not take place, then, in the name of another, higher truth, but in the name of another, better life. By that, I mean a life that is governed differently, less subjected to the constraints of the alliance of truth and power, and freer. Contrary to what one might expect, and some believe, Foucault does not see power as inescapable, as something resembling a perfectly sealed cage. “My role,” he once said in an interview, “is to show people that they are much freer than they feel.”¹³ And that, as Saul Newman puts it, is because “power has no continuity or consistency of its own—it has to be propped up and reinstated constantly by those who submit.”¹⁴ Its paradox is that it has no power outside the power that we grant it, and it cannot operate without our consent. Because it is neither necessary nor inevitable, freedom—like subjection—is possible in any situation or social arrangement. As a result, and as I have already indicated, the crucial political question—and, in many ways, puzzle—is that of voluntary servitude. Why is it that men and women desire to be governed in ways that make them less free? How, by contrast, can we refuse to be governed in those ways, through those conceptions of the self and intersubjective relations? How can we learn to become indifferent to power, and how can this indifference become the foundation for a new ethics and a new politics? One thing is certain: Only when we extricate ourselves from the game of power and act as though it had never existed are we able to listen to the “insistent murmuring” and “joyous impatience” of freedom.¹⁵

Following a suggestion Foucault makes in “What Is Critique?” I call “anarchistic” the desire that seeks to escape power, and I call “anarchism” the art of being governed less, or differently.¹⁶ When, in the discussion following his talk, and in response to Jean-Louis Bruch’s invitation to clarify his position on whether he thinks it is possible not to be governed at all, he speaks of the “will not to be governed,” he means the will “not to be

governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price”—and not, as one might think, the will of “not being governed at all.”¹⁷ The difference is significant, insofar as the position Foucault advocates, and which I defend, is that there are no dimensions of life that could be considered ungovernable *absolutely*: Precisely because there is no life outside history, no pure or essential life, there are no aspects of life that cannot be governed in principle. When Foucault refers to anarchism, then, he is not referring to “something that would be a fundamental anarchism, which would be like an originary freedom, absolutely and wholeheartedly resistant to any governmentalization.”¹⁸ His *History of Madness* already made it clear that “there exists not a single culture in the world in which it is allowed to do anything.”¹⁹ For the same reason, power never succeeds to govern life entirely, that is, in all its multiple aspects, and there are always aspects of life that can be used in order to oppose or escape power. Power, and the resistance to power, is strategic, rather than ontological: There is no *essential* anarchic dimension of life itself. As Reiner Schürmann remarked perceptively thirty years ago, the question “What can I do?” is neither a Kantian, transcendental one (since it inquires not about what I *ought* to do, but about what I *can* do), nor a Heideggerian, onto-historical one (since the bounds of an age are not determined by a “destiny of being,” but by a series of contingent events). Rather, it is a quasi-transcendental question, concerned with the possibility of extracting oneself from, or negotiating with, the constraints that condition our age. The genealogical, critical question, in other words, is one of knowing “what forms of *subjectivation*, i.e. self-constitution, are possible today.”²⁰

Yet as soon as one speaks of self-constitution, an objection comes to mind: Isn't liberalism, precisely in the way in which this book has described it, a series of techniques of individualization, a form of government that appeals to everyone's particularity, unique personality, and desires? And isn't uniformity generated precisely (and paradoxically) as the result of such an appeal, so much so that the task of freedom becomes that of liberating not the individual from the state, as (neo-)liberalism claims, but ourselves from the state *and* the type of individualization linked to it, as Foucault suggests?²¹ This double liberation is precisely the hallmark of anarchism, and the way to distinguish it from individualism.

I shall introduce this anarchic regime of desire (if that is not a contradiction in terms) as the supreme form of sovereignty—not the sovereignty of the law and the sword, or the sovereignty that defines and asserts itself

in opposition to it, through an act of transgression, but the sovereignty of autonomy and freedom (which, once again, cannot be identified with the sovereignty of a self-conscious and transcendentally self-constituted subject). To borrow Schürmann's terms once again, while "the transgressive subject still fetishizes the law in daring what is forbidden," the anarchistic subject "echoes Nietzsche's Zarathustra: 'Such is *my* way; where is yours?' . . . For *the way*—that does not exist."²² At once singular and (perhaps modestly) tactical, the anarchistic struggles of our age are directed at specific organizations of power, specific discourses of truth, and specific modes of subjectivation, and not at power as such, as the fundamentalist anarchism and the liberation ideology of the nineteenth century believed. And by contrast with the merely transgressive subject, who seeks only to defy the law, and ends up reaffirming it, the anarchist subject resists governmentality by developing his or her own path of life and action. As such, the anarchistic subject differs from both the individual, liberal subject, and the (transgressive) subject of the law.

What, if anything, can be opposed or offered as an alternative to the *faire faire* of liberal governmentality? The question has to be one of knowing whether the counter-conducts in question presuppose a life that turns its back against, and unfolds outside, the play of norms, and corresponds to an operation of denormalization, or whether they presuppose the invention of new norms. Can desire flourish outside its normative conduct? Or should we seek to exploit the free play of norms, and use it as leverage to transform them?

FAIRE JOUER

The answer, I feel, depends on the manner in which we define life. If, following Canguilhem, we define life precisely as normativity, that is, as the capacity not just to follow norms, but to adapt and re-create them, then the question of a different life can only be posed within the framework of normativity, and of our capacity to transform social norms. This would correspond to a possible theory and practice of biopolitics. In that regard, to extract oneself from the play of norms would be to extract oneself from biopower altogether, to no longer inscribe oneself within its social space of visibility and recognition. But, even if it were possible, would it be desirable? Wouldn't it amount to a form of self-effacement or of disappearance of oneself as life, to something resembling social and political death?

Should the real struggle not instead take place within the very space of normativity, that is, within the free play that the norms always allow? This possible strategy, concerned with ordinary lives, or life in an ordinary sense, is not one that I would want to exclude from the start. Guillaume Le Blanc has done much to show how ordinary social and economic life is precisely the kind of life that is able to “play with norms.”²³ This, however, does not mean that ordinary life unfolds outside that play, as if that position of exteriority allowed it to produce a deviation or distance, which in turn introduced a play. Ordinary lives unfold within certain norms, which regulate their course. To play with norms is therefore not tantamount to breaking with them, or distancing oneself from them. Rather, it is to detach oneself from them in the very act that attaches oneself to them, to be ruled by them as we deviate from them. At stake, here, is the subjective (and subjectifying) procedure through which a given life develops by developing the norms that actualize it. This procedure presupposes the creation of a gap, the very gap that is necessary for the norm to develop and evolve as a rule of conduct. As Canguilhem had already clarified in relation to biological life, far from opposing the norm, the gap or distance in question regulates its course.

Concretely, this means that all normative systems, including those explored in this book, generate their own (yet limited) space of freedom. To exploit it presupposes not so much a strategy as a tactic of distance, through which ordinary lives seek to appropriate and profit from the norms to which they are subjected. As Le Blanc remarks, whereas a strategy seeks to neutralize or do away with the system of norms in question, and acts in the name of another rationality, a tactic transforms events into opportunities: It introduces itself within the system in question, not to internalize it and adopt it fully, but to play and tinker with it, and eventually gain something from it.²⁴ In that respect, and to use another expression, which Le Blanc borrows from Michel de Certeau, it is akin to the “art of poaching.” Poaching consists in setting up traps in a hostile environment, in bringing back something that was initially not meant for oneself. In that respect, Le Blanc remarks, ordinary life is comparable to “a series of poachings within the forest of norms.”²⁵ The subject diverts norms, not to oppose them, or escape their power, but to appropriate and transform them.

The example of work and the workplace is most revealing. Naturally, one doesn’t live in order to work. But insofar as one works to live, one’s boundedness to the norms of work and the workplace is itself vital. And

insofar as work is a directed and regulated activity, it follows prescribed norms. Despite those constraints, however, work remains an activity that allows a subject to explore and transform his or her own life: The norms of work are negotiated within the norms of life, even if and where certain possibilities of life are negated through the norms of work. For the most part, this negotiation takes the form of micro-choices, which are constantly revised and adapted, and correspond to a tinkering of norms. For example, when train conductors oppose an automatic system of braking on certain trains, and insist on maintaining a manual one, they are not engaging in sabotage or industrial action, but in a subtle yet significant adjustment of the rules and norms through which they experience themselves as train conductors.²⁶ Something vital, for them, is at stake in the possibility of manual braking, something that would disappear in automatic braking, and would alter their own sense of self. Micro-interventions of this sort, within a system of norms, define possibilities of counter-conduct, and ordinary experiences of freedom.

Precarious—fragile, marginalized, dispossessed—forms of life, by contrast, are characterized by a sudden or progressive exclusion from the normativity of social life, that is, by an inability to contribute to its transformation, however minimal. Certain forms of precarious life, such as poverty and unemployment, are, as we saw under neoliberalism, entirely normalized, yet excluded from the capacity to take part in the play of norms that defines social life. Others, as in the case of social exclusion, through which individuals lose all social visibility, are simply kept outside the framework of normativity—not so much abnormal as a-normal.

FAIRE FUIR

But we can also define life differently: not on the basis of norms, but, following Deleuze and Guattari, on the basis of singularities, differences, and intensities. It would then be a question of opposing the singular and the remarkable to the normal and the ordinary. The remarkable is that which cuts across, exceeds, and sweeps away the play of norms. If, as we saw, play and distance constitute a viable tactic internal to the normativity of social life, and define the ordinary way in which life negotiates its relation to norms, escape (*fuite*) can be described as a strategy aimed at circumventing normativity altogether. To live, in this instance, would mean to escape, to take flight—not, as one might expect, in the sense of abandon-

ing one's responsibility, or fleeing in the face of adversity, but in the sense of resisting a certain organization of desire, and a given power structure.

Let me elaborate by returning to the concept of becoming, which I introduced earlier as an alternative to that of recognition, and as indicative of a genuine ethics and politics of difference: Where recognition is concerned with identifying and discovering who we are, becoming is concerned with who (or what) we can be. It is irreducibly bound up with a moment of creation and invention, and thus with a process of disidentification and desubjectivation. As such, becoming is a way of escaping power, of inserting a line of flight within a given setup of power, of becoming anonymous and invisible. The concept of flight or escape (*fuite*), which I also introduced in my discussion of Deleuze and Guattari, is intimately connected with that of becoming. *Anti-Oedipus* distinguishes between two chains of desire, the first of which, in my view, matches the normative dimension of desire explored in this book, and the second, the other dimension, which I began to evoke in the final chapter. One chain, they claim, is "molar": codifying, axiomatic, and reterritorializing. The problem of the socius, or of governmentality, as they see it, is one of knowing how to codify the flows of desire, that is, how to record them, channel them, and make sure that only those that are regulated and controlled are allowed to flow freely. Advanced capitalism, as we saw, especially in the form of neoliberalism, is most successful in this enterprise, precisely through the technologies of government it has been able to introduce. But the *scientia sexualis*, and the analytic of sexuality as a whole, through its typology and constant reconfiguration of the normal, is equally adept at constructing, shaping, and orienting our sense of self and identity. Were we to explore further the significance of the analytic of sexuality for psychoanalysis from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, we could emphasize the transcendent and territorializing role of the oedipal complex, and see it as the new face of sovereign power, that is, of the Law, the Father, and prohibition, which crushes the (otherwise) essentially productive and immanent faculty of desire.²⁷ The other chain, Deleuze and Guattari claim, is molecular: Its sole function is to deterritorialize the flows of desire, that is, to extract them from their codification, to undo those codes and norms, and thus open up new possibilities of life. To govern, that is, to conduct conducts, or to make someone do something (*faire faire*), is always to engage in an activity of the first type. The second, radically different ("schizophrenic" or, as I prefer to call it, *anarchic*) type of activity marks the limit of the first, or

“paranoiac-reactionary”—that is, the point at which it is no longer possible to codify, govern, or normalize.

How, then, does one resist governmentality? How does one become less governed and less governable? By recognizing that life, insofar as it cannot be said to have a predefined identity, origin, or end, is itself, and from the very start, if not ungovernable, at least irreducible to the power structures and normative procedures to which it is subjected; thus, one can resist them not by opposing power with another power, or by seizing power, but by becoming indifferent to it, by denying it any ontological reality, and living as though it had no substance. This can take various forms, depending on the context: Wherever power is exercised, and unfolds within the space of veridiction, counter-attitudes and counter-conducts, lines of flight, and points of bifurcation are possible.²⁸ Historically, these have taken the form of resistance to specific relations of power at localized points of intensity, or to certain institutions and institutional practices; of insurrection, uprising (rather than revolution, the aim of which is power), and strike action (but not as a political strategy aimed at controlling state power), especially, perhaps, in the form of the hunger strike (as in the British militant suffragettes in 1909, the Irish struggle for independence in 1917, or Mohandas Gandhi’s opposition to a new constitution for India in 1932); of occupation, disruption of global summits, or whistleblowing; and even, in the most extreme and tragic circumstances, of suicide, which can in turn trigger political action.²⁹

But resistance can also lead to the creation of alternative practices, experiences, and spaces. Today, we see a proliferation of autonomous political spaces and practices—movements of occupation of public spaces around the world, from Tahrir Square, to Wall Street, to Gazi Park in Istanbul, to Syntagma Square, to the streets of Hong Kong, to the Place de la République in Paris—that amount to a kind of escape or flight from the political form of liberal democracy: They are not directed toward the state, do not seek recognition from it, and do not seek to seize state power, whether through democratic or revolutionary means. Rather, they embody a different type of desire—the sovereign desire for another type of life, one that is at once autonomous and sustainable, and which, following Rancière, we could call truly political or democratic, insofar as it reveals the *demos* as the literally anarchic principle underpinning and exceeding at the same time the problematic of government (or, in Rancière’s idiom, the “police”).³⁰ While the latter is concerned with the theoretical principle or *arkhè* that justifies a clear distribution of positions and capacities, and grounds the distribu-

tion of power between those who rule and those who are ruled, the former expresses the paradox of a qualification to rule that is without qualification. To be sure, each qualification (birth, seniority, wisdom, expertise, strength, wealth, and so on) can lead to a specific form of government (aristocracy, gerontocracy, technocracy, plutocracy, and so on), the merits of which can be debated. But democracy is not the exercise or power of a qualification. Rather, it is the power of those that no *arkhè* entitles them to exercise. As such, it is neither a form of government nor a set of institutions, but the anarchic principle that must be presupposed for politics to exist at all, and which precludes the self-grounding of politics. This, in turn, means that, strictly speaking, the *demos* can never be in power, or seize power. It is the “inner” or “vanishing difference” of power, which “both legitimizes and de-legitimizes state institutions and practices of ruling.”³¹ Continually thwarted by the oligarchic running of those institutions, “the power of the people must be re-enacted ceaselessly by political subjects that challenge the police distribution of parts, places or competences, and that restage the anarchic foundation of the political.”³²

Finally, resistance to power and voluntary servitude can take the simple form of indifference or nonparticipation. As Newman puts it, “not acting, or no longer acting in certain kinds of ways that reproduce submission—a kind of radical ‘inaction’” can be just as effective as revolutionary action.³³ One might think here of civil disobedience, or other forms of passive resistance, such as idleness or laziness.³⁴ The lazy or idle person escapes the rationality of the market, the norm of competition, and the morality of work by refusing to lend them his or her body and desire. This, in essence, is what Bertrand Russell tried to convey in a short piece, “In Praise of Idleness,” which he wrote in 1932 with the hope of inducing “good young men to do nothing.”³⁵ Critical of what he calls the “slave morality of work,” he sees leisure (which he tends to identify with idleness) as “essential to civilization.”³⁶ To be sure, he claims, “in former times leisure for the few was only rendered possible by the labors of the many. But their labors were valuable not because work is good, but because leisure is good.”³⁷ The purpose of modern economics and good government, as a result, ought to be to “distribute leisure justly without injury to civilization.”³⁸ This desirable outcome is unlikely, however, and Russell is prescient when he writes that “having taught the supreme virtue of hard work, it is difficult to see how the authorities can aim at a paradise in which there will be much leisure and little work. It seems more likely that they will find continually fresh schemes, by which present leisure is to be sacrificed for future productiv-

ity.³⁹ Indeed, as we saw, the market principles of productivity, efficiency, risk, and cost calculation have been internalized as norms of life, thus turning the problem of life itself into one of investment and productivity, and blurring the very distinction between labor and leisure. Georges Bataille's long, incomplete attempt at writing a political economy "at the limit of utility" seeks to reverse that order,⁴⁰ and to subordinate production to the construction of a general state of idleness (*oisiveté, désœuvrement*), one that we need to distinguish very clearly from the leisure industry we have become familiar with, and which is a business like any other. As for laziness, the strongest advocates would include writers and thinkers such as the communist (and son-in-law of Karl Marx) Paul Lafargue.⁴¹

Anarchism, in this instance, stands less for the destruction of state power, along with Capital and the Church, less for the creation of a liberated society, in which men and women finally would be free of oppression, exploitation, and ignorance, and more, as Newman puts it, for an anarchism of the here and now, an "anarchism of the everyday," which opens up a space of contingency and freedom.⁴² To govern less, or not govern at all, in the end, is to replace the *faire faire* with a *faire fuir*, that is, a strategy of flight and escape that is also a puncturing tactic, a way of making a specific configuration of power empty itself out, leak its governmental, normative fluid. Consequently, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, drawing on the thematic of revolution, which I would be inclined to replace with that of anarchy:

the schizophrenic escape itself does not merely consist in withdrawing from the social, in living on the fringe: it causes the social to take flight [*fait fuir*] through the multiplicity of holes that eat away at it and penetrate it . . . The only fundamental difference between the schizo and the revolutionary is that the former takes flight [*fuit*], whereas the latter knows how to make leak [*faire fuir*] what he or she is escaping from [*fuit*], piercing [*crevant*] a disgusting drainage pipe, causing a deluge to break loose, liberating a flow . . . The schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process . . . is the potential for revolution. To those who say that escaping is not courageous, we answer: what is not escape *and social investment at the same time*?⁴³

The flight in question is thus not the cowardly flight that refuses to engage in battle, but the flight of which Stephen Dedalus speaks in *Portrait of the*

Artist as a Young Man. Like Joyce's hero, we need to learn to fly by those nets—not just “language, nationality, religion,” but also, and above all, interest, instinct, and recognition.

The socius is itself bipolar, then, and not situated solely on the side of codes, axioms, and norms. To be sure, one pole is defined by the subjection of desire to rational aggregates under a given form of power, but the other is defined by the overthrow of power and the critique of those aggregates. The first, as we saw, produces certain types of subjects, generates *normal* behaviors, and excludes others. Those aggregates—those combinations of discourses and practices—“crush” certain types of life, or “regularize those that they retain in codes or axiomatics.”⁴⁴ But the other constructs ways of speaking, thinking, and living by setting free and combining singularities, by constructing molecular assemblages, which can be artistic or scientific, erotic or economic, but which are all social. The first integrates, territorializes, sedentarizes, normalizes; the other creates lines of flight, decodes, and deterritorializes. Deleuze and Guattari summarize the preceding determinations by saying that the one pole is defined by “subjected groups” (*groupes assujettis*), and the other by “subject-groups.”⁴⁵ “Subject-groups” does not refer to the traditional categories of class, People, or Humanity; to sexual, ethnic, or religious identities; and even less to the (liberal and neoliberal) figure of the individual. Rather, the term refers to singularities, which are the only subject of (anarchic) politics. If, as we saw, power is defined by assemblages of rationalities and institutions, which render subjects visible and governable, singularities are precisely what escapes this molar procedure, what is invisible, and they can lead to practices and experiments that are open-ended and cannot be defined in advance. Becoming invisible is itself an effective political strategy. Foucault once said that he wrote in order to have no face. But this facelessness, while perhaps the impossibility of recognition and communication, is not the impossibility of expression. As Deleuze tried to demonstrate in his work on Spinoza, expression is precisely the point of contact of the impersonal, preindividual world of singularities, and the individuated, crystallized world of ordinary points and representable identities. This is what authorizes Newman to say that

the coming politics will not be about communicating the demands of representable identities seeking visibility on the public stage. Politics will not be about struggles of recognition, nor will it be based on the idea of rational

communication. Rather, it will take the form of incommunicability—that is, opacity and anonymity.⁴⁶

Newman mentions movements and campaigns such as “Occupy” throughout the world, “Don’t shoot!” in the United States, and “Time for Outrage!” (*Indignez-vous!*) in France and Spain, to which we could add “Not in my name” in Britain. All of them testify to “the sovereignty of singular wills and desires, intensified through interaction with others”; all amount to a “gesture of defiance and disobedience in the face of power.”⁴⁷

The political question, then, becomes one of knowing how to become a subject-group, or what, following Spinoza, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call a “multitude.”⁴⁸ How does one construct one’s own lines of flight, invent breaks that produce new flows of desire, rather than reinscribe and reinforce the lines of power that arrest the free circulation of singularities through processes of identification and recognition, and the play of the universal and the particular? Through a range of practices, from art and thought to love, science, and politics, but so long as they are rooted, not in a form of knowledge (and a politics of truth) that would lead to, and at the same time depend on, forms of power, but in a process of learning: Learning requires the experience of differences, points of singularity and bifurcation, which open up, and onto, a different horizon, and inscribe us in a becoming, rather than in schemas of recognition, transport us beyond ourselves and beyond selfhood as such, toward a kind of impersonal, a line or an arrow pointing toward another place, beyond truth and power.

Consider the example of love and eroticism. Under an erotic—and precisely not sexual—regime of desire, this body, which I can no longer call mine, is a different animal altogether: an erogenous surface, entirely aware of, and responsive to, this multiplicity of singular points that hitherto lay dormant; a body that is entirely fragmented and recomposed, that radiates and lives according to modalities, affects, and intensities that no longer have anything to do with the categories of “sexuality”; a desexualized and at the same time highly erotic body; a body open to connections that require a different assemblage, the crossing of thresholds, the conjugation of singularities. At that point, there is no longer *my* body, *my* voice, *my* mouth, but *a* body, *a* mouth, *a* life. The joys of the impersonal, of desire freed from subjectivation, have replaced the satisfaction of sexual

instincts. The indefinite article, Deleuze and Guattari claim, is “the conductor of desire.”⁴⁹ Examining the role and mechanisms of courtly love, they write the following:

Courtly love does not love the self, any more than it loves the whole universe in a celestial or religious way. It is a question of making a body without organs upon which intensities pass, and in such a way that there is no longer a self and an other—not in the name of a higher level of generality or a broader extension, but by virtue of singularities that can no longer be said to be personal, and intensities that can no longer be said to be extensive. The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the immanence in which they have fused. “Joy” in courtly love, the exchange of hearts, the test or “assay”: everything is allowed, as long as it is not external to desire or transcendent to its plane, or else internal to persons. The slightest caress may be as strong as an orgasm; orgasm is a mere fact, a rather deplorable one, in relation to desire in pursuit of its principle. Everything is allowed: all that counts is for pleasure to be the flow of desire itself, Immanence.⁵⁰

Similarly, drawing on Van Gulik’s *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, and Lyotard’s commentary on it,⁵¹ Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Taoist conception of love revolves around the circulation of intensities between two poles, two energies, one female and one male, Yin and Yang, which result in the increase of powers (*puissances*) of both—so long as the man does not ejaculate. The aim, here, is not to experience desire as an inner lack, or to delay the moment of pleasure to increase it, but to constitute an intensive body without organs, a field of immanence. So yes, the self is loathable, but only insofar as it smothers the impersonal and preindividual singularities that connect us to the Outside, to what is not recognizable and does not return it back to itself. Become in order not to recognize (even yourself)! Lose yourself, undo yourself! For only then—when experimentation replaces normalization, and when the processes of subjectivation are traversed and overwhelmed by life lines, untamable intensities—can desire reveal its immanent voluptuousness. This voluptuousness is also that of bodies intertwined, bodies that search themselves,

compose themselves, touch, merge, found, and create not the union of two bodies, or the combination of two powers, but a new body, a new power, and a new existence.

Is this not also the point at which life itself becomes something altogether different, something that can longer be governed, because it unfolds at the limit of life itself, in close proximity with the unlivable? Is this not the point at which, far from being an object of truth and power, it becomes a matter of experience and experiment, of an experience that can only be described *as* an experiment? In one of his most striking statements, Foucault describes experience as the attempt “to reach that point of life that is closest to what can’t be lived [*l’invivable*]” and for which “the greatest intensity is required.”⁵² The aim of experience, he goes on to say, is

to tear [*arracher*] the subject from itself, to act in such a way that it is no longer recognizable, no longer itself; to bring it to its own annihilation, or dissolution. It is an enterprise of desubjectivation. It is the idea of this liminal experience, in which the subject is torn from itself, which was significant for me when reading Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot. And they are the reason why, however boring and erudite my books may have been, I always thought of them as direct experiments [*expériences*], the aim of which is to tear myself away from myself, to stop me from being the same.⁵³

The Impersonal, the Singular, the Outside—that is what can become the object of another desire. The aim is to reach the point when we have become something else, and when the ordinary, molar question: “Who am I?” no longer matters, because it has been replaced with the singular, molecular question: “What can I become? How can ‘I’ be an other?” How can I reach a greater stage of intensity, a higher degree of life, by combining elements of myself—of my body, my intelligence, my faculties and capacities—with other singular points? How can I draw the map of my own becoming? How, as Foucault himself acknowledged, can I think and write, but also love, act, or do nothing, with a view to undoing myself, that is, with a view to extricating my desire from the norms that frame it?

Notes

Introduction

229

- 1 Paul Mazur, quoted in Norbert Häring and Niall Douglas, *Economists and the Powerful: Convenient Theories, Distorted Facts, Ample Rewards* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 17. In a book published a year after his article, Mazur expressed the same idea, before adding that human nature “very conveniently presents a variety of strings upon which an appreciative sales manager can play fortissimo”—strings such as “threats, fear, beauty, sparkle” (Paul Mazur, *American Prosperity: Its Causes and Consequences* [New York: Viking Press, 1928], 44 and 47, respectively).
- 2 Siva Vaidyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), xiv. Google, another commentator suggests, is neither a traditional Internet service nor an advertising company, but “a whole new type of beast” that “tracks as much of our daily lives as possible—who we are, what we do, what we like, where we go, who we talk to, what we think about, what we’re interested in—all those things are seized, packaged, commodified and sold on the market” (Yasha Levine, “The Psychological Dark Side of Gmail,” *AlterNet*, 31 December 2013, <http://www.alternet.org/media/google-using-gmail-build-psychological-profiles-hundreds-millions-people>).
- 3 See *Financial Times*, 4–5 May 2013, “From Details to Desire: The Power of Big Data.”
- 4 On the intersection of desire and digital power, see Bernard Harcourt’s fascinating *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
- 5 Émile Zola, *La bête humaine* (Paris: Folio, 1987), 418.
- 6 Michel Foucault, “La culture de soi,” in *Qu’est-ce que la critique?* ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 145. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 78. Henceforth cited as *HS* 1.
- 7 Michel Foucault, “Qui êtes-vous, professeur Foucault?” in *Dits et écrits, I. 1954–1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 606; “Who Are You, Professor Foucault?” in Jer-

- emy R. Carrette, ed., *Religion and Culture*, trans. Lucille Cairns (New York: Routledge, 1999), 91.
- 8 Michel Foucault, “La philosophie structuraliste permet de diagnostiquer ce qu’est ‘aujourd’hui,’” in *Dits et écrits, I*, 581.
- 9 Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–83*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7. For Foucault’s analysis of Kant’s opusculum, published under the title “What Is Enlightenment?” see Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). See also the paper Foucault gave at the Société française de philosophie in 1978, and published as “Qu’est-ce que la critique? (Critique et *Aufklärung*)” *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* 84, no. 2 (1990): 35–63; “What Is Critique?” in Sylvère Lotringer, ed., *The Politics of Truth*, trans. Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1997), 41–81. The original paper is also available in Foucault, *Qu’est-ce que la critique?*
- 10 Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” in Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 43.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 45.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 45–46.
- 13 Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 216.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 215.
- 15 Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” in Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 50.
- 16 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004), 199–202. See also Arnold Davidson, “In Praise of Counter-Conduct,” *History of the Human Sciences* 24, no. 4 (2011): 25–41, and Daniele Lorenzini, *Éthique et politique de soi: Foucault, Hadot, Cavell et les techniques de l’ordinaire* (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 62–82.
- 17 Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” 46.
- 18 Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 10.
- 19 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8.
- 20 See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2003), 31–54. And in the context of the Christian examination and direction of conscience, which Foucault defines as “pastoral power,” see *ibid.*, 177–84. He returns at length to the question of pastoral power in his 1978 lecture course (*Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Picador, 2004], 123–85); and then again in his 1980 lectures, especially those of 12, 19, and 26 March (*On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980*, trans. Graham Burchell [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014]).
- 21 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 49.
- 22 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 193. Translation modified.
- 23 Foucault, *HS 1*, 81. In his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis, Lacan speaks of the “tangled knot [*nœud étroit*] of Desire and the Law,” and of the *jouissance* associated with its transgression; see *Le séminaire VII: L’éthique de la psychanalyse, 1959–1960* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), 208. The Law—that of the Father, and the prohibition of incest—is expressed, at the imaginary level, in the phal-

- lus. The phallus is the very image or *Gestalt* of sovereign power; see *Le séminaire III: Les psychoses, 1955–1956* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), 198. Fully visible and erect—and, in that respect, radically different from the female sex, “characterized by an absence, a void, a hole, which makes it less desirable than the male sex, in its provocative character” (*Le séminaire III*, 199)—it signifies power, that is, force and mastery. It is the “master-signifier” that inaugurates (or perhaps only perpetuates) our phallogocentric and especially phallogocratic model of desire. Having said that, I should emphasize that, moving away from that phallogocentrism of the 1950s, Lacan attempts to construct a distinctive and irreducible “feminine sexuality” in his later work, and in the central chapter of *Encore*, the twentieth volume of his *Seminar*. See Jacques Lacan, “God and the *Jouissance* of Woman,” (“Dieu et la jouissance de Lafemme”) in *Le séminaire XX: Encore, 1972–1973* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 61–71. See also Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), 150–57.
- 24 Foucault, *HS 1*, 83. See also Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, with Héroïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 102–122.
- 25 Foucault, *HS 1*, 89–90. Translation modified.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 90.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 For an extended discussion of the productive nature of norms in Foucault, see Pierre Macherey, “Pour une histoire naturelle des normes” in *De Canguilhem à Foucault: La force des normes* (Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2009), 71–97. In his article, Macherey also (and crucially) emphasizes that if the norm is not external to the field to which it is applied, this is not only because it produces the field. It is also because the norm produces itself in producing it. In other words, the norm does not exist independently of its own action; it is immanent to what it produces, and to the process through which it produces it. What “norms” the norm, he says, is its own action (90). As a result, there is nothing “cunning” about the norm, or its cunning consists in being entirely manipulated by its own action. More significant still, and more detailed, is Macherey’s recent *Le sujet des normes* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2014), especially chaps. 1 and 3. See also François Ewald, “Norms, Discipline, and the Law,” in Robert Post, ed., *Law and the Order of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Stéphane Legrand, *Foucault et les normes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007).
- 29 See Foucault, *HS 1*, 139–40.
- 30 Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 253.
- 31 See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), chap. 7.
- 32 Fonds Michel Foucault, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Box 56. This lecture course consists of ten lectures, three of which are missing. My thanks and appreciation to Daniele Lorenzini for having drawn my attention to the lecture course in question, Henri-Paul Fruchaud for having authorized my access to the material, and Marie-Odile Germain for her precious help *in situ*.
- 33 Michel Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité. Cours au Collège de France (1980–1981)* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2014), 293.
- 34 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1989), 226–29.

- 35 Ibid., 228.
- 36 For Foucault's analysis of the *Quixote*, see *The Order of Things*, chap. 3.
- 37 Ibid., 228.
- 38 Ibid., 229.
- 39 Ibid. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Random House, 1990), 245; henceforth cited as *HS 2*.
- 40 Foucault, *HS 2*, 5. Translation modified.
- 41 Foucault, *HS 1*, 78.
- 42 São Paulo lecture course, lecture 4.
- 43 Much of the material that Foucault would have used, however, is discussed in the São Paulo lecture course, as well as in *On the Government of the Living*. Foucault's interest in the discourse and history of sexuality can be traced back to a lecture course he gave at the University of Clermont-Ferrand in the mid-1960s (BNF, Box 78). Foucault gave another lecture course on the discourse of sexuality at the University of Vincennes in 1969 (BNF, Box 51). It's not until 1975, however, that the problem of sexuality is explicitly mentioned alongside that of desire.
- 44 Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité*, 288.
- 45 Foucault sees evidence of that shift in Plutarch's dialogue on love, or *Erotikos*. See Foucault's lecture on 4 March, in his *Subjectivité et vérité*. See also Plutarch, "Eroticus," in Donald Russell, ed. and trans., *Plutarch Selected Essays and Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 246–83.
- 46 See Epictetus, *Discourses: Books 3–4*, trans. W. A. Oldfather (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1928), 14–19.
- 47 Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité*, 293.
- 48 Foucault, *HS 1*, 139.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Foucault, *Qu'est-ce la critique?* ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 121. As for the quasi-identification between desire and sexuality, and without even considering the manner in which it is assumed in ordinary discourse, a quick glance at the literature suffices to reveal it. See, for example, Edward Stein, ed., *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's "History of Sexuality" and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Franz X. Eder, *Kultur der Begierde. Eine Geschichte der Sexualität* (Munich: Beck, 2002); Jean Streff, *Les extravagances du désir* (Paris: La Musardine, 2002); Anna Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008); James Penney, *The World of Perversion: Psychoanalysis and the Impossible Absolute of Desire* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012).
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 14.
- 54 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 288.
- 55 Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 26.
- 56 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Con-*

- flicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 165. See also Drucilla Cornell and Sara Murphy, “Anti-racism, Multiculturalism and the Ethics of Identification,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28, no. 4 (2002): 419–49.
- 57 Foucault, *HS 1*, 145.
- 58 See section 8 of Joachim Ritter’s influential “Hegel and the French Revolution,” in his *Hegel and the French Revolution: Essays on the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Richard Dien Winfield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982).
- 59 Fukuyama, *The End of History*, 206.
- 60 See Martin Hortmann and Axel Honneth, “Paradoxes of Capitalism,” *Constellations* 13, no. 1 (2006): 44. See also Axel Honneth, “Nachwort: Der Grund der Anerkennung. Eine Erwiderung auf kritische Rückfragen,” in *Kampf und Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, 2d ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 334.
- 61 See Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent, eds., *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015). In his own chapter, “Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976–1979,” Behrent reads Foucault’s 1979 lecture course on the birth of biopolitics as an explicit endorsement of economic liberalism, while Zamora (“Foucault, the Excluded, and the Neoliberal Erosion of the State”) sees in Foucault’s work from the early 1980s a thinly veiled sympathy for neoliberalism.

Chapter One

- 1 Cited by Rob Dransfield and Don Dransfield, *Key Ideas in Economics* (Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd., 2003), 80.
- 2 See Francis Bacon, “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates,” in Mary Augusta Scott, ed., *The Essays of Francis Bacon* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), chap. 29.
- 3 Confirmation of Foucault’s claim can be found in Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18–23. It was, he claims, German thinkers—Leibniz especially—and statesmen who brought to full consciousness the idea that the power of the modern nation-state resided in its population, and that the knowledge of this power required mastery of the laws of chance and a statistical office. “Leibniz’s essential premises,” Hacking argues, “were: that a Prussian state should be brought into existence, that the true measure of the power of the state is its population, and that the state should have a central statistical office in order to know its power” (18). The true measure of power is thus “the number of people, for where there are people, there are resources for sustaining the population” (19). For that very reason, and as various methods of counting and classifying were experimented with in Prussia in the eighteenth century, official statistics were kept secret, for divulging them would amount to revealing the true strength of the state to its actual or potential enemies. Aside from the tables of births, marriages, and deaths, official statistics were “for the eye of the king and his administrators” (23). There were, Hacking claims, a number of private studies that were made public, which the state did not oppose but did not help or encourage, either. In the nineteenth century—and, I would claim, as a result of the birth of biopower and political economy—official statistics were

- made public, and seen as necessary to the welfare of the population as a whole. Power, in other words, was no longer simply a matter of sovereignty and territory, and the meaning of population itself had changed.
- 4 For translations of extracts from those two articles, see Ronald L. Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy: Essays and Translations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 72–81, 88–101. On Quesnay and his disciples, see Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1994), 223–43.
- 5 Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 88.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 72–74.
- 8 Such a claim should be balanced, however, by calling attention to the fact that the treatise from the Aristotelian school entitled *Economics*, and its second book in particular, broadens the use of the word *oikonomia* from the *oikos* to the city and kingdom as a whole. By the end of the 4th century BCE, when Athens was deprived of its own empire, the question became how to produce *more*, and this meant *better*. But the point is that even then it remained subordinated to a political end and to a clear sense of what the common good was or ought to be.
- 9 Claude Mossé, “L’homme et l’économie,” in *L’homme grec*, ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), 35. See also Moses I. Finley’s seminal work, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece* (London: Penguin, 1981). Originally published in 1953, it draws on the work of Marcel Mauss to show how exchanges in Homer’s Greece were based not on trade, but on practices of gift and counter-gift. Finley’s *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) draws on the works of Weber and Polanyi to show that the ancient economy was not an independent sphere of activity, but was largely a byproduct of status, and “embedded” in “noneconomic” social and political values. The idea of economies “embedded” in society was first introduced by Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* [1944] (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
- 10 Mossé, “L’homme et l’économie,” 45. For an apology of the land and its cultivation, see Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, trans. E. C. Marchant, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 1–17.
- 11 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, vol. 4, 2–3. Translation modified.
- 12 See Mossé, “L’homme et l’économie,” 48.
- 13 While, contrary to popular belief, and to what economists have assumed since Adam Smith, money was not invented for the purpose of exchange, it progressively became the privileged instrument of trade. Money was initially introduced for fiscal and especially military purposes (as a way of paying mercenaries who came from distant lands and who had to be paid in often remote areas). See Mossé, “L’homme et l’économie,” 60. For a detailed genealogy of money in ancient and modern societies, and the dissolution of the myth of barter as a mode of exchange and the basic form of trade in primitive economies, see David Graeber, *Debt: The First Five Thousand Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011).
- 14 Aristotle, *Politics*, in Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1941), 1257b25–34.
- 15 Ibid., 1257b37–58a10.
- 16 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 56.
- 17 Ibid., 57.
- 18 Quoted by J. Le Goff in *La civilisation de l’Occident médiéval* [1964] (Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1997), 240.

- 19 Quoted in Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments in Favor of Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 41.
- 20 Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State*, trans. P. J. Waley and D. P. Waley (London, 1956); Ludovico Zuccolo, “Della ragione di stato,” in *Politici e moralisti del Seicento*, ed. Benedetto Croce and Santino Caramella (Bari, 1930), 23–41. See also Eugenio Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Giorgio Pinton, vol. 1 (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 553–55; Y. C. Zarka, ed., *Raison et déraison d'état: Théoriciens et théories de la raison d'état au XVIème et XVIIème siècles* (Paris: PUF, 1994); Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, 33–48; J. A. W. Gunn, *Politics and the Public Interest in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1924).
- 21 Noel Malcolm, *Reason of State, Propaganda, and the Thirty Years' War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 92.
- 22 See Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, ed. and trans. Sidney Alexander [1561] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). “Private interest [*interesse particolare*],” he claims, “is the master that rules over all men.” On the question of self-interest in politics, and its distinction from “virtue,” see the editor’s introduction, especially xv–xix.
- 23 Botero, *The Reason of State*, xiv.
- 24 René de Lucinge, *De la naissance, durée et chute des estats*, ed. M. J. Heath [1588] (Geneva: Droz, 1984).
- 25 Lucinge, *De la naissance*, III.7, 222. On Lucinge’s connections with Botero and their mutual influence, see A. E. Baldini, “Botero et Lucinge: Les racines de la *Raison d'État*,” in Zarka, ed., *Raison et déraison d'état*, 67–99. See also Malcolm, *Reason of State*, 94–95.
- 26 Malcolm argues that Botero, like many Counter-Reformation theorists, tried to argue for a “good” or “virtuous” reason of state that conformed to divine and natural law. See Malcolm, *Reason of State*, 98–99.
- 27 Botero, *The Reason of State*, 41. Translation modified. “Interest” became the central concept of political analysis in the seventeenth century, especially in France, under the influence of the duc de Rohan’s *L'interest des princes* (1641). Its famous opening phrase reads as follows: “Princes rule the people, and interest rules princes.” On the duc de Rohan’s influence, and on later developments in the use of the term, see J. A. W. Gunn, “‘Interest Will Not Lie’: A Seventeenth-Century Political Maxim,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 29, no. 4 (1968): 551–64; and his *Politics and the Public Interest*. This idea made its way into Thomas Hobbes’s political theory, where it is presented as a feature of human nature, that is, as *self-interest*: “most men measuring others by themselves, are apt to think that all men will . . . in all their actions more respect what conduces to the advancing of their own ends, than of truth, and the good of others” (Thomas Hobbes, *Three Discourses*, ed. N. B. Reynolds and A. W. Saxonhouse [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], 40–41); “Every man by nature seeketh his own benefit, and promotion” (Hobbes, *Leviathan* [London, 1654], 97) (page numbers of this edition to be found in most modern editions). While recognizing the pursuit of “private” or “particular” interests as a fundamental feature of human nature, and not just of the state, Hobbes sees such a tendency as conflicting with the “publique” or “common interest”: “People always have been, and always will be, ignorant of their duty to the public, as never

- meditating anything but their particular interest” (Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth: Or, The Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies [London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1889], 39).
- 28 Giovanni Botero, *Aggiunte di Gio. Botero Benese alla sua ragion di stato* (Pavia, 1598), fol. 34v; quoted by Malcolm, *Reason of State*, 94.
- 29 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 65.
- 30 On the birth of the idea of natural order in the economic sphere, and especially in the thoughts of Quesnay and Smith, see Bernard Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), chap. 3.
- 31 On Pierre le Pesant, Sieur de Boisguillebert, see Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 215–17, 283–84. On the Physiocrats on price, see Quesnay’s “Remarks on the Price of Corn,” in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 84.
- 32 In his *Anarchical Fallacies*, written between 1791 and 1795, but not published until 1816, in French, Bentham famously criticizes the French Declaration of Human Rights, which, he says, is based on “political fallacies,” and on a radical ignorance of human nature, its mechanisms and motivations, which can all be reduced to the pursuit of one’s own interest. “Natural rights,” Bentham famously wrote, “is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptible rights, rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts.” See Jeremy Bentham, *Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, ed. Philip Schofield, Catherine Pease-Watkin, and Cyprien Blamires (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 328.
- 33 Having said that, and by way of anticipation, we should emphasize from the start that the liberal (and neoliberal) idea of minimal government in economic matters has gone hand in hand with a maximalist and highly interventionist conception of the role of government in the field of crime and punishment: As Bernard Harcourt claims—convincingly in my view—the massive expansion of the penal sphere under utilitarian and neoliberal regimes, and even mass incarceration in the United States, are largely due to the need to protect and police the expansion of “free” markets, and to rein in the many deviations they naturally give birth to. See Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*, chap. 9.
- 34 See René de Voyer, marquis d’Argenson, *Mémoires et journal inédit*, vol. 5 [1858] (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1979), 362. For an account of the sources on Walpole’s motto, see Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 23n.
- 35 In a letter to Charles de Weissenstein dated 1 July 1778, Benjamin Franklin asserted that “a virtuous and laborious people could always be ‘cheaply governed’ in a republican system.” Quoted by Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 48n1. The notion of frugality was widely used in the eighteenth century, including by Benjamin Franklin and Jeremy Bentham.

Chapter Two

- 1 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 72–74.
- 2 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton [1739–40] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.3.3, 2.3.9.

- 3 Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (1754), part 1, chaps. 2 and 3; part 2, chap. 6; and *Traité des animaux* (1755), part 2, chap. 8. Both treatises can be found in Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations et des animaux*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Ch. Houel, 1798).
- 4 Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit* (Paris: Durand, 1758–59).
- 5 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Hakkonssen [1759] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), part 4, chap. 1.
- 6 Pietro Verri, *Meditazioni sulla felicità*, ed. Gianni Francioni [1763] (Como: Ibis, 2012).
- 7 Cesare Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments and Other Writings*, ed. Richard Bellamy [1764] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 157.
- 8 Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart [1781] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 1.
- 9 John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* [1682] (London: Penguin, 1997), 233 (original emphasis).
- 10 *Ibid.*, 234.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*, 241.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 241.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 242.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 243.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 242.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 243.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*, 250.
- 21 Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 367.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 266.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*, 308 (original emphasis).
- 25 *Ibid.*, 309.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*, 305.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 311–12.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 342.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 348.
- 31 Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, 53.
- 32 James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy: Being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations* (London: Printed for A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767), 162–63 (my emphasis).
- 33 *Ibid.*, 165, 164.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 165.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 484.
- 36 Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 239–46.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 228, 239.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 239.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 176.

- 40 Ibid., xxi.
- 41 Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 4.1.10.
- 42 Ibid., 4.1.8.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 See Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, vol. 2 [1749] (Paris: Garnier, 1961), 8. See also Hirschman, *The Interests and the Passions*, 70–87, as well as his summary of that line of argument among eighteenth-century political economists and philosophers in “Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?” *Journal of Economic Literature* 20, no. 4 (December 1982): 1464–66.
- 45 Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 4.1.10 (original emphasis). This long passage from Smith can be seen as a full explanation of the idea that Giambattista Vico had formulated thirty years before, and according to which the “ferocity, avarice and ambition” of men, and the pursuit of “their private utility,” are the sole cause of “civil happiness” and the proof of “the existence of divine providence.” See Giambattista Vico, *Scienza nuova* [1725], in *Opere*, ed. Fausto Nicolini (Milan: Ricciardi, 1953), 132–33.
- 46 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 72–73 (original emphasis).
- 47 Ibid., 73.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 On this connection between desire and interest, no one is more explicit than Gabriel Tarde, who sees in desires (and beliefs) the “sole forces and sole quantities of the soul,” and thus the psychological springs behind the two fundamental laws of society, namely, “invention” and “imitation.” Political economy, in that context, is only the science of desire applied to the market or, in his own terms, the science of “impassioned interests.” In volume 1, chapter 2, of *La psychologie économique* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1902), Tarde aims to demonstrate “the crucial role of Desire in economic phenomena” and “its often hidden presence in fundamental economic notions” (184), such as those of offer, demand, labor, value, capital, or wealth. See also *La logique sociale* (Paris: Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo pour le progrès de la connaissance, 1999), especially chaps. 1, 4, and 8. On Tarde’s views on economics, see Maurizio Lazzarato, *Puissances de l’invention. La psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l’économie politique* (Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo pour le progrès de la connaissance, 2002); and Bruno Latour and Vincent Antonin Lépinay, *L’économie, science des intérêts passionnés* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).
- 51 I explore in detail the connection between desire, self-love, and self-esteem in the final part of this book. I will amend Foucault’s claim by showing how that crucial connection cannot be identified with the sense of desire as self-interest, or utility, and has a different history, even if, in reality (and as I have already begun to show with the example of money), the two sets of connections are often intertwined.
- 52 Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals*, 11–12.
- 53 Ibid., 11.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Jeremy Bentham, *The Book of Fallacies* (London: Hunt, 1824), 392–93.
- 56 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 48.
- 57 William Novak makes this point in the context of nineteenth-century America: While advocating *laissez-faire*, the American states regulated economic and social

- life extensively, by using their police powers to control health, safety, and working conditions. See William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
- 58 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 145.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., 147.
- 62 For further evidence regarding the “illusion” of free markets since the nineteenth century, see Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*, especially the pages devoted to the Chicago Board of Trade: “The entire history of the Chicago Board of Trade is, in truth, a story of a strict *police des grains* [the administration that policed and regulated the trade of grains in France in the *ancien régime*] masquerading under free-market rhetoric” (179), insofar as the board was entirely “constructed through government coercion” (196). On the history of the board, see Charles H. Taylor, *History of the Board of Trade of the City of Chicago*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Robert O. Law Company, 1917); Jonathan Lurie, *The Chicago Board of Trade, 1859–1905: The Dynamics of Self-Regulation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); William G. Ferris, *The Grain Traders: The Story of the Chicago Board of Trade* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1988).
- 63 Jeremy Bentham, *Manual of Political Economy*, in *Jeremy's Bentham's Economic Writings*, ed. W. Stark, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2004), 224.
- 64 Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*, 113.
- 65 Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*, 21.
- 66 “Pleasure and pain,” Beccaria writes, “are the motive forces of all sentient beings” (*On Crimes and Punishments*, 21).
- 67 Ibid., 7.
- 68 Ibid., 64.
- 69 Ibid., 20.
- 70 See Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, the Inspection-House*, in *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 194–228.
- 71 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 218.
- 72 There is even a wealth of evidence regarding the remarkable expansion of the penal sphere during the market revolutions of the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, especially in the United States. See David J. Rothman's seminal *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998); Adam Jay Hirsch, *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*, 191–220. Michelle Perrot makes a similar argument regarding the situation in nineteenth-century France in “*Délinquance et système pénitentiaire en France au dix-neuvième siècle*,” *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 30, no 1 (1975): 67–91. More generally, see Norval Morris and David J. Rothman, eds., *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

- 73 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 67 (my emphasis).
 74 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1986), 41.

Chapter Three

- 1 For a detailed and systematic history of neoliberalism, see Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road From Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics* itself goes into a fair amount of detail, but does not benefit from the perspective that over thirty years of expansion of neoliberalism provides us with today.
- 2 Dieter Plehwe, "Introduction," in Mirowski and Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 23. The Draft Statement of Aims as a whole is reproduced in *ibid.*, 22–24.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 4 In 1937, Walter Lippmann published *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Good Society*, which argued for the superiority of the market economy over state intervention, and was extremely well received by European liberals. The Colloque Walter Lippmann was organized by the French philosopher Louis Rougier in honor of the American journalist and writer. See Plehwe, "Introduction," in Mirowski and Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 13.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 22–23.
- 7 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 8 Philip Mirowski, "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism," in Mirowski and Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 437.
- 9 Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski, "The Rise of the Chicago School of Economics," in Mirowski and Pleywe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 161–62.
- 10 John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Unemployment, Interest, and Money* [1936] (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- 11 Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* [1944] (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 12 Wilhelm Röpke, "Das Beveridgeplan," *Schweizer Monatshefte für Politik und Kultur* (June–July 1943). Röpke reiterated his critique a year later in *Civitas Humana* (1944; translated into English by Cyril Spencer Fox, *Civitas Humana: A Humane Order of Society* [London: William Hodge, 1948], 142–49). See also Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 189–90. Röpke's and Hayek's ideas were defeated in the United Kingdom the year of the publication of *The Road to Serfdom*, when the Labor Party was elected in a landslide that brought about the implementation of the 1944 Education Act and the creation of the National Health Service, together with the provision of universal entitlements for pensions and unemployment. They resurfaced in 1975, when Margaret Thatcher held up Hayek's work as the new bible, and proceeded to turn it into policy in the early 1980s.
- 13 See Richard Robinson, "Neo-liberalism and the Market State: What Is the Ideal Shell?" in *The Neo-Liberal Revolution: Forging the Market State*, ed. Richard Robinson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3–19.
- 14 Miguel Vatter, "Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society," in *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*, ed. Vanessa Lemm and Miguel Vatter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 175.

- 15 See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 267–69.
- 16 This is a complex issue, to which I cannot do justice here, given that the nature of the relation between economics and law is hotly contested within neoliberalism itself, and even within the Chicago School. Roughly speaking, we can say that up until the 1970s, and very much under the influence of Henry Simons and Hayek, the Chicago School—and most prominently Edward Levi—adhered to the view that I will be presenting. Yet already in the 1950s and 1960s, the voices of dissent, led by Aaron Director, Ronald Coase, and Richard Posner, began to grow. In a seminar hosted at the Director’s home in Chicago in 1960, Coase presented a soon-to-become-seminal paper entitled “The Problem of Social Cost,” in which he claimed that all economic activity, both regulated and unregulated, carries costs—“transaction costs” of coordination and communication between actors, of creation of contracts, enforcement of property rights, regulation, and so forth—which need to be taken into account when calculating the overall efficiency of an activity. The fundamental consequence of this is that certain industrial strategies, which might undermine competition and favor monopolies, can turn out to be more “efficient” than antitrust and procompetition strategies. As William Davies puts it in a recently published book: “It may be more efficient (in the aggregate) to let one agent [such as a polluting firm] impose ‘social costs’ upon a rival, and leave them to work out the damages or redress between themselves, than to employ law and regulation as a means of restoring some vision of a ‘perfect’ competitive market” (William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism* [London: Sage, 2017], 53). A legitimate “competitive” activity, Davies goes on to argue, is one that maximizes its efficiency and asserts its own interests, for example, by expanding its property entitlements or flexing its “legal muscle as part of the competitive game” (ibid.).
- 17 Friedrich von Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1982), chaps. 5 and 6.
- 18 Ibid., 122–23. See also John Tomasi, *Free Market Fairness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 17–18; and Vatter, “Foucault and Hayek,” 176–78.
- 19 Vatter, “Foucault and Hayek,” 178.
- 20 Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part 4, chap. 2; quoted by Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 35 (my emphasis).
- 21 The law in question was first formulated by Rudolf Clausius in “On the Moving Force of Heat, and the Laws of Heat Which May Be Deduced Therefrom,” in Pogendorff’s *Annalen der Physik* 79 (March–April 1850). He did not coin the concept of entropy until 1865.
- 22 See Stuart Kauffman, *At Home in the Universe: The Search for Laws of Complexity* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 7–8.
- 23 Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Entre le temps et l’éternité* (Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1992), 49–50.
- 24 Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 47.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 See Friedrich von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* [1960] (London: Routledge, 2006), 195–96; *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 111–12.
- 27 Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 39–40 (my emphasis).
- 28 Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, 111.
- 29 Ibid., 110.

- 30 Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 43.
- 31 Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski, “The Rise of the Chicago School of Economics,” in Mirowski and Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 161.
- 32 Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, 111.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 112–14.
- 34 Quoted in Heinz Grosseckettler, “Franz Böhm as a Pioneering Champion of an Economic Theory of Legislative Science,” *European Journal of Law and Economics* 3, no. 4 (December 1996): 309–29.
- 35 See Joseph Persky, “The Ethology of Homo Economicus,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 221–31.
- 36 See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 129–57.
- 37 Although the idea of “human capital” first appeared in Gabriel Tarde’s *La psychologie économique*, it is usually attributed to Theodore W. Schultz. See, for example, *Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and of Research* (New York: Free Press, 1971); and *Human Resources* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1972). Another strong proponent of the theory of human capital, also from the Chicago School, is Gary Becker, *Human Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- 38 Schultz, *Investment in Human Capital*, 48.
- 39 Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Present* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 49.
- 40 Gary Becker, *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- 41 Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).
- 42 Tarde, *La psychologie économique*, 161 (my emphasis).
- 43 Tarde, *La psychologie économique*, 186.
- 44 Quoted in Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 120.
- 45 “From Details to Desire: The Power of Big Data,” *Financial Times*, 4–5 May 2013.
- 46 Frédéric Lordon, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude. Marx et Spinoza* (Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2010).
- 47 For a more detailed description of those techniques, see Lordon, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude*, 127–30.
- 48 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), 259.
- 49 Lordon, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude*, 75.
- 50 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 28–29. Translation modified.
- 51 This is the expression used by Augustine to describe his own concupiscence as an adolescent: “I slid away from thee, and I went astray [*defluxi abs te ego et erravi*], O my God, from thee my Stay, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a land of want [*et factus sum mihi regio egestatis*]” (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watts [Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1919], book 2, chap. 10, p. 95).

Chapter Four

- 1 Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Special Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-legal Study*, trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock

- [1886] (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1893). The first treatise of psychiatry in German dedicated to sexuality and sexual abnormalities is Heinrich Kaan, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Leipzig, 1844).
- 2 See Foucault, *Abnormal*, 49–52.
 - 3 William I, Prince of Orange, also known as William the Silent, was the principal leader of the Revolt against the Spanish that set off the Eighty Years' war and eventually led to the independence of the United Provinces in 1648. William's assassin was Balthasar Gérard, a Frenchman from Franche-Comté, then Spanish territory, and a fervent admirer of Felipe II.
 - 4 See Foucault, *Abnormal*, 85.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, 87.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, 89.
 - 7 *Ibid.*
 - 8 The theory in question can be traced back to Gary Becker's seminal article from 1968, "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach," *Journal of Political Economy* 76, no. 2 (1974): 169–217; as well as his *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, in which he looks at crime and punishment, as well as marriage, fertility, and the family, from the point of view of rational choice and human capital. The criminal, we are told, is a rational agent weighing the potential gains from an action against the risk of punishment, which can involve the loss of his or her personal freedom. Posner argues a similar point, which he traces back to Bentham: All individuals naturally seek to maximize pleasure or happiness over pain, and are engaged in a constant calculation of their welfare. See Richard A. Posner, "An Economic Theory of the Criminal Law," *Columbia Law Review* 85, no. 6 (October 1985): 1193–231; and *Frontiers of Legal Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
 - 9 Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*, 133–38.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, 136.
 - 11 See Claude-François Michéa, "Des déviations malades de l'appétit vénérien," in *L'union médicale* 85 (17 July 1849): 338c–39c; Ludger Lunier, "Examen médico-légal d'un cas de monomanie instinctive. Affaire du sergent Bertrand," *Annales médico-psychologiques* 1 (1849): 351–79; Henri de Castelnau, "Pathologie mentale et médecine légale. Exemple remarquable de monomanie destructive et érotique ayant pour objet la profanation de cadavres humains," *La lancette française* 82 (14 July 1849): 327–28; A. Briere de Boismont, "Remarques médico-légales sur la perversion génésique," *Gazette médicale de Paris* 29 (21 July 1849): 555–64; Félix Jacquot, "Des aberrations de l'appétit génésique," *Gazette médicale de Paris* 30 (28 July 1849): 575–78; review of Lunier's article in *Annales médico-psychologiques* 2 (1850): 105–9, 115–19; Henri Legrand du Saulle, *La folie devant les tribunaux* (Paris: F. Savy, 1864), 524–29; Ambroise Tardieu, *Études médico-légales sur les attentats aux mœurs* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1878), 114–23; Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 68–70.
 - 12 See Foucault, *Abnormal*, 283–87; Georges Lantéri-Laura, *Lecture des perversions. Histoire de leur appropriation médicale* (Paris: Masson, 1979), 17–19; Vernon Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Arnold Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4–5; Marc Renneville, *Crime et folie. Deux siècles d'enquêtes médicales*

- et judiciaires* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Jonathan Strauss, *Human Remains: Medicine, Death and Desire in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), chap. 1; Patrick Singy, “Sexuality and Liberalism,” in *The Care of Life: Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Bioethics and Biopolitics*, ed. Miguel de Beistegui, Giuseppe Bianco, and Marjorie Gracieuse (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 232–33; Julie Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour* (Montreuil-sous-Bois: Ithaque, 2014), 127–63.
- 13 Cited by du Saullé, *La folie devant les tribunaux*, 527.
- 14 Cited by Dr. Étienne-Jean Georget in *Examen médical des procès criminels des nommés Léger, Feldtmann, Lecouffe, Jean-Pierre et Papavoine* (Paris: Migneret, 1825), 44.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 45 and 46.
- 16 du Saullé, *La folie devant les tribunaux*, 525 and 527.
- 17 Georget, *Examen médical des procès criminels*, 11.
- 18 Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol, “Note sur la monomanie-homicide,” in *Médecine légale relative aux aliénés et aux sourds-muets, ou, Les lois appliquées aux désordres de l’intelligence*, by Johann Christoph Hoffbauer (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1827), 353–54.
- 19 Boismont, “Observations médico-légales sur la monomanie homicide,” 237.
- 20 Georget, *Examen médical des procès criminels*, 11.
- 21 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 22 On the complex and often antagonistic relation between law and medicine (or legal and medical power) in France in the early 1800s, and on the birth of legal medicine, see Strauss, *Human Remains*, 26–34.
- 23 Auguste Comte, *Système de politique positive*, vol. 1 (Paris: Crès, 1851–54), 652–53. Comte’s review of Broussais’s book, “Examen du traité de Broussais sur l’irritation” (1828), is included as an appendix in *Système de politique positive*, vol. 4. Cited and commented by Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn Fawcett in collaboration with Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 47–50.
- 24 Moris Benedikt, *Anatomical Studies upon Brains of Criminals* [1878] (New York: Wm. Wood, 1881).
- 25 *Ibid.*, vii.
- 26 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [1265–73] (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), first part of the second part, q. 40, art. 3, p. 1021.
- 27 See Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1794), sec. 16 (“Of Instinct”), §1.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 See Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, *Système analytique des connaissances de l’homme* (Paris: Belin, 1820), part 2, sec. 2, chap. 2 (“De l’instinct”), 228–54.
- 30 See Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, ed. Gillian Beer [1859] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 7 (“Instincts”).
- 31 Cited by Foucault in *Abnormal*, 129.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 34 See Foucault, *Abnormal*, 111; Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour*, 109.

- 35 Zola, *La bête humaine*. The Folio edition includes a useful dossier on the scientific literature and the newspaper articles Zola consulted for his novel. Those include the translation of Cesare Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (Cesare Lombroso, *L'homme criminel. Criminel né. Fou moral. Épileptique. Étude anthropologique et médico-légale* [Paris, 1887]); and Gabriel Tarde, *La criminalité comparée* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1886). See also Roger Whitehouse's introduction to the English translation of Zola's novel (London: Penguin, 2007), which documents the connection between Jacques Lantier and "Jack the Ripper." The impact of Zola's novel, and the fascination with the criminal type it describes, is evident in the review that Lombroso himself wrote of Zola's book in 1892 ("La bête humaine et l'anthropologie criminelle," in *La Revue des revues*, no. 4–5 [1892]: 260–264) and in the two famous film adaptations of the novel, namely, Jean Renoir's *La bête humaine* (1938) and Fritz Lang's *Human Desire* (1954). Still in the French context, and from the same period, one could also mention the remarkable series of twelve "psychopathological passionate" novels that, following the translation of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* into French in 1895, the prolific Armand Dubarry published under the very revealing title *Les déséquilibres de l'amour*. By 1906, two of those novels, *Les flagellants* and *Les invertis*, published in 1896 and 1898, respectively, were in their fortieth and forty-fourth editions!
- 36 Zola, *La bête humaine*, 339 (my emphasis).
- 37 *Ibid.*, 338–39 (my emphasis).
- 38 *Ibid.*, 84–85.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 301.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 419 (my emphasis).
- 42 *Ibid.*, 418 (my emphasis).
- 43 For an in-depth discussion of the history and philosophical consequences of that distinction, see Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*.
- 44 For a detailed exposition of the formation of the psychiatric concept of perversion in France, see Claude-Olivier Doron, "La formation du concept psychiatrique de perversion au XIXe siècle en France," in *L'information psychiatrique* 88, no. 1 (2012): 39–49. For the following discussion, I also consulted the articles on "perversion" in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, vol. 41 (Paris: Panckoucke, 1820) and *Dictionnaire de médecine*, vol. 16 (Paris: Béchet Jeune, 1826).
- 45 Cited in Doron, "La formation du concept," 40.
- 46 On the history of alienism, see Robert Castel, *Lordre psychiatrique. L'âge d'or de l'aliénisme* (Paris: Minuit, 1976); J. Bogousslavsky and T. Moulin, "From Alienism to the Birth of Modern Psychiatry: A Neurological Story?" *European Neurology* 5, no. 62 (2009): 257–63; and Bogousslavsky and Moulin, "Birth of Modern Psychiatry and the Death of Alienism: The Legacy of Jean-Martin Charcot," *Frontiers of Neurology and Neuroscience* 29 (2011): 1–8. See also Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l'amour*, part 1.
- 47 Philippe Pinel, *Traité médico-philosophique de l'aliénation mentale, ou la manie* (Paris: Ricard, Caille et Ravier, 1801). In addition to his early *Des passions, considérées comme causes, symptômes et moyens de l'aliénation mentale* (Paris: Didot, 1805), Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol wrote entries on "Erotomania," "Madness," "Mania," and "Nymphomania" for the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*,

- par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens* (Paris: Panckoucke) between 1815 and 1819, as well as *Des maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*, 3 vols. (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1838).
- 48 Esquirol, “De la manie” (1818), in *Des maladies mentales*, vol. 2, 132.
- 49 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 481. See also Étienne Georget, *De la folie. Considérations sur cette maladie* (Paris: Crevot, 1820); and Charles Chrétien Henri Marc, “Considérations médicales sur la monomanie et particulièrement sur la monomanie incendiaire,” in *Annales d’hygiène publique et de médecine légale* 10 (1833): 357–468. For a detailed account of those authors’ slightly different interpretations of monomania, see Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour*, 38–40.
- 50 On the Austrian and German origins of phrenology, the work of Gall, and its reception in Europe in the early nineteenth century, see John van Wyhe, “The Authority of Human Nature: The *Schädellehre* of Franz Josef Gall,” *British Journal of the History of Science* 35 (2002): 17–42.
- 51 François-Joseph-Victor Broussais, *De l’irritation et de la folie* (Paris: Delaunay, 1828), 655.
- 52 Claude Bernard, as quoted by Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, 75.
- 53 See van Wyhe, “The Authority of Human Nature,” 23.
- 54 Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 37.
- 55 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 16, 52–53 (my emphasis). See also his *Textbook on Insanity*, trans. Charles Gilbert Craddock (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1905). For other representative statements see Albert Moll, *Perversions of the Sex Instinct* [1891] (Newark: Julian Press, 1931), 172 and 182; and Dr. Laupt (G. Saint-Paul), *L’homosexualité et les types homosexuels: Nouvelle édition de Perversion et perversités sexuelles* (Paris: Vigot, 1910), 385.
- 56 Moll, *Perversions of the Sex Instinct*, 182.
- 57 Laupt, *L’homosexualité et les types homosexuels*, 292.
- 58 Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 22.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 60 The notion of *Homosexualität*, as opposed to *Normalsexualität*, first appeared in 1868 in a letter by the German-Hungarian journalist Karl Maria Kertbeny. The notion of “inversion” appeared only later, in 1878, in an article by Arrigo Tamassia, “Sull’inversione dell’istinto sessuale,” *Rivista sperimentale di frenetria* 4 (1878): 97–117. See also Labaste-Mazaleigue, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour*, 195–96.
- 61 See also David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Franz X. Eder, “Von ‘Sodomiten’ und ‘Konträrsexuellen’. Die Konstruktion des ‘homosexuellen’ Subjekts,” in *Kultur der Begierde*, 151–69. As Mazaleigue-Labaste shows, the idea of homosexuality as a disease of the sexual instinct was first developed in Germany and Austria, given the highly repressive antihomosexual laws in those countries in the 1850s. In France, by contrast, where sodomy had been decriminalized since 1791, homosexuality was not the primary example of abnormal sexual behavior. See Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour*, 194–95.
- 62 *Le siècle*, 11 July 1849; see also de Boismont, “Remarques médico-légales,” 559; Jules-Gabriel-François Baillarger, “Cas remarquable de maladie mentale,” *Annales médico-psychologiques* 4 (1858): 134.
- 63 See Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l’amour*, 134.
- 64 Michéa, “Des déviations malades,” 339.

- 65 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 69–70; Alexis Épaulard, *Vampirisme, nécrophilie, nécrosadisme, nécrophagie* (Lyon: A. Storck, 1901).
- 66 Ambroise Tardieu, quoted by Strauss, *Human Remains*, 18.
- 67 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 53, 56–57.
- 68 Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l'amour*, 27.
- 69 Dr. Lauptz, *Perversion et perversité sexuelles* [1895] (Paris: Vigot, 1910), 280.
- 70 It was by recognizing that tension that Freud was eventually forced to posit the existence of a death drive beyond the restricted economy of the purely sexual drives—a destructive desire, oriented toward the self or toward others, that signaled the limit of the rationality of the sexual instinct as itself a way of understanding the limits of the bourgeois rationality of self-interest. The problem of radical evil, and of a desire that Freud did not hesitate to characterize as “demonic” in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” continued to haunt psychiatry and psychoanalysis, precisely as the desire that exceeded the economy of sexual pleasure, and signaled the moment of the return of the Law, and the figure of sovereignty, within the clinical paradigm of the sexual instinct.
- 71 In fact, the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) recognizes a significant amount of new paraphilias, such as hebephilia, or the primary or exclusive adult sexual interest in pubescent individuals approximately eleven to fourteen years old. And, troubling as this may be, they are still defined in terms of cultural abnormality and social deviance. In the face of such a phenomenon, some people have advocated the removal of all paraphilias from the psychiatric classification of diseases. See Patrick Singy, “How to Be a Pervert: A Modest Philosophical Critique of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 43 (August 2012): 139–50.
- 72 The pedophile and serial killer of the first season of *True Detective* is, of course, a physical monster as well as a moral one, and the large scar on his face serves as the visible sign of his moral depravity.
- 73 See the case of Andreas Dippold in Germany, which I discuss below.
- 74 See Foucault, *HS 1*; Mazaleigue-Labaste, *Les déséquilibres de l'amour*, 151–52.
- 75 M. P. Legrain, *Des anomalies de l'instinct sexuel et en particulier des inversions du sens génital* (Paris: Carré, 1896), 36.
- 76 In his recently published *Der Hauslehrer: Die Geschichte eines Kriminalfalls* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2000), Michael Hagner recounts in great detail the remarkable historical case of Andreas Dippold, private tutor to the Koch brothers, aged eleven and thirteen. On account of their allegedly onanistic habits and general weakness of character, and with the blessing of their parents and the complicity of the then highly respected and popular psychiatrist Oskar Vogt, Dippold subjected the two brothers to a brutal combination of spartan regimen and regular corporeal punishments, confessions of their dirty sexual habits, and nightly surveillance. The oldest boy died from his ill treatment on 8 March 1903. As soon as the scandal broke out, the psychiatric tables turned, and experts—including Vogt—accused Dippold of being a “sadist,” a “moral monster,” and a “degenerate.” The same fear of sexual deviance led to the death of Heinz Koch and to the psychiatric and media frenzy around Dippold’s trial. The entire case reveals the growing impact of the *scientia sexualis*, which draws on aspects of evolutionary theory, criminal anthropology, psychiatry, and Judeo-Christian morality. In the end, the court ruled that Dippold was in full possession of his mental faculties when looking after the boys,

- and that the explanations of sexual perversion and moral deficiency were not sufficient to compensate for the gravity of his act. Still, the *scientia sexualis* was a key part of the trial, and revealed the remarkable impact of this new style of reasoning on the liberal rationality of justice. “Dippoldism” even became an official perversion as a result.
- 77 Quoted by Foucault, *Abnormal*, 283.
- 78 Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1991), 75.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 80 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 1–10.
- 81 G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), vol. 2, 109.
- 82 See Foucault, *HS 1*, 54–70; *Abnormal*, 169–92. In the São Paulo lecture course on the history of sexuality, as well as in *HS 1*, Foucault claims that, in the West, “sexuality” is not what is passed over in silence, but what is *confessed*. Sexuality is subjected to an obligation of discourse, and one that focuses on identifying the truth of one’s desires. This “strange practice” generated a “confessing society,” aspects of which found their way into the *scientia sexualis* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See also Alain Corbin, *L’harmonie des plaisirs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 97–113.
- 83 On the historical origins of the fear of the disease of onanism, see Samuel Auguste Tissot, *De l’onanisme, ou dissertation physique sur les maladies, produites par la masturbation* (Paris, 1760). On the history of onanism, see Foucault, *HS 1*, 104–5, 121 and especially his *Abnormal*, 231–58. As I have already mentioned, *The History of Sexuality* was initially to contain six volumes, the third of which, *La croisade des enfants*, was to devote many pages to the problem of child masturbation. Further evidence of Foucault’s intention to focus on this topic can be found in the Foucault archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale: Box 51 contains lecture courses and Foucault’s numerous notes on treatises and manuals from the nineteenth century related to the topic; box 56 (lectures 5 and 9) contains the notes preparatory to the São Paulo lecture course. For more recent work on the topic, see Jean Stengers and Anne van Neck, *Histoire d’une grande peur. La masturbation* (Paris: Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo pour le progrès de la connaissance, 1998); Karl Braun, *Die Krankheit Onania. Körperangst und die Anfänge moderner Sexualität im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995); Franz X. Eder, “Onanie und die Wurzeln des modernen sexuellen Subjekts im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Kultur der Begierde*, 91–127; Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2005). The introduction to the German edition of *The History of Sexuality* lists the following volumes: I. The Will to Know, II. The Confessions of the Flesh, III. The Crusade against Young People, IV. Population and Races, V. The Wife, the Mother, and the Hysteric, VI. The Perverts.
- 84 Hermann Rohleder, *Die Masturbation. Eine Monographie für Ärzte, Pädagogen und gebildete Eltern* (Berlin: Kornfeld, 1902); Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology*, vol. 2.
- 85 Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology*, vol. 1, 465–69.
- 86 Emil Kraepelin, *Psychiatry: A Textbook for Students and Physicians*, ed. Jacques M. Quen [1899] (Canton, MA: Watson Publishing International, 1991), 452.

- 87 August Forel, *Der Hypnotismus, seine psycho-physiologische, medicinische, strafrechtliche Bedeutung und seine Handhabung* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1895), 111. Forel was also the author of a widely read treatise on sexuality, *Die sexuelle Frage* (München: Reinhardt, 1905).
- 88 Laupts, *Perversion et perversité sexuelles*, 324.
- 89 Arnold Davidson, “Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality,” *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 32.

Chapter Five

- 1 *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 7 (London: Vintage Books, 2001), 135 (my emphasis). Henceforth cited as Freud, SE, followed by volume and page number.
- 2 Freud, SE, vol. 14, 121–22.
- 3 Freud, SE, vol. 11, 214.
- 4 Freud, SE, vol. 14, 124.
- 5 Freud, SE, vol. 12, 223.
- 6 The significance of that aggressive and destructive dimension of human sexuality became increasingly apparent to Freud, to the point that he found it necessary to isolate a further drive, known as the death drive, in 1920.
- 7 See Freud’s letter to Edouard Claparède, probably written in 1921, and partly translated in SE, vol. 11, 214–15n.
- 8 Friedrich Schiller, “Hunger and love are what moves the world,” from “Die Weltweisen,” in *Sämtliche Werke I*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert Göpfert (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1960), 223.
- 9 Freud, SE, vol. 7, 181.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 181–82 (my emphasis).
- 11 *Ibid.*, 182.
- 12 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 13 Freud, “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,” in SE, vol. 9, 188.
- 14 Freud, “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love,” in SE, vol. 11, 180–81.
- 15 Freud was not the first to use the term “aberration” in connection with the sexual instinct. The term, somewhat unusual in the context of German psychiatry, which preferred the terms *Anomalie* and *Abnormität*, was widely used in French psychiatry between the 1840s and 1880s. See Félix Jacquot, “Feuilleton. Des aberrations de l’appétit génésique,” *Gazette médicale de Paris: Journal de médecine et des sciences accessoires* 3, no. 4 (1849): 575–78; Paul Moreau (de Tours), *Des aberrations du sens génésique* (Paris: Hasselin et Houzeau, 1880–87); Eugène Gley, “Les aberrations de l’instinct sexuel d’après des travaux récents,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 17 (1884): 66–92; Valentin Magnan, “Des anomalies, des aberrations et des perversions sexuelles,” *Annales médico-psychologiques* 7, no. 1 (1885): 447–72.
- 16 Freud, SE, vol. 7, 154.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 We should also note, however, that in his “Summary” of the essay as a whole, Freud makes it very clear that, in his experience, over half of the sexual perver-

- sions and neuroses, such as hysteria and obsessional neurosis—which are, as we shall see, only repressed perversions—can be attributed to “inherited degeneracy” (*SE*, vol. 7, 236), and to syphilis contracted by the patient’s father, in particular!
- 20 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 146.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 144 (footnote added 1910).
- 22 *Ibid.*, 145 (footnote added 1915).
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*, 145–46.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 27 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 29 Sigmund Freud to Mrs. X (anonymous), 9 April 1935, in *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst L. Freud (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000), 423.
- 30 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 156.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 154.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*, 157 and 159.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 158.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 160.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Freud, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” *SE*, vol. 14, 109–40.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 127.
- 39 Eugen Bleuler introduced the term “schizophrenia” in a lecture in Berlin in 1908, to replace that of “dementia praecox,” originally introduced by Kraepelin. A precise and systematic account of Bleuler’s view can be found in his *Dementia Praecox, oder Gruppe des Schizophrenien* (Leipzig: Deuticke, 1911).
- 40 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 163.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 164.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 165.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 44 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology*. Hall invited Freud and Jung to Clark University, where he taught, in 1909.
- 47 Eugen Bleuler, “Sexuelle Abnormitäten der Kinder,” *Jahrbuch der Schweizerischer Gesellschaft für Schulgesundheitspflege* 9, no. 2 (1908).
- 48 Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 3: *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse; Love and Pain; The Sexual Impulse in Women* [1903] (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1913).
- 49 Hermine von Hug-Hellmuth, *Aus dem Seelenleben des Kindes. Eine Psychoanalytische Studie* (Leipzig: F. Deuticke, 1913).
- 50 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 177.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*, 192–93.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 197.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 177.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 177–78.

- 56 Freud, “On Narcissism” (1914), in *SE*, vol. 14, 78.
- 57 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 178.
- 58 Lacan, *Le Séminaire VII*, 133.
- 59 Freud, *SE*, vol. 14, 94.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 61 Freud, *SE*, vol. 9, 193.
- 62 Freud, “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in Love,” in *SE*, vol. 11, 188–89.
- 63 Freud quotes the passage at the end of lecture 21 of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–17) (in *SE*, vol. 16, 338); at the very beginning of “The Expert Opinion in the Halsmann Case” (1931) (in *SE*, vol. 21, 251); and again at the end of part 2 of *The Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940) (in *SE*, vol. 23, 192).
- 64 Freud, *SE*, vol. 11, 189.
- 65 Freud, *SE*, vol. 7, 225.
- 66 Freud, *SE*, vol. 11, 189.
- 67 Freud, *SE*, vol. 9, 186.
- 68 Freud, *SE*, vol. 11, 190.
- 69 Freud, *SE*, vol. 9, 192.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 195.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 196.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 204.
- 73 Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 76.
- 74 Freud, *SE*, vol. 18, 7.
- 75 Gustav T. Fechner, *Einige Ideen zur Schöpfungs- und Entwicklungsgeschichte der Organismen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1873), part 11, suppl., 94.
- 76 See Barbara Low, *Psycho-Analysis: A Brief Account of the Freudian Theory* (London: George Allen, 1920), 73.
- 77 Freud, *SE*, vol. 18, 24.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 79 Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 118–19.
- 80 The famous passage reads as follows: “Mine is a most peaceable disposition. My wishes are: a humble cottage with a thatched roof, but a good bed, good food, the freshest milk and butter, flowers before my window and a few fine trees before my door; and if God wants to make my happiness complete, he will grant me the joy of seeing six or seven of my enemies hanging from those trees” (Heinrich Heine, *Gedanken und Einfälle*, section 1; quoted in Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 110).
- 81 Freud, *SE*, vol. 18, 20; see also 29.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 83 See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *SE*, vol. 4, 122–33.
- 84 Freud, *SE*, vol. 18, 21.
- 85 Freud, *SE*, vol. 14, 298.
- 86 Freud, *SE*, vol. 18, 54.
- 87 Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 120.
- 88 Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (1915), *SE*, vol. 14, 280.
- 89 Freud, *SE*, vol. 14, 278–79.
- 90 *Ibid.*, 279.
- 91 Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *SE*, vol. 21, 111.
- 92 In that respect, I agree with Laplanche’s claim that the death drive is supposed to bring together two separate issues in psychoanalysis: “the fundamental economic

principle of psychoanalysis,” which, in its most radical form, is “the tendency to zero,” that is, the tendency to eliminate all tensions; and the need “to give a meta-psychological status . . . to the increasingly numerous and impressive discoveries of psychoanalytic inquiry concerning the register of ‘aggressiveness’ or ‘destructiveness’” (Jean Laplanche, *Life, Death, and Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffery Mehlerman [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], 85). Unlike Laplanche, however, I feel that those two demands are ultimately irreconcilable, at least as expressions of a single drive, and that the death drive is thus host to an irreducible tension.

- 93 On the current state of the debate regarding the nature of aging from a biological perspective, and how it leads to death, see Paul-Antoine Miquel, “Ageing and Longevity,” in *The Care of Life*, ed. Beistegui, Bianco, and Gracieuse, 199–210.
- 94 Miquel, “Ageing and Longevity,” 199.
- 95 Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, 206.
- 96 Freud, *SE*, vol. 19, 40 and 41, respectively.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 163.
- 98 *Ibid.*
- 99 Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 121.
- 100 Freud, *SE*, vol. 19, 164.
- 101 In what amounts to a twisting free of both the naturalistic account of the sexual instinct and the economic account of interest and utility, Lacan reverts to a sovereignist model of desire (and power) in order to explore what he once called the “tangled knot [*nœud étroit*] of Desire and the Law” (mentioned previously in my introduction). It is as a result of this deep connection between desire and the (symbolic) order of the law (of prohibition, transgression, and punishment), to which he was led as a result of his early work on paranoid psychosis, that his contribution to criminology and his own critique of liberal, bourgeois penology should be assessed. See Jacques Lacan and Michel Cénac, “Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology,” in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, and Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 102–22.
- 102 Freud, *SE*, vol. 21, 122.

Chapter Six

- 1 Thomas Tenison, D.D., *A Sermon against Self-Love & c. Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, on the 5th of June, 1689. Being the Fast Day, appointed to Implore the Blessing of Almighty God upon their Majesties Forces by Sea and Land, and Success in the War now declared against the French King* (London, 1689).
- 2 2 Tim., 3:1–2 (New English Bible).
- 3 On the Greek sources of self-love, see Irénée Hausherr, S.I., *Philautie, de la tendresse pour soi à la charité selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 137 (Rome, 1952), 1–41. To be sure, there is evidence of another, more positive account of *philautia* in pre-Christian Greek philosophy, and in Aristotle in particular: In the *Eudemian Ethics* (ed. and trans. Brad Inwood and Raphael Woolf [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 1240a8–b37), Aristotle argues that *philia* is formed on the basis of self-esteem by the recognition in the

friend of that rational nature which one has learned to value in oneself. And in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ed. and trans. Roger Crisp [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 1166a28–b2 and 1168a28–69b1), he claims that the good person, who acts justly, temperately, or according to any other virtue or excellence of the soul, should be a lover of self. On Aristotle's conception of *philautia*, see Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), chaps. 4 and 5; Héctor Zagal Arreguín, "The Role of *Philautia* in Aristotle's Ethics," *Acta Philosophica* 18, no. 2 (2009): 381–90. See also Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1994), 22–42 and 203–16.

- 4 Tenison, *A Sermon against Self-Love*, 3.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 See, for example, William Dawes, Baronet, D.D. and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, *Self-Love the Great Cause of Bad Times. A Sermon Preach'd before the Society of the Mystery of Goldsmiths, at Parish Church of St Lawrence Jewry* (London, 1701); Lilly Butler, D.D., Minister of St. Mary Aldermanbury, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, *The Sin and Mischief of Inordinate Self-Love*, Published by His Majesty's Special Command (London, 1716).
- 15 Butler, *The Sin and Mischief of Inordinate Self-Love*, 3.
- 16 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer [1669] (London: Penguin, 1966), 112 (No. 271).
- 17 *Ibid.*, 136 (No. 373).
- 18 *Ibid.*, 234 (No. 617).
- 19 *Ibid.*, 236 (No. 628).
- 20 Augustine in *The Raccolta: Prayers and Devotions Enriched with Indulgences*, ed. Joseph Christopher, Charles E. Spence, and John F. Rowan (Boston: St Athanasius Press, 1957), 37–38.
- 21 Augustine, *Commentaries on the Psalms* 105, 13; cited by Hannah Arendt in *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 32.
- 22 Augustine, *Confessions* II, I, i; cited by Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 23.
- 23 Augustine, *Commentaries on the Psalms* 57, I; cited by Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 23.
- 24 Augustine, *Confessions* II, I, i; cited by Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 23.
- 25 Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV, 14, 18; cited by Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 30.
- 26 Augustine, *City of God*, XIV, 13.
- 27 A very similar line of argument can be found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Prima Secundae, question 77, article 4.
- 28 See Paul A. Boer, ed., *The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. Algar Thorold (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 293.
- 29 See Jean-Joseph Surin, *Guide spirituel pour la perfection*, ed. Michel de Certeau (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), 29; *Correspondance*, ed. Michel de Certeau

- (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), 1482. On this seventeenth-century French mystic, see Michel de Certeau, *La fable mystique*, 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), chap. 7.
- 30 *Toward a State of Self-Esteem: The Final Report of the Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility* (Sacramento: Bureau of Publications, California State Department of Education, 1990). Available online: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED321170>. For a positive assessment of that report and the shaping of the self through esteem, see Barbara Cruikshank, “Revolutions Within: Self-Government and Self-Esteem,” in Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 231–51.
- 31 Virginia Satir, *Self-Esteem* (Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 1975).
- 32 *Toward a State of Self-Esteem*, ix.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 35 The California task force gave birth to the (still active) National Association for Self-Esteem (NASE), the purpose of which is to promote and fully integrate self-esteem into the fabric of American society.
- 36 Frederick Neuhouser, “Rousseau and the Human Drive for Recognition,” in *The Philosophy of Recognition*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher Zurn (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 21.
- 37 The latter distinction is particularly difficult to establish, as some, like Hume, have tended to identify self-love and self-interest. See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 233–34, 339.
- 38 *Amour-propre*, Rousseau claims, is “the first step towards inequality and vice.” See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality (Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men)* [1754], in *The “Discourses” and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 166.
- 39 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom [1762] (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 160.
- 40 Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.2.
- 41 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 184.
- 42 Rousseau, *Emile*, 213.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*, 215.
- 45 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 187.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 Rousseau, *Émile*, 42.
- 48 Neuhouser, “Rousseau and the Human Drive,” 30.
- 49 Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau’s Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.
- 50 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor [1797] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), vol. 6, 449.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 462.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 467–68. To translate *Verehrung* as “reverence,” as Mary J. Gregor does, is thus potentially misleading, since the German term *Achtung* is itself a translation of the Latin *reverentia* (see *ibid.*, 402–3).
- 53 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 166.

- 54 Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 83.
- 55 J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, trans. Michael Baur [1797] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 41–49. See also J. M. Bernstein, “Recognition and Embodiment: Fichte’s Materialism,” in *The Philosophy of Recognition*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher Zurn (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 47 and following.
- 56 Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 168.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 58 I am not arguing in favor of such a position, nor indeed suggesting that it was, in the case of Kant, internally coherent. As various scholars have shown, Kant excluded from such a process of universal recognition Africans and Jews, for different reasons. It is not the purpose of this investigation to establish whether such scandalous exclusions and contradictions are internal to the logic of the universal or attributable to empirical and personal circumstances. For this debate, see the following works by Robert Bernasconi: “Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race,” in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 11–36; “Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up: The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy,” *Radical Philosophy* 117 (2003): 13–22; “Kant’s Third Thoughts on Race,” in *Reading Kant’s Geography*, ed. Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 291–318.
- 59 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind* (Part Three of *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* 1845), trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), §432A, p. 172 and following.
- 60 Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 223.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 62 Rousseau, *Émile*, 252.
- 63 Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 225.
- 64 Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4. See also his “The Surprising Origins of Human Dignity,” in *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London: Verso, 2014). Jürgen Habermas makes a very similar point in “The Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights,” in *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response*, trans. Ciara Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), especially 81 and following.
- 65 For further discussion of this principle see Thomas. H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in his *Sociology at the Crossroads* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 67 and following; Jeremy Waldron, “Dignity and Rank,” *European Journal of Sociology* 48 (2007): 201–37; Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 115–19.
- 66 Following evidence unearthed by the political theorist Charles Beitz, Moyn concludes that the reference to “the dignity and worth of the human person” in the preamble of the United Nations Charter was traceable to Catholic usage and was due to Barnard College dean Virginia Gildersleeve, who had been sympathetic to German territorial expansion in the 1930s, and had tried to bar Jews from her institution. See Moyn, “The Surprising Origins of Human Dignity,” 28–29.
- 67 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 111. Honneth develops this distinction by

- drawing on the work of the nineteenth-century German jurist and legal scholar Rudolph Ihering, whose writings, largely indebted to the Kantian distinction between respect and esteem, greatly influenced the development of legal studies in Germany. See Rudolph von Ihering, *Der Zweck im Recht*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1905), 389 and following.
- 68 Joel Feinberg, “The Nature and Value of Rights,” in *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty: Essays in Social Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 151.
- 69 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 133. Giorgio Agamben has analyzed in detail the mechanism of dispossession of rights of certain German citizens—Jews especially—under Nazism in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), part 3.
- 70 Neuhouser, *Rousseau’s Theodicy of Self-Love*, 63.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 73.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 182.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 188.
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 184.
- 76 Rousseau, *Émile*, 214.
- 77 Stephen L. Darwall, “Two Kinds of Respect,” *Ethics* 88, no. 1 (October 1977): 36–49.
- 78 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 113.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 *Ibid.*, 124–25.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 85 *Ibid.*
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 125. A main source of inspiration regarding the process of individualization of honor is Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence [1835–40] (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), part 2, book 3, chap. 18.
- 89 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 126.
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 *Ibid.*, 129.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 126.
- 93 *Ibid.* My emphasis.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 127. I explored in detail this connection between recognition and power in chapter 3, above.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 William James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 [1890] (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 305–17.
- 97 See Steven Ward, “Filling the World with Self-Esteem. A Social History of Truth-Making,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (Winter, 1996): 1; Glynn Harrison, *The Big Ego Trip* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 5.

- 98 John Buri, Peggy Kirchner, and Jane Walsh, "Familial Correlates of Self-Esteem in Young American Adults," *Journal of Social Psychology* 127, no. 6 (1987): 583–88.
- 99 Richard Dukes and Barbara Lorch, "Concepts of Self, Mediating Factors, and Adolescent Deviance," *Sociological Spectrum* 9, no. 3 (1989): 301–19.
- 100 Carolyn Hally and Robert Pollack, "The Effects of Self-Esteem, Variety of Sexual Experience, and Erotophilia on Sexual Satisfaction in Sexually Active Heterosexuals," *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy* 19, no. 3 (1993): 183–92.
- 101 Lars Thornstam, "Loneliness in Marriage," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 9, no. 2 (May, 1992): 197–217.
- 102 Susan Crockenberg and Barbara Soby, "Self-Esteem and Teenage Pregnancy," in *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem*, ed. Andrew Mecca, Neil Smelser, and John Vasconcellos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 125–64.
- 103 Marie Choquet, Viviane Kovess, and Nathalie Poutignat, "Suicidal Thoughts among Adolescents: An Intercultural Approach," *Adolescence* 28 (1993): 649–59.
- 104 Lynn Stewart, "Profile of Female Firestarters: Implications for Treatment," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 163 (1993): 248–56.
- 105 L. F. Lowenstein, "Homicide: A Review of Recent Research," *Criminologist* 13 (1989): 74–89.
- 106 Carol Eagle and Carol Coleman, *All That She Can Be* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 14–15.
- 107 Ward, "Filling the World with Self-Esteem." 5.
- 108 For a review of the history of the concept of self-esteem in the scientific literature, from which I have borrowed freely, see Ward, "Filling the World with Self-Esteem," 5–7.
- 109 See Maslow's clinical studies on the impact of self-esteem on female sexuality and marital relationships, in Abraham H. Maslow, "Self-Esteem (Dominance Feeling) and Sexuality in Women," *Journal of Social Psychology* 16 (1932): 259–94. See also V. C. Raimy, "Self-Reference in Counseling Interviews," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1949): 153–63.
- 110 Carl Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).
- 111 Samuel Z. Klausner, "Social Class and Self-Concept," *Journal of Social Psychology* 38, no. 2 (1953): 201–5.
- 112 Russell W. Levanway, "The Effect of Stress on Expressed Attitudes toward Self and Others," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 50, no. 2 (1955): 225–26; S. L. Sharma, "Some Personality Correlates of Changes in Self-Esteem under Conditions of Stress and Support," *Journal of Education and Psychology* 14 (1956): 154–65.
- 113 James Benjamins, "Changes in Performance in Relation to Influences upon Self-Conceptualization," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 45, no. 3 (1950): 473–80.
- 114 Louis D. Cohen, "Level-of-Aspiration Behavior and Feelings of Adequacy and Self-Acceptance," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 49, no. 1 (1954): 84–86; Mary C. Jones and Paul H. Mussen, "Self-Conceptions, Motivations, and Interpersonal Attitudes of Late- and Early-Maturing Boys," *Child Development* 28 (1957): 243–56.
- 115 Walter Reckless, Simon Dinitz, and Barbara Kay, "The Self Component in Potential Delinquency and Potential Non-Delinquency," *American Sociological Review* 22, no. 5 (July 1957): 566–70.

- 116 Ezra Stotland and Alvin Zander, “Effects of Public and Private Failure on Self-Evaluation,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 56, no. 2 (March 1958): 223–29.
- 117 Ward, “Filling the World with Self-Esteem.” 7.
- 118 Louise Hart, *The Winning Family: Increasing Self-Esteem in Your Children and Yourself* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1987), 5.
- 119 Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1992), 119. For a systematic (and Foucault-inspired) review of that literature, see Rebecca Hazleden, “Love Yourself: The Relationship of the Self with Itself in Popular Self-Help Texts,” *Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 4, (December 2003): 413–28.
- 120 Barbara de Angelis, *Secrets about Men Every Woman Should Know* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990), 57.
- 121 Cherie Carter-Scott, *If Love Is a Game, These Are the Rules* (London: Vermilion, 2000), 1.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 123 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 124 See http://selfesteem.dove.co.uk/Articles/Written/Our_Mission_in_Practice.aspx.
- 125 Simon Blackburn, *Mirror, Mirror: The Uses and Abuses of Self-Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 57.
- 126 Foucault, *HS* 1, 144.
- 127 *Ibid.*, 145.
- 128 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 161.
- 129 *Ibid.*, 165.
- 130 *Ibid.*, 163.
- 131 See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 73.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 127; and Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?” in *Recognition and Difference: Politics, Identity, Multiculture*, ed. Mike Featherston and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 2002), 48.

Chapter Seven

- 1 Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25 and 26.
- 2 K. Anthony Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149.
- 3 Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition* (New York: Verso, 2003), 1.
- 4 Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?” 45.
- 5 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking Recognition,” in *The Philosophy of Recognition*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher Zurn (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 211.
- 6 Joel Anderson, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, x.

- 7 Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?” 45.
- 8 Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 61. See also Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), especially chaps. 3 and 4; *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 9 Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 38.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 39–40.
- 11 I am not suggesting that struggles of the former type have been entirely resolved, leaving only struggles of the latter type. As I am writing these lines, the live recording of the lethal and clearly illegal shooting of thirty-two-year-old African-American Philando Castile by a white police officer in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, reminds us that the struggle for racial equality and, more generally, equality before the law is far from over. In the last couple of years, Alton B. Sterling, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Eric Garner, Kajieme Powell, and Michael Brown each suffered a similar fate at the hands of U.S. police officers.
- 12 Ruth Lister, “Towards a Citizen’s Welfare State,” in *Recognition and Difference: Politics, Identity, Multiculture*, ed. Mike Featherston and Scott Lash, *Theory, Culture and Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (June 2001): 100.
- 13 On the category of “social death,” used to define the experience of slavery, Honneth refers to Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l’esclavage: Le ventre de fer et d’argent* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), especially part 1, chap. 5.
- 14 *Toward a State of Esteem*, 21.
- 15 Jan Pakulski, “Cultural Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 1, no. 1 (1997): 80.
- 16 Governments of United Kingdom and Ireland, *The Agreement* (Belfast: Governments of United Kingdom and Ireland, 1998), 2; quoted by Lister, “Towards a Citizen’s Welfare State,” 101.
- 17 Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 5 (“Double Bind: Jewish Emancipation and the Sovereign State”).
- 18 On Hegel’s support of Jewish emancipation (along strong assimilationist lines), see the long footnote of §270 of the published version of *Philosophy of Right* (1821), found in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 295–96. See also §159 of the so-called Wannenmann transcript of Hegel’s lecture course on the philosophy of right in Heidelberg in the winter of 1817–18: *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right: Heidelberg 1817–1818 with Additions from the Lectures of 1818–1819: Transcribed by Peter Wannenmann*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 297–98. A good account of the debate surrounding those remarks can be found in Lars Fisher, “Hegel in Support of Jewish Emancipation: A Deliberate Political Act?” *Owl of Minerva* 37, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2006): 127–57.
- 19 Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 5.
- 20 See *Gesetz-Sammlung für die Königlichen Preussischen Staaten 1812* [Collection of Laws for the Royal Prussian States 1812] (Berlin: Georg Decker, 1812), 17–22. Reprinted in Walter Demel and Uwe Puschner, eds., *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung*, vol. 6, *Von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Wiener Kon-*

- groß 1789–1815 [From the French Revolution to the Congress of Vienna, 1789–1815] (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 211–16.
- 21 Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 133.
- 22 Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1781), 28.
- 23 Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 133.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 134.
- 26 von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 26.
- 27 See Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Michael Silverstone and Jonathan Israel [1670] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chap. 5. Spinoza's conclusion is that "he who reigns over his subject's hearts holds the greatest power" (chap. 17, p. 202) and "no more effective means can be devised to influence men's hearts, for nothing can so captivate the heart as joy springing from devotion, that is, love combined with admiration" (chap. 17, p. 216).
- 28 "Immediatvorlage Schroetters an den König, Nov. 20, 1808," in Ismar Freund, ed., *Emanzipation der Juden in Preußen*, vol. 2 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2004), 209.
- 29 On this question, see Malika Rebai Maamri, "The Politics of Recognition: Algerian Immigrants in France," *International Journal of Sustainable Human Development* 2, no. 1 (2014): 18–28.
- 30 Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, 23.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., 194.
- 33 Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 40; see also Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 148, 180.
- 34 Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes*, 180.
- 35 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 30.
- 36 Quoted by Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 1.
- 37 Ibid., 2.
- 38 Ibid., 1.
- 39 Sally Westwood, "Complex Choreography: Politics and Regime of Recognition," in *Recognition and Difference: Politics, Identity, Multiculture*, ed. Mike Featherston and Scott Lash, *Theory, Culture and Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (June 2001): 249.
- 40 Lister, "Towards a Citizen's Welfare State," 102.
- 41 For a further analysis of the connection between precarious forms of life, social denigration, and misrecognition, see Guillaume Le Blanc, *Vies ordinaires, vies précaires* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2007), chap. 2.
- 42 Anne Phillips, *Which Equality Matters?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 131.
- 43 Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-socialist' Age," *New Left Review* 212 (July–August, 1995): 72–73; Fraser, *Justice Interruptus* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 15.
- 44 Iris Marion Young, "Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Dual Systems Categories," *New Left Review* 222 (March–April 1997): 156, 159.
- 45 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (New York: Routledge, 2006), part 1, chap. 2.

- 46 Ibid., 49–50.
 47 Deut., 15:11 (New English Bible).

Chapter Eight

- 1 Patchen Markell argues a similar point, albeit from a more ontological perspective, largely inspired by Arendt. See Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, chap. 1, especially 30–31.
- 2 Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival,” 161.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), chap. 5 (“The Lived Experience of the Black Man”).
- 6 Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival,” 162.
- 7 See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), especially introduction and chap. 6. For Nancy Fraser’s critique, see “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (delivered at Stanford University, 30 April–2 May 1996), 60–61. Available online at: http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/atoz/f/Fraser98.pdf Of interest also is Butler’s response to Honneth’s Tanner Lectures, delivered at Berkeley (2005). See Judith Butler, “Taking Another’s View: Ambivalent Implications,” in Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, ed. Martin Jay, with commentaries by Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, and Jonathan Lear (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 8 See Rasmus Willig, “Recognition and Critique: An Interview with Judith Butler,” *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 13, no. 1 (2012): 139–44.
- 9 Ibid., 140.
- 10 Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-century France* (New York: Columbia, 1987).
- 11 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 3.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid., 16. Athena Athanasiou says something very similar in a conversation with Judith Butler: “Thus, one of our many dispossessions is by the norms of sex and gender, which precede and exceed our reach, despite the normalizing claims to original and stable proprietarily bodily schemas. When I articulate *my* gender or *my* sexuality, when I pronounce the gender or the sexuality that I *have*, I inscribe myself in a matrix of dispossession” (Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013], 56).
- 14 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 31–32.
- 15 Ibid., 3.
- 16 Michel Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life” (interview with René de Ceccaty, Jean Danet, and Jean Le Bitoux), *Gai Pied* 25 (April 1981): 38–39; “The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will: A Conversation with Michel Foucault” (interview with Gilles Barbedette), *Christopher Street* 6, no. 4 (May 1982): 36–41; “Michel Foucault, an Interview: Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity” (interview with Bob Gallagher and Alexander Wilson), *The Advocate* 400 (August 1984): 26–30. Those inter-

- views are also available in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, vol. 1 of *The Essential Works of Foucault (1954–1984)* (New York: New Press, 1997).
- 17 Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 157.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., 136.
- 20 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 105.
- 21 Ibid., 4.
- 22 Ibid., 114.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., 5. Butler makes a very similar point elsewhere: “The question remains open for me whether the activist effort to claim marriage rights is not a way of submitting to regulatory power and seeking to become more fully ordered by its norm” (Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 84).
- 25 Ibid., 5.
- 26 “The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will: A Conversation with Michel Foucault,” in Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 158.
- 27 “Michel Foucault, an Interview: Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” in Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 165.
- 28 Homosexuality, Lacan claims, is a perversion, and one that the Greeks “sublimated” by turning it into a “cultural fact” (*fait de culture*), a “construction,” and even an art. See Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire VIII: Le transfert, 1960–1961* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 42–44.
- 29 Michel Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life,” in Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 135.
- 30 Ibid., 136.
- 31 “Michel Foucault, an Interview: Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” in Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 165.
- 32 Ibid., 163. Translation modified.
- 33 Ibid., 166.
- 34 Elizabeth Grosz, “A Politics of Imperceptibility: A Response to ‘Anti-racism, Multiculturalism and the Ethics of Identification,’” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28, no. 4 (2002): 463–72.
- 35 Ibid., 471.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 171.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Elizabeth Povinelli forged the notion of “the cunning of recognition” to examine the way in which, in the Australian context, capitalist multiculturalism promotes cultural recognition of Indigenous people as a way of minimizing land title claims. See Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). And as Gillian Cowlshaw has shown, the failure of Australian Aboriginal peoples to respond to acts of recognition, including the recognition of native titles, in the ways white Australians had expected and desired—that is, their failure to bring the Australian redemptive story to its appropriate conclusion—has provoked a shift in Australian public talk away from the issue of Aboriginal self-determination and toward sometimes authoritarian invocations of the need to rescue Aboriginals who will not, apparently, rescue themselves. See Gillian

- Cowlshaw, “Disappointing Indigenous People,” as cited in Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 173. Likewise, the politics and culture of Creole cosmopolitanism, which emerged in the French postslavery colonies, can be seen as a form of resistance to the French assimilative project. See Françoise Vergès, “Vertigo and Emancipation, Creole Politics and Cosmopolitanism,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 18 (June 2001): 169–83.
- 41 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.
 - 42 *Ibid.*, 15.
 - 43 *Ibid.*
 - 44 *Ibid.*
 - 45 *Ibid.*, 31.
 - 46 Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiii.
 - 47 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 152.
 - 48 *Ibid.*, 156.
 - 49 *Ibid.*
 - 50 *Ibid.*
 - 51 *Ibid.*, 65.
 - 52 *Ibid.*
 - 53 *Ibid.*, 66.
 - 54 *Ibid.*
 - 55 *Ibid.*
 - 56 *Ibid.*
 - 57 *Ibid.*, 77.
 - 58 *Ibid.*
 - 59 Paul Nadasdy, “‘Property’ and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Sub-Arctic: Some Theoretical Considerations,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 1 (2002): 248.
 - 60 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 78.
 - 61 *Ibid.*, 39.
 - 62 Department for Social Security, *New Ambitions for Our Country: A New Contract for Welfare* (London: HMSO, 1998).
 - 63 Quoted in Lister, “Towards a Citizen’s Welfare State,” 104.
 - 64 Department for Work and Pensions, *Touchbase Newsletter* 25: 7.
 - 65 Department for Work and Pensions, *Touchbase Newsletter* 26: 3.
 - 66 Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in Barry, Osborne, and Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason*, 60.
 - 67 Commission on Social Justice, *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal* (London: Vintage, 1994), 222.
 - 68 On the question of risk as a “style of thought,” rather than a property of reality, see Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*. See also François Ewald, “Insurance and Risk,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Pat O’Malley, “Risk and Responsibility,” in Barry, Osborne and Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason*, 189–208; Nikolas Rose, “The Death of the Social? Re-configuring the Territory of Government” [1996], in Miller and Rose, *Governing the Present*, 98–101. In that respect, “risk” is synonymous with, or at least very close to, another neoliberal value, namely, resilience. See Pat O’Malley, “Resilient Subjects:

- Uncertainty, Warfare, and Liberalism,” *Economy and Society* 39, no. 4 (2010): 488–509; O’Malley, “From Risk to Resilience. Technologies of the Self in the Age of Catastrophes,” *Carceral Notebooks* 7 (2011): 41–68.
- 69 Miller and Rose, *Governing the Present*, 101.
- 70 Cited by Lister in “Towards a Citizen’s Welfare State,” 94.
- 71 On “prudentialism” as a technology of government, see O’Malley, “Risk and Responsibility,” 196–97.
- 72 Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in Barry, Osborne, and Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason*, 59.
- 73 See Emma Carmel and Theodoros Papadopoulos, “The New Governance of Social Security in Britain,” in *Understanding Social Security: Issues for Social Policy and Practice*, ed. Jane Millar (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003), 31–52.
- 74 Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies,” in Barry, Osborne, and Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason*, 59.
- 75 Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 85.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 77 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- 78 *Ibid.*, 16 (my emphasis).
- 79 *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 25 December 1911, 193. Translation modified.
- 80 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 18.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 82 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1922] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 170.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 85 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 26.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 88 *Ibid.*
- 89 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 136.

Conclusion

- 1 Saul Newman, *Postanarchism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 27.
- 2 Harcourt, *Exposed*, 20–21.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 4 Newman, *Postanarchism*, 29–30.
- 5 Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- 6 Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” 50 (original emphasis).
- 7 Rabinow, ed., *Ethics*, 256.
- 8 Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 215.
- 9 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 199–202.

- 10 Foucault, “What Is Critique?” in Sylvère Lotringer, ed., *The Politics of Truth*, trans. Lisa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1997), 47.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Michel Foucault, “Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (London: Tavistock, 1988), 9–15.
- 14 Newman, *Postanarchism*, 128.
- 15 Ibid., 107.
- 16 Foucault, “What Is Critique?” 75.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Foucault, *History of Madness*, 544.
- 20 Reiner Schürmann, “On Constituting Oneself as an Anarchist Subject,” *Praxis International* 6, no. 3 (October, 1986): 305.
- 21 Michel Foucault, “Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject,” in Dreyfus and Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 216.
- 22 Schürmann, “On Constituting Oneself as an Anarchist Subject,” 308.
- 23 Blanc, *Vies ordinaires, vie précaires*, 39. See also Julien Pieron and Florence Caeymaex, “Critical and Political Stakes of a Philosophy of Norms,” in *The Care of Life: Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Bioethics and Biopolitics*, edited by Miguel de Beistegui, Giuseppe Bianco, and Marjorie Gracieuse (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 95–120.
- 24 Ibid., 40.
- 25 Ibid., 44.
- 26 Ibid., 43.
- 27 I present this critique in *Immanence—Deleuze and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 130–44.
- 28 For an inspired attempt at drawing up a philosophy of resistance, and analyzing the various forms of social and political resistance, see Howard Caygill, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- 29 Athena Athanasiou mentions a few examples: the self-immolation of Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamad Bouazizi, on 17 December 2010, which triggered the uprising that ousted Ben Ali after twenty-three years in power; Fadwa Laouri, the Moroccan woman who set herself on fire on 21 February 2011 to protest her exclusion from a social housing plan because she was an unmarried mother; or the seventy-seven-year-old Greek pensioner who, on 5 April 2012, committed suicide in front of the Greek Parliament, having left a note in which he explained that he preferred to end his life in dignity rather than beg for food and be a burden for his child. See Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 143–45.
- 30 See Jacques Rancière, “Does Democracy Mean Something?” in his *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), 45–61.
- 31 Ibid., 54.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Newman, *Postanarchism*, 128.
- 34 On civil disobedience and, more generally, on the art of being governed less, see Henry David Thoreau’s essay “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849), also

- known as “Civil Disobedience.” On the history of laziness, idleness, and the various forms of resistance to the capitalist ethos, see Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France 1972–1973*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 186–200. The political-economical, and specifically liberal, condemnation of laziness and idleness is to be related to, yet distinguished from, its moral and religious counterpart, which, in the seventeenth century, saw in laziness an anti-Christian attitude, and especially the rejection of the human condition as essentially fallen, sinful, and bound to the necessity of work. On that particular condemnation, see Foucault, *History of Madness*, part 1, chap. 2, especially 69–72.
- 35 Bertrand Russell, *In Praise of Idleness* [1935] (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 40 “La limite de l’utile” is the title of a draft of *La part maudite*. See Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 7 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 181–233.
- 41 Paul Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy* [1883], ed. Bernard Marszalek (London: AK Press, 2011).
- 42 Newman, *Postanarchism*, 146.
- 43 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 374. Translation modified.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 401.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Newman, *Postanarchism*, 28.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 132.
- 48 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
- 49 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1988), 164.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 51 Jean-François Lyotard, *Économie libidinale* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974), 241–51.
- 52 “Conversation with Michel Foucault” (a conversation with Duccio Trombadori), in *Dits et écrits II. 1976–1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), no. 128, p. 862.
- 53 *Ibid.*

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Index

- abnormality, 92, 93, 99, 106, 126, 247n70
Agamben, Giorgio, 12, 256n69
agency, 21, 38, 66, 114, 127, 154, 176, 189, 202, 211
Alfred, Taiaiake, 197, 198
alienation, 89, 92, 151, 193
amour-propre, 144, 145, 148–55, 158–62, 169
anaclysis, 115, 117
anarchism, 8, 216–18, 224
Appiah, K. Anthony, 171, 187–89, 191
Aquinas, Thomas, 12, 94
Aristotle, 12, 36–37, 47, 50, 67, 94, 252n3
assemblage, 8, 26, 62, 187, 208, 210, 225–26
Athanasiou, Athena, 261n13, 265n29
Aufklärung, die. See Enlightenment
Augustine, Saint, 14, 50, 55, 82, 97, 143, 146, 147, 151, 242n51
Aurelius, Marcus, 18
auto-erotic, 115, 116, 121, 125, 133

Bacon, Francis, 33
Bataille, Georges, 224, 228
Beccaria, Cesare, 42, 46, 60
Becker, Gary, 65, 78, 242n37
Beckett, Samuel, 206
Bentham, Jeremy, 46, 56, 57, 59, 61, 236n32, 243n8
Bertrand, François, 90–92, 99, 102, 104, 122
bestiality, 104
Beveridge Plan, 67
Bichat, Marie François Xavier, 93, 100
biology, 20, 93, 108, 110, 112, 113–16, 119, 126, 131, 136–38, 167, 173, 219, 252n93
bionormalization, 180

biopolitics, 20, 21, 23, 25, 32, 63, 180, 209, 218, 233n61
biopower, 9–13, 15, 19, 20, 23, 26, 33, 45, 55, 63, 76, 109, 150, 163, 167, 168, 175, 176, 178, 202, 218, 233n3
biostatistics, 179, 180
bisexual, 118
Blanchot, Maurice, 228
Bleuler, Eugen, 124, 250n39
Blunkett, David, 202
Böhm, Franz, 76
Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen von, 64
Boisguillebert, sieur Pierre le Pesant de, 41
Boismont, Brierre de, 92
Boltzmann, Ludwig, 72
Botero, Giovanni, 38, 39
bouleusis, 47
bourgeoisie, 23, 38, 89, 104, 129, 138, 161, 192, 210, 213, 247n70, 252n101
Brexit, 31
Broussais, François-Joseph-Victor, 93, 98
Butler, Judith, 175, 189–93, 261n7, 262n24

cameralists, 33
Canguilhem, Georges, 136, 218, 219, 245n43
capitalism, 37, 80, 197, 211, 266n34; and desire, 2, 3, 50, 73–74, 79, 81, 169, 213, 221; and recognition, 199
Cassel, Karl Gustav, 64
Castile, Philando, 259n11
castration, 119
Chicago Board of Trade, 239n62
Chicago School, 65, 67, 88, 241n16

- chrematistics, 36
- Christianity, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 45, 55, 56, 79, 95, 97, 104, 107, 108, 143–45, 150, 155, 166, 176–80, 209, 230n20
- colonialism, 173, 174, 196–200
- competition, 22, 31, 36, 64, 66, 70, 73–77, 202, 212, 223, 241n16
- Comte, Auguste, 93, 244n23
- concupiscence, 15, 17, 18, 21, 50, 56, 103, 108, 168, 242n51
- Condillac, Étienne Bonnot de, 46, 60, 237n3
- confession, 2, 15–19, 106, 247n76
- conjugalit , 17, 19
- consumerism, 201
- Cornier, Henriette, 94, 95, 102
- corporations, 76, 80, 162, 169
- Coulthard, Glen Sean, 181, 196–200
- counter-conduct, 6, 26, 215, 218, 220, 222
- cupiditas*, 146
- d'Argenson, marquis de (Ren -Louis de Voyer de Paulmy), 44
- Darwin, Erasmus, 94
- Davidson, Arnold, 99–102, 108
- Davies, William, 241n16
- decentralization, 66
- decolonization, 195, 196, 198
- Dedalus, Stephen, 206, 224
- degeneracy, 99, 118, 124, 145, 247n76, 250n19
- Deleuze, Gilles, 62, 81, 82, 205, 207, 208, 220, 221, 224, 225, 227; Deleuzo-Guattarian thought, 205, 221
- Dene Declaration, 198–99
- denormalization, 218
- depopulation, 33, 179
- deregulation, 31, 137
- desubjectivation, 200, 221, 228
- detrterritorialization, 205, 206, 207, 221, 225
- Diderot, Denis, 34, 128
- Dippold, Andreas, 247n76
- discipline, 10, 11, 20, 23, 61, 80, 85, 86, 93, 107, 129, 165, 211
- Dohm, Christian Wilhelm von, 176, 177
- domination, 11, 21, 106, 125, 126, 133, 163, 188, 195–97, 203, 205
- drives, 111, 112, 114–16, 121, 122, 125, 127, 129–31, 169, 213, 247n70
- economics, 1, 2, 19, 25, 26, 31, 45, 49, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60–68, 73–82, 85–89, 109, 111, 127–29, 130, 131, 133, 137, 139, 144, 153, 155, 167–69, 176, 179, 182, 184, 185, 199–203, 205, 210–13, 214, 219, 223, 224, 225, 241n16, 243n8. *See also* market, the; political economy
- egkrateia*, 18
- eighteenth century, 11, 12, 19, 22, 33–35, 38, 41, 42, 45, 86, 87, 94, 97, 148, 155, 209, 233n3, 236n35
- Ellis, Havelock, 124
- emancipation, 175–80, 196, 204, 259n18
- Enlightenment, 5, 159, 230n9
- entrepreneurship, 22, 24, 77, 78, 184, 203, 207
- Epictetus, 18
- epithumia*, 18, 104
- epithumogenetic, 81
- epithumotechnics, 211
- equality, 86, 153–55, 172, 174, 177, 180, 183, 184, 259n11
- ergodicity, 71, 72
- eros*, 3, 130, 131, 134, 136, 137
- erotic, 1, 27, 77, 98, 102, 105, 137, 139, 194, 195, 213, 225, 226
- erotogenic, 115, 125, 126
- Esquirol, Jean- tienne Dominique, 92, 96, 97, 245n7
- ethics, 17, 19, 22, 25, 27, 106, 150, 154, 160, 161, 162, 164, 166, 168, 185, 191, 194, 201, 204, 210, 215, 216, 221, 230n23
- ethnicity, 25, 26, 156, 164, 172, 173, 174, 187, 188, 190, 191, 207, 225
- Eucken, Walter, 65
- eugenics, 119
- Europe, 32, 37, 64, 67, 79, 93, 135, 156, 176, 180, 184, 246n50
- exhibitionism, 101, 121, 123, 125
- Facebook, 2, 211
- Fanon, Frantz, 173, 188, 190, 195–97
- fascism, 32, 207
- Fechner, Gustav, 130
- federal, 156, 181
- Feinberg, Joel, 157
- feminism, 171, 195, 197
- fetishism, 1, 5, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 117, 120
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 154
- Forster, Thomas Ignatius Maria, 98
- Foucault, Michel, 3–7, 9–26, 32–34, 38, 41–45, 54–55, 57, 59, 61–63, 75–77, 85–87, 90, 104, 112, 129, 167, 168, 175, 184, 189, 192–94, 197, 200, 204, 205, 208, 209, 211, 213, 215–17, 225, 228, 232n43, 233n61, 236n34, 240n1, 248n82, 266n34
- Frankfurt School, 168

- freedom, 7, 14, 17, 22, 47, 59–61, 64–68, 73, 75,
79, 119, 128, 152, 154, 155, 174, 189, 196, 198,
210–12, 215–20, 224, 243n8
- Freud, Sigmund, 100, 105, 106, 109–38
- Friedman, Milton, 65
- Fukuyama, Francis, 25, 26
- fundamentalism, 214, 218
- Galileo, 49
- gender, 1, 174, 175, 187, 190, 191, 194, 207
- genealogy, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16, 26, 34, 63, 111, 149,
166, 210
- genital, 90, 101, 105, 107, 111, 116, 125, 213
- Georget, Étienne-Jean, 92, 97
- gerontocracy, 223
- governmentality, 8–11, 25, 33, 34, 43, 44, 54, 55,
56, 63, 64, 66, 68, 85, 108, 144, 168, 169, 180,
197, 199, 200, 203, 210, 212, 215, 216, 217, 218,
221, 222
- Graeber, David, 234n13
- gratification, of desire, 36, 54
- Griesinger, Wilhelm, 100
- Guattari, Felix, 81, 82, 205, 207, 220, 221, 224,
225, 227; Deleuzo-Guattarian thought,
205, 221
- guilt, 97, 106, 123, 134, 138, 157
- Hacking, Ian, 179, 233n3, 263n68
- Hall, G. Stanley, 103, 104, 106, 107
- happiness, 46, 47, 51, 52, 57–60, 81, 130, 134,
146, 152, 164, 165, 167, 238n45, 243n8
- Harcourt, Bernard, 60, 88, 211, 229n2, 236n30,
239n62
- Hardt, Michael, 226
- Hayek, Friedrich, 31, 64–65, 67, 68, 69–70,
74–76, 241n16
- Hebrew, 143, 177, 178
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 24, 25, 26,
127, 151, 154, 157, 163, 173, 176, 190, 191, 196,
259n18
- Heidegger, Martin, 198, 217
- Heine, Heinrich, 131, 251n80
- Helvétius, 46, 49
- hermaphroditism, 118
- heterosexuality, 17, 116, 119, 193, 194, 213
- Hobbes, Thomas, 46, 56, 235n27
- homo oeconomicus*, 24, 34, 64, 68
- homophobia, 193
- homosexuality, 101, 102, 104, 105, 107, 118, 119,
137, 171, 188, 189, 192–95, 204, 205, 208, 213,
262n28. *See also* sexuality
- Honegger, Arthur, 64
- Honneth, Axel, 25, 26, 151, 157, 159–63, 167–69,
171, 172, 175, 189, 197, 203
- household, 36, 37
- Hume, David, 46–48, 50, 60, 254n37
- hysteria, 110, 122, 123, 248n83, 250n19
- identification, 55, 106, 118, 138, 180, 226
- identities, 24, 26, 166, 173, 174, 188, 189, 204,
207, 208, 213, 214, 225
- immanence, 227
- immigration, 179
- impulses, 91, 95, 98, 116, 121–23, 127, 132, 134
- incest, 95, 128, 230n23
- individualization, 11, 161, 162, 166, 189, 217,
256n88
- instinct, sexual, 2, 20, 22–24, 88, 93–96,
98–106, 108–18, 120–23, 125–28, 130, 131,
133–39, 145, 149, 167, 210, 225, 227, 247n70,
249n15, 252n101. *See also* sexuality
- interest, rational, 22–25, 32, 34, 37–40, 48–51,
54–57, 59, 60, 62–64, 67, 73, 85–91, 94, 96,
102, 108, 109, 119, 135, 144, 153, 154, 166–68,
172, 189, 210, 211, 214, 225, 238n50, 252n101
- intersubjectivity, 25, 149, 155, 160, 162, 173, 216
- interventionism, 65, 236n33
- James, William, 163
- Jansenism, 145
- joy, 3, 51, 96, 131, 227
- Joyce, James, 206, 225
- Judaism, 143, 175–80, 196, 204, 205, 206,
255n58, 256n69, 259n18
- juridical, 10, 25, 42, 43, 68, 103, 109, 155, 156,
206, 212, 215
- Kafka, Franz, 205, 206, 208
- Kant, Immanuel, 5, 12, 152, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158,
163, 165, 208, 217, 230n9, 255n58, 256n67
- Keynes, John Maynard, 67
- khresis*, 17
- Kojève, Alexandre, 24, 127, 151, 190
- Kraepelin, Emil, 107
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard Freiherr von, 85, 90,
100–103, 106, 107, 109, 114
- La Boétie, Étienne de, 216
- labor, 35, 40, 77–79, 88, 169, 198, 199, 211, 224,
238n50
- Lacan, Jacques, 9, 10, 110, 112, 115, 116, 127, 138,
194, 230n23, 252n101, 262n28
- Lafargue, Paul, 224
- laissez-faire*, 58, 238n57

- Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste, 94
 Laupts, Dr. *See* Hall, G. Stanley
 laziness, 27, 223, 224, 266n34
 Levi, Edward, 241n16
 liberalism, 22, 32, 40, 61, 62, 108, 210, 214, 215, 217, 218, 222, 225, 233n61, 236n33, 252n101, 266n34; failure of, 65, 67; and governmentality, 44, 54–59, 87; and neoliberalism, 68, 75, 76; and punishment, 88–91, 111, 122, 138; and recognition, 168, 171–202; and self-love, 144; and utilitarianism, 26, 85. *See also* neoliberalism
 Lippmann, Walter, 65, 240n4
 Locke, John, 43, 45–48, 50
 Lombroso, Cesare, 95, 96, 245n35
 longevity, 20, 252n93
 Lordon, Frédéric, 80, 81
 love, 24, 25, 48, 54, 56, 95, 96, 98, 106, 114, 117, 121, 125, 127, 130, 131, 134, 146–47, 151, 152, 157, 165, 173, 227–28. *See also* self-love
 Lucinge, René de, 39
 Lyotard, Jean-François, 227
 lypemania, 97, 98

 Machiavelli, 38
 mania, 97, 98, 245n47
 Marcuse, Herbert, 10, 123
 marginalization, 172, 183, 204, 214, 220
 Markell, Patchen, 175–78, 261n1
 market, the, 11, 32, 34, 37, 61, 87, 88, 165, 193, 199, 213, 223, 224, 241n16; and desire, 21–23, 56–59, 80, 81; and difference, 169; free market, 144, 203, 236n33, 239n62; and neoliberalism, 65–71, 73–78, 210; transformation of, 38, 40–42
 Marx, Karl, 77, 197, 224
 masochism, 101, 111, 120, 121, 123, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136, 137, 195
 Mauss, Marcel, 234n9
 Mazaleigue-Labaste, Julie, 103
 Mazur, Paul, 2, 21, 79, 229n1
 medicine, 11, 36, 89, 93, 96, 97, 100, 102, 107, 108, 135, 244n22
 mercantilism, 32, 33
 messianism, 143, 177
 metaphysics, 72, 131, 138, 215
 Michéa, Jean-Claude, 102
 Mill, John Stuart, 64
 minorities, 26, 127, 174, 179, 180, 181, 188, 193, 194, 205, 206, 208
 Mirowski, Philip, 67, 76, 240n1
 misrecognition, 173, 174, 175, 187, 203, 214, 260n41
 modernity, 160, 161
 morality, 2, 7, 33, 41, 45, 46, 49, 56, 58, 89–92, 95–97, 99, 102, 103, 107, 122, 125, 131, 134, 138, 152, 154–58, 162, 168, 171–73, 185, 247n72, 247–48n76, 266n34
 moralizing, 214
 mortality, 20, 180
 Mont Pèlerin Society, 64–66, 69, 75
 Moyn, Samuel, 155
 multiculturalism, 171, 172, 175, 178, 262n40
 murder, 3, 95, 96, 99, 144

 narcissism, 116, 125, 127, 129, 133, 134, 137, 214
 nationality, 156, 177, 179, 187, 206, 225
 naturalization, 19, 21, 22, 89, 94, 149
 Nazism, 65, 156, 256n69
 necrophilia, 102, 104
 need, 2, 9, 25, 26, 40, 46, 48, 50, 51, 77, 79, 112–14, 116, 151, 167, 169
 Negri, Antonio, 226
 neoclassical, 67
 neocolonial, 198
 neoliberalism, 23, 26, 31, 32, 34, 42, 43, 62–70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78–80, 88, 168, 169, 198, 200–203, 207, 210, 211, 214, 220, 221, 225, 233n61, 236n33, 240n1, 241n16, 263n68. *See also* liberalism
 Neuhausser, Frederick, 149, 152–55, 158
 neuropsychiatry, 93
 neurosis, 122, 123, 125, 129, 132, 133, 134, 250n19
 Newman, Saul, 211, 214, 216, 223–26
 Newton, Isaac, 49, 62
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 4, 8, 163, 205, 218, 228
 nineteenth century, 13, 20, 22, 23, 37, 46, 58, 77, 88, 89, 91, 94, 101, 107, 108, 163, 175, 176, 178, 180, 218, 233n3, 238n57, 239n62, 239n72, 244n22, 246n50, 248n82, 256n67
nomos, 68, 69, 213
 normalization, 10, 11, 21, 22, 62, 63, 89, 93, 106, 107, 111, 128, 129, 138, 197, 204, 210, 211, 213, 220, 222, 225, 227, 261n13
 normativity, 8–12, 20–23, 25, 32, 42, 58, 59, 62, 64, 66, 69, 74, 76, 78, 80, 93, 105, 108, 109, 110, 116, 136, 139, 156, 166–68, 171, 172, 180, 185, 188, 189, 191, 192, 195, 201, 203, 204, 207, 211–14, 218–22, 224
 North American Free Trade Agreement, 32
 nymphomania, 103, 245n47

- obsession, 2, 13, 107, 122, 149, 250n19
 oedipal complex, 110, 221
oikonomia, 9, 35, 234n8
 ontology, 4–6, 209, 215, 217, 222, 261n1
 ordoliberal, 76
 Ottoman Empire, 135
- Pakulski, Jan, 173, 174
 panopticism, 61, 62
 paranoia, 122, 252n101; paranoiac-reactionary, 222
 paraphilia, 104, 129, 247n71
 Pascal, Blaise, 145
 passions, 18, 47, 88, 89, 91, 92, 95–98, 128, 135, 238n50, 245n35, 245n47
 pastoral, 11, 12, 14, 107, 108, 166, 204, 209, 230n20
 pathological, 4, 22, 24, 85, 89, 92, 93, 96–100, 103–9, 111, 115, 117–23, 128, 129, 132, 173, 210
 patriarchy, 174, 197
 Paul, Saint, 143, 144, 145
 penitent, 16
 penology, 23, 111, 122, 138
 perversion, 1–3, 13, 20, 23, 62, 89–107, 109–12, 117, 120–26, 129, 133, 138, 248n76, 250n19
 phallogocentric, 174, 212, 231n23
 phallogocentric, 231n23
 phenomenology, 6, 24, 154, 196
philautia, 143, 252–53n3
philia, 36, 252n3
 Phillips, Anne, 183
 phrenology, 98, 102, 246n50
 physiocratic, 22, 26, 33, 41, 56, 236n31
 physiology, 97, 100, 101, 105–7, 112, 113, 116, 122, 137
 Pinel, Philippe, 96, 97
 Plato, 15, 143
 pleasure, 17–19, 36, 37, 46–48, 52, 57, 58, 60, 81, 92, 102, 111, 112, 114–17, 125, 128–33, 136, 155, 194, 212, 227, 239n66, 243n8, 247n70
 pleasure-ego, 114
 Polanyi, Karl, 37, 41, 58, 59, 234n9
 political economy, 13, 14, 20–24, 26, 32, 34, 38–42, 45, 49, 56, 63, 66, 68, 77, 109, 167, 224, 233n3, 238n50
 polymorphous, 111, 126, 128, 137, 138
 pornography, 1, 104
 Posner, Richard, 88, 241n16, 243n8
 postanarchism, 214
 postcolonial, 174, 180, 195, 196, 200
 post-neoliberal, 32
- poststructuralist, 189
 power, 5, 6, 8–11, 16, 18–20, 22, 23, 26, 33, 34, 39, 40, 42–44, 46, 50, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 63, 66, 68, 69, 81, 86–89, 107–9, 112, 136, 137, 139, 150, 163, 166, 167, 173–80, 185, 187–91, 195–98, 200, 203–8, 210, 211, 213, 214, 216–19, 221–26, 228, 231n23, 233n3, 252n101
 praxis, 200
 pregenital, 111, 118, 125
 preindividual, 225, 227
 prison, 9, 10, 61, 62, 80, 102
 proletariat, 2, 77
 prosperity, 37, 39, 40, 43, 44, 51, 53, 73, 75
 protectionism, 32
 Protestantism, 178
 Prussia, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 233n3
 psychiatric, 3, 23, 90–95, 97, 100–102, 104–7, 111, 116, 124, 164, 210, 213, 245n44, 247n71
 psychoanalysis, 9, 14, 20, 90, 104, 106, 108–13, 118, 123, 126, 130, 132, 194, 221, 230n23, 247n70, 251–52n92
 psychopathology, 24, 62, 85, 103, 138, 167, 213
 psychosexual, 102–4, 119
 punishment, 10, 21, 23, 60–62, 79, 85–89, 91, 92, 138, 139, 212, 243n8, 247n76, 252n101
 pyromania, 164
- quasi-transcendental, 6, 217
 Quesnay, François, 34, 55, 236n30
- race, 25, 74, 156, 173, 174, 179, 187, 189, 190, 194, 204, 207, 255n58
 racialization, 172, 182, 188, 205
 racism, 173, 174, 197, 255n58
 Rancière, Jacques, 222
 rationality, 6, 14, 21, 22, 23, 43, 51, 57, 59, 60, 62, 65, 66, 85, 87–92, 94, 109, 111, 138, 152, 153, 155, 187, 202, 209, 210, 211, 219, 223, 225, 247n70; reason of the state, 33, 34, 38–41, 42, 54, 65, 68, 156, 178. *See also* interest, rational
 Reagan, Ronald, 31
 recognition, social, 8, 14, 24–27, 33–35, 50, 51, 54, 63, 74, 77, 80, 104, 116, 136, 144, 148–52, 158–63, 166–210, 214, 215, 218, 221, 222, 225, 226
 religion, 37, 104, 106, 127, 145, 156, 164, 178, 180, 206, 225
 Renaissance, 13, 39, 184
 repression, 10, 19, 111, 121–23, 125–29, 132, 134, 210, 213, 246n61

- resistance, 6, 16, 26, 158, 168, 190, 195, 204, 217, 222, 223, 263n40, 265n28, 266n34
 reterritorialization, 206, 207, 221
 revolution, 2, 42, 43, 129, 207, 212, 222–24
 Rogers, Carl, 164
 Rohleder, Hermann, 107
 Röpke, Wilhelm, 65, 67
 Rose, Nikolas, 78, 201–3
 Rosenberg, Morris, 164, 165
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 43, 56, 144, 148–53, 150, 152, 157–61, 163, 166, 169
 Russell, Bertrand, 223
 Rüstow, Alexander, 65
- sadism, 1, 90, 101, 102, 104, 105, 111, 120, 121, 123, 131, 133, 134, 136, 137, 195
 same-sex. *See* homosexuality
 satisfaction, 3, 22, 47, 48, 50–52, 56–58, 63, 66, 67, 78, 96, 101, 113, 115, 116, 120, 127, 128, 132, 133, 137, 164, 167, 226
savoir, 9, 33, 38, 89
 Schiller, Friedrich, 114, 131, 249n8
 schizophrenia, 164, 221, 224, 250n39
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 131
 Schultz, Theodore W., 65, 78
 Schürmann, Reiner, 217, 218
 scopophilia, 120, 123, 125
 self-love, 24, 26, 56, 143–50, 154, 157, 166–68, 185, 203, 210, 238n51. *See also* love
 self-respect, 24, 25, 144, 157, 166, 167, 185
 self-worth, 26, 162, 173, 183, 185, 200–202
 Seneca, 18
 seventeenth century, 33, 40, 42, 44, 46, 97, 184, 266n34
 sexology, 106
 sexuality, 1–3, 12–17, 19–27, 46, 48, 50, 85, 89–93, 95, 96, 98–131, 133–39, 149, 156, 167, 174, 175, 187–227, 231n23, 232n43, 243n1, 248n82, 249n6, 257n109, 261n13; infantile, 111, 115, 118, 119, 124–26, 128, 135, 138; sexual desire, 3, 13, 18–23, 50, 102, 104, 106–13, 127, 139, 195, 213
 sexualization, 9, 15, 21, 93, 105
 Simmel, Georg, 50, 169
 Simons, Henry, 241n16
 Simpson, Leanne, 197
 sin, 21, 50, 104, 145, 147, 166, 266n34
 sixteenth century, 39, 40, 44
 Smith, Adam, 42, 46, 51, 53, 59, 64, 69, 70, 73, 75, 150, 158, 160, 169, 234n13, 238n45
 social-democratic, 26
- socioeconomic, 31, 76, 183, 199, 210
 socius, 221, 225
 Socrates, 18, 35
 sodomy, 102, 246n61
 sovereignty, 10, 11, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 33, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 54–57, 60, 68, 69, 86, 109, 110, 112, 133, 139, 167, 172, 175–80, 198, 199, 208, 212, 217, 218, 221, 222, 226, 234n3, 247n70
 Spinoza, Baruch, 177, 225, 226, 260n27
 state, the, 11, 19, 25, 33, 38, 39, 42–44, 49, 54, 58, 59, 65, 66, 68, 75, 76, 144, 153, 154, 156–58, 162, 172, 176–81, 185, 192, 193, 196–99, 201, 202, 211, 214, 215, 217, 222–24, 240n4. *See also* rationality: reason of the state
 state aid, 32
 Steuart, James, 49–51, 64
 Stoicism, 15, 17, 18, 79, 143, 146
 struggle, political. *See* resistance
 subject, the, 10, 17, 19, 22, 24–26, 33, 37, 39, 69, 77–78, 88, 89, 104, 108, 118, 120, 121, 155, 195, 201, 203, 211, 214, 216, 219, 220, 225, 228; colonized, 196; desiring, 8, 14–16, 63, 106, 109, 187, 191, 209, 212; judicial, 102; sexualized, 93; transgressive, 218
 subjectivation, 11, 80, 107, 189, 193, 205, 217, 218, 226, 227
 sublimation, 111, 121, 123, 126, 127, 129, 134, 194, 262n28
- Tarde, Gabriel, 79, 95, 96, 238n50, 242n37
 Tardieu, Ambroise, 102
 Taylor, Charles, 25, 26, 151, 161, 171, 172, 175, 181, 189, 197
techne, 36
 techno-capitalist, 199
 Tenison, Thomas, 143–45
 territorialization, 221, 225
thanatos, 3, 130, 131
 Thatcher, Margaret, 31, 32, 76, 240n12
 thermodynamics, 70, 71, 75, 136
 totalitarianism, 65, 67
 transcendental, the, 4, 7, 8, 13, 19, 21, 217
 transcendental-historical, the, 13, 14
 transgender, 188
 Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), 32
 Trump, Donald, 31, 32
 twentieth century, 67, 106, 107, 135, 180, 239n72, 248n82
 tyranny, 61, 65, 67, 188

- universalism, 172, 174, 180
- utilitarianism, 25, 26, 43, 55, 56, 57, 58, 85, 114, 168, 236n33
- Vaidhyanathan, Siva, 2, 229n2
- Van Gulik, Robert, 227
- Van Horn, Rob, 67, 76
- Vatter, Miguel, 69
- Verri, Pietro, 46, 60
- Vogt, Oskar, 247n76
- voyeurism, 101, 104, 120, 121
- Walpole, Robert, 44, 236n34
- wealth, 2, 13, 14, 34, 36, 37, 40, 51, 52, 150, 163, 169, 183, 223, 238n50
- Wilhelm, Friedrich, 176, 178
- Xenophon, 35
- Zapatista (movement), 182
- Zola, Émile, 2, 3, 95, 120, 245n35