

what is political rationality?

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I

This article presents an exercise in reading Michel Foucault. More concretely, it poses an attempt to mobilise fragments of his thought in order to make it speak in an emancipatory voice. The question I ask is, what is political rationality? This question is my way into, first, a discussion of a certain reception of Foucault's works on power—routinely called 'governmentality studies'—and, second, an exegesis of Foucault's writings that foregrounds his lifelong preoccupation with historical articulations between politics and rationality. This exegesis yields both a scandalous thesis on the historicity of reason and the makings of an emancipatory project that far surpasses the ethos of refusal that Foucault routinely expounded; a project that calls for a radical *disarticulation* of politics and rationality and that has, in recent decades, been pursued by Giorgio Agamben.

II

In October 1979, Michel Foucault delivered the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Stanford University, which he entitled “‘*Omnes et Singulatim*’: Toward a Critique of Political Reason.”² This title alone goes to the heart of Foucault's concerns at the time: the phrase “*omnes et singulatim*,” Latin for ‘each and all,’ signi-

fies the individualisation that he claims is at the heart of pastoral power³ and that, according to Foucault, is carried over into modern ‘governmentality’ and state power, which is at once individualising and totalising.⁴ The term ‘critique’ is a reference to what he considers to be the central (if self-assigned) task of philosophy since the Kantian moment: “since Kant, the role of philosophy has been to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience.”⁵ This enterprise is not, however, confined to reason and the reasoned subject’s experience of the world, for “from the same moment [...] the role of philosophy has also been to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality.”⁶ And, as is clear from this last quote, the term ‘political reason’ (or ‘political rationality’) refers to that which the (Kantian, or, better, Kant-inspired) critique must have as its object.⁷ But here the title starts collapsing in on itself; for if philosophy has, since Kant, charged itself with keeping watch over political rationality, then why does Foucault feel the need to profess that his lectures move *toward* a critique of political rationality? Surely his aim is not simply to reiterate this task, for this would be to join the ranks of the speculative philosophers.

What, then, is the critique that Foucault seeks to move toward? Before this question can be answered, a more fundamental question must be considered first: what is political rationality? Throughout “*Omnes et Singulatim*” the term remains shrouded in mystery. Foucault’s concluding assertion is especially perplexing:

Political rationality has grown and imposed itself all throughout the history of Western societies. It first took its stance on the idea of pastoral power, then on that of reason of state. Its inevitable effects are both individualization and totalization. Liberation [*La libération*] can come only from attacking not just one of these two effects but political rationality’s very roots.⁸

The uncharacteristic lexicon Foucault employs here makes one pause in wonder. Surely it was Foucault who tirelessly reminded his readers not to think in terms of inevitability and to eschew sweeping claims about liberation. The enigma of this passage must be solved if the problem of critique and its relation to political rationality is to be understood.

III

Part of what makes the term ‘political rationality’ so unclear in “*Omnes et Singula-*

tim” is that Foucault varies between using the term in an abstract sense, as in the concluding paragraph cited above, where it signifies political rationality as such (even as that term allows for historical heterogeneity), and in a determined sense, where it refers to a particular rationality. He employs the term in the latter way, for instance, when he notes that, when engaging with *raison d’État*, one must take care “to pin down the specific type of political rationality the state produced” because, in the realm of political practice, “it’s not ‘reason in general’ that is implemented but always a very specific type of rationality.”⁹

A year and several months before delivering the Tanner Lectures, Foucault was interviewed by a round table. When prompted by his interlocutors to clarify his stance on what is called, with reference to Max Weber’s work, ‘rationalisation,’ Foucault replies:

I think one must restrict one’s use of this word [rationalization] to an instrumental and relative meaning. [...] One isn’t assessing things in term of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality but, rather, examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them—because it’s true that ‘practices’ don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality.¹⁰

It is, then, because the term ‘rationalisation’ implies that there is *one* political rationality that gradually unfolds across history that Foucault rejects it.

These comments make one wonder what the status is of the concluding paragraph of “*Omnes et Singulatim*”: How can Foucault warn against invoking rationality in general on the one hand and champion ‘attacking’ political rationality’s ‘very roots’ on the other? I contend that the ambiguity that marks the term ‘political rationality’ signals the makings of a critical project that pivots on the historical articulation of rationality and politics. In order for the notion of political rationality to serve this purpose, however, a tradition of commentary that has sought to pin down its meaning must first be reconstructed and dismantled.

IV

Foucault did not start reflecting systematically on political rationality until the late 1970s. It was around the same time that, especially in English-speaking aca-

demia, several sensitive readings of his thought emerged that emphasised Foucault's stance on the historicity of rationality. Thus in the afterword to the 1980 volume *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon writes that it is a "complex set of relationships between the notions of historicity and rationality that form the framework of Foucault's critical thought."¹¹ Gordon concludes that piece (published approximately half a year after Foucault had delivered the Tanner Lectures) with a remark that chimes with the conclusion to "*Omnes et Singulatim*":

[W]hat if instead of stigmatising the unacceptable in order to supplant it by the acceptable, one were to call in question the very rationality which grounds the establishment of a regime of acceptability and the programmatic logic whereby the 'unacceptable' is regularly restored to the 'acceptability' of a norm? It is at the points where the role of a whole species of rationality and the status of a whole regime of truth can be made to open itself to interrogation that the possibility of a profounder logic of revolt may begin to emerge.¹²

According to Gordon, Foucault has inherited the problem of the historicity of rationality from his mentor, Georges Canguilhem, with the crucial difference that the former's work on power and its intimate tie to knowledge and rationality render fathomable the questioning of entire regimes of rationality.

A similarly incisive reading was presented in the afterword to the 1983 book *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow: "The genealogist looks for the moment in our history when human reality in its three dimensions (truth, power, and ethics) was first restructured in a way that set up a space in which the kind of rationality that could lead to our current norms could work itself out."¹³

It did not take long for the term 'political rationality' to become central to these readings of Foucault. In his introduction to the *Foucault Reader*, which first appeared in 1984, Paul Rabinow provides a summary of Foucault's overall project. "His concern," he writes succinctly, "is the subject and power, as well as the political rationality which has bound them together."¹⁴

V

In the decade following the publication of *Power/Knowledge*, collections of Fou-

cault's essays and interviews on the topic of power continued appearing in English (with the 1988 *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* and the 1991 *The Foucault Effect* being the most influential). Around the same time a body of literature developed out of these texts that similarly put great emphasis on the notion of political rationality, but that, in the main, lacked the subtlety and sensitivity of the readings put forward by Gordon, Dreyfus, Rabinow, Graham Burchell, and others, instead focusing more on extracting a streamlined methodological apparatus from Foucault's work on power and government. This body of literature has since become widely referred to as "governmentality studies."¹⁵

Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller's work is paradigmatic of this literature. Rose's 1989 *Governing the Soul* is, to my knowledge, the first book that attempted to mine Foucault's analytics of power—extracted from "*Omnes et Singulatim*" among other texts—with the express aim of breaking open a particular scientific discipline, namely, in this case, psychology.¹⁶ Foremost amongst the conceptual tools thus mobilised was the notion of political rationality, which, for Rose, referred to "those forms of rationality that comprise our present, the ways of thinking and acting with which they have been caught up, the practices and assemblages which they have animated, and the consequences for our understanding of our present, and of ourselves in that present."¹⁷

Rose continued using the term in the same manner in his co-authored work with Peter Miller. In an influential article published in 1992 they describe political discourse as "a domain for the formulation and justification of idealised schemata for representing reality, analyzing it and rectifying it. Whilst it does not have the systematic and closed character of disciplined bodies of theoretical discourse it is, nonetheless, possible to discern regularities that we term political rationalities."¹⁸ For them, political rationalities are characterised by three core features: they are *moral* in the sense that they are normative, they are *epistemological* in the sense that they articulate and construct certain objects of government, and they are *linguistic* in the sense that they mobilise the apparatus of language to render reality thinkable.¹⁹

What Miller and Rose did for psychology was repeated in the years to follow by Mitchell Dean and Thomas Lemke for sociology. Dean's 1994 *Critical and Effective Histories*, for instance, sought to mobilise "a number of concepts, themes and theories" drawn from Foucault's work for "historical-sociological studies,"²⁰ whilst his authoritative *Governmentality*, first published in 1999, was a systematic intro-

duction to the notion of governmentality with the express aim of outlining “some fundamental precepts for those who are sufficiently persuaded to wish to employ at least some elements” of what Dean called “an ‘analytics of government.’”²¹ Both books posit that Foucault establishes an intimate link between governmentality and political rationality, where the latter is understood as the knowledge that “is anterior to political action and a condition of it.”²² In *Governmentality*, Dean (with explicit reference to Miller and Rose) argues that “the way we think about exercising authority draws upon the expertise, vocabulary, theories, ideas, philosophies and other forms of knowledge that are given and available to us” and so, on this account, a *political* rationality is a systematic form of knowledge specifically aimed at formulating techniques and objectives of *government*.²³

Lemke’s equally influential work undertakes to do much the same. In his 1997 *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft* one encounters a very similar definition of political rationality, linking it to “programmes” of government, which “do not only express wishes and intentions, but define an implicit *knowledge* [Wissen].”²⁴ In a revealing footnote, Lemke expands upon his use of the term “political rationality,” insisting (with reference to Miller and Rose) that the very term “governmentality” already implies a distinction between “governing (*gouverner*)” and way of thinking (*mentalité*).²⁵ In his subsequent work on Foucault, power, and governmentality Lemke continues to rely upon this distinction and continues to define political rationality as “the *knowledge* that is part of [governmental] practices.”²⁶

In its zeal for formalisation and systematisation of Foucault’s methodological apparatus, the ‘governmentality studies’ literature defines political rationality as the discursive field from which the tools and techniques of specific governmental regimes are forged. In these works—which chiefly rely upon each other and upon “*Omnes et Singulatim*”—political rationalities are consistently described as ‘knowledges,’ ‘mentalities,’ and ‘ways of thinking’ and are seen as that which must be studied if we are to capture the ways in which the objects of government are constructed and its techniques legitimised; how, in other words, specific political practices become possible.²⁷

VI

After having passed through the ‘governmentality studies’ phase, the notion of political rationality went on to fulfil a significant role in the analysis and critique of neoliberalism. Whilst Foucault’s account of neoliberalism, developed in the

1978-79 lectures at the Collège de France entitled *The Birth of Biopolitics*, is too sensitive, complex, and layered to be summarised adequately here, it suffices for my present purposes to say that, in Foucault's view, the emergence of neoliberalism marks a novel moment in the history of governmentality.²⁸ It is at once a continuation of liberal governmental rationality and a thorough critique of it; a critique necessitated—according to neoliberals—by the inadequacies and crises of classical liberal governmentality. The works of such figures as Wilhelm Röpke, Ludwig von Mises, F.A. Hayek, and Gary S. Becker (to name but a few) effectuated a series of shifts in liberal governmental rationality that amounted to an altogether “new programming of liberal governmentality” and thus, according to Foucault, *neoliberalism* was born.²⁹

The ‘governmentality studies’ literature followed Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism closely.³⁰ Because the vast majority of this literature was concerned with applying a formalised version of Foucault's work on knowledge, power, and government to concrete social formations, it lacked a systematic attempt to study neoliberalism and its history with any rigour. For the most part, authors repeated the analysis developed in Foucault's lectures, or, more commonly—because the lectures themselves were transcribed only in 2004 and translated into English in 2008—Gordon's summary of it.³¹

One of the first significant attempts to break open Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism came from Wendy Brown, who turned her attention to neoliberalism in the early 2000s, starting with a 2003 essay called “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.” The merit of her critique is that it relies upon, but simultaneously distances itself from, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.³² Brown's greatest innovation is that she does not stop short at asking how neoliberalism reconstructs politics, the subject, and contemporary life at large—which was Foucault's concern as well as his followers'—but that she also inquires into the *consequences* of those reconstructions. Thus all of her work on neoliberalism is animated by a concern for what politics and the subject *cease* to be when they are reconstructed according to neoliberal parameters.³³ This question is already captured by the title of her most detailed study of neoliberalism, *Undoing the Demos*, which, in her words, “is a theoretical consideration of the ways that neoliberalism, a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms, is quietly undoing basic elements of democracy.”³⁴ Her project, in other words, is to consider what is undone, overturned, vanquished as a result of neoliberalism's transformation of our political imagination.

In her work on neoliberalism Brown reserves a crucial role for the notion of political rationality, which she receives from the ‘governmentality studies’ orthodoxy. “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” for example, borrows the notion directly from Lemke’s summary of the *Birth of Biopolitics* lectures and even reproduces, term by term, Lemke’s distinction between ‘governing’ and ‘mentality.’³⁵ In another authoritative essay on neoliberalism, the 2006 “American Nightmare,” she insists that “a political rationality is a specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship.”³⁶ By thus representing political rationality as a ‘mentality’ that underlies and orients the practice of ‘governing,’ Brown situates herself squarely within the ‘governmentality studies’ framework. In other words, it is primarily via Lemke that Brown’s early writings on neoliberalism inherit the rather formalistic conception of political rationality that Rose, Miller, Lemke, Dean, and others had developed in the 1990s.

VII

Whilst *Undoing the Demos* shows a clear continuity with her earlier pieces on neoliberalism it is also somehow out of kilter. In stark contrast to her earlier essays, *Undoing the Demos* is at pains to define *what* a political rationality is and, in doing so, pays explicit homage to the ‘governmentality studies’ literature.³⁷ Her working definition of political rationality falls in lockstep with Dean’s and Lemke’s: political rationality is “a particular regime of power-knowledge” that “is not an instrument of governmental practice, but rather the condition of possibility and legitimacy of its instruments, the field of normative reason from which governing is forged.”³⁸

At the same time, however, something changes in the term’s definition, furtively setting the analysis presented in *Undoing the Demos* apart both from critiques developed in the ‘governmentality studies’ literature and from Brown’s earlier work on the topic. This shift in meaning revolves around the term ‘hegemony,’ which is suddenly incorporated into the definition of political rationality. Consider the following passage, in which Brown seeks to distinguish political rationalities from what she terms ‘forms of reason’:

Political rationality [...] differs from a normative form of reason, although the former emanates from and is suffused with the latter. Neoliberalism might have remained only a form of reason generated by Ordoliberalism

and the Chicago School, without ever becoming a political rationality. Indeed, this seemed its likely fate at midcentury, although Foucault [...] insist[s] that postwar Germany was already organized by it. Political rationality could be said to signify the *becoming actual* of a specific normative form of reason; it designates such a form as both a historical force generating and relating specific kinds of subject, society, and state and as establishing an order of truth by which conduct is both governed and measured.³⁹

Here and elsewhere, Brown argues that what makes a rationality, that is, a form of reason, a *political* rationality is that it has come positively to organise and govern personal and governmental conduct: “political rationalities are world-changing, hegemonic orders of normative reason, generative of subjects, markets, states, law, jurisprudence, and their relations.”⁴⁰ Even though she ascribes this understanding to Foucault, the idea that there is a difference between forms of reason and political rationalities, and, what is more, that this difference turns on the latter being *hegemonic* in a given context is without doubt alien to Foucault’s use of the term.

This rendering of political rationalities as *hegemonic* forms of reason does a lot of work in the background of Brown’s argument. Most notably, it allows Brown to single out neoliberal rationality as the only hegemonic rationality in today’s discursive landscape, making her critique more streamlined and giving more force to the argument that democracy is under attack (even though this view jars with the account developed in “American Nightmare” and elsewhere,⁴¹ which precisely investigated how the congruence of *several different political rationalities* – such as neoliberal and neoconservative political rationalities in the Bush Jr. administration – constituted an unprecedented assault on democracy). At the same time, however, it distances her account of neoliberalism from Foucault’s to such an extent that it has effectively become an altogether different approach, rendering void any claims that Brown’s is simply another voice in the choir of Foucaultian orthodoxy.⁴²

VIII

Brown’s already complex use of the notion of political rationality is troubled further by the manner in which her understanding of it intersects with her understanding of the notion of governmentality.

In a piece on genealogy and politics, first published in 1998 and reprinted in her 2001 *Politics Out of History*, Brown reflects on the notion of political rationality systematically for the first time. There she anticipates her use of it in her studies of neoliberal rationality when she writes that the term refers “to the discursive logics legitimating all regimes of power,”⁴³ but adds that Foucault also uses the term in a historically specific sense, indicating the specific form that power takes in Western modernity. The essay in question mostly relies upon a reading of “*Omnnes et Singulatim*,” where Foucault indeed describes political rationality in this manner. Yet, as readers of *Security, Territory, Population* know, Foucault more commonly uses the term ‘governmentality,’ not ‘political rationality,’ to express these ideas.

Because she bases her definition of political rationality on Foucault’s use of it “*Omnnes et Singulatim*,” the term inherits the complexities that that piece introduced into its fabric. As a result, Brown has difficulty distinguishing between governmentality and political rationality in all of her subsequent writings on governmentality, political rationality, and neoliberalism. “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” for instance, oscillates between describing neoliberalism as a governmentality and as a rationality⁴⁴ and elsewhere she uses phrases that are habitually used in connection with governmentality—such as the “conduct of conduct”—to define political rationality instead.⁴⁵ This equivocation comes to a head when, in *Undoing the Demos*, Brown attempts to distinguish the two neatly, leading to an awkward passage that overemphasises the State in Foucault’s account of governmentality even as the terms it employs to describe governmentality are exactly the same as those used to describe political rationality mere pages before (and elsewhere):

Political rationality is also not the same thing as ‘governmentality,’ Foucault’s term for an important historical shift in the operation and orientation of the state and political power in modernity. This is a shift away from sovereignty and its signature—‘do this, or die’—to what Foucault calls governing through ‘the conduct of conduct’—‘this is how you live.’ Put differently, governmentality represents a shift away from the power of command and punishment targeting particular subjects and toward the power of conducting and compelling populations ‘at a distance.’ Foucault does indeed speak of neoliberalism as a ‘new programming of liberal governmentality’—it changes the way the liberal state reasons, self-represents, and governs and it also changes the state-economy relation.

But these changes mark something apart from the political rationality of neoliberalism. Political rationality does not originate or emanate from the state, although it circulates through the state, organizes it, and conditions its actions.⁴⁶

Brown's thought inherits the equivocations Foucault introduced into his own terminology and pushes them to the point where political rationality and governmentality become indistinguishable. This is, without doubt, the upshot of the attempt to fashion a set of streamlined analytical tools out of the writings of so complex and inconstant a thinker as Foucault.

IX

With Brown's rigorous and piercing critique of neoliberal rationality the conception of political rationality that started with Rose and Miller has reached its full potential. Her work has had a significant impact on English and French critical thought, inspiring thorough critiques of the history and composition of neoliberal political rationality,⁴⁷ accounts of the relationship between neoliberalism and democracy,⁴⁸ studies of resistance to neoliberal rationality,⁴⁹ as well as scholarly critiques of her stance on resistance to neoliberalism.⁵⁰ Brown's work demonstrates that this understanding of political rationality, however circumscribed and formalistic, can be a powerful tool in what she terms critique "in the classic sense of the word," that is, "an effort to comprehend the constitutive elements and dynamics of our condition."⁵¹ Because, in this account, political rationalities are historical regimes of discourse and practice, they can be subjected to genealogical critique—what is more, they demand to be, for "what must be captured for them to be subject to political criticism is their composition as well as their contingent nature."⁵²

Yet this approach to political rationality has several drawbacks that ultimately limit the rich critical potential carried by the notion. Because it only considers political rationality in the determined sense—i.e. this or that particular political rationality—this method fails to connect determinate political rationalities to political rationality in an abstract sense. In other words, it understands 'rationalities' as synonymous with 'knowledges' (of which *political* rationalities compose a subspecies) and proceeds to interrogate their specificity, historicity, and contingency, as well as—in Brown's case—the implications they carry for our political and moral life. However, this method does not inquire into political rationality in

an abstract sense; that is, does not ask what it could mean to suggest that political rationality must be attacked at its very roots. Neither does it ask how political rationality in the determinate sense might interact with political rationality in the abstract sense; how, that is to say, this or that rationality constructs rationality or rational conduct in an abstract sense and what role such construction plays in the broader mechanism of the ‘conduct of conduct.’

A distinct but related drawback of this conception of political rationality is that it is based entirely on Foucault’s work on power-knowledge, which culminated in the late 1970s in his lectures on the history of governmentality and modern *dispositifs* of power (including, crucially, “*Omnes et Singulatim*”). Neither the ‘governmentality studies’ literature nor Brown relate this work to Foucault’s earlier work on the archaeology of the social sciences or his later work on subjectivation and the care of the self. As a result, the scope of their analysis of political rationalities is limited to what Foucault, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, called the “‘analytics’ of power”.⁵³

If, instead of working with this formalistic understanding of political rationality, one departs from a consideration of the different stakes of Foucault’s thought as a whole, it becomes possible to see in this notion the makings of a problematic that touches upon the very fabric of Western political discourse.

X

In the 1980s—that is, as Gordon’s, Rabinow’s, and others’ readings gained in influence—a distinctly philosophical reception of Foucault developed in France. Especially significant is Gilles Deleuze’s reading, which remains unsurpassed in elegance and incisiveness.⁵⁴

In the years following Foucault’s death in 1984 Deleuze published several pieces and delivered several talks and interviews on Foucault’s thought, of which the short 1986 monograph *Foucault* is only the most well known. These pieces sought to trace the “logic” of Foucault’s thought, which means “the whole set of crises through which it passes.”⁵⁵ Following Foucault himself,⁵⁶ Deleuze paints a vivid picture of Foucault as an inheritor of the Kantian inquiry into conditions, but with the crucial difference that “the conditions are those of real experience (statements, for example, assume a limited corpus); they are on the side of the ‘object’ and historical formation, not a universal subject (the *a priori* itself is historical);

all are forms of exteriority.”⁵⁷

Again following Foucault’s own understanding of the trajectory of his thought,⁵⁸ Deleuze identifies the three major problems that Foucault’s thought passes through as knowledge, power, and the self. These three problems—or “dimensions,” as Deleuze calls them here—“are irreducible, yet constantly imply one another.”⁵⁹ It is not possible, in this view, to separate one dimension from the others and treat it in isolation. After all, Foucault’s turn to subjectivation was necessitated by one of those ‘crises’ that Deleuze’s reading seeks to trace: “at the end of [*The History of Sexuality*, volume 1] Foucault finds himself in an impasse,” which led to the question “where power itself places us, in both our lives and our thoughts, as we run up against it in our smallest truths”; and thus Foucault’s thought turned to “a new axis, different from the axes of both knowledge and power.”⁶⁰ Attempts to formalise or apply the dimensions of knowledge and power without taking into consideration the dimension of the subject must therefore encounter the same impasse and must founder on the problem of the subject’s relationship to power.

In a talk delivered at a meeting organised by the Michel Foucault Centre in January 1988, entitled “What is a *Dispositif*?,” Deleuze further develops his reading of Foucault through the notion of *dispositif* (habitually translated as ‘apparatus’). When considering the philosophical implications of Foucault’s thought, he singles out one theme that, in his view, haunts each of its three dimensions, or, as he calls them here, “lines”:

Perhaps it is Reason [*la Raison*] which poses the greatest problem because the processes of rationalisation can operate on segments or on regions of all lines under consideration. Foucault pays homage to Nietzsche regarding the historical nature [*historicité*] of reason; and he suggests the importance of epistemological research on the different forms of rationality [*rationalité*] in knowledge [*le savoir*] (Koyré, Bachelard, Canguilhem) and of sociopolitical research into modes of rationality [*modes de rationalité*] in power (Max Weber). Perhaps he was reserving the third line for himself: the study of types of ‘reasonableness’ in subjects he was dealing with [*dans d’éventuels sujets*].⁶¹

In this reading it is reason, or rationality (rather than the problem of the subject, as Foucault has forwarded in “The Subject and Power”),⁶² that can tie together the

different problems (or crises) that animate Foucault's work.⁶³

Following Deleuze's suggestion I shall, in the remainder of this essay, provide a reading of Foucault that links his theses on the historicity of rationality to the other two dimensions, that is, modern governmental power and practices of subjectivation. This will result in a complex rendering of political rationality, which I shall, in conclusion, use to decipher the final paragraph of "*Omnes et Singulatim*."

XI

Foucault's earliest works, that is, his archaeological studies, were fundamentally concerned with the historicity of the social sciences. They were indebted to the work of Georges Canguilhem, his mentor and friend, about whom Foucault wrote several pieces, including the foreword to the English translation of *The Normal and the Pathological*, and whom he considered a "historian of rationalities."⁶⁴ In a revealing interview from 1983, Foucault accordingly situates his own work in this tradition (which, besides Canguilhem, includes such people as Alexandre Koyré and Gaston Bachelard) and confesses that he embarked on his archaeological studies because, in his view, phenomenology (in the 1960s at the height of its influence in the French academy) could not give an account of "the historicity of reason" or develop a "history of rationality."⁶⁵ This, then, is what prompted Foucault to write the history of madness—which he also termed the history of the separation between "Reason and Unreason"⁶⁶—and to write the history of how the human sciences imposed order on things.⁶⁷ At base, therefore, his archaeological studies hinged on the attempt to historicise the subject and the (ir)rationality that divides her from herself.

XII

To be sure, the history of rationality is itself a rational endeavour: in the same way that Canguilhem, "[t]his historian of rationalities, [is] himself a 'rationalist',"⁶⁸ Foucault's archaeological works in no way champions the irrational. Thus, in a lengthy 1978 interview with Duccio Trombadori, Foucault insists that his *History of Madness* "wasn't an irrationalist history" but was, on the contrary, "the most rational possible history, of the constitution of a knowledge [*savior*], of a new relation of objectivity, of something that could be called the 'truth of madness.'"⁶⁹

This position invited a lot of scorn. Jürgen Habermas famously claimed to have detected a “contradiction in which Foucault becomes enmeshed” because the latter supposedly cannot develop his “critique of power” without accepting categories such as truth and rationality, which he precisely rejects.⁷⁰ This “self-referential denial of universal validity claims,” as Habermas puts it elsewhere, causes Foucault’s genealogy to be “an unholy subjectivism” and a “relativism” that undermines its own “putative objectivity of knowledge.”⁷¹ When Foucault was asked to reply to this charge in a 1982 interview with Rabinow he formulated a response that played precisely with the ambiguity inherent in the category of rationality, observing that “if it is extremely dangerous to say that reason is the enemy that should be eliminated, it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality.” Why dangerous? Because it was, Foucault reminds us, “on the basis of the flamboyant rationality of social Darwinism that racism was formulated, becoming one of the most enduring and powerful ingredients of Nazism.”⁷²

Much more rigorous was Jacques Derrida’s critique of *History of Madness* articulated some two decades before Habermas’ accusations. In a 1963 lecture on that book, Derrida develops a deconstructive reading that precisely turns on the impossibility of writing a history of rationality from within the language of reason. Foucault, so he argues, seeks to put Western reason on trial, “[b]ut such a trial may be impossible, for by the simple fact of their articulation [*élocution*] the proceedings and the verdict unceasingly reiterate the crime.”⁷³ Even if, he goes on to argue, Reason in general can be divided into historically determined episodes it will not thereby lose its generality and therefore “the expression ‘history of reason’ is difficult to conceptualize [*est difficile à penser*].”⁷⁴ Derrida devotes most of the rest of his lecture to a critique of Foucault’s reading of the first of Descartes’ *Meditations*, a passage that covers three pages of the *History of Madness*.

Foucault’s reply to Derrida constructed the latter as an insulted philosopher who cannot bear the historicisation of reason. In focusing solely on the (for the book’s main hypotheses altogether unimportant) reading of Descartes, Derrida presupposes that “all rational discourse entertains a fundamental relation with philosophy, and that it is in this relationship that this rationality or this knowledge have their foundation” and that, accordingly, any (rational) text can be criticised by revealing its implicit philosophical contradictions.⁷⁵ Foucault proceeds to use Derrida’s critique to distance himself from the traditional French manner of practicing philosophy and even remarks about his *History of Madness* that what it “tried

to show [...] is that philosophy is neither historically nor logically a foundation of knowledge; but that there are conditions and rules for the formation of knowledge to which philosophical discourse is subject, in any given period, in the same manner as any other form of discourse with rational pretension.”⁷⁶

If what is at stake in Foucault’s attempt to think the history of rationality in terms of singular historical events (such as the bifurcation of the subject into reason and madness) is to break free from the discourse of contemporary French philosophy (with its phenomenological subject on the one hand and its attachment to Reason on the other) then these controversies, with Derrida first and Habermas later, are more than petty squabbles between fragile egos: they mark the moment when thought refuses to side with or against rationality and instead turns rationality’s gaze towards itself, which in turn invokes a backlash in the name of a Reason that feels beleaguered. For Foucault, the upshot of any philosophical project that attaches subjectivity to rationality is that philosophy becomes implicated in the very exclusions that critical thought purports to uncover and grant a voice. Such was the point Foucault made in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France where, in what is without doubt a thinly veiled slight at Derrida, he asks: “What is ‘écriture’ (the writing of the ‘writers’) other than a [...] system of subjection [*système d’assujettissement*], which perhaps takes slightly different forms [*des formes un peu différentes*], but forms whose main rhythms are analogous?”⁷⁷ He immediately connects this question to philosophical practice more broadly: “I wonder whether a certain number of themes in philosophy have not come to correspond to these activities of limitation and exclusion, and perhaps also to reinforce them.”⁷⁸ It comes as no surprise that, for Foucault, philosophy’s mechanism of exclusion works “first of all by proposing an ideal truth as the law of discourse and an immanent rationality [*une rationalité immanente*] as the principle of their unfolding.”⁷⁹

This may be called Foucault’s *scandalous* critique of philosophy: the insistence on the historicity of philosophy on the one hand and, on the other, the accusation that historically, philosophy has produced and upheld manifold exclusions in the name of (and by way of) Reason. From the point of view of traditional philosophical practice, the history of rationality can only be scandalous.

XIII

Let me return to tracing the impasses that functioned as the motor of Foucault’s thought. The impasse that Foucault’s archaeological work encountered becomes

palpable in the closing pages of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In the concluding section of that book Foucault remarks that archaeology might be applied to problems of a different order than epistemic ones, including, crucially, “political knowledge [*du savoir politique*]”: “One would try to show whether the political behavior of a society, a group, or a class is not shot through with a particular, describable discursive practice.”⁸⁰ Such an archaeology of *political* knowledge would not interrogate the manner in which this or that political theory is or was applied in practice, but would rather locate a political knowledge “in the field of different practices in which it finds its specificity, its functions, and its network of dependences.”⁸¹ It is clear, at this point, that he senses the importance of exploring the intersection between knowledge and power but that he does not yet have the tools to do so, which explains why, several pages earlier, Foucault has to take recourse to the notion of *ideology* in order to give an example of such a political knowledge.⁸² In his 1979-80 lecture series, called *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault reconstructs this impasse, explaining that his turn to “power-knowledge” was necessitated because the limitations of the notion of ideology made it inadequate in the “analysis of the procedures and techniques by which power relations are actually effectuated.”⁸³ A turn to power, then.

Foucault’s studies on power were marked, from the first, by an interest in the manifold ways in which determinate regimes of power—such as techniques of punishment, methods of correcting deviant sexuality, or forms of state-centred governmental practices—are marked by forms of rationality. Thus, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault proffers the following proposition:

Power relations [...] are intelligible [...] because they are imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject; let us not look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality [*rationalité*]; [...] the rationality [*rationalité*] of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems [*des dispositifs d'ensemble*].⁸⁴

The rationality of power relations must therefore be sought on the level of ‘tactics,’ yet Foucault also signals that these tactics find their *justification* elsewhere.

In the years to follow Foucault would use the term ‘rationality’ to describe *both* the *tactics themselves*, or, in this later lexicon, governmental ‘techniques,’ and what one might call the *regime of justification* that renders these techniques possible in the first place. In his work on governmentality this proposition would reach its maturity, and thus his 1977-78 and 1978-79 courses at the Collège de France see him study what he calls ‘governmental rationality’ or ‘governmental reason’ on both of these levels: the rationality of the techniques employed and the rationality that justifies and discursively brings into being certain governmental objectives, techniques, and practices. There is, in other words, a two-tiered analysis of the intersection between government and rationality: on the one hand, there is the question of how government is *practiced* and, on the other, there is the question of how these practices are *elaborated* in discourse, in thought, in historical documents. The term ‘rationality’ traverses both of these themes. An example from *Security, Territory, Population* will illustrate this two-sided use.

In his discussion of the emergence of *raison d’État* (an event that he, significantly, calls “an event in the history of Western reason, of Western rationality, which is undoubtedly no less important than the event associated with Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and so on”), Foucault describes this form of “governmental reason” as “a certain way of thinking, reasoning, and calculating” and as “a different way of thinking power, the kingdom, the fact of ruling and governing.”⁸⁵ As this is a governmental rationality that centres on the State, it can also be said that it is a way of reasoning that views politics and power *through* the State: “The state was a way of conceiving, analyzing, and defining the nature and relations of these already given elements”; elements such as the king, the sovereign, and wealth.⁸⁶ Here ‘governmental reason’ is pegged to ‘a way of reasoning.’ In this context, rationality should be connected to questions of truth and knowledge: a form of governmental rationality or governmental reason, in this sense, is a regime of knowledge from which governmental techniques derive their constitutive grammar and legitimacy—e.g. *Polizeiwissenschaft* and statistics for *raison d’État* or political economy for liberal governmentality. (This, to be sure, is the understanding of rationality that Miller, Rose, Dean, Brown, and others draw upon in their rendering of political rationality.)

Immediately after having introduced *raison d'État* as a certain way of reasoning about power and governing, Foucault notes that the State not only is that which structures governmental reasoning, but that it also “functions as an objective in this political reason.”⁸⁷ He continues: “The state is what must exist at the end of the process of the rationalization of the art of government.”⁸⁸ And:

The state is what commands governmental reason, that is to say, it is that which means one can govern rationally according to necessity; it is the function of intelligibility of the state in relation to reality, and it is that which makes it rational, necessary, to govern. Governing rationally because there is a state and so that there is a state.⁸⁹

Here governmental reason is articulated as the problem of *how to govern rationally*, which means that the techniques used in governing must themselves be rational, or, to rephrase, that “the art of government” must take a “rational form.”⁹⁰

That he uses the term in these two different but related ways becomes clear when, in the first lecture of *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault summarises the project he had been working on the previous years:

[I]t is in the general framework of this notion of government that I tried to study two things, as examples: on the one hand, the birth of *raison d'État* in the seventeenth century, understood not as theory or representation of the state, but as art of government, as rationality elaborating the very practice of government, and, on the other, contemporary American and German liberalism [...] also being understood, not as economic theory or political doctrine, but as a certain way of governing, a certain rational art of government.⁹¹

Foucault sees these two understandings of governmental rationality—i.e. the form of reasoning from which arts and techniques of government are moulded and the question of rational arts and techniques of government—as inseparable. After all, one cannot govern rationally if one does not work with a form of reasoning that prescribes what it means to do so: this, of course, is precisely the point conveyed by the notion of power-knowledge.

The passages cited here reveal a third level that I shall touch upon in further detail below: from a certain point in history, the rationality, or knowledge, upon which

a rational governmental art is constructed assigns a fundamental role to the category of rationality as such, which is why Foucault calls the emergence of the doctrine of *raison d'État* an *event* in the history of Western rationality. From this point onwards, that is, with the birth of the specifically modern form of power that we call 'government,' constructions of the rational subject become pivotal for how politics is thought and practiced.

XIV

It is only after his lecture series on the *Birth of Biopolitics* ends in April 1979 that Foucault starts using the term 'political rationality' with any regularity (*pace* Brown's insistence that "[p]olitical rationality' or 'governing rationality' are the terms Foucault used for apprehending, among other things, the way that neoliberalism comes to govern as a normative form of reason").⁹² In the course summary of that series he writes that his aim that year was to look at the phenomena that constitute biopolitics, but that he had to take a step back for these to become fully comprehensible: "It seemed to me that these problems were inseparable from the framework of political rationality within which they appeared and took on their intensity. This means 'liberalism,' since it was in relation to liberalism that they assumed the form of a challenge."⁹³ Then, in October 1979, he delivered the Tanner Lectures where, as I have shown, he effectively substitutes the term 'governmentality' for the term 'political rationality/reason' in such a way that their semantic and analytical content starts overlapping to a significant degree.

Not long after the Tanner Lectures Foucault shifts his attention in a manner similar to the shift from archaeology to the 'analytics of power.' For Deleuze, as already noted, this new shift was necessitated by another "impasse"; one that revolved around the relationship between power and the subject and that necessitated "a general reshuffle" of Foucault's approach.⁹⁴ Indeed, in the first lecture in *On the Government of the Living*, given a mere three months after the Tanner Lectures, Foucault announces that he wants to recalibrate his analysis and wants to inquire into the relationship between governing and truth; into how, in his words, the "manifestation of truth is required by, or entailed by, or linked to the exercise of government and the exercise of power." This recalibration is an explicit attempt at extending his genealogy of governmentality to the ancients.⁹⁵ He continues:

I would like to go back and show you how the relations between government and truth were not finally formed when society or the State appeared

as possible and necessary objects for a rational governmentality. For the link between manifestation of truth and exercise of power to be made, we don't have to wait for the constitution of [...] modern relations between an art of government and, let's say, political, economic, and social rationality.⁹⁶

The problem of government, Foucault says here, is not exclusively modern, and neither is the relationship between government and political rationality. This means that, from the first, Foucault's "genealogy of the subject" revolved around the nexus between government and rationality.⁹⁷ It is, differently put, by extending his genealogy of governmentality that Foucault first pushes his work from the dimension of power-knowledge to the dimension of the subject and that he begins to focus on "the element of the first person, of the 'I,' of the '*autos*,' of the 'myself' in what could be called alethurgy or veridiction or the rites and procedures of veridiction," that is, what he calls the "point of subjectivation."⁹⁸

Speaking more generally, when Foucault's attention shifts to the problem of subjectivation, he also adjusts his approach to the topic of rationality. Indeed, in his studies of ancient practices of "work of the self on the self,"⁹⁹ undertaken in the final years of his life, one recurring theme is the question of how subjects are incited, by themselves or by others, "to do such and such things because we are rational beings."¹⁰⁰ Or: "How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers?"¹⁰¹ In posing these questions, Foucault implicitly troubles his earlier tendency to place rationality in a position of externality *vis-à-vis* the subject; to represent, that is, the subject as a passive product of historical political rationalities. Rationality now becomes internal to the subject once more—without thereby regaining its transcendence or its universality.

Rationality is, then, one of the central axes of analysis in the genealogy of the subject. In the 1980-81 lecture series on *Subjectivity and Truth*, for example, Foucault contends, in a discussion of discourses that posit marriage as a rational technique of the self, that "to say that these general principles [concerning marriage] are rational principles [*des principes rationnels*] implies a very peculiar conception of marriage or of reason, and perhaps of both at once."¹⁰² From the lectures on the *Hermeneutics of the Subject* onwards, the connection between techniques of the self and rationality has become so intimate that Foucault starts using the terms "truth" and "rationality" as if they were interchangeable. Consider his reading of

Marcus Aurelius, to give but one example. There, in a series of considerations of the problem of practices of self-constitution (called *askēsis* in Greek), Foucault launches into a discussion of the notion of *paraskeuē*, which is “an open and an orientated preparation of the individual for the events of life,”¹⁰³ or, in other words, a set of habitual practices which makes one prepared for any unknown future challenges. In Marcus Aurelius’ thought, this *paraskeuē* “is made up of *logoi* (discourses),” which means that one’s *paraskeuē* consists of lessons and phrases (in a word, discourses) that one has memorised and internalised. Foucault goes on:

As the word *logos* indicates, they are propositions justified by reason. Justified by reason means that they are rational, that they are true and constitute acceptable principles of behavior. [...] [T]hese really existing phrases, these materially existing *logoi* are then phrases, elements of discourse, of rationality: of a rationality that states the truth and prescribes what we must do at the same time.¹⁰⁴

Here truth and rationality have become indistinguishable, which is without doubt itself a technology of power that must be explained. Practices of subjectivation, in ancient thought, pivoted on the self’s *rational* self-construction to such an extent that Foucault is even prompted to say, near the end of that year’s lectures series, that, as a general rule, the Greeks and Romans held that “[t]he human being is such, his *bios*, his life, his existence is such, that he cannot live his life without referring to a certain rational and prescriptive articulation.”¹⁰⁵

These questions do not yet involve a discussion of *political* rationality, however. The latter theme starts coming to the fore in the two years leading up to Foucault’s death. Thus in the 1982-83 lectures on *The Government of Self and Others* and in *The Courage of the Truth*, delivered the following year, Foucault wonders how politics as a practice was understood in ancient thought and focuses, as is well known, on the notion of *parrēsia*, or “free-spokenness.”¹⁰⁶ The problematic of *parrēsia*, the meaning and use of which shift over time, essentially revolves around the practice of constituting oneself (and directing others in their self-constitution) as a subject who tells the truth about themselves as a citizen of the *polis*. It is in this connection that Foucault finds the notion of *parrēsia* being used in several texts in relation to rationality: in Euripides’ *Ion* the term *parrēsia* means the “mak[ing] use of discourse, but of rational discourse, the discourse of truth” by the one in charge of the city;¹⁰⁷ in Thucydides’ discussion of Periclean democracy in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* the term refers to Pericles’ “dis-

course of political rationality, the true discourse”;¹⁰⁸ and in Isocrates’ *On the Peace*, likewise, it means delivering “rational and true arguments in order to persuade the Assembly and get it to change its opinion.”¹⁰⁹ Foucault’s discussion of Plato’s letters deserves special mention in this context. In his reading of Plato, the latter looks to *parrēsia* for a way to make philosophy more than the mere engagement in abstract thought:

It is by taking part directly, through *parrēsia*, in the formation, maintenance, and exercise of an art of governing that the philosopher will be not merely *logos* in the political realm, but really *logos* and *ergon* [which Foucault translates as ‘action,’ ‘task,’ or ‘work’], in accordance with the ideal of Greek rationality. In reality, *logos* is complete only if it can lead to *ergon* and organize it according to the necessary principles of rationality.¹¹⁰

For Hellenistic thought, then, the ultimate end of the citizen of the *polis* is rational political conduct. Speaking truthfully—that is to say, to practice *parrēsia*—is nothing other than fulfilling one’s purpose as a rational agent in the *polis*,¹¹¹ and, conversely, whoever fails to practice *parrēsia* is someone who “do[es] not index their discourses to reason.”¹¹² In these passages from his final two lecture series, ‘political rationality’ almost becomes synonymous with *parrēsia*, and therefore Foucault’s account of *parrēsia* could also be called a genealogy of political rationality understood as a process of subjectivation.

Whilst, in these last few lecture series, ‘political rationality’ has not ceased referring to a regime of knowledge that conditions governmental conduct (see, e.g., Foucault’s assertion that, for Plato, “it is not necessarily or inevitably as the statement of what political action must be, it is not, if you like, as political program, as intrinsic political rationality that philosophy in its truth-telling has a role to play in politics”) the term is now also inserted into the analysis of forms of subjectivation and has become, as something of a synonym of *parrēsia*, inseparable from the genealogy of subjectivity.¹¹³

XV

If, following Deleuze, one approaches Foucault’s thought through the theme of rationality, what comes into view is the scandalous project that all of his works contribute to: the history of rationality, which is always already the history of its constitutive exclusions and therefore *inherently and irrevocably political*.

When considered in relation to Foucault's thought as a whole, the term 'political rationality' alone gives rise to a three-tiered critical programme that one might term, with Foucault, the "historical analysis of our political rationality": 1. An *archaeological* history of those regimes of knowledge and those forms of veridiction that produce the division between the rational and the irrational.¹¹⁴ This archaeology would isolate those discursive practices and historical conditions that made it possible for reason to circumscribe the domain proper to itself and to set itself apart from its 'Other,' that is, from unreason. It would document, in other words, the historical conditions of possibility that rendered singular moments in "the endless, multiple bifurcation" of reason possible.¹¹⁵ 2. A *genealogical* history of the intersection between politics and rationality. This genealogy would document the dynamics of exclusion that are made possible by the 'othering' of unreason. The rationale of such a genealogy would be close to Wendy Brown's genealogy of the relation between masculinity and politics: like the latter, it would ask "[w]hat counts as political and what is excluded from politics, what is considered pernicious, threatening, or inappropriate to politics,"¹¹⁶ but it would index this to rationality, rather than to masculinity—even though it would doubtlessly uncover that "constructions of manhood" are historically indivisibly related to "formulations of [...] rationality."¹¹⁷ Such a genealogy would not involve tracing the exclusions made possible by constructions of rationality in general, but would rather question *historically determinate* forms of political rationality. 3. A genealogy of modes of subjection. This genealogy would record how the subject has been incited to relate to herself *as a rational subject*; how, to rephrase, the subject is made to work on herself in order to conform to a standard of rationality and because she is purportedly rational. The manner in which this process always involves the active participation of the subject has been interrogated incisively by Judith Butler, who, in a reading of Foucault, insists that in any moment of subjection

[t]here will be a reflexive action of a subject, and this action will be occasioned by the very rationality to which it attempts to conform or, at least, with which it negotiates. This form of rationality will foreclose others, so that one will become knowable to oneself only within the terms of a given rationality, historically conditioned, leaving open and unaddressed what other ways there may have been, or may well yet be, in the course of history.¹¹⁸

That these forms of subjection are always thoroughly political does not escape

Butler. Whenever I, in my becoming of a subject, negotiate a certain form of rationality, “I am also putting power to work in discourse, using it, distributing it, becoming the site for its relay and replication.”¹¹⁹ At stake, in other words, is the point of contact between external rationalities, whose mode of existence is historical, and internal techniques of the self, which are ethical (and therewith inescapably political).

XVI

The history of political rationality is inevitably an history of political rationality’s ‘Others,’ that is, a history of exclusions: the exclusions from the *polis* that the intersection between politics and rationality has produced—and that philosophy had no small part in legitimising—are legion. The exclusion from politics proper of all non-philosophers in Plato’s ideal state, and the exclusion of all women and slaves in Aristotle’s *Politics* are, in this sense, only two paradigms for what, across the long history of Western political rationality, would unfold as a sheer endless list of categories of the irrational, themselves products of discourse, that could, as categories, be excluded by determinate political rationalities. Such a list features, in different times and places, the mentally ill, the non-male (or non-masculine), the poor, the colonised, the incarcerated, the non-human, the enslaved, the non-Western, the non-white, the uneducated, the non-economic, the under-aged, and so forth.

XVII

Yet the history of political rationality is not only an history of oppression, but it is also a preamble to resistance, for its three lines come together to form the possibility of emancipation. If the subject is not a passive recipient of power but is implicated in its distribution and application, it follows that she can also relate *critically* to the terms set by dominant forms of rationality. This, of course, is the work of ethics—which Foucault also calls “spirituality”¹²⁰—and is made possible by genealogy, which, says Foucault, “will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think” that he also calls “the undefined work of freedom.”¹²¹ Such resistance to forms of rationality does not, as I have already pointed out, imply that one ought to embrace irrationality or champion unreason; rather, it involves mechanisms of disidentification with what are revealed to be historical—and therefore always precarious—constructions of rationality.¹²²

This is not to say that resistance to political rationality is simple, or indeed that it is always possible. After all, as Foucault says in a 1984 interview, at times “one is faced with what may be called a state of domination [*état de domination*]. In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited.”¹²³ This, no doubt, is often the case for those who have been assigned the role of the radically irrational and therefore unpolitical. Foucault goes on to conclude from this “that liberation [*la libération*] is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of freedom.”¹²⁴ Here one catches a glimpse—a rare one, to be sure—of Foucault imagining a more fundamental mode of resistance; a mode of resistance that precedes the practice of freedom and, in this sense, ethics.

XVIII

It is now possible to grasp the scandal contained in the concluding paragraph of “*Omnes et Singulatim*.” Foucault’s insistence that “[l]iberation can come only from attacking [...] political rationality’s very roots” proves to refer back to an accusation levelled as much at modern articulations of power as at traditional forms of philosophy, which have produced and upheld the ‘othering’ of unreason.¹²⁵ These words call for nothing less than a history of rationality’s exclusions, and, what is more, for the upheaval of the entire machinery that the articulation of politics and rationality gives rise to.

It follows that it is not enough to document the genealogies of determinate political rationalities, even if such documentation is among the core elements of the critical history of political rationality. The genealogy of neoliberalism, e.g., may assist in combating its particular effects (technologies of debt and austerity, logics of sacrifice, determinate processes of de-democratisation, etc.) but in terms of political rationality all it can do is denaturalise neoliberal constructions of the rational subject. Yet even if one were to succeed at knocking the neoliberal subject off the stage of political rationality, the gap it leaves behind will doubtlessly be filled by other constructions of (political) rationality. Wendy Brown’s insistence that, for this reason, the Left requires a “counterrationality,” that is, “a different figuration of human beings, citizenship, economic life, and the political” is problematic precisely because no such counterrationality can hope to succeed unless it includes an articulation of rationality, in which case it must reproduce political rationality’s constitutive exclusions.¹²⁶

It seems to me that what Foucault's words point toward is that only the attempt at *disarticulating* politics and rationality can put a stop to political rationality's sinister reign over the destiny of Western politics. Attacking political rationality's very roots would mean, in this view, launching a critique of the ways in which Western philosophy has pegged politics to man's rationality (and, *vice versa*, his rationality to his political inclination) in order to make possible a fundamentally different understanding of the subject and the *polis*. This would involve not "cast[ing] the blame on reason in general," which Foucault warns against in "*Omnes et Singulatim*,"¹²⁷ but a historico-philosophical critique of the mechanism by which the exercise of power was destined towards reason. This is an arduous philosophical task, the stakes of which are high and the urgency of which is great.

XIX

It might be useful, by way of conclusion, to connect the reading of Foucault forwarded here to Giorgio Agamben's philosophical project as developed in the *Homo Sacer* series.

Indeed, when foregrounded in the manner here attempted, Foucault's call to arms at the end of "*Omnes et Singulatim*" anticipates the main objectives of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project. Thus, in the epilogue to *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben writes:

The archaeology of politics that was in question in the "Homo Sacer" project did not propose to critique or correct this or that concept, this or that institution of Western politics. The issue was rather to call into question the place and the very originary structure of politics, in order to try to bring to light the *arcanum imperii* that in some way constituted its foundation and that had remained at the same time fully exposed and tenaciously hidden in it.¹²⁸

What he has attempted, in other words, is to uncover the moments at which the Western tradition has sought to define, capture, and destine the human so that these moments may be "deactivated [*disattivato*]" with a view to "liberating [*liberando*] living human beings from every biological and social destiny and every predetermined task."¹²⁹

It is inviting to view Agamben's project as taking up the aporias (as he might say) concerning the nexus of politics and rationality that Foucault left unresolved af-

ter his death. To be sure, in the concluding section of the first volume of *Homo Sacer*, Agamben expresses his doubts about the political potential carried by Foucault's understanding of biopolitics, saying:

At the end of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, having distanced himself from the sex and sexuality in which modernity, caught in nothing other than a deployment of power, believed it would find its own secret and liberation [*liberazione*], Foucault alludes to a 'different economy of bodies and pleasures' as a possible horizon for a different politics. The conclusions of our study force us to be more cautious.¹³⁰

Here Agamben has in mind the danger that inheres in grounding a politics in the body, which "is always already a biopolitical body and bare life, and nothing in it or the economy of its pleasure seems to allow us to find solid ground on which to oppose the demands of sovereign power."¹³¹

However, in an essay entitled "Absolute Immanence," which was published the year after *Homo Sacer* first appeared, Agamben gestures towards a very different reading of Foucault. There, at the heart of Foucault's essay, "Life: Experience and Science" (which is a slightly edited version of his introduction to Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*), Agamben finds the tentative makings of "a philosophical task" that revolves around dislocating the theme of transcendence that has haunted Occidental thought since the classics.¹³² In the passage in question—already discussed briefly above—Foucault claims that the work of Canguilhem, that "historian of rationalities," allows for the reformulation of "the whole theory of the subject."¹³³ That is, it holds out the possibility of a philosophy not dependent on a transcendental theme; a philosophy that, in this sense, is the polar opposite of the axis of modern philosophy that, in the twentieth century, culminated in phenomenology. Writes Foucault:

Although phenomenology brought the body, sexuality, death, and the perceived world into the field of analysis, the *cogito* remained central to it; neither the rationality of science nor the specificity of the life sciences could compromise its founding role. In opposition to this philosophy of meaning, the subject, and lived experience, Canguilhem has proposed a philosophy of error, of the concept of the living, as a different way of approaching the notion of life.¹³⁴

Note that, in a complete reversal of his position in the first volume of *History of Sexuality*, Foucault here ascribes the twin thematics of the body and sexuality to the philosophy of transcendence, linking them to the centrality of the *cogito* instead of investing his hopes in them.

Commenting on this passage, Agamben writes that

what is at issue here is [...] something like a new experience that necessitates a general reformulation of the relations between truth and the subject and that, nevertheless, concerns the specific area of Foucault's research. Tearing the subject from the terrain of the *cogito* and consciousness, this experience roots it in life.¹³⁵

He sees in this text—the last text Foucault authored before he passed away, which therefore, for Agamben, has a “testamentary” quality—a glimpse of “the coming philosophy,” one “that has freed itself of all cognition and intentionality.”¹³⁶ The first step in this trajectory of philosophical liberation, however, is “to embark on a genealogical enquiry into the term ‘life.’”¹³⁷

These remarks summarise the stakes of the *Homo Sacer* project. Genealogically, Agamben has sought to demonstrate that “Western politics has [...] been conceived as the collective assumption of a historical task (of a ‘work’) on the part of a people or a nation. This political task coincided with a metaphysical task, that is, the realization of man as rational living being.”¹³⁸ Politically and philosophically, he has sought to articulate “a politics that corresponds to the inactivity of man, one which is determined, that is, not simply and absolutely beginning from the being-at-work of human rationality, but from a working that exposes and contains in itself the possibility of its own not existing, of its own inactivity.”¹³⁹

When the Foucault presented in “Absolute Immanence,” and not the one presented in the first volume of the *Homo Sacer* series, is viewed as Agamben's point of departure, it becomes possible to view the entire project less as an attempt to ‘correct’ Foucault's work and more as the pursuit of a philosophical task that Foucault left as his final “inheritance.”¹⁴⁰ What, indeed, is the *Homo Sacer* project if not an attack on the roots of political rationality with the objective of liberating humanity from its own biopolitical destiny? What is Agamben's work if not the attempt to articulate the ‘critique of political reason’ that the subtitle to Foucault's Tanner Lectures had gestured towards?

In recent years a large body of literature has amassed that faults Agamben for making claims that are too grand to be analytically useful and for proposing too radical a politics. Oftentimes, such critiques juxtapose Agamben's ostensibly grandiloquent philosophy to Foucault's more nuanced analyses. Paul Patton, for instance, writes that "[w]here Foucault pursues a historical inquiry into the different conceptions of the purpose, objects, methods, and instruments that have informed the exercise of political government since the seventeenth century, Agamben prefers to subsume all under a single amorphous concept of biopolitics."¹⁴¹ And: "the difference between [Agamben's] approach and that of Foucault is not so much a matter of correction and completion as a choice between epochal concepts of biopolitics and bare life and a more fine-grained, contextual, and historical analysis intended to enable specific and local forms of escape from the past."¹⁴²

Interesting to my own purposes is that many such critiques of Agamben come from the very same authors who, in the 1980s and 1990s, formed the phalanx of the 'governmentality studies' approach. What is more, they routinely disparage Agamben for lacking a sufficiently precise methodological 'toolbox'; a toolbox that, unsurprisingly, consists of the methods and concepts they spent their careers fashioning out of Foucault's writings, including, crucially, the concept of political rationality. Thomas Lemke, for example, published a critique of Agamben in 2005, contending that "the social dynamics of the relations between bare life and political existence, between technologies of the self and political rationalities, remain theoretically underdeveloped in Agamben's work."¹⁴³ In 2011 he released another salvo, claiming that Agamben's "notion of life remains curiously static and ahistorical."¹⁴⁴ This is problematic, in Lemke's view, because it consists of a betrayal of Foucault: "Agamben's attempt to correct and amend Foucault," he writes, "abandons the latter's central insight, namely, that biopolitics is a historical phenomenon."¹⁴⁵ Nikolas Rose and Paul Rabinow similarly write that whilst Agamben's work is provocative, "we need a more nuanced account of power, and of sovereign power, to analyse contemporary rationalities and technologies of biopolitics."¹⁴⁶ Colin Gordon, finally, recently remarked that Agamben's work on biopolitics "has little to do with whatever is distinctive about Foucault's work and also does not seem to be very productive except as doxology or theology."¹⁴⁷

Mitchell Dean, for his part, has faulted Agamben for lacking the capacity to analyse politics in terms of "a series of discontinuous, contestable mobilizations

of different rationalities and practices” and preferring the “worthy and mighty topics of sovereignty and law.”¹⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he repeats this critique, noting that rather than offering a ‘tool box,’ as Foucault does, “Agamben offers us something like a ‘jewel box’ containing the most perfect, attentive analyses and the most lapidary of theses. One can admire and display these gems,” he goes on, “but only in their uniqueness. They are very hard, if not impossible, to apply and use, and to reproduce.”¹⁴⁹ Dean goes on to assail Agamben’s “radical politics,” preferring to articulate a different “way of playing the game of orderability” over a complete overturning of the Western “machine of domination.”¹⁵⁰

As these quotes show, the attempt to juxtapose Foucault to Agamben by devotees of the former tends to rely precisely upon the analytically formalistic and politically tame reception of Foucault that lies at the heart of the ‘governmentality studies’ literature. I have tried to read him in a different manner, looking for moments where he speaks in a voice more radical and emancipatory than we are accustomed to; moments that signal a continuity between Foucault’s work and Agamben’s rather than a betrayal of the former by the latter. I have contended that when approached through the notion of ‘political rationality,’ Foucault’s work yields the makings of a radical critique of the exclusions upon which the historical nexus between politics and rationality rests. Whether Foucault had such a project in mind or instead spoke of ‘liberation’ in an unguarded moment is both impossible to ascertain and of little consequence. His thought provides the tools and the impetus for the great and urgent philosophical work of thinking the political subject in a radically different way. Let this be the clandestine aspiration of Foucaultian critique.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to Tim Huzar for feedback on an earlier version of this article and to German Primera, without whose interlocution many of the ideas presented here would never have occurred to me.
2. Michel Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*”: Toward a Critique of Political Reason,” included in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, vol. 3: Power*, translated by R. Hurley and others, edited by J.D. Faubion. London: Penguin, 2000, 298-325.
3. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 307-311; cf. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by M. Senellart. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 [2004], 128-129.
4. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 325. Cf. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” included in *Essential Works of Foucault, vol. 3*, 326-348, 332.
5. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 298. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, translated by L. Hochroth & C. Porter, edited by S. Lotringer. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 1997; Michel Foucault, “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism,” included in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, translated R. Hurley and others, edited by J.D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 1998, 433-456.
6. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 298-299.
7. Foucault uses the terms (or concepts) “reason” and “rationality” interchangeably in “*Omnes et Singulatim*” and elsewhere. This is not simply a slip of the tongue (or pen) or an equivocation on his part. Rather, as Judith Revel argues, “la confusion raison/rationalité est précisément l’un des mécanismes de pouvoir qu’il s’agit de décrire.” (Judith Revel, *La vocabulaire de Foucault*. Paris: Ellipses, 2002, 52.)
8. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 325.
9. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 313.
10. Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method,” included in *Essential Works of Foucault, vol. 3*, 223-238, 229-230. Cf. Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 329; Michel Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité: Cours au Collège de France, 1980-1981*, edited by F. Gros. Paris, Gallimard-Seuil, 2014, 246ff.
11. Colin Gordon, (1980) “Afterword,” included in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, translated by C. Gordon et al., edited by C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, 229-259, 240.
12. Gordon, “Afterword,” 257-258.
13. Hubert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1983 [1982], 259.
14. Paul Rabinow, (1984) “Introduction,” included in Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, 3-29, 18.
15. For discussions of this body of literature, see e.g. Colin Gordon, “Governmentality Studies Observed: Interview with Colin Gordon by Aldo Avellaneda and Guillermo Vega,” *Foucault News* (Dec 2015). Online at: <https://foucaultnews.com/2015/12/11/governmentality-studies-observed-interview-with-colin-gordon-by-aldo-avellaneda-and-guillermo-vega-2015/>; Thomas Lemke, “Neoliberalismus, Staat und Selbsttechnologien: Ein kritischer Überblick über die *governmentality studies*,” *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 41 (2000) 1, 31-47; Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2012, ch. 5.
16. See Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd edition. London & New York: Free Association Books, 1999 [1989], 273n4.

17. Rose, *Governing the Soul*, x.
18. Peter Miller & Nikolas Rose, "Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government," *The British Journal of Sociology*, 43 (1992) 2, 173-205, 178. Reprinted as chapter 3 of Peter Miller & Nikolas Rose *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Political Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.
19. See also Peter Miller & Nikolas Rose, "Governing Economic Life," *Economy and Society*, 19 (1990) 1, 1-31; Peter Miller & Nikolas Rose, "Political Rationalities and Technologies of Government," included in *Texts, Contexts, Concepts: Studies on Politics and Power in Language*, edited by S. Hänninen & K. Palonen. Jyväskylä: Finnish Political Science Association, 1990, 166-183.
20. Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994, 5.
21. Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, 2nd edition. London: SAGE, 2010 [1999], 16.
22. Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories*, 182.
23. Dean, *Governmentality*, 25.
24. Thomas Lemke, *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft: Foucaults Analyse der modernen Gouvernementalität*. Hamburg: Argument, 1997, 147. Translations given are my own.
25. Lemke, *Eine Kritik*, 146n21.
26. Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 81, emphasis added. Lemke similarly relies upon the distinction between 'governing' and 'mentality' in Lemke, "Neoliberalismus, Staat und Selbsttechnologien" and Thomas Lemke, "'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality," *Economy and Society* 30 (2001) 2, 190-207.
27. In addition to the works already referenced, see also the following: Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne & Nikolas Rose (eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996; Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann & Thomas Lemke (eds.), *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*. New York & London: Routledge, 2011; Mitchell Dean, & Barry Hindess (eds.), *Governing Australia: Studies in Contemporary Rationalities of Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Barry Hindess, "Knowledge and Political Reason," included in *Foucault*, edited by R. Nola. London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998, 63-84.
28. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by M. Senellart. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 [2004]. For good discussions of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, see Serge Audier, *Penser le 'néolibéralisme': Le moment néolibéral, Foucault et la crise du socialisme*. Lormont: Le bord de l'eau, 2015; Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," included in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, 1-51; Keith Tribe, "The Political Economy of Modernity: Foucault's Collège de France Lectures of 1978 and 1979," *Economy and Society* 38 (2009) 4, 679-698.
29. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 94.
30. See, for example, Barry et al., *Foucault and Political Reason*; Dean, *Governmentality*; Lars Gertenbach, *Die Kultivierung des Markets: Foucault und die Gouvernementalität des Neoliberalismus*. Berlin: Parodos, 2010, Lemke, *Eine Kritik*; Lemke, "'The birth of biopolitics'."
31. Gordon, "Governmental Rationality." For a discussion of the history of the reception of Foucault's lectures on the *Birth of Biopolitics*, see Audier, *Penser le 'néolibéralisme.'*
32. See especially Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books, 2015, chs. 2-3.

33. See especially Wendy Brown, “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” *Theory & Event* 7 (2003) 1, reprinted as *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, ch. 3; Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism and De-Democratization,” *Political Theory* 34 (2006) 6, 690-714; Brown, Undoing the Demos; Wendy Brown, “Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics,” *Constellations* 23 (2016) 1, 3-14.
34. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 17.
35. Brown, *Edgework*, 141n1.
36. Brown, “American Nightmare,” 693.
37. See especially *Undoing the Demos*, 115-116.
38. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 116.
39. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 118.
40. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 121.
41. E.g. Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books, 2010; Wendy Brown, “‘We Are All Democrats Now...’,” included in Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Daniel Bensaid, Wendy Brown, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, Kristin Ross & Slavoj Žižek, *Democracy in What State?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011 [2009], 44-57.
42. As, for instance, Audier argues in *Penser le ‘néolibéralisme.’*
43. Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History*. Princeton, NJ & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, 114.
44. See e.g. Brown, *Edgework*, 37.
45. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 48.
46. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 117-118.
47. E.g. Pierre Dardot & Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*, translated by G. Elliott. London & New York: Verso, 2013 [2009]. Interestingly, Dardot and Laval inherit from Brown the peculiar use of ‘political rationality,’ even collapsing the terms ‘political rationality’ and ‘governmentality’ in a way remarkably similar to Brown.
48. E.g. Étienne Balibar, *Citizenship*, translated by T. Scott-Railton. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015 [2012], ch. 7; Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017; Myriam Revault d’Allonnes, *Pourquoi nous n’aimons pas la démocratie*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2010.
49. Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2015.
50. See, e.g., the contributions by Anne Barren and Alen Toplišek to the review symposium on *Undoing the Demos* published in *European Political Science* 16 (2017) 2, 263-289; Honig, *Public Things*, ch. 1; Sam Chambers, “Undoing Neoliberalism: *Homo Economicus*, *Homo Politicus*, and the *Zōon Politikon*,” *Critical Inquiry*, forthcoming.
51. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 28.
52. Brown, *Politics Out of History*, 116.
53. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, translated by R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 [1976], 82.
54. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, translated by S. Hand. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988 [1986]; Gilles Deleuze, “What is a *Dispositif*?,” included in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, translated by T.J. Armstrong, edited by F. Ewald. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992 [1989], 159-168; Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, translated by M. Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995 [1990].

55. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 84.
56. See e.g. Michel Foucault, "Foucault," included in *Essential Works of Foucault*, vol. 2, 459-463.
57. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 60.
58. See e.g. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, translated by R. Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1985 [1984], 3-13; Foucault, "The Subject and Power."
59. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 114.
60. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 96.
61. Deleuze, "What is a *Dispositif*?" 162.
62. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 326.
63. In *Foucault*, Deleuze argues a very similar point, but uses the term "thought" (*la pensée*) rather than "reason" (*raison*): "In truth, one thing haunts Foucault – thought [*la pensée*]. [...] He writes a history, but a history of thought as such. To think means to experiment and to problematize. Knowledge, power and the self are the triple root of a problematization of thought." (Deleuze, *Foucault*, 116; cf. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 95-96.)
64. Michel Foucault, "Introduction," included in Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, translated by C.R. Fawcett. New York: Zone Books, 1991 [1966], 23. See also Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism"; Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," included in *Essential Works of Michel Foucault* vol. 3, 239-297, 255f.
65. Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism," 438.
66. See e.g. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, translated by J. Murphy & J. Khalfa, edited by J. Khalfa. New York & London: Routledge, 2006 [1961], 89.
67. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, translated by A.M. Sheridan. London & New York: Routledge, 1970 [1966].
68. Foucault, "Introduction," 23.
69. Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 255.
70. Jürgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," included in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, edited by D.C. Hoy. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, 103-108, 108.
71. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by F. Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 [1985], 286, 276.
72. Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," included in *The Essential Works of Foucault* vol. 3, 349-364, 358.
73. Jacques Derrida, J. (1978 [1967]) *Writing and Difference*, translated by A. Bass. London & New York: Routledge, 1978 [1967], 41-42.
74. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 42.
75. Foucault, *History of Madness*, 576.
76. Foucault, *History of Madness*, 577-578. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. London & New York: Routledge, 1972 [1969], part V.
77. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," included in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by R. Young. Boston, MA & London: Routledge, 1981 [1970], 64.
78. Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," 64.
79. Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," 65.
80. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 214.
81. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 214.
82. See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 203ff.
83. Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by M. Senellart. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014 [2012], 12.

84. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 95.
85. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 285-286.
86. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 286.
87. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 287.
88. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 287.
89. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 287.
90. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 287.
91. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 12.
92. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 115. But see also her caveat on 116: "Political rationality came late and sparely in Foucault's work."
93. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 317.
94. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 96.
95. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 17.
96. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 17.
97. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," included in *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol. 1: *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, translated by R. Hurley and others, edited by P. Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997, 253-280, 266.
98. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 48, 73.
99. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by F. Gros. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005 [2001], 16.
100. Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 264.
101. Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," 358.
102. Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité*, 246. My translation.
103. Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 320.
104. Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 322, 323.
105. Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 447.
106. Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by F. Gros. New York: Picador, 2010 [2008], 43.
107. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 157.
108. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 167.
109. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 191.
110. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 219.
111. See also Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth (The Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by F. Gros. New York: Picador, 2011 [2008], 86.
112. Foucault, *Courage of the Truth*, 10.
113. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 288.
114. Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," included in *The Essential Works of Foucault vol. 3*, 403-417, 416.
115. Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism," 442.
116. Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988, 4. Of passing interest to the present inquiry is that Brown's piercing feminist critique of the political-philosophical tradition in fact mobilises the term "political rationality" and, furthermore, does so in a manner reminiscent of the two ways Foucault uses it in "*Omnes et Singulatim*." Thus, in the introduction to *Manhood and Politics*, she claims that Aristotle's political writings (the first of her three case studies) develop "a political rationality to facilitate [the]

domination” of the natural necessities of life (p. 5). A mere two sentences later she asserts that in Machiavelli’s time (the second case study), “[p]olitical rationality has grown more forthrightly instrumental” (p. 5). That her text shifts – in the space of three sentences – between “political rationality” in the determinate sense and in the general sense may once more be seen as an indication of political rationality’s abstruse nature.

117. Brown, *Manhood and Politics*, 4. See also Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, chs. 6-7.

118. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 120.

119. Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 125.

120. Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” included in *The Essential Works of Foucault vol. 1*, 281-301, 294. See also Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

121. Foucault, *Politics of Truth*, 114.

122. For a powerful discussion of such mechanisms of dis-identification as resistance, see for instance Judith Revel, “Between Politics and Ethics: The Question of Subjectivation,” included in *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, edited by Laura Cremonesi, Orazio Irrera, Daniele Lorenzini & Martina Tazzioli. London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 163-174.

123. Foucault, “Ethics of the Concern of the Self,” 283.

124. Foucault, “Ethics of the Concern of the Self,” 283.

125. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 325.

126. Brown, *Edgework*, 59. See also Chambers, “Undoing Neoliberalism”: “one can challenge the hegemony of [neoliberal] rationality only through the production of a distinct rationality.”

127. Foucault, “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 324.

128. Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV*, 2, translated by A. Kotsko. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016 [2014], 263.

129. Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 277, 278.

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