

# FOUCAULT STUDIES

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## EDITORIAL

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The editorial team is pleased to publish this issue of *Foucault Studies*. In addition to two original articles, the issue contains a special issue dedicated to the theme *Foucault, Our Contemporary* and a book review.

## ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Tim Christiaens (Tilburg University, Netherlands) has written the first original article, "Ungovernable Counter-Conduct: Ivan Illich's Critique of Governmentality". Christiaens starts from the observation that there is little room for an ungovernable life if one follows Foucault's own conceptualization of governmentality. In so far as the notion of an ungovernable life seems to indicate forms of social conduct beyond and relatively unaffected by power relations, the idea of an ungovernable life seems to run counter to Foucault's basic assumption of the omnipresence and inescapability of power. However, Foucault conflates governmentality and power due to his exclusive attention to the history of Western power relations.

To prove this, Christiaens opposes Ivan Illich's critical history of government to Foucault's genealogy of governmentality. Whereas Illich wrote a history of government that resembles Foucault's genealogy of governmentality in surprisingly many ways, the former also showed how governmentalization undermined human autonomy and examined indigenous struggles to demonstrate how they fought against governmentality and sought to develop forms of ungovernable counter-conduct. As an advocate of anticolonial resistance to Western governmental regimes and to the Western development *dispositif*, Illich praises indigenous movements that resist governmentalization and seek to appreciate an ungovernable form of life in resisting decolonial movements.

Christiaens highlights the Zapatista movement in which Chiapas communities expressly cut ties to the Mexican government to affirm their own capacity for self-government

as a remarkable attempt to develop a politics of disalienation in which power-relations are less hierarchically fixed.

In the second original article, entitled “Sustaining Significance of Confessional Form: Taking Foucault to Attitudinal Research”, Krystof Dolezal (Central European University, Austria) centers on the confession, which forms a crucial technique in Foucault’s genealogical investigation. Without a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the historical and epistemological modalities of confession, it is difficult to adequately understand the procedures of subjectivation and the modern experience of the subject that form a core interest for Foucault which increasingly comes to the fore in his work towards the end of his life.

The article provides a survey of Foucault’s account of confessional procedures as he pieces it together against the backdrop of his genealogies of modern man and the human sciences. Confessional procedures are developed in Greek philosophical schools, early Christian monastic practices, early modern judicial trials, Counter-Reformation pastoral practices and modern medical and corrective dispositifs; and they end up becoming integrated in truth production and theoretical knowledge concerning subjects and societies.

In contemporary society, confessional techniques are integrated into and made use of in quantitative attitudinal surveys, such as the *Czech Panel Research of Households*, where face-to-face interviews are carried out that focus on respondents’ self-evaluation accessed through closed-ended questions concerning their left-right political identity. In the social sciences, epistemological strategies thus appear that draw upon and make use of the confessional model to constitute subjective identities at an individual level and on a mass scale.

#### SPECIAL ISSUE: FOUCAULT, OUR CONTEMPORARY

Written by Bradley Kaye (SUNY Fredonia, USA) and Corey McCall (Cornell University, USA), the special issue introduction draws attention to Foucault’s ongoing fascination with the movement of Enlightenment. One reason why Foucault took a special interest in the Enlightenment was that European thought here for the first time began to reflect on the specific characteristics of the present and sought to determine how it distinguished itself from the past. In prolongation hereof, the special issue contains contributions that discuss Foucault’s relevance for an analysis of the specifics of contemporaneity and challenges it presents.

The first article contributing to the special issue, “Inhuman Hermeneutics of the Self: Biopolitics in the Age of Big Data” is written by Patrick Gamez (University of Notre Dame, USA). It examines how one can use Foucault’s work to better understand the role of data in contemporary society. Gamez examines recent research on Foucault and data to show how Foucault’s work can help us understand the digital capitalism that forms a hallmark of the present. Countering Koopman’s claim that infopower amounts to a new *episteme*, Gamez argues that data capitalism is in continuation with biopower.

The second article of the special issue, entitled “Accountability, Climate, Equity, Sustainability”, is written by Ege Selin Islekel (Texas A&M University, USA). Drawing on a

Foucauldian approach, Islekel investigates the political impact of collective story-telling practices in the face of enforced disappearances in a high number of cases in Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Turkey. The aim is to examine what the insistence on story telling among the remnants does or performs. To address this question, the article utilizes two main theoretical frameworks.

On the one hand, the article draws on an analysis of necropolitics as a kind of power that is operative in the contemporary world and accounts for the regulation and management of death and the dead. Existing distinctly from but also together with biopolitics, necropolitics is a kind of power that, according to Mbembe under the name of war or terror, makes the destruction of its enemy its primary objective. Unlike Foucauldian thanatopolitics, which kills in the name of life, necropolitics works primarily on death. On the other hand, the article draws on genealogy as a type of historical examination that mobilizes subjugated knowledges that are buried and disqualified as a result of the workings of necropolitics.

The first part of the article focuses on the role of archival erasure in the context of necropolitics. Here, necropolitics effects a specific kind of fabulation in so far as the erasure of the archive confuses the distinction between the real and the fictional. The second part of the article focuses on the possibilities of narrating other kinds of stories by focusing on Foucault's analysis of archival genealogies but also argues that a genealogical approach encounters difficulties. Since necropolitics works through erasure and fabulation, archives remain incomplete and oblivious. Consequently, the last part asks what kind of archival approach is necessitated to counter this oblivion. To answer this question, one must examine what these kinds of counter-stories do and analyse their actors and events of time. What is at stake is the collective emergence of another kind of fable which Hartman characterizes as "critical fabulation"; a fabulation that multiplies the possibilities of the present and the past by telling stories of nothing.

## BOOK REVIEWS

The book review section of the present issue contains the following book review:

- Mark Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement: Technologies of the Soul in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. Reviewed by William Tilleck (Harvard University, USA).

## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Since 2020, *Foucault Studies* has updated and clarified guidelines for footnote references and bibliography. Most important to note in this respect is that the journal articles have all text references in running footnotes with most of the bibliographical information about the source, while the list of references ending each article provides all bibliographical information about the source as well as the DOI of the given piece (if there is one).

With the introduction of these changes, *Foucault Studies* has significantly increased its service to its readers since they now have essential information ready to hand in both the article and on the page studied.

As a consequence, *Foucault Studies* kindly asks authors of future submissions to follow the updated guidelines before they submit articles. Complying with these guidelines makes

the submission and review process, as well as copyediting, a lot easier and more expedient. The details of the updated guidelines can be found on the homepage here: <https://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/about/submissions>.

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