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REVIEW

Stephen W. Sawyer and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins (ed.), *Foucault, Neoliberalism, and Beyond*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. Pp. 227. ISBN: 9781786603760 (hardback).

Stephen Sawyer and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkin's edited volume *Foucault, Neoliberalism and Beyond* is a remarkable work not simply in terms of its irrefutable quality but also in terms of the breadth and depth of the erudition therein. The outcome of a conference convened at the American University of Paris in March 2016, the volume is composed of an introduction, which ably sets the following nine chapters in the context of a heated debate that turned on Foucault's opinion of neoliberalism, initiated in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008 and ushering in a new, more insidious, form of neoliberalism. Michael Behrent's article in *Modern Intellectual History* "Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free Market Creed, 1976-1979" conjectured that Foucault, despite being associated with the political left, paradoxically signaled, at least from the perspective of our present, endorsing the emergence, in his present, of an apparently novel form of liberal capitalism dubbed neoliberalism. This was followed by numerous, increasingly sophisticated and nuanced interventions in the debate featuring important contributions by the authors of chapters two and three of the volume: Serge Audier's 'hefty tome' (p. viii) *Penser le néolibéralisme: Le moment néolibéral, Foucault et al crise du socialisme* and Daniel Zamora's pieces in *Jacobin Magazine*, "Can we criticize Foucault?" and "Foucault's Responsibility", as well as a co-edited volume by Behrent and Zamora titled *Foucault and Neoliberalism*. The editors make clear, however, that they are not concerned with the question of whether and to what extent Foucault was in alignment with neoliberalism - a task, which I argue below, they leave to the reader - but rather to consider "how neoliberalism emerged as a theme within Foucault's work" to understand "how and why this engagement unsettled and provoked debate decades later"; and, finally, to "offer a better foundation for thinking about the present [...] through the past" (p. xviii).

The central focus of the volume is Foucault's lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Delivered at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979, Foucault turns to the topic of neoliberalism or, to be more precise, to the topic of neoliberalisms, especially that of the American brand associated with the Chicago School and the writings of Gary Becker on *homo*

oeconomicus and criminality, and its German counterpart known as ordoliberalism. In their introduction, Sawyer and Steinmetz-Jenkins point out that in spite of Foucault's brief interest in the subject, and the fact that he does not clearly articulate a position that was emphatically for or against his object of interest, he opens the door to a multiplicity of interpretations. As the co-editors write: "In response [to Foucault's lectures on biopolitics], the authors [...] have employed a range of interpretative strategies. Some established connections between his discussion of neoliberalism and other parts of his work, even reaching back to the 1950s. Others have reached into the context within which Foucault was writing, such as the rise of the 'second left' in France and beyond or the global perspective of the Iranian Revolution. And others still have explored the political legacy of these concepts and how they developed in the work of other social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu" (p. x). The co-editors, however, do not intend for the volume to "take a stand" (p. ix) on Foucault's relationship to neoliberalism, hence the absence of a conclusion; instead, by allowing the authors to speak for themselves, the essays simultaneously clarify, contextualise, reinforce and undermine one or more of the others, offering readers the freedom to form their own judgement, disciplined, albeit, within the parameters of their own intellectual biographies.

Were one inclined to read the entire volume, the co-editors provide limited guidance to the reader as to the most effective route through it. However, implicit within their explanation of its content lies the hint of a roadmap, and the rationale guiding the way in which the chapters were arranged. Anchoring the volume, they argue, are the first three chapters by Behrent, Audier and Zamora – who are among leading voices in the debate that began with Behrent's original contribution in 2009. It opens, fittingly, with a chapter by Behrent in which he outlines the four major positions that scholars in the debate have taken, the limitations of each, and a restatement of his position interpreted through the lens of an intellectual historian. This is followed by a translation of Serge Audier's reading of Foucault's biopolitics lectures, focusing on the German variant of neoliberalism from his perspective as a French philosopher. Completing the set is a chapter by sociologist Daniel Zamora in which he outlines his position. All three of these chapters focus on the historical period in which Foucault gave his biopolitics lectures; lectures which, as the co-editors assert, represent a contribution "to the intellectual history of this critical moment in modern history" (p. xiv). While the six chapters that follow these contributions do not explicitly refer to the first three, all cite these authors' original statements. In reading the first three chapters, the reader is provided with a clear picture of the content of those original statements. Unless one is already acquainted with the nature and complexity of the debate, I would strongly advise reading these chapters before the others. If, like the authors of the six proceeding chapters, the reader is familiar with the debate, then they can be read in any order – especially seeing as these authors are in dialogue with the original works of one or more of the first three authors and do not address each other explicitly.

But this does not help us to understand the logic underpinning the ordering of chapters four to nine. Knowing this, I contend, is useful because in briefly summarising the

chapters in consecutive order rather than, say, the order I would recommend, or any other apparently logical basis, we are, in a sense, seeing the chapters in the volume through the eyes of its editors. In their introduction, the co-editors group the second set of three chapters together not to signal to the reader that they should necessarily be read next but to highlight the commonalities between them. All three chapters, written by Barzilay, Lesham and Kelly respectively, consider Foucault's biopolitics lectures in the context of his oeuvre. Barzilay, taking issue with Behrent's position that Foucault was sympathetic towards neoliberalism, identifies a philosophical strand in Foucault's thought that reaches back to his early academic career and a course "on the origins of anthropology in modern philosophy" (p. 74) as a young psychology lecturer that he delivered at the University of Lille in 1952 and 1953. For Barzilay, it is Behrent's treatment of the philosophical and the political as synonymous that leads him to the false conclusion that Foucault sympathized with neoliberalism.

Lesham's contribution situates Foucault's biopolitics lectures in the context of Foucault's Collège de France lecture series, starting with his inaugural lectures in 1970-71. In his interpretation of the lectures as a whole, which, as he points out, is "at its very beginning" (p. 98), he writes, "I subscribe to a position aligned with that stated and repeated in the Foreword to each annual lecture series by the editors, François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, that the lectures should be read 'as the opening up of fields of problematization [that] were formulated as an invitation to possible researchers'" (p. 99). Concern around an apparent lack of criticality in the lectures on neoliberalism, for Lesham, fails to account for the fact that Foucault was engaging in what he termed "a happy positivism" and, in doing so, was simply laying the ground for more critical work (p. 100). Lesham proposes that it was not until after *The Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, and his telling of "the histories of the culture of the self and of truth-telling", that Foucault attempts his own solution to the problem that neoliberalism posed and in which he attended to "the urgent, fundamental and politically indispensable task of forming a critical ethos of truth-telling that would give rise to a politics with innate resistance to governmentality" (p. 107).

In the chapter of what completes the second triad of chapters treating Foucault's oeuvre as a single project is Kelly's superb essay "Foucault on *Phobie d'État* and Neoliberalism", which not only contextualises the two chapters that precede it, if not the three before those, but anticipates the chapters that follow – especially the discussion of Foucault's interest in the Iranian Revolution and his involvement with *Goutte d'Or* and its advocacy work for migrants and migration. Kelly, like the authors of the previous two chapters, sees continuity in Foucault's work where others see discontinuity. Refusing to subdivide Foucault's work into "various stages or moments of rupture" (p. 111), Kelly argues that Foucault "continuously supplemented rather than replaced or rejected, because [he] was neither a lumpener nor a splitter, but a compulsive tinkerer" (p. 112). Kelly's contention is reinforced by Foucault himself, who, at the end of his biopolitics lectures, remarked, "the point of all [my] investigations concerning madness, disease, delinquency, sexuality, and what I am talking about now is to show how the coupling of

a set of practices and a regime of truth forms a *dispositif* of knowledge-power that effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false" (p.111). In his chapter, Kelly's primary concern is to consider the relationship between these couplings and the part that they played in Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism.

The remaining chapters of the volume by Castiglioni, Paltrinieri and Revel represent a going 'beyond' in three main senses: geographically, intellectually and chronologically. Castiglioni, in her piece, shifts the focus to Iran and the Iranian Revolution of 1978-9. As she states in the opening line of her chapter, "Foucault delivered the first of his [biopolitics lectures] shortly upon his return from Iran in early January 1979, while the conclusive one, addressed in early April, preceding his last piece [for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*], on the revolution by just a few weeks" (p. 139). Castiglioni considers Foucault's interest in the revolution and its probable impact on his thinking, caveating her argument with the point that Foucault "was an intellectual who adamantly refused labels and who changed his views as frequently as he saw fit" (p.153).

Paltrinieri's chapter, which compares the ideas of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and Foucault around neoliberalism in the 1970s to the present day, runs against the grain of the introduction and all the preceding chapters, which venerate Foucault, by presenting Bourdieu as the intellectual whose work is best placed to deal with the challenges posed by our contemporary neoliberal predicament. While acknowledging Foucault's influence on Bourdieu's thinking, she draws out the fundamental flaw in Foucault's work, which stems from his rejection of Marxism and consequent failure to take account of social class within his analysis of neoliberal governmentality. Rather than rejecting Marxism, Bourdieu, on the other hand, elaborated a more sophisticated concept of class, which, from Paltrinieri's view, offers a better foundation for a critical analysis of contemporary society.

In the final chapter, Revel follows Paltrinieri in questioning the relevance of Foucault's "toolbox of concepts", employed both in his biopolitics lectures and earlier work, in facilitating an understanding of the contemporary refugee crisis in Europe, her particular concern being "the manner in which European countries have nearly unanimously decided to administer, manage, and govern these men and women whom we call migrants, for fear of giving them the status of refugees that they seek" (p. 181). While Foucault, in his lectures and earlier writings, points to the supersession of the old sovereign right "to put to death or let live" with a newer one: "to foster life or leave to die", the newer right, for Revel, does not apply to the refugee crisis, suggesting that European countries are "not fostering life and leaving to die" (p. 185).

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