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DRIVE AS THE STRUCTURE OF BIOPOLITICS
ECONOMY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND CAPTURE

Krisis, 2010, Issue 2
www.krisis.eu

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Biopolitics is a strange term. It flourishes in a range of discursive habitats throughout the humanities and social sciences, from network science to international relations theory, political philosophy to public policy.¹ Different authors use the term 'biopolitics' in multiple, sometimes conflicting ways. For some, a gesture to biopolitics or the biopolitical is necessarily critical; others use the term descriptively or even affirmatively.²

Giorgio Agamben associates biopolitics with Western models of sovereignty, more specifically, with that modern sovereignty that takes life as its primary political value such that there is no separation or distinction between politics and life, what the state includes and what it excludes. Drawing from Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, Agamben draws out the horrific repercussions of the politicization of life, construing the Nazi death camp as the 'hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living' (Agamben 1995: 166).³ In contrast, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri affirm biopolitics as the productive power of life, the disruptive and innovative potential that arises out of the interactions of

the bodies and desires constitutive of the multitude (Hardt and Negri: 2009: 58-59). Although at risk of capture and corruption, biopolitics is an ontological event overflowing capitalist processes and values. Roberto Esposito offers a third conception of biopolitics, one that synthesizes Agamben and Hardt and Negri in a critical reading of the threat the multitude poses to personal identity and a reconceptualization of an openness to community (Esposito 2008). Seemingly far removed from these increasingly influential debates in contemporary Italian political theory is still another version of biopolitics, one associated with Albert Somit's and Steven Peterson's work in evolutionary biology (Somit and Peterson 2003). They argue that human political arrangements need to be understood not in historical and cultural terms but rather in light of genetically transmitted species-wide behaviors.

Throughout these dispersed treatments of biopolitics is a claim regarding the merger of politics and life. Our present biopolitical setting, we are told, renders us incapable of thinking politics without life and life without politics. While Hardt and Negri conceive these imbrications in terms of the inescapability of resistance and renewal – change is ineliminable – Agamben and Esposito consider the shared biopolitical horizon of democracy and fascism a fundamental problem for contemporary politics. Thus, Agamben and Esposito highlight (and Somit and Peterson exemplify) our continued entrapment in the political logic and suppositions that produced eugenics, Nazism, fascism, and the camps. As bare life, we are exposed and at risk, threatened by the very relations that condition and secure us. It's no wonder, then, that Slavoj Žižek associates contemporary biopolitics with post-politics: preoccupation with protecting and immunizing perpetually vulnerable and potentially victimized life manifests itself in a constant mobilization and administration of fear that displaces a politics based in universal axioms (Žižek 2007: xxvi-xxvii).

Rather than embrace the story of the absorption of politics into life and life into politics, I consider here the specificity of biopolitics, the coincidence of an ostensibly vital and energetic domain of productive life with a stagnant, deadened, and deadly terrain of sovereign political action. I argue that biopolitics is best understood not as a mode of governance that takes life as its object but rather as the unintended byproduct of the clash

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between sovereign power and capitalist economics. Biopolitics is an effect of the capture of popular sovereignty in a kind of loop around the absence of political sovereignty in the economy. To make this argument, I draw from Foucault's discussion of liberalism and neoliberalism and Lacan's account of drive.

The most significant work on the link between biopolitics and the relation between sovereign power and capitalist economics comes from Foucault's 1978–1979 lectures published as *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Foucault begins these lectures with a gesture to Freud's epigraph to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, '*acheronta movebo*' (a line from Virgil which can be roughly translated as 'if I can't move heaven, I'll raise hell'). He ends the lectures with a return to the Freudian thematic of dreams and dream interpretation, concluding that liberalism 'is not a dream that comes up against a reality and fails to insert itself within it' (Foucault 2008: 320). No, liberalism is a 'form of critical reflection on governmental practice' (321). It is a reflection, Foucault points out, motivated by a suspicion: is government necessary at all? Do free people and free markets need supervision and regulation or are they better off when left to themselves? Over the course of the lectures, Foucault demonstrates how liberalism's claims to *laissez faire*, to let the market be, incite a wide range of interventions throughout the newly emergent domain of civil society. Liberalism ends up doing the opposite of what it intends, in effect proving that its suspicions were justified all along: government does bring with it the risks of its own over-reaching. For Foucault, liberalism's inability to move heaven, that is to say, its recognition of the market as a site of spontaneous truths that must be obeyed and natural mechanisms that must be allowed – even *made* – to function opens up a new kind of hell.

The gestures to Freud in *The Birth of Biopolitics* suggest that there might be some benefit in reading Foucault's discussion of the emergence of biopolitics out of competing, even contradictory tendencies in liberalism with an eye to psychoanalytic theory. Foucault's liberalism is one preoccupied with excess, driven by the question of too much and too little. It's a circuit of critical reflection and intervention perpetually seeking to navigate the border between the maximum and minimum fixed by necessities intrinsic to the nature of governance. This description of liberalism's con-

stitutive instability resonates with Jacques Lacan's discussion of the drives. Lacan writes, 'everything that has to do with the *Trieb* raises the question of plasticity and of limits' (Lacan 1997: 94). My wager here is that the psychoanalytic notion of drive can open up and clarify the problem of too much governance that Foucault situates in the place of liberalism's missing heart. Psychoanalysis (or, more specifically, some of the insights developed in recent psychoanalytic theory) allows us to draw out and make explicit a logic implicit in Foucault's account of a liberal governmentality that ends up doing what it most seeks to avoid.

There are additional indications that psychoanalytic theory can help clarify thinking about biopolitics. Freud's view of drive as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic resonates with Foucault's discussion of biopolitics in terms of knowledge and mechanisms that take the population or species body as their target and object. Drive and biopolitics each cut through what are posited as the natural rhythms and processes of organic life. As Lacan notes in his discussion of Freud's description of drive as a 'constant thrust,' 'the constancy of the thrust forbids any assimilation of the drive to a biological function, which always has a rhythm' (Lacan 1998: 165). Likewise, Foucault's presentation of biopolitics as a technology that aims toward equilibrium but nonetheless fails echoes Lacan's lectures (given twenty years earlier) on drive as 'beyond the instinct to return to a state of equilibrium' (Lacan 1997: 212). Once stuck in the loop of drive, the subject keeps doing the same thing, trying to get the same result, the same enjoyment (*jouissance*), even to the point where these repetitions become destructive of other aspects of the subject's well-being and throw the subject out of joint. Hence Lacan views drive as such as destructive 'given that it challenges everything that exists' (Lacan 1997: 212). For a final indication of the potential benefits of a psychoanalytic treatment of biopolitics, we could construe the rim-like structure of the drives that Lacan finds in Freud, particularly in connection with the gaze, the mouth, the anus, and the breast, as figuring Foucault's primary examples of biopolitics: surveillance, public health, sexuality, and reproduction.

These examples, however, are at best analogies and metaphors. The thesis I defend here is stronger: the structure of biopolitics, biopolitics' underly-

ing dynamic and shape, is drive. A psychoanalytically attuned reading of Foucault's lectures on biopolitics brings out the formal dimension of the historical emergence of biopolitics as the byproduct, the effect, of political sovereignty's confrontation with an economic demand, that is, with the appearance of the market as a site of truth beyond the reach of sovereign power.

Given the complexity of the drives, and the disputes over drive within the psychoanalytic field, drive may not seem the best choice of a concept to analyze much of anything (even if it has some metaphorical appeal). Freud changes his theory of the drives over the course of his career. Lacan, having initially focused on desire, turns to drive only at the end of the 1950s, varying and revising it for the next two decades. Melanie Klein and Jean Laplanche, to mention but two others, have still different accounts of drive. Later critics and analysts alter and combine and correct these and other notions of drive in accordance with their own reading, thinking, and clinical practice. Some of the most influential of these later analyses come from Lacanian theorists Joan Copjec, Mladen Dolar, Slavoj Žižek, and Alenka Zupančič. All in all, the discursive habitat of drive resembles that of biopolitics in its fecundity and disarray, but, again, not in a way that suggests a productive analytical affinity between the concepts (cf. Johnston 2005).

Despite these difficulties, the concept of drive can go some way toward clarifying how it is that biopolitics is a politics of reversal, repetition, and return wherein activity and passivity converge (Freud 1915: 127). While Freud's vicissitudes of the drive are generally known (reversal into its opposite, turning round upon the subject's own self, repression, and sublimation), three features of the perhaps less familiar Lacanian notion of drive bear emphasizing. The first concerns the difference between drive and desire as relations of *jouissance*, in other words, as economies through which the subject structures her enjoyment. Desire is always a desire to desire, a desire that can never be filled, a desire for a *jouissance* or enjoyment that can never be attained (Žižek 2000: 291). In contrast, drive attains *jouissance* in the repetitive process of not reaching it. Failure (the thwarting of the aim, the missing of the goal) provides its own sort of success insofar as one cannot not enjoy.⁴ Such failure or thwarting is key to

sublimation, itself premised on the providing of the drive with a satisfaction different from its aim (Lacan 1997: 111). In drive, one doesn't have to reach the goal to enjoy. Enjoyment attaches to the process, thereby capturing the subject. Enjoyment, no matter how small, fleeting, or partial, is why one persists in the loop of drive.

Explaining the difference between desire and drive via Lacan's *objet a*, Žižek adds a second feature to the notion of drive, namely, loss. He writes:

'Although, in both cases, the link between object and loss is crucial, in the case of the *objet a* as the object of *desire*, we have an object which was originally lost, which coincides with its own loss, which emerges as lost, while, in the case of the *objet a* as the object of drive, the "object" is *directly the loss itself*—in the shift from desire to drive, we pass from the *lost object* to *loss itself as an object*. That is to say, the weird movement called "drive" is not driven by the "impossible" quest for the lost object; it is a *push to directly enact the "loss" — the gap, cut, distance — itself*. (Žižek 2008: 328).

Drive is a kind of compulsion or force. And it's a force that is shaped, that takes its form and pulsion, from loss. Drive is loss as a force or the force loss exerts on the field of desire.

A third feature of drive important for the argument here is Lacan's treatment of drive as 'a will to create from zero, a will to begin again' (Lacan 1997: 213). Even as the drive is destructive, 'a challenge to everything that exists,' it is also an opening to something new.⁵ Dolar extends the idea of drive as creative destruction to the political, positioning drive as a force of negativity that makes politics possible (Dolar 2009). An excess that subverts all attempts to reduce politics to the proper arrangement of subjects and institutions, drive prevents an order from permanently stabilizing or closing in upon itself. It marks the crack in the social that opens the way to politics. For Dolar, then, psychoanalysis contributes to political theory a view of politics as necessarily a dislocating, a shifting of relations, rather than only or primarily an ordering and its reproduction.

My discussion of drive as the structure of biopolitics considers the destabilizations specific to liberalism and neoliberalism. I am concerned with the ways creative disruption in one direction produces a new entrapment or snare in another, the ways ordering and disordering are the same process from different vantage points. Disordering and destabilization, ‘untying’ in Dolar’s language, are as much attributes of governmentalities as are regulating and guiding. Read in terms of this aspect of drive, biopolitics appears both as a creative explosion in the tactics and mechanisms of governance, an ever-expanding and ever-shifting network of possible targets, and as the capture of subjects within the circuits through which they are governmentalized as passive parts of a population.

This view of drive as a destabilizing force of loss and capture is the background against which I take up Foucault’s lectures on biopolitics. After a brief discussion of Foucault’s introduction of biopolitics in the context of his analysis of a change in the operation of sovereignty, a change from the old right to ‘take life or let live’ to a new power to ‘make live’ and ‘let die,’ I focus on his account of liberalism and neoliberalism in the 1978-1979 lectures on the birth of biopolitics. Particularly remarkable in these later lectures is the way that biopolitics doesn’t seem to be born. It is perpetually deferred as Foucault attends to the shift from liberal to neoliberal governmentality, emerging only as kind of after-effect or byproduct. Drive can account for this deferral as well as for the plasticity and the dispersion throughout the population of the tactics Foucault associates with biopolitics. That the drive is thwarted or sublimated means that it reaches its goal by other means, through other objects. Blocked in one direction, it splits into multiple vectors, into a network. If Freud views the process as akin to the flow of water into multiple tributaries and canals, we might also think of it as an acephalic power’s attempt to constitute and reach its objects by any means necessary (Lacan 1997: 91). The very attempt to inhibit sovereign power, to reduce sovereignty’s domain by treating the market as an autonomous site of truth with laws immune to sovereign direction, enables the intensification and spread of biopolitics. Biopolitics is thus a by-product of the limitation of sovereignty, a set of mobilized effects of its interiorized critique, limitation, and redirection. Biopolitics takes its form as the loss of sovereign political power, more specifically, in the circumscription of the authority of the people as a collective who

thereby come to be passively rendered as the population, a target of multiple, shifting interventions. Drive enables us to understand how it is that the people are captured in the population, a capture that neoliberalism amplifies and extends.

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In his last lecture in the 1975-1976 series (collected in the volume, *Society Must be Defended*, 2003), Foucault presents biopolitics as a new technology of power that emerges in the middle of the eighteenth century. Biopolitics is a continuous, scientific power to make live via a kind of regularization that aims toward equilibrium. Unlike the individualizing disciplines, the regularizing processes of biopolitics take the population as their object. They apply to ‘man as living being’ or ‘man as species.’

This technology of power has three primary domains. The first is that of birth and death, reproduction and longevity. Rather than taking epidemics as the primary problem for public health, biopolitics targets the illnesses endemic in a population, in effect treating every element of the life process as endangered and in need of supervision and management. The second domain is the field of accidents. Here biopolitics intervenes in the forms of insurance, public hygiene, and issues of safety. Again, the supposition is not that biopolitics can permanently eradicate accidents from the life of a population. Rather, it is that it can discern the probabilities of certain accidents, measure risk, and decrease the negative effects that accidents can have. Finally, the third domain is the environment or human habitat. Biopolitics aims at reducing the dangers that the external environment poses to a given population. Overall, in the second half of the eighteenth century a technology of power emerges that takes as its object the regularization of life, the maintenance and securing of life against a whole series of vagaries, accidents, misfortunes and inevitabilities.

Insofar as biopolitics takes care of life, it creates some distinct problems for sovereignty. The attempt to secure life in its totality, to maintain completely a population, results in monstrous reversals as biopolitics turns

into an intensified politics of death. Atomic power best exemplifies this biopolitics that comes to exceed sovereignty: itself the manifestation and result of the imperative to secure a population completely, atomic power can, if deployed, destroy the sovereign power to maintain life. With a pulsion of its own, biopolitics turns round upon itself as a logic, system, or set of tactics and suppositions. It persists and expands and compels as a kind of acephalic force, a force that exceeds sovereignty's attempts to contain or control it.

If atomic power is an externalized biopolitics, a biopolitics in conflict with other states, then racism works as an internalized biopolitics, a biopolitics wherein the population is itself the target of the processes designed to maintain it, a target now viewed as a locus of impurity and inferiority. Foucault states:

'And the reason this mechanism can come into play is that the enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population. In the biopower system, in other words, killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race.' (2003: 256).

Racism is bound up with technologies that put biopower to work, with a State that uses race to justify its sovereign power of making life and letting live and so mobilizes death in order to strengthen the race. Not only is the 'bad' or 'inferior race' eliminated, but the 'good' one gets stronger through the extermination of those who might weaken or corrupt it.

It's no surprise, then, that Foucault says the most murderous States (the capitalization is in the text) are the most racist. His example is Nazi Germany, where 'murderous power and sovereign power' were 'unleashed throughout the entire social body' (2003: 259). In their attempt to achieve the proper regeneration of the race, the Nazis exposed the entire population to death. Accordingly, Foucault reads Nazi society as a society of generalized biopower.

To be sure, Nazi society also relied on the generalization of the sovereign right to kill. Nazi rule was not only biopolitical. It required the coincidence of two mechanisms: the classic sovereign right of life and death and the new mechanisms of biopower. Foucault explains:

'The Nazi State makes the field of the life it manages, protects, guarantees, and cultivates in biological terms absolutely coextensive with the sovereign right to kill anyone, meaning not only other people but also its own people. There was, in Nazism, a coincidence between a generalized biopower and a dictatorship that was at once absolute and retransmitted throughout the entire social body by this fantastic extension of the right to kill and of exposure to death.' (Foucault 2003: 260).

Foucault suggests that this Nazi combination of biopower with the sovereign right to kill may be 'inscribed in the workings of all States' (Foucault 2003: 260). But he retreats from the point, uncertain whether to ascribe a 'becoming fascist' to capitalist states. In fact, not only does he use this term 'becoming fascist' critically in his later lectures on the birth of biopolitics, but he rejects the 'state phobia' that views the state in terms of an unlimited power of expansion or endogenous imperialism (Foucault 2008: 187).

The 1975-1976 lectures suggest a view of biopolitics as a tactic of power that takes the life of the population as its target. Aiming to regularize life processes into a sort of equilibrium, biopolitics turns into its opposite, ultimately working against the very population it is supposed to secure, as Foucault's examples of atomic weapons and racism demonstrate. In its taking possession of life, biopolitics provides a particularly dangerous and murderous supplement to classical sovereignty's right of life and death.

Read against the 1975-1976 lectures, the 1978-1979 lectures are remarkable in part for what they don't say, for the themes they do not develop but diverge from instead. The most dramatic difference is Foucault's critique of 'state phobia,' his rejection of 'the great fantasy of the paranoid and devouring state' that results in the sloppy, imprecise 'move from social security to concentration camps' (2008: 188). Whereas the earlier lectures suggest precisely such an elision between insurance and Nazi death camps,

the later ones both reject such an ‘inflationary’ analysis and situate its currency within the setting of neoliberalism’s critique of Keynesianism, New Deal and Popular Front policies, socialist approaches, and National Socialist economics and politics.

Here are three other, related, divergences. First, the Nazi State is no longer an exemplar of biopolitics but an exception insofar as it results from a convergence of two models of sovereignty. Second, Foucault’s discussion of biopolitics does not continue along the lines of racism and ethnocentrism that he suggests in the earlier lectures. Instead, biopolitics is situated within a liberal governmentality, that is to say, within the specific conjunction of economics and politics that gives form to liberalism. Third, biopolitics is not primarily a matter of sovereignty that has taken possession of life but rather of a governmentality that emerges as a byproduct of the limiting of the state.

More specifically, in the 1978-1979 lectures, Foucault views biopolitics in terms of the problem of the population as an object of governance. On this point he agrees with the earlier lectures (2003: 245). But, he says, to grasp the specificity of the problem of governing a population, one must understand how the population itself emerges within the opposition between two logics of government, liberalism’s and the *raison de’Etat* of eighteenth century absolutism. The turn to liberalism is crucial, marking a substantial revision in Foucault’s understanding of biopolitics. Foucault says: ‘the analysis of biopolitics can only get under way when we have understood the general regime of this governmental reason I have talked about, this general regime that we can call the question of truth, of economic truth in the first place, within governmental reason’ (2008: 22). So instead of viewing biopolitics in essentially statist terms, instead of relying on ‘two sets of mechanisms’, an institutional set characterized by discipline and a ‘biological and Statist set’ characterized by biopolitics (2003: 250), Foucault offers a more complex chain of nested concepts: biopolitics, population, economic truth, and governmental reason. And in this version of his thought, biopolitics is neither a key player in the game of power, nor a major new configuration of power’s tactics and processes. Instead, biopolitics is the byproduct of a more fundamental change in

governmental reason. I take up this change in the following section and return to biopolitics in section four.

3

How should the change in governmental reason from absolutism to liberalism be understood? Foucault argues that it turns on the emergence of a new domain of truth, a domain which provides new criteria by which to assess the rightness of government as well as a new model of the subject. The emergence of this new domain of truth or site of veridiction does not simply limit sovereign power. It hollows it out, redirecting the authority and reason previously assembled in the state into a civil society that itself comes into being through this redirection.

The new domain was political economy. Political economy provides the material for assessment as it discovers a set of natural processes with their own laws of supply and demand, logics of causes and effects, and determinations of incentives and consequences. For political economy, these processes, particularly as they seem to obey spontaneous mechanisms, are a site of truth, the truth of the natural limitations of government. The sovereign may have a right to levy taxes, but is that good government?

This way of asking the question of government installs a limitation on sovereign power, fundamentally changing the logic of governance. If truth is located in the market, it is displaced from juridically determined principles of right. The reason for and measure of governance is thus absent from the state. Once truth is invested in the market, once the market emerges as a site of veridiction, the task of government becomes securing, circumscribing, and supervising this site (2008: 116).

Homo economicus, economic man, is the subject appropriate to the new field of political economy. Bound up in a world he can neither predict nor control, economic man’s interests depend on a series of accidents, on actions and others which he cannot and does not know. Economic man’s situation, Foucault explains, is ‘therefore doubly involuntary, indefinite,

and non-totalizable' (2008: 278). Yet, and here is the mystery of the invisible hand, in these conditions of collective blindness, each can benefit. In fact, it's even better than this: these conditions of collective blindness are *necessary* conditions for each to benefit. Any attempt to ensure something like the public good must fail because collective benefit can *only* be secured through the pursuit of individual self-interest.

Just as individual economic actors cannot see the whole, neither can the sovereign: a visible hand would be no hand at all. It would be partial, distorted. It would fail to combine the multitude of economic interests. Political economy thus announces: 'There is no sovereign in economics. There is no economic sovereign' (2008: 283). *Homo economicus*, Foucault explains, 'tells the sovereign: You must not. But why must he not? You must not because you cannot. And you cannot in the sense that "you are powerless". And why are you powerless, why can't you? You cannot because you do not know, and you not know because you cannot know' (2008: 283). Economic man thus does not simply limit sovereign power. Rather he 'strips the sovereign of power inasmuch as he reveals an essential, fundamental, and major incapacity of the sovereign, that is to say, an inability to master the totality of the economic field' (2008: 292). Liberalism's embrace of political economy hollows out juridical sovereignty by positing a field of processes, a terrain of actions and interactions, an ensemble of mutually conditioning choices and decisions, knowledge of which necessarily eludes the sovereign.

The hollowing out of sovereign power, the revelation of a fundamental incapacity within sovereignty, allows for various resolutions. One would be a kind of zoning of sovereignty that excludes the sovereign from the market. Another would hold the sovereign responsible for supervising and verifying market processes. In this second version, the very practices of governmental activities associated with supervision would subordinate sovereign reason to 'a scientific and speculative rationality' (2008: 294). What actually happens, Foucault explains, is a third course, one that extends government into a new domain – civil society.

As a new field for the exercise of governmental power, civil society provides a location for the management of economic men. It's a plane of ref-

erence (Foucault also refers to it as a transactional reality at the interface of relations between governors and governed) where individuals are not 'governmentable' either as subjects of right or as economic actors but through a new ensemble that connects and combines these juridical and market concerns as it brings other elements into relation with them. On the terrain of civil society, then, the juridical and economic aspects of the subject become 'partial aspects' integrated into a larger, more complex ensemble.

In sum, in his account of the shift from absolutism to liberalism, Foucault outlines a change in governmental reason. Where eighteenth century approaches to sovereignty emphasize external challenges to state authority (such as divine or natural law), liberalism arises out of internal challenges to the state's reason for being (what is the state's purpose or role?). To ask such questions, liberalism interiorized a new field of truth and new understanding of the subject, the truth of political economy and the subject as economic man. As it evacuates from sovereignty the power and knowledge necessary for governance, moreover, liberalism redirects and circulates this power and knowledge into a civil society constituted through this very redirection and circulation. Biopolitics is born in this setting.

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Three aspects of drive intertwine in Foucault's lectures on the birth of biopolitics: loop, loss, and part (or partial object). These are not the same as Freud's vicissitudes of the drive (reversal into its opposite, turning round upon the subject's own self, repression, and sublimation). Nonetheless, I incorporate these reversals and turns as I concentrate on what Lacan describes as the loop or circuit of drive.

By loop I mean the course or path of the movement of drive, drive in and as movement (Lacan 1998: 182). Drive is a repetitive circuit, a cycle. Elaborating on Freud's discussion of reversal and turning round back on oneself, Lacan describes drive's structure as a movement 'outwards and back'

(1998: 195). Repetitive movement outward and back lets the subject miss his object but still achieve his aim; the subject can ‘find satisfaction in the very circular movement of repeatedly missing its object’ (Žižek 1999: 297). Because failure produces enjoyment, because the subject enjoys via repetition of the process, the effort, the action, drive captures the subject. Žižek writes, ‘drive is something in which the subject is caught, a kind of acephalous force which persists in its repetitive movement’ (1999: 297). The loop ensnares.

That drive moves in a loop or circuit also tells us that drive is a byproduct. It’s a result of a barrier or inhibition, a thwarting or failure. The capture or captivity of the subject that drive designates isn’t originary. It’s an effect.

Foucault’s discussion of the birth of biopolitics relies on this loop of drive, the turning round and reversing, the movement outward and back. The loop appears in liberalism as the failure of governmental reason stimulates and intensifies the repeated efforts to limit it that thereby become extensions of governmental power. Liberalism, Foucault argues, relies on a circuit of freedom and danger. On the one hand, the role of government is to ensure the economy’s freedom. That freedom is ‘given’ means that it isn’t present as a kind of essential condition or property. Freedom has to be given to a population through specific mechanisms and processes. On the other hand, ensuring freedom is a tricky process, as likely to reverse itself into constraint and turn itself round onto its subjects as not. Foucault says, ‘Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera’ (2008: 64). Liberalism’s functioning requires that multiple differentiated freedoms exist, that it produces and organizes these freedoms, that it manages the conditions under which its subjects are free, fully alert to the dangers and risks of freedom. Foucault thus presents the ‘game of freedom and security’ as a kind of sustaining engine, a mechanism of incitement and risk. Liberalism relies on this interplay, this circuit, intervening in its management. That’s what governance under liberalism is, the stimulation and management of freedom and danger. Foucault’s insight, then, is that precisely insofar as freedom is ‘a relation in which the measure of the ‘too little’ existing freedom is given by the “even more” freedom demanded’ (2008: 63) liberalism depends on,

requires, its own endangerment. Liberalism cannot be reduced either to the provision of freedom or the maintenance of security. Its dynamic oscillation between the two, its compulsive circulation from the one to the other, indicates that extra dimension of enjoyment necessary for any political-ideological formation (cf. Dean 2006).

Biopolitics is one of the arrangements of this circuit of freedom and security. Differently put, some of the objects of the political drive set in motion through liberalism are biopolitical objects, objects of intense political concern and attachment at the level of the population. Foucault says that liberalism’s motto is ‘live dangerously’ (2008: 66). At the same time that liberalism constantly aims to arouse and produce freedom, it conditions its subjects ‘to experience their situation, their life, their present, and their future as containing danger’ (2008: 66). What, exactly, is dangerous is less important than the overall stimulation of a sense of endangerment, of fear. Crime, sex, disease, bank failure – the objects of biopolitics are ‘extraordinarily plastic,’ to use Freud’s description of the drives (quoted in Lacan 1997: 71). The stimulation of danger incites the extension of procedures of surveillance and control. The mechanisms of liberalism, Foucault explains, are themselves ‘liberogenic’ (2008: 69). Instead of producing freedom, they produce – or risk producing – a wide, dispersed, field of control.

One might have thought that the economic limitation of the political would produce a space exterior to sovereignty, limiting its reach. There would be an economic domain of purely economic subjects, subjects whose relations could be described entirely in terms of competition. But this is not what happens. There remains a compulsion to governmentalize these subjects, to ensure that they are not outside power. That the limiting of government is not a limiting of its reach but a change in its logic tells us we are dealing with an economy of drive: the inhibition of sovereign reason that posits a limit to what it can know pushes it into a loop; it turns it around so that its aims can be achieved through other means.

In Foucault’s account, neoliberalism also follows the loop of drive. It reverses *laissez faire*. *Laissez faire*, Foucault says, is ‘turned round, and the

market is no longer a principle of government's self-limitation; it is a principle turned against it' (2008: 247). Neoliberalism is thus a governmentality wherein economic reason confronts, judges, and displaces governmental reason. Foucault's primary examples are Germany and the United States. In each instance neoliberalism arises out of a critique of excessive governance (2008: 322), as a response to a mode of government that is erring on the side of too much and hence endangering freedom. The interesting twist is that where one would expect such a critique to urge the state to take its hands off the economy, it does something else instead: it subjects the state to the economy. German and American neoliberals reverse the equation, making the economy the legitimator of the state. 'In other words: a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state' (2008: 116).

This reversal intensifies and extends biopolitical processes and mechanisms. Insofar as neoliberalism emphasizes the market as a site of competition rather than exchange, it demands that the state combat anti-competitive mechanisms and work to spread opportunities for competition. Consequently, the state must be ever vigilant in these efforts as well as vigilant about its own efficiency in so doing. Such vigilance, moreover, is exercised not just with regard to government, as its operations and resources are privatized. Rather, neoliberalism entails a governmentality of 'active, multiple, vigilant, and omnipresent' intervention in society (2008:160). Society, too, must be opened up and subjected to the dynamic of competition. For neoliberals, this takes the form of the enterprise society, a vital, differentiated society of productive entrepreneurs, that is, individuals who take responsibility for their own success and well-being (hence, Foucault emphasizes their role as producers rather than consumers).

American neoliberalism was particularly effective in extending biopolitics via its theory of human capital. Human capital was the concept through which neoliberals grasped labor in its specificity, the way they sought to understand the meaning of labor means for the working person, the rationality underlying the worker's choices. Treating income as a return on capital, neoliberals construed the worker's income in terms of the capital he has in himself. Because of the multiplicity of factors influencing work-

ers' choices – mobility, quality of life, familiarity, capacities to adapt, aversion to risk – the theory of human capital enabled economic analysis to permeate a variety of new domains, domains previously the purview of the human sciences that developed around disciplinary institutions (sociology, psychology, demography, criminology, etc).

Foucault explains that there are two primary kinds of human capital, innate and acquired. Innate elements are heritable, genetic. A person concerned with her child's innate human capital can take the proper steps toward finding an appropriate co-producer of this child. She can seek to secure a mate with desirable traits that might reduce her off-springs' risks and enhance their competitive position. Genetic research is thus valuable to individuals in an enterprise society as it provides a knowledge they can use to plan for the future. At the same time, it gives rise to a complex of issues of screening, disclosure, prevention, and risk. Acquired capital refers to the skills and capacities that prepare individuals for competition. Health care, both infant and maternal, is important here, as are matters of health and hygiene, diet and exercise, relationships and opportunities. In this regard, the theory of human capital stimulates interventions in family life as it asks about the best ways to produce economic competitors. Neoliberalism's emphasis on education as preparation for work similarly targets the worker as an 'abilities machine.' Rather than producing critical humanists or responsible citizens, the theory of human capital treats education as a means for instilling in the worker those specific capacities that render him sufficiently competent, competitive, and flexible.

Under neoliberalism, then, power gets a hold of individuals to the extent that they are little enterprises, abilities machines competing in the market.

Correlative to the loop of drive is the hole around which drive circulates. The empty space within the loop of drive doesn't result from the loss of something that was there before and is now missing. Instead, it is the inside of the loop, the space of nothing that drive's loop makes appear. Foucault's account of the movement of forces and relations, the shifts in governmentality's tactics generated by liberalism's circuit of freedom and danger and by neoliberalism's turning back round on the state as it sub-

jects it to economic reason, presents the inside of the loop as a loss of sovereign knowledge. The sovereign cannot be sovereign over the economy because it does not and cannot know the truth of the economy. The loss, though, isn't an actual loss of knowledge; the sovereign did not lose something it already had. On the contrary, a new domain emerged that produced and revealed a heretofore unconceived barrier to sovereign power. Biopolitics is an effect of the diversion and recirculation of power that takes place as sovereignty is limited.

As I've discussed, Foucault describes changes in governmental reason, sovereignty's becoming hollowed out, redirected, and passive. What sort of sovereignty is this? He doesn't emphasize it, but we should keep in mind that it's the sovereignty of the people. The shift to neoliberalism in particular is set in constitutional democracies – the U.S. and Germany post 1948. Both liberalism and neoliberalism, however, present a certain version of the economy, one first focused on the market and then on competition, as a barrier to governance, a limit on what government can know and do. In each instance this limit is a limiting of the people. And it's a limiting of the people that turns them from active agents of power into a passive population. They can observe and monitor the economy, but they cannot know it or change its laws. The freedom of the market is the disqualification of popular sovereignty.

Lacan presents the drives as partial drives. He specifies this idea as 'partial with regard to the biological finality of sexuality' (1998: 177). I understand the point to refer to the variety of changing, incomplete, and dispersed ways subjects enjoy. It's not the case that drives develop in a linear fashion from infant to adult (Lacan: 'the passage from the oral drive to the anal drive can be produced not by a process of maturation, but by the intervention of something that does not belong to the field of the drive – by the intervention, the overthrow, of the demand of the Other,' 1998: 180). Rather, they fragment and disperse as they satisfy themselves via a variety of objects. As Joan Copjec writes, 'It is as if the very function of the drive were this continuous opening up of small fractures between things' (2002: 43). Her language here is precise: the fractures are not of things but between them; the parts that are objects of the drives are not parts of wholes but parts that appear in the force of loss as new expressions of a whole (she

uses Deleuze's example of the role of the close-up as a cinematic device: it's not part of a scene enlarged; rather, it's an expression of the whole of the scene, 2002: 53). Lacan refers to the partial object as an object of lack, an object that emerges in the void of the drive to provide the subject with satisfaction.

The partiality of the drive, the way that the object of drive is a part that can express a whole, accounts for the dispersion of biopolitics through civil society as a byproduct of political sovereignty's confrontation with the economy as an external site of truth. Biopolitical targets emerge as sites in which the state can intervene, sites it can know and assess. Health, education, and scientific knowledge become the proper objects of politics. They make *homo economicus* governmentalizable even as they reconstitute him as politically passive, as governed rather than governing. As the circuit of biopolitical drive intensifies, the targets of biopolitics continue to fragment and branch out, behaving toward each other like a network, as Freud describes, 'They may appear in each others' places. One of them may accumulate the intensity of the others. When the satisfaction of one is denied by reality, the satisfaction of another may offer total compensation' (quoted in Lacan 1997: 91). Health concerns shift and change: hormones, heart disease, cancer, diet, obesity, genetic indicators for future illness, sexual vitality; dangers ebb and flow: salmonella, fat, carbohydrates, *e. coli*, motorcycles, cell phones, vinyl, certain plastics. Commissions are formed, advice is given, laws are passed, funding is allocated to address an array of dangers and concerns arising throughout civil society even as the neoliberal state remains subject to and evaluated in terms of the economy over which it cannot be, must not be, sovereign. The partial objects of biopolitics are not nothing; they are something. They are real targets and demand real action. Yet they are elements of a governmentality focused on society as a population rather than of the sovereignty of the people over the economy.

In sum, reading biopolitics in terms of drive accounts for the repetitive, circulating, unending dimension of biopolitics. It produces a kind of satisfaction even as it misses its aim, even as it emerges in the plastic network of knowledge's limits, in a form of sovereignty where the population is managed but the people don't appear. Biopolitics is born in the course of,

as a byproduct of, a loss of sovereign power. Sovereign power is redirected around a gap in its knowledge, a gap that renders it passive, capable only of watching. This redirected power circulates throughout a civil society constituted through this very circulation, a civil society whose inhabitants can be understood neither as purely juridical nor purely economic subjects but as always partially one, the other, and more. Differently put, the impulse to limit sovereignty fragments and extends it in different forms, a form of passive watching and being watched and a form of entrapment in circuits of ever-intensifying competition. Because equilibrium is impossible, because liberalism and neoliberalism can never find a way between too little and too much, because their approach to governance hinges on a view of the population as competing little rational enterprisers rather than collective agents, the result is freedom as capture.

5

The versions of biopolitics theorized over the past decades encompass individual practices of body cultivation, interventions into the health and productivity of populations, and attempts to seize and manipulate the very genetic material of the human species. Agamben adds what might be thought of as the missing fourth term in this series: bare life (1998).

As is well known, Agamben's theorization of bare life employs Aristotle's distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, life as such and the good life. Agamben uses this distinction in his critique of sovereignty's production and capture of life. Unlike Foucault, who views biopolitics as having a history, and, as I have argued, that takes its shape as a byproduct and effect of the hollowing out of governmental reason as the economy emerges as an independent site of truth, Agamben presents sovereignty as *essentially* biopolitical (as if there were an essence to sovereignty and the state). It's important to note, however, that this is not Aristotle's view of the distinction between life and the good life. Aristotle does not confine his discussion of the division to a problem particular to politics but recognizes instead its connection with economics.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle considers the way commerce is wealth acquisition without limit. Concerned with money and the exchange of goods, commerce involves the improper use of things, a kind of wealth acquisition that can go on and on and on. Commerce is a craft that produces the excess needed for gratification. Aristotle says that the people preoccupied with this improper management of wealth think they need to increase it without limit. He writes:

'The reason they are so disposed, however, is that they are preoccupied with living, not with living well. And since their appetite for life is unlimited, they also want an unlimited amount of what sustains it.' (Bk.1, ch. 9, 1258a).

The distinction between living and living well, then, seems more connected with commerce, with economy and the *oikos*, than as it does with the *polis*, with sovereignty and politics. Life in its excess threatens living well and those who are preoccupied primarily with living ultimately hurt their capacity to live well. The one who seeks to preserve his life at all cost, who seeks to preserve it excessively, shall lose it. Is this not a description of drive? An attachment to living that reverses into an unending circuit? Aristotle's account of excessive attachment to life here is not an attribute of a relation to sovereign power. It has nothing to do with a relation between sovereignty and bare life but rather between economic life, commerce, and living well.

6

Žižek notes that much has been written about the subject of desire and that now there needs to be attention to the mysterious subjectivity brought about by the circular movement of drive (1999: 298). Viewed in terms of changes in governmental reason since the late eighteenth century, changes wherein the economy arises as a site of truth external to and ungovernable by sovereign power, the political subject of drive appears as a passive subject, not one who can rule and be ruled in turn but one who is governed and managed and who through his very economic activity

makes himself governable. The subject of drive is stuck in drive's circuits and repetitions.

As an inhabitant of civil society, he is part of a governed population. To this extent, we can say that population is the space of overlap between government and economy, the site produced as state power confronts the limit of economic truth. As part of the population, the subject is neither the rational *homo economicus* nor the juridical subject. Agamben refers to such a subject as bare life. Understood as the impossible/Real part of the population, the term bare life becomes useful.

Agamben writes: 'the people necessarily contains the fundamental biopolitical fracture within itself' (1998: 178). He's right, but he misidentifies the fracture. Agamben describes the division as between the people as a whole and the people as the excluded other, the poor and the exploited. The fracture is better understood as between the people as subjects of desire and the people as subjects of drive, that is, between the people and the population. Rather than locating the political problem in exclusion, the focus on drive explains the fundamental political problem as the limiting of the people's power through the establishment of a domain of truth they cannot navigate, they cannot affect, they cannot steer as the corresponding endeavor to governmentalize them as parts of the population. Agamben writes:

'It is as if what we call 'people' were in reality not a unitary subject but a dialectical oscillation between two opposite poles: on the one hand, the set of the People as a whole political body, and, on the other, the subset of the people as a fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies . . .' (1998: 177).

The oscillation he describes is better understood as the circuit of drive, the circuit in which the people get stuck in a repetitive loop which they occupy as the population. No active subject, juridical or economic, persists as a part of the population. This is a set of the governmentalized.

But one should be wary of the risks involved in taking on Agamben's argument, risks that block from view the historicity of biopolitics. Fou-

cault's account makes clear the way biopolitics is the byproduct of a constellation of strategies and tactics circulating around a hole in political reason. Blocked from knowledge of the economy, sovereign power swerves in another direction, extending into a variety of other more domains and turning the people, who were in the process of becoming sovereign throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, into the population.

7

I have argued that Foucault's concept of biopolitics is best understood in terms of drive. The implication of this argument is that biopolitics does not itself function as a new and distinct logic of governance but is a byproduct of fundamental change in governmental reason. Biopolitics is the effect of political sovereignty's confrontation with an economic demand, the result of the emergence of the market as a site of truth beyond the reach of sovereign power. Biopolitics, then, is neither the ahistorical essence of sovereignty (which has no essence) nor the truth of a racist or nationalist state. Rather, it is the result of a reflexive turning of state power in upon itself as it comes up against external sites of veridiction. Attempts to reduce sovereignty's domain result in sovereignty's dispersion throughout the newly emerging field of civil society. But rather than a paradox, this spread indicates the work of drive as the people are captured in the population. Biopolitical targets are so many partial objects of political attachment to be hit upon and later replaced by ever-changing opportunities for intensification and enjoyment.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Paul Apostolidis, Clint Burnham, Anna Kornbluh, Paul A. Passavant, John Protevi, Steven Shaviro, Gijs van Oenen and the participants in the workshop on Biopolitics and its Vicissitudes (Amherst Col-

Krisis

Journal for contemporary philosophy

lege, April 9-10 2009) for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also indebted to James Martel for our ongoing discussions of drive.

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¹ Examples include Tiziana Terranova (2004) *Network Culture*, New York: Pluto Press; Michael Dillion and Luis Lobo-Guerrero (2008) 'Biopolitics of Security in the 21st Century: An Introduction', in: *Review of International Studies*, 34: 265–292; Vanessa Lemm (2009) *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy*, New York: Fordham University Press; Miguel Vatter (2009) 'Biopolitics: From Surplus Value to Surplus Life', in: *Theory & Event* 12.2 available online through Project Muse; John Protevi (2009) *Political Affect*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

² In addition to Lemm 2009, for an example of an affirmative biopolitics see Miguel Vatter (2006) 'Nativity and Biopolitics in Hannah Arendt', in: *Revista de ciencia Política* 26, 2: 137 – 159.

³ For a critical exposition of Agamben's account of sovereignty, see Passavant 2007.

⁴ Žižek emphasizes the way the 'reflexive reversal-into-self constitutive of drive' (which Freud develops in 'Instincts and Their Vicissitudes' and Lacan explores in Seminar VII) 'relies on a fundamental, constitutive *failure*. The most succinct definition of the reversal constitutive of drive is the moment when, in our engagement in a purposeful activity (activity directed towards some goal), the way towards this goal, the gestures we make to achieve it, start to function as a goal in itself, as its own aim, as something that brings its own satisfaction. This closed loop of circular satisfaction, of the repetitive movement that finds satisfaction in its own circular loop, thus none the less relies on the failure to achieve the goal we were aiming at: drive's self-affection is never fully self-enclosed, it relies on some radically inaccessible X that forever eludes its grasp—the drive's repetition is the repetition of a failure,' (2000: 305).

⁵ Žižek develops this theme of creation out of nothing throughout his work; see, for example, *The Indivisible Remainder*, London: Verso, 1996.