

ARTICLE

“Is power always secondary to the economy?”¹

Foucault and Adorno on Power and Exchange

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ABSTRACT: The paper begins with a broad description of Adorno’s and Foucault’s relations to Marx. Its focus then narrows to describe the relation between the economy and the state in their work, and in particular, whether Adorno adopted Friedrich Pollock’s state capitalist thesis which asserts that state power now outflanks the market economy. The next section deals with exchange relations and power relations, and Foucault’s discussion of neo-liberalism in *The Birth of Biopolitics* comes to the fore. After questioning Foucault’s claim that neo-liberalism effectively abandons exchange, I conclude that, while Adorno may well be right about the primacy of exchange relations, his analysis must be supplemented with an analysis of power because he recognizes that power superseded exchange in Nazi Germany and believes that the West still faces a resurgence of that horror. In fact, it was this very threat that impelled Foucault to devote much of his work to an analysis of power.

Keywords: power relations; exchange relations; economy; state; neo-liberalism

Theodor W. Adorno and Michel Foucault seem to orient their work around different, and possibly incompatible, poles. Where Adorno focusses on exchange relations and their effects on phenomena as diverse as artworks, the natural sciences, and interpersonal relations, Foucault concentrates on power relations in the state and a variety of institutions (including the family, the school, the hospital, and the factory). In part, these distinct centres of interest reflect different perspectives on the work of Karl Marx. Although Adorno is by no means an orthodox Marxist, he nonetheless remains squarely within a Marxist paradigm even as he attempts to revise and update it. By contrast, Foucault shifts the focus away from traditional Marxist concerns about economic exploitation and class conflict when he examines the subjection of individuals by disciplinary power

¹ This is a question that Foucault raises in *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, translated by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 14.

and biopower. This paper will attempt to determine whether Adorno's and Foucault's views about exchange relations and power relations are really as incompatible as their distinct stances on Marx might suggest.

Given the widespread influence that Adorno and Foucault have had on social criticism, the question of the compatibility of their critical analyses of Western societies is important. At issue here is not just the continued relevance of Marxism for critical social theory, but, by extension, both the theoretical orientation and the practice of social criticism. It is also important to raise this question because Adorno and Foucault never engaged directly with each other's work. Although Foucault does refer very generally, and on a number of occasions,² to the early Frankfurt School, he was largely unfamiliar with Adorno's work. This is another reason why it is important to initiate a dialogue between Adorno and Foucault by comparing their respective analyses of exchange relations and power relations with a view to assessing their compatibility.

The first section of the paper will discuss Adorno's and Foucault's positions on Marx; it will examine the role that Marx plays in their influential critiques of Western societies. In the second section, I shall compare Adorno's discussion of economic conditions under late, or monopoly, capitalism with Foucault's analyses of liberalism and neo-liberalism, particularly in *The Birth of Biopolitics*. The third section of this paper will offer a comparative account of what lies at the heart of the differences between their work, namely Adorno's claim about the pervasiveness of exchange relations in society and Foucault's claim about the ubiquity of power relations. Finally, at the end of the paper, I shall attempt to respond to the question I have raised about the compatibility of Adorno's and Foucault's analyses.

Whither Marx?

Adorno was not a dogmatic Marxist. He not only supplemented his Marxist analysis of Western societies with a Freudian account of the psychology of individuals under capitalism, but he also realized that Marx's nineteenth-century account of capitalism had to be updated precisely because Marx's prediction that capital would be concentrated and centralized in monopolies had proved to be correct. At the same time, Adorno recognized that other changes had taken place in the West that Marx had not predicted, including the adoption of social welfare policies (under Roosevelt's New Deal, for example) after the 1929 stock market crash. According to Adorno, the welfare state helps to mask the persistence of class stratification in society, while simultaneously making it far less likely that workers

² See for example, Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," and "The Art of Telling the Truth," in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), Jeremy Harding, and Alan Sheridan (trans.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1988); "Interview with Michel Foucault," and "The Political Technology of Individuals," in James D. Faubion (ed.), Robert Hurley *et al.* (trans.), *Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984)*, Vol. 3: *Power* (New York: The New Press, 2000); "What is Enlightenment?" in Paul Rabinow (ed.), Robert Hurley *et al.* (trans.), *Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984)*, Vol. 1: *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997); "What is Critique?" in Kevin Paul Geiman (ed.), James Schmidt (trans.), *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-century Answers and Twentieth-century Questions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

would revolt.

But what complicates any account of Adorno's relation to Marx is the claim, made by a number of commentators,³ that Adorno adopted Friedrich Pollock's state capitalism thesis which postulates that there has been a transition in the West "from a predominantly economic to an essentially political era."⁴ According to this thesis, the power motive had supplanted the profit motive in both command economies (such as Nazi Germany) and mixed economies (such as the United States). Nevertheless, Adorno did not fully endorse this thesis. In fact, he continued to stress the primacy of the economy in Western states as well as the persistence of class relations. Although some have argued that state intervention in the economy, along with "large-scale and long-term planning," prove "that late capitalism can no longer be termed 'capitalism'," Adorno contends that this view ignores the fact that the fate of individuals is as economically precarious as it was in the past.⁵ Conceding that there is a general tendency towards state control of the economy—or that "control of economic forces is increasingly becoming a function of political power"—Adorno nonetheless argues that there are "compelling facts which cannot [...] be adequately interpreted *without* invoking the key concept of 'capitalism'" because "[h]uman beings are, as much as ever, ruled and dominated by the economic process"—a process which "produces and reproduces a class structure."⁶

If late capitalist societies manifest a tendency towards the predominance of state power, Adorno argues that this tendency is itself the outgrowth of economic conditions. If the economically driven trend towards political domination were to continue, then the West would indeed "steer directly towards forms which are no longer defined by classical exchange mechanism."⁷ Yet Adorno did not believe this had happened, or would happen, in most Western states—with the notable exception of Nazi Germany. Instead, he suggested that state intervention in the economy was a limited response to class conflict (both real and potential) after 1929. Moreover, Adorno claims that the economic system owes its survival (in part) to increasing state intervention. But intervention not only serves to secure the economy's continuing primacy, it is a form of self-defence. Although state intervention could cause the breakdown of capitalism given its tendency towards "direct political domination independent of market mechanisms," it was nonetheless intended to protect capitalism from collapse.⁸

³ See, for example, Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*, translated by Benjamin Gregg (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 81; David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 63-4; William Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1994), 124; and Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 62-3.

⁴ Friedrich Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Research*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1941), 207.

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" in Fred van Gelder (trans.), V. Meja, D. Misgeld, and N. Stehr (eds.), *Modern German Sociology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 244.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, "Diskussionsbeitrag zu 'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?'" in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *Soziologische Schriften I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), 583. All translations of essays in *Soziologische Schriften I* are my own.

⁸ Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" 244-5 *passim*.

Rejecting claims that the primacy of the economy has been superseded by more recent historical events, Adorno continues to defend Marx. Correspondingly, and despite changes in the composition of classes under late capitalism, Adorno believes that society remains stratified in socio-economic classes. Although individuals seldom experience themselves as members of a class, Adorno contends that another of Marx's predictions had come to fruition, namely that "the division of society into exploiters and exploited not only persists but gains in force and strength." What had changed, however, was the economic position of the bourgeoisie. Formerly comprising relatively independent entrepreneurs, the bourgeoisie forfeited much of its economic power as capital was concentrated in monopolies. Now salaried employees or wage labourers, the economically disenfranchised bourgeoisie forms with workers a new mass class. This class confronts the "economic and political command of large capitalists [*der Großen*] who wield the same police threat against both their supporters and workers."⁹

Like Adorno, Foucault acknowledges the persistence of class stratification and struggle in the West. If he was once convinced that "the social struggle, the struggle between classes [...] was coming to an end," he came to realize that "the class struggle still exists; it even exists more intensely."¹⁰ However, since power permeates all social interaction, class struggle is only one of many "agonistic" relations in society today, and it is no longer as important as it was in the past. Moreover, class struggle needs to be rethought. History, Foucault claims, has "undeniably" involved class struggle, but no one, including Marx, has satisfactorily described what struggle means.¹¹

In fact, Foucault deploys the concept of class in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* when he compares the sexual controls that targeted the bourgeoisie to those targeting the proletariat. Arguing that these controls were not originally directed at the proletariat, as some Marxists believed, but were first applied "with the greatest intensity, in the economically privileged and politically dominant classes,"¹² Foucault nonetheless accepts the existence of two antagonistic classes defined by their economic positions within society. Later, when an interviewer notes that he seldom makes use of the concept of class, Foucault replies that the institutionalization of practices like psychiatric internment, for example, is not "foreign to the existence of class in the Marxist sense of the term." Although their relation to class is "extremely complex," practices like these must "be placed inside historical processes that are economic."¹³

From a Marxist perspective, however, Foucault makes a more controversial claim: "if small power relations are often directed, induced from on high by big state powers or by a large dominant

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Reflections on Class Theory," translated by, in Rodney Livingstone (trans.), Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *Can One Live After Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 99; the translation of this essay may be modified.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Birth of a World," in John Johnston (trans.), *Foucault Live (Interviews 1966-84)* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 72; translation modified.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, "Méthodologie pour la Connaissance du Monde: Comment Se Débarrasser du Marxisme," in Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds.), *Dits et Ecrits 1954-1988*, Vol. III: 1976-1979 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 606. All translations of essays and interviews in *Dits et Ecrits* are my own.

¹² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978), 120.

¹³ Foucault, "Pouvoir et Savoir," 403.

class, we must also say that, conversely, class domination or a state structure can only function if there are, at base, these small power relations."¹⁴ In other words, class struggle often begins with local struggles that are subsequently incorporated into what Foucault calls larger "strategies." In fact, Foucault also denies that there is "a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated' on the other." Instead, one finds "a multiform production of relations of domination which are [only] partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies." In some cases, class struggle may not be "the 'ratio for the exercise of power'," yet it may "be the 'guarantee of intelligibility' for certain grand strategies."¹⁵

Consequently, neither power nor the economy has *de jure* priority, and it is always also the case that economic phenomena are embedded in power relations. To this, Foucault adds that power relations have acquired greater importance in Western societies than they once had. If, in the nineteenth century, it was true to say that "the major problem was [...] economic exploitation, the formation of wealth, the wealth of capital, through the immiseration of the very people who produced it," struggles against exploitation have largely been eclipsed by struggles against subjection. In fact, Foucault points to the emergence of fascism and Stalinism to support his claim that the exploitation of workers was displaced by the subjection of individuals to disciplinary power and biopower.¹⁶ Attributing the aim of making the state wither away to Marx, Foucault controversially argues that this aim has become even more relevant today owing to the "hypertrophy or excess of power in both socialist and capitalist countries."¹⁷

Foucault frequently makes reference to Marx; he explicitly acknowledges that he often cites "concepts, texts and phrases from Marx." He also insists that it "is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx's thought and [without] situating oneself within a horizon of thought which has been defined and described by Marx." One "might even wonder," Foucault declares, "what difference there could ultimately be between being an historian and being a Marxist."¹⁸ Distinguishing between Marx and party political Marxism—the Marxism of the *Parti Communiste Français*, for example—Foucault argues that we do not need to free ourselves from Marx—an impossibility in any case—but from Marxism because Marxism has hemmed in our political imagination with its scientific, or pseudo-scientific, prophecies which continue to exercise "a coercive force on a certain truth about the past and future of humanity."¹⁹

For Foucault, then, Marx remains an important theorist, even though power relations, in the broad sense of that term, are at least as important as economic relations, and social conflicts now revolve primarily around power. By contrast, Adorno endorses Marx's claim that the economy retains its primacy in the West, while conceding that if the tendency towards state intervention were to per-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies," in Colin Gordon (ed.), Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (trans.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 142 *passim*.

¹⁶ Foucault, "Pouvoir et Savoir," 400.

¹⁷ Foucault, "Méthodologie pour la Connaissance du Monde," 613.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "Prison Talk," in *Power/Knowledge*, 52-3.

¹⁹ Foucault, "Méthodologie pour la Connaissance du Monde," 599-600.

sist and intensify, it would eventually give the lie to the predominance of exchange relations. Responding to the question “Is power always secondary to the economy?” Foucault states that power may be “deeply involved in and with economic relations,” without being functionally subordinate or formally isomorphic with respect to them. A relation of force, power is simply “of a different order” than economic relations, and it is this order that Foucault attempts to investigate.²⁰ But since Adorno views state power as functionally subordinate to the economy, I shall take a closer look in the following section at Adorno’s and Foucault’s views about relations between the economy and the state in order to assess further the compatibility of their analyses.

The Economy and the State

To his Marxist account of a society trenchantly divided between a small number of owners of the means of production and the many workers (in contemporary terms, the 1 percent and the 99 percent), Adorno adds that, once monopoly conditions developed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the economy began to assume an increasingly totalitarian character. As a result, the oligarchical ruling class had become largely faceless, anonymous. In another, albeit indirect, criticism of Pollock’s state capitalism thesis, Adorno writes that the ruling class now disappears “behind the concentration of capital”—a concentration that has become so great that capitalism appears to be “an institution, as the expression of society as a whole.”²¹ In other words, the state serves capital—and it only serves capital. This is one reason why Adorno maintains in *Negative Dialectics* that “the concept of a capitalist *society* is not a *flatus vocis*.”²²

Relations of production now pit the working class, not just against those who own the means of production, but against “administration,” including the state with its role as “the general capitalist.”²³ Remaining subordinate to capitalism, the state now aids and abets it. It does so with police and other institutions, including, of course, educational institutions. And, of course, the state’s welfare policies also support capitalism. However, if Adorno implies that Keynesian policies were adopted to pacify class conflict during the depression of the thirties, his view was challenged indirectly by economic historian Herman Van der Wee who argued that John Maynard Keynes’ policy of “full employment, social security, income redistribution, and mutual co-operation” was intended primarily as an instrument for economic growth. Van der Wee alleged that countries like Britain, the USA, France, and Italy engaged in “economic planning in order to be able to specify extra-high growth rates and ensure that they were achieved.”²⁴

Yet, no matter which explanation for the adoption of welfare policies is correct, both

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, translated by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 14.

²¹ Adorno, “Reflections on Class Theory,” 99.

²² Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973); see the footnote on 49-50, emphasis added.

²³ Adorno, “Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?” 240.

²⁴ Herman Van der Wee, *Prosperity and Upheaval: The World Economy (1945-1980)*, translated by Robin Hogg and Max R. Hall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 283.

Adorno and van der Wee see the welfare state as capitalism's staunch ally. Also allied with capitalism is the culture industry, itself an important economic sector in its own right that is now dominated by monopolies. Selling standardized, pseudo-individuated products, the culture industry encourages people to think in schematic and stereotypical ways, while promoting conformity to prevailing behavioural standards or norms. That this industry has greatly influenced the behaviour of individuals is, in part, due to the waning influence of the family. As the bourgeoisie was absorbed into the new mass class, the family forfeited its role as the primary agent of socialization. Parents were obliged to vie for authority, more or less impotently, with school teachers and other experts and specialists (such as public health officials and doctors) employed by the state; parents no longer served as the primary standard against which children measured their strength through rebellion or resistance. As a result, children became more vulnerable to extra-familial pressures to adapt and conform to prevailing social norms.

In "Individuum und Organisation," Adorno offered an account of the abstract norms and procedures used by bureaucratic organizations such as businesses and welfare state agencies. On the one hand, standardized and mechanized procedures for identifying and processing individuals do allow bureaucracies to deal "with every case automatically and 'without consideration for the person'." They promise "an element of justice" to the extent that they guarantee that "arbitrariness, accident, and nepotism do not rule people's fate." On the other hand, these procedures are also responsible for "depersonalization and reification." Treating all individuals in a uniform way, regardless of their circumstances, their unique needs and concerns, these ostensibly egalitarian procedures oblige individuals to identify themselves with institutional and organizational categories, and to orient their behaviour accordingly. Individuals have become mere "appendages" of organizations; these now affect all their behaviour, right down to "their most private reactions."²⁵

Of course, Foucault also sees Western societies as normalizing. However, he links normalization to disciplinary institutions and the biopolitical state. For its part, disciplinary power emerged with the industrial revolution. It facilitated the rise of capitalism because it helped to produce a docile and obedient labour force by moulding and shaping the human body through exercise, training, and supervision in the different institutions that form what Foucault calls the carceral archipelago:²⁶ prisons, schools, factories, armies, asylums, and hospitals. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes the relation between power—the disciplinary colonization of the body—and the economy as both reciprocal and complex. On the one hand, "it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination." On the other hand, the body can be constituted as labour power only if it has already been "caught up in a system of subjection."²⁷

²⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, "Individuum und Organisation," in *Soziologische Schriften I*, 447.

²⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 297.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-6.

Foucault makes similar remarks about biopower. Where disciplinary power targets individuals in institutions, biopower is wielded by the modern state which now manages risks in order to ensure the security of the population (both as a biological entity and as a public with opinions, mores, behaviours, prejudices, fears, and the like²⁸). Nevertheless, like disciplinary power, which it both supplements and modifies, biopower too was “an indispensable element in the development of capitalism.” Capitalism “would not have been possible” without “the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.” At the same time, biopower also operated within “the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them.”²⁹ In fact, indirectly, and perhaps even unwittingly, Foucault explains here why economic exploitation persists, even though he thinks that exploitation is now less problematic than subjection.

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, however, Foucault charted historical developments that altered the relation between the state and the economy. Until the mid-eighteenth century, when capitalism entered its liberal phase, the state, with its governmental rationality of *raison d’Etat*, exercised considerable control over the economy. But the advent of liberalism marked the emergence of a “dissymmetrical bipolarity of politics and the economy”³⁰ because the state adopted a principle of self-limitation, *laissez-faire*, which stipulated that the economy must be allowed to operate in accordance with its own “natural” or spontaneous mechanisms (Adam Smith’s invisible hand). In turn, this principle of *laissez-faire* was transformed as liberalism was superseded by neo-liberalism in post-war Germany and the United States.

For neo-liberals, the Keynesian welfare state (which Foucault views as a response to the dangers posed by mass unemployment after the Great Depression,³¹ and as a means of preserving “its labour force, production capacity, and military power”³²) was anathema because it violated their central precept to keep state intervention in the economy to a minimum. But neo-liberals also alleged that Nazi Germany adopted and expanded Keynesian policies³³ in its pursuit of world domination. Arguing that Nazism showed that “the defects and destructive effects traditionally attributed to the market economy should instead be attributed to the state and its intrinsic defects,” neo-liberals wanted to remedy these defects by demanding “even more from the market economy than was demanded from it in the eighteenth century,”³⁴ they wanted to model “the overall exercise of political power [...] on the principles of a market economy.”³⁵ The market

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007), 75.

²⁹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, 140-1.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³² Michel Foucault, “Crise de la Médecine ou crise de l’antimédecine?” in *Dits et Ecrits III*, 41.

³³ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 109.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

would become the “organizing and regulating principle of the state;” it would serve “as the principle, form, and model for a state which, because of its defects, is mistrusted by everyone on both the right and the left, for one reason or another.”³⁶

Specifically, the model that capitalism offers the neo-liberal state is *homo oeconomicus*: the entrepreneur. It is now a question of modelling government “on the rationality of those who are governed as economic subjects and, more generally as subjects of interest.”³⁷ To complicate matters, however, the entrepreneur is not just the model for the state, it is also the state’s primary target. Pointing to a paradox in the work of American economist Gary Becker, Foucault notes that, in the eighteenth century, *homo oeconomicus* was someone “who must be let alone,” whereas Becker’s *homo oeconomicus* is someone who is “manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment.” Now “inherently governable,” *homo oeconomicus* is “the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables.”³⁸ Paradoxically, then, the state should try to intervene as little as possible in the economy, while simultaneously targeting the interests of *homo oeconomicus* as a member of civil society.³⁹

Unfortunately, I cannot comment on this paradox here. Instead, I shall return to my comparative account of Adorno’s and Foucault’s analyses. In contrast to Adorno, who did not study the genealogy of the state, Foucault contends that the state has exhibited distinct forms of rationality that were tied historically to the problem of governing individuals: *raison d’Etat* was superseded by *laissez-faire*, which in turn was superseded, or at least modified, by neo-liberalism’s principle of minimum state/maximum economy. So, where Adorno focusses on the relation between the state and the economy in the first half of the twentieth century, claiming that the economy retained its primacy even during the period of Keynesian intervention, Foucault offers an historical overview of the development of neo-liberal economic theory which reveals that neo-liberal economists want the state to subordinate itself to the economy. Noting that neo-liberal policies were not strictly applied, Foucault nonetheless believes that they have had a considerable impact on government policies in Western states.⁴⁰

Interestingly, Foucault denies that his account of the modern form of governmentality *explains* the predominance of the economy in the West. Allowing the market to function as a site of truth for governmental practice cannot be explained by the influence of the political economists whom Marx so severely criticized—an influence that Foucault himself documents throughout *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Moreover, Foucault objects that it is “at once true and says nothing exactly” to argue that market became “a site of veridiction” for governmental practice because “we have entered the age of a market economy.” In fact, we do not need to look for, and Foucault does not

³⁶ Ibid., 117.

³⁷ Ibid., 312.

³⁸ Ibid., 270-1.

³⁹ Ibid., 296.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 145.

think we can find, “the cause of the constitution of the market as an agency of veridiction.” We need only “establish the intelligibility of this process,” which means “showing how it became possible.”⁴¹

Foucault does not engage here with Marx’s account of the rise of capitalism. Nor does he engage with Marx on other important issues. For example, he limits himself to noting that Marx’s prediction about the concentration of capital in monopolies, which plays such an important role in Adorno’s analysis of late capitalism, was rejected by many neo-liberals on the grounds, *inter alia*, that monopolies were created by state intervention.⁴² Rather than analyzing capitalism, Foucault focusses exclusively on political economy in order to chart the emergence of the new rationality of self-limiting government. Yet Foucault does show that the biopolitical state, which helped to make capitalism possible, now tends, not just to let the capitalist economy follow its own course (albeit in a paradoxical way because it also manages and manipulates *homo oeconomicus*), but to generalize the economic form of the market “throughout the social body [...] including the whole of the social system not usually conducted through or sanctioned by monetary exchanges.”⁴³

Exchange Relations and Power Relations

Since Foucault acknowledges that Western societies entered the age of the market economy under liberalism and neo-liberalism, the differences between his work and Adorno’s may be less polarizing than a cursory view might suggest. However, to gauge the compatibility of their positions, it will also be necessary to compare Adorno’s claims about the impact of exchange relations on virtually every aspect of human life in the West with Foucault’s views about the ubiquity of power relations. For power relations are not situated exclusively in the state; Foucault alleges that they are just as pervasive in institutions and in relations between individuals to the point where they permeate all social interaction. In this section of the paper I shall examine these claims.

Marx’s critique of the commodity form in the first volume of *Capital* shaped Adorno’s views about the character of exchange relations under late capitalism. For Marx, once an object is

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33. On the same page, Foucault says that to “establish the intelligibility of the process” that turned the market into a principle of veridiction, we would have to establish “a polyhedral relationship between: the particular monetary situation of the eighteenth century, with a new influx of gold on the one hand, and a relative consistency of currencies on the other; a continuous economic and demographic growth [...]; an intensification of agricultural production; the access to governmental practice of a number of technicians who brought with them both methods and instruments of reflection; and finally a number of economic problems being given a theoretical form” (*Ibid.*).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 133-7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 243. Although he offers insufficient evidence for this claim, Jeffrey T. Nealon agrees: with the “triumph of biopower comes the ascendancy of the economy as the dominant measure for all other social sectors of cultural and political life” (see Jeffrey Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Power and its Intensification since 1984* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 71).

commodified, it changes “into a thing that transcends sensuousness”⁴⁴ because the use-value of disparate, sensuous things is transformed into abstract and commensurable units of value. But the concrete human labour involved in the production of commodities has also been commodified and turned into something abstract. Under capitalism, labour is objectified and transformed into socially necessary labour time, or the time that is “required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society.”⁴⁵ In this case, the commodity form “reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things.”⁴⁶ Finally, relations between human producers are transformed into relations between things. Commodity exchange acts as “an *alien* social power” that controls individuals and turns their “mutual interaction” into a “process and power independent of them.”⁴⁷

Adorno only echoes this account of the preponderance of exchange relations over individuals: “the real movement of society” has become independent of the individuals who created society and continue to sustain it. Our exchange-based society now operates over individuals’ heads and “through their heads” as it reduces individuals to “mere executors, mere partners in social wealth and struggle.”⁴⁸ Transformed into so many instances of exchange value, individuals “are not just character masks, agents of exchange in a supposedly separate economic sphere” because commodification now shapes so many aspects of their lives that, even when they “think they have escaped the primacy of economics,” their least behaviours are shaped by exchange relations.⁴⁹ In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno complains that life can reproduce itself under existing conditions only when “the metamorphosis of labour-power into a commodity has permeated individuals through and through and objectified each of their impulses into formally commensurable variations of the exchange relationship.”⁵⁰

With more than a hint of irony, Adorno states that exchange relations have become the measure of all things.⁵¹ But he also objects that principle on which exchange is based, the “doctrine of like-for-like,” is always contradicted by the fact that “the societally more powerful con-

⁴⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 163.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 164-5.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, translated by Martin Nicholas (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 196-7. Cited in Theodor W. Adorno, “Extorted Reconciliation,” *Notes to Literature*, Vol. II, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 220.

⁴⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 304.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁵⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, translated by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), 229.

⁵¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Robert Hullot Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 310.

tracting party receives more than the other." The "repeatedly broken exchange contract" would be fulfilled only if truly equal things were exchanged, or if exchange relations finally made good on the promise contained in the idea of an exchange of equivalents.⁵² But if exchange were to make good on this promise, the result would be a "zero-sum game." According to Adorno, "the fulfillment of the contract of exchange [...] would converge with its abolition: exchange would disappear if the objects exchanged were truly equivalent."⁵³

Exchange relations have a counterpart in the realm of thought, which Adorno calls "identity-thinking." Just as exchange turns individuals, both producers and consumers, into commensurable and fungible units of value, the prevailing mode of thought subsumes particular things under universal concepts and categories, effectively identifying objects with concepts. In other words, identity-thinking reinforces economic domination in a conceptual form. For identity-thinking, as J. M. Bernstein notes, an object is known "only when it is classified in some way," or "when it is shown, via subsumption, to share characteristics or features" with other objects. Similarly, "an event is explained if it can be shown to fall within the ambit of a known pattern of occurrence, if it falls within the ambit of a known rule or is deducible from (subsumable by) a known law." For their part, concepts, rules, and laws have cognitive value only when they are "subsumed under or shown to be deducible from higher-level concepts, rules, or laws."⁵⁴

Like exchange relations, then, identity-thinking obliterates the particularity of objects and masks differences between them in order to manipulate and control them. In fact, identity-thinking and exchange relations are isomorphic. By reducing human labour to "the abstract universal concept of average working hours," exchange is "fundamentally akin to the principle of identification." Serving as the "social model" for identity-thinking, exchange "imposes on the whole world an obligation to become identical, to become total."⁵⁵ As Fredric Jameson remarks, Adorno adopted Marx's view that the modes of abstraction involved in specific forms of value—from barter to exchange relations under late capitalism—affect "the whole range of distinct human activities (from production to the law, from culture to political forms, and not excluding the psyche and the more obscure 'equivalents' of unconscious desire)."⁵⁶

Again, Adorno's claims about the ubiquity of exchange relations are matched by Foucault's claims about power relations. For Foucault, power is always present "in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication [...], or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships."⁵⁷ Power permeates all attempts to control, influence, or even simply to affect the

⁵² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 147.

⁵³ Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-1965*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 206), 170.

⁵⁴ J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 87.

⁵⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 146.

⁵⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 1990), 149.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Paul Rabinow (ed.), Robert Hurley et al. (trans.), *Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984), Vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 291-2.

conduct of others in some way (from benign attempts to teach someone how to do something, to more malignant attempts involving coercion). Given the ubiquity of power relations, Foucault generalizes the notion of struggle. Society consists in “a perpetual and multiform struggle.” We are “everywhere in conflict” because “power relations necessarily incite, constantly call for and open up the possibility of resistance.” This generalization of struggle to the point where it includes a child who picks his nose at the kitchen table to upset his parents—an example Foucault gives⁵⁸—may appear to trivialize it. But the child’s resistance is arguably less trivial when it is understood as a struggle against the normalizing incursions of disciplinary power.

Curiously, Foucault insists in a discussion of disciplinary power that he “refrains from seeing power everywhere.” When Pierre Boncenne notes that, like Marx, who has been criticized for his exclusive focus on the economy, Foucault could be accused of seeing power everywhere, of reducing everything to power, Foucault rejects this criticism on the grounds that he constantly shows the “economic or political origin” of disciplinary mechanisms. In other words, Foucault is saying that, despite their ubiquity, power relations do not explain all aspects of society—even, perhaps, all aspects of the struggle in which the nose-picking child is engaged with its parents. Nevertheless, disciplinary power is not reducible to a political or an economic phenomenon because disciplinary techniques have a specificity, “a logic, obey a type of rationality, and are all based on one another to form a sort of specific stratum.”⁵⁹ And the same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about biopower: although it is tied inextricably to the capitalist economy, it is not reducible to an economic phenomenon.

Colin Gordon remarks that, with his focus on power relations, Foucault “brings Nietzsche to the aid of Marx.” According to Gordon, moreover, “what *Capital* had done for the study of relations of production,” Foucault proposes to do “for relations of power—duly recognizing, of course, the profoundly material interconnection of the two factors.”⁶⁰ But Foucault also attempts to use Nietzsche to develop Marx’s notion of conflict or struggle. Conceiving of power as an agonistic relation, he argues, gives one “a much better chance” of grasping the connection “between power and struggles, and especially the class struggle.”⁶¹ In fact, Foucault’s extended discussion of how struggle became a model for understanding history in *Society must be Defended* can be read as a major contribution to the project of clarifying class struggle. So too can the concept of counter-conduct which Foucault introduces in *Security, Territory, Population*.

Conversely, Foucault brings Marx to the aid of Nietzsche when he cites Volume Two of *Capital* to illustrate how power should be analyzed. For Marx, there is not just one power, but many different powers; these are localized, *inter alia*, in workshops and armies, and coordinated,

⁵⁸ Foucault, “Pouvoir et Savoir,” 407.

⁵⁹ Foucault, “On Power,” in Alan Sheridan (trans.), Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc. 1988), 104-5.

⁶⁰ Colin Gordon, “Introduction,” in James D. Faubion (ed.), by Robert Hurley *et al.* (trans.), *Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984), Vol. 3: Power* (New York: The New Press, 2000), xiv. Gordon is specifically comparing *Capital* to *Discipline and Punish* here.

⁶¹ Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 208.

juxtaposed, and linked together in hierarchical forms. Second, these powers are not derived from the state. Rather, Marx shows, “on the basis of the initial and primitive existence of these small regions of power—such as property, slavery, the shop and the army—how the grand apparatuses of State were able to form.” Third, Marx’s “superb” analyses of discipline in armies and workshops reveal that power also produces efficiencies and aptitudes—or that power is not only negative, prohibitive or repressive. Fourth, reading “between the lines” in *Capital*, Foucault discovers a history of technologies of power which reveals that mechanisms of power were invented, improved, and constantly developed.⁶²

Interpreting Marx, not just as a theorist of power, but as a proto-Foucauldian, Foucault also avers (as mentioned earlier) that struggles against power have outstripped struggles against exploitation. Although he could be charged with minimizing the bloody conflicts that accompanied the establishment of trade unions, for example, or those that led to the Russian revolution, his contention has more than a little plausibility. For the war against Nazi Germany which mobilized hundreds of millions of people, along with the institution of Gulags in the USSR and the conflicts that later marked Eastern bloc countries, obviously involved power struggles. Moreover, Nazi Germany was not only an existential threat to other Western states. It represented “the paroxysmal development of the new power mechanisms that had been established since the eighteenth century.” Not only was no state more disciplinary than the Nazi regime, but Nazism “generalized biopower in an absolute sense,” while simultaneously generalizing “the sovereign right to kill.” But though Nazism took disciplinary power and biopower to an extreme, Foucault claims that other Western states continue to be marked by the racism that underlies biopower.⁶³ In other words, what happened in Nazi Germany only reflected on a grander scale what was occurring in other Western countries.

Facilitating the rise of capitalism, disciplinary power and biopower target the body: the individual body that can be exercised and trained, and the social body, the population, which is regulated by the state. Sex is the point where these two forms of power intersect; it is their common target.⁶⁴ But the measures taken by the state to regulate sex would eventually become “anchorage points for the different varieties of racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”⁶⁵ Racism, “in its modern, ‘biologizing,’ statist form,” took shape when “the thematics of blood” helped to revitalize biopower. By “racism,” Foucault means “a whole politics of settlement, family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life.” When this politics was associated with “the mystical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and en-

⁶² Foucault, “Les Mailles du Pouvoir,” in Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds.), *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988, Vol. IV: 1980-1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 186-9 *passim*.

⁶³ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 259-61 *passim*.

⁶⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 145.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

sureing the triumph of the race,"⁶⁶ Nazism and Stalinism emerged,⁶⁷ but Foucault also argues that racism characterizes the exercise of biopower throughout the West. Racism, he claims, is "a mechanism that allows biopower to work."⁶⁸

In his own account of the emergence of Nazism, Adorno again blames the spread of exchange relations. Briefly, exchange homogenizes and levels individuals; it encourages them to think in stereotypical and schematic ways, while promoting their conformity and adaptation to prevailing norms, and making it relatively easy for advertisers, propagandists and demagogues to manipulate and control them. Yet, since Adorno views Nazi Germany as state capitalist, and recognizes that other Western states exhibit state capitalist tendencies, his insistence that social conflict *always* finds "its objective basis in economic antagonisms"⁶⁹ is problematic to say the least, and Foucault might well object that Adorno is too reductionist. To explain phenomena like Nazism, it could certainly be argued that an independent, noneconomic, analysis of power is also needed.

Yet, there are problems with Foucault's position as well. Without naming Adorno, Foucault implicitly criticizes his focus on exchange relations in the context of his discussion of neo-liberalism when he begins to analyze what it means to "introduce market regulation as a regulatory principle of society." Making direct reference to Marx, Foucault asks whether the introduction of the market as a regulatory principle means "establishing a market society, that is to say, a society of commodities, of consumption, in which exchange value will be at the same time the general measure and criterion of the elements, the principle of communication between individuals, and the principle of the circulation of things?" To this question, Foucault responds in the negative.⁷⁰

According to Foucault, neo-liberal societies are regulated, not by the exchange of commodities, but by "mechanisms of competition." A neo-liberal society is not "a supermarket society, but an enterprise society." What neo-liberals seek is not "a society subject to the commodity-effect, but a society subject to the dynamic of competition." Or again, the model for government, *homo oeconomicus*, "is not the man of exchange or man the consumer, he is the man of enterprise and production." This is why Foucault denies that neo-liberalism represents "a return to the kind of market society that Marx denounced at the beginning of Book I of *Capital*." Instead, it marks "an attempt to return to a sort of social ethic of the enterprise, of which Weber, Sombart, and Schumpeter tried to write the political, cultural, and economic history."⁷¹ Importantly, Foucault concedes that, with their critique of the commodity form, social theorists like Adorno were "criticizing something that was certainly on the explicit or implicit horizon, willed or not, of the arts of

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁶⁷ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 82-3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Anmerkungen zum sozialen Konflikt heute," in *Soziologische Schriften I*, 182.

⁷⁰ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 146.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

government [from the twenties to the sixties].” Nevertheless, Foucault insists that “we have gone beyond that stage.” We “are no longer there” because the neoliberal art of government, “which has become the program of most governments in capitalist countries, absolutely does not seek the constitution of that type of society.” Foucault makes this point repeatedly: neo-liberalism “is not orientated towards the commodity and the uniformity of the commodity, but towards the multiplicity and differentiation of enterprises.”⁷² On Foucault’s view, then, Adorno was right about the early twentieth century, but his analysis was rendered irrelevant by neo-liberalism.

However, there are obvious problems with Foucault’s analysis. One of these is his failure to assess the extent to which neo-liberal policies actually succeeded in steering the West away from a market society and towards an enterprise society. Interested exclusively in neo-liberal programmes, Foucault never evaluates their impact on the policies of Western states (with the exception, perhaps, of France under Giscard d’Estaing⁷³). Moreover, even if the impact of these policies has been considerable, Foucault never explains why an enterprise society cannot coexist with a market society. Contra Foucault, it could also be argued that the commodity-form now absorbs and transforms more phenomena than it did in the past, even and especially in states that have implemented neo-liberal policies and are oriented towards competition. For example, one effect of the university-as-enterprise model has been the commodification of students (now targeted by advertising) as consumers of an education that is itself reduced to, and sold as, a commodity. And, surely one of the major activities of an enterprise is exchange.

Foucault’s discussion of Becker’s theory of consumption illustrates some of these problems. On Becker’s account of it, consumption does not involve exchange. Instead, consumption is an “enterprise activity by which the individual, [...] on the basis of the capital he has at his disposal, will produce something that will be his own satisfaction.” Foucault notes that Becker’s view of consumption differs dramatically from the classical one. However, he is wrong to conclude from the fact that Becker’s view differs from the classical view that “the classical conception of consumption in terms of exchange, along with all the sociological analyses [...] of mass consumption, of consumer society,” do not “hold up,” that they “have no value.” For Foucault only shows that Becker circumvents the concept of exchange in his economic theory; he by no means demonstrates that exchange has become obsolete as a practice.⁷⁴ Finally, and to return to the neo-liberal critique of monopoly conditions, neo-liberalism may ascribe monopoly conditions to state intervention, but the persistence and spread of these conditions now mitigate competition to the

⁷² *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, Lecture of 7 March, 1979.

⁷⁴ Indeed, Foucault appears to contradict himself when he claims, in a passage cited earlier, that American neo-liberalism is much more radical than its German counterpart because it generalizes the economic form of the market “throughout the social body [...] including the whole of the social system not usually conducted through or sanctioned by monetary exchanges” (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 243). As he notes in his discussion of Becker, under neo-liberalism, all sorts of phenomena—including education, marriage, parenting, health, and genetics—become instances of human capital, and as instances of capital, these phenomena can be, and in fact are, commodified and exchanged.

point where they arguably compromise the enterprise society that neo-liberalism seeks. Foucault would need to address issues like these if he were to respond adequately to critics, including Adorno.

Initiating a Dialogue

So where does this critical comparison leave us? To repeat the point made above, it is questionable whether Foucault's objections to the exchange-based model of society succeed because these arguments are filtered through neo-liberal economic theories whose implementation and effects on society Foucault does not assess. Arguably, Foucault would have to do more to demonstrate that neo-liberalism represents a new "regime of truth" in the West. To be sure, his largely descriptive account of neo-liberal theory does shed a welcome and illuminating light on postwar political economy. And, since neo-liberalism continues to affect (and afflict) government policies in the West, Foucault's analysis also clarifies a number of important economic and political phenomena, while helping to make biopower more intelligible, albeit only indirectly. Yet Foucault's attempt repudiate Marx's—and Adorno's—claim that we live in a market society that is based on exchange is not convincing.

But if Foucault fails to demonstrate that neo-liberalism marks a fundamental shift from an exchange-based society to a society based on competition, he does successfully contest the exclusive focus on exchange that characterizes Adorno's work. In fact, by linking disciplinary power and biopower to the rise of capitalism, Foucault supplements Adorno's account of late capitalism. For the latter acknowledges that state intervention tended to make domination more "direct"—and perhaps in some of the ways that Foucault describes when he discusses the biopolitical state's security apparatus.⁷⁵ Backed in part by police intimidation, which always threatens to erupt into more extreme forms of oppression, state capitalist societies often use physical force to maintain themselves in power. Indeed, for Adorno, political domination has proved to be more malignant in some cases than its economic counterpart.⁷⁶ Wherever the power motive supersedes the profit motive, direct physical and psychological control over citizens may be the option of first resort by many states—as it was in Nazi Germany.

Consequently, it could be argued that Adorno's exclusive focus on exchange relations is too reductive, and on his own terms, because he acknowledges that the state can play, and has played, a more independent role in Western societies. Equally important, Adorno also argued, against Marx, that economic domination may well have originated in political domination, while simultaneously contending that the Soviet Union proved that domination could outlast a planned economy.⁷⁷ Moreover, as Foucault effectively shows when he cites approvingly the second volume of *Capital* in "Les Mailles du Pouvoir," a Marxist account of Western societies can accommodate a discussion of power

⁷⁵ See, for example, Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 45. In contrast to disciplinary mechanisms, "apparatuses of security [...] have the constant tendency to expand; they are centrifugal. New elements are constantly being integrated: psychology, behavior, the ways of doing things of producers, buyers, consumers, importers and exporters, and the world market. Security therefore involves organizing, or [...] allowing the development of ever-wider circuits" (ibid.).

⁷⁶ Adorno, "Diskussionsbeitrag zu 'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?'" 584.

⁷⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 323.

relations. Marx himself demonstrates the compatibility of the institutional, political, and economic dimensions of critique.

Again, Foucault's focus on power relations by no means invalidates or calls into question an analysis of economic phenomena. In fact, he explicitly states that his problem "was not to replace an economic explanation with an explanation in terms of power."⁷⁸ Moreover, Foucault's own histories affirm that economic explanations of society are often as important (and possibly more important in some cases) as political ones. Constantly linking disciplinary power and biopower to the rise of capitalism, Foucault describes in great detail the developments in political economy that encouraged Western states to cede much of their former independence to the capitalist economy. His claims about liberalism and neo-liberalism only emphasize the need to take economic phenomena into account in any critique of the West.

However, Foucault's analysis of neo-liberalism must be amended to take into account not just economic theory, but the economy. Tellingly, Foucault expressed concern, early in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, that his study of liberalism would be misinterpreted because it might appear that he was only talking about what was going on in the heads of economists.⁷⁹ This interpretive problem also affects his discussion of neo-liberalism and its theoretical orientation away from exchange and towards competition. Of course, the pervasiveness of exchange relations is *the* central tenet in Adorno's critique of late capitalist societies, and if Foucault has demonstrated that neo-liberalism invalidates this tenet, then Adorno would have been right about the pervasiveness of exchange relations before the emergence of neo-liberalism but wrong about their continued pervasiveness, and this would obviously restrict the relevance of Adorno's social criticism to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Conversely, Adorno's work would be compatible with Foucault's only if Adorno accepted the need for an independent analysis of power. In principle, however, since Adorno shares Foucault's concern about the persistence of totalitarian tendencies in the West, he might well agree that such an analysis is needed. Moreover, his own discussion of state capitalist tendencies in Western states would seem to call for an independent analysis of power relations, despite his insistence that the state remains subordinate to the economy. But the answer to the question of whether Adorno would accept that exchange relations and power relations are coeval and coequal (as Foucault suggests when he talks about the reciprocal and complex relations between them) is less clear. For while Adorno's exclusive focus on exchange can be challenged, if he is right about the primacy of exchange relations, then power relations obviously remain subordinate to them.

To determine the compatibility of Adorno's and Foucault's critiques, it is not necessary to

⁷⁸ Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Essential Works: Power*, 284.

⁷⁹ Foucault takes pains to insist that market as the site of truth does not exist "in the heads of economists." Political economists were merely the harbingers of a new reality, namely that the "natural" mechanisms of the market should serve as the "site and mechanism of the formation of truth" (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 30). Political economy did not "dictate a good type of conduct to government." Rather, it pointed out to government "where it had to go to find the principle of truth of its own governmental practice" (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 32). To this, one could certainly object that telling governments where to find their site of veridiction does amount to dictating a good type of governmental conduct. But even if it does not, Foucault fails to examine the practical effects on the economy of neo-liberal economic theory.

show that power relations infiltrate exchange relations, or that exchange infiltrates power. Indeed, Foucault rightly insists on the need for a noneconomic analysis of power. Rather, to determine the compatibility of these critiques, one must answer Foucault's question: is power always secondary to the economy? On the surface, the issue of compatibility is underscored when Foucault denies that exchange relations predominate today, and Adorno argues that exchange remains predominant. However, these problems are not insurmountable because Foucault's account of exchange under neo-liberalism largely concerns the theory, not the practice, of capitalism, and Adorno can accommodate an independent analysis of power even if power remains secondary to the economy in most Western states. More importantly, when Foucault claims that liberalism introduced a dissymmetrical bipolarity between the economy and power that was only deepened by neo-liberalism, he also reveals that political economists have attempted to subordinate power to the economy for centuries.

Of course, many other issues need to be addressed to make a more complete and balanced assessment of the compatibility of Adorno's and Foucault's critical social theories. For example, one would need to compare their ostensibly contradictory views on emancipation and revolution, and this in turn would require a more far-reaching discussion of their positions on Marx than I was able to provide here. The problem of determining the compatibility of their analyses also requires a comparison of their ideas about the plight of the individual in the West, and this comparison requires an extensive discussion of Adorno's and Foucault's views about psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud. Admittedly, then, the focus of this paper is limited. Despite its obvious limitations, however, I have tried to correct misunderstandings about the work of Adorno and Foucault, particularly with respect to their positions on Marx, that may have obscured some of the important ways in which their ideas converge. I have also attempted to open a critical perspective on their work that will hopefully serve as a framework for future comparative analyses.

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