

Foucault Studies

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EDITORIAL: EXCHANGES

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Prompted by Michelle Brady's article "Ethnographies of Neoliberal Governmentalities: from the Neoliberal Apparatus to Neoliberalism and Governmental Assemblages," *Foucault Studies*, No. 18, October 2014, Mitchell Dean opens the exchange with the article "Neoliberalism, Governmentality, Ethnography: A Response to Michelle Brady."

In her article, Brady stresses how Foucault's analysis of neoliberal rationalities remains "fresh and insightful" and that this might explain why scholars inspired by Foucault's analytics "have been able to make major contributions to the current social science literature on neoliberalism" (11). Concomitantly, however, Brady voices concerns that scholars contributing to governmentality studies may increasingly seem to succumb to a tendency to present neoliberalism and its transformations in monolithic terms. As a countermove, Brady's article reviews various contributions from scholars that aim to avoid such tendencies by combining an analytics of governmentality with ethnographic and quasi-ethnographic methods.

For Dean, Brady's discussion in the survey article brings up a number of issues. It points towards an important discussion concerning Foucault's relationship to the social sciences, which he himself has earlier tried to spark. With the propagation of Foucault's thought and Foucauldian scholarship in the social sciences since then, the importance and urgency of this discussion have only increased.

Nonetheless, Dean questions whether Brady's article may form a well-placed point of departure and a sufficiently fertile ground for such discussions. He finds a characterization of governmentality studies as monolithic quite misleading. Equally, he questions a simple opposition between schemata and multiplicity. Notably, he remains quite sceptical with regards to ethnographic fieldwork and methodologies (or any particular methodology or approach for that matter) as privileged means of access to multiplicity that allows us to go beyond schemata and concepts as they permit us get in touch with the complexities of "real people".

In her "Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethnography: A rejoinder", Brady agrees with Dean that there still is an important discussion to enter into concerning Foucault and the social sciences and stresses that her initial article aimed at provoking, facilitating and advancing this debate.

Concomitantly, however, Brady finds that Dean misreads her article in various ways. Whereas her article seeks to explain the logics underpinning recent efforts to use ethnographic methods and approaches together with an analytics of governmentality, it should not be read as an attack on Dean's work on governmentality. Neither should the article be read as claiming that Foucault was a realist who sought to access the complexity of everyday life with the aim to generate a sociological description of practice or actual forms of governance. Instead of asserting that ethnography has special access to the real in the form of actual people, her article claims that ethnographies allow us to see practices, sites and problems that would otherwise not be visible.

The Exchanges section in the present issue does not form a new-fangled invention, but makes an addition to a number of previous exchanges. *Foucault Studies*, No. 2, May 2005, contains an exchange entitled "Impossible Dialogue on Bio-power: Agamben and Foucault" between interlocutors Mika Ojakangas, Maria Margaroni and Michael Dillon. The exchange in *Foucault Studies*, No. 3, November 2005 concerns Foucault's actuality, or the question what we may make of Foucault's works today and what they may make of us. Participants are Todd May, Trent H. Hamann and Ladelle McWhorter. *Foucault Studies*, No. 8, February 2010, contains a critical discussion of Colin Koopman's "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages", published in the same issue. In response to criticism of his own phenomenological interpretation of Foucault raised by Koopman in the article, Kevin Thompson initiates the exchange and is answered by Koopman. The discussion of Koopman's article continues in *Foucault Studies*, No. 9, September 2010, in an exchange between Colin McQuillan and Colin Koopman.

For *Foucault Studies*, it is vital to continue to offer not only a forum where views, angles and approaches to Foucault and Foucauldian scholarship can be voiced, but also an open space where such views, angles and approaches may be exchanged, argued and disputed. As a consequence, future contributions like the ones present in this section are also most welcome. In the exchange section, liberty of thought, speech and expression will be permitted; and apart from scholarly review, only the most necessary censorship to ensure mutual scholarly respect will be imposed. As also voiced elsewhere in this issue, a particular concern for *Foucault Studies* is to be open to text formats and scholarly exchanges other than the classical journal article. We therefore encourage readers to engage with the texts published by *Foucault Studies* and to use the journal as a medium for scholarly debate about the field that we cover.