Updated 20/01/26

Study Notes for Michel Foucault's *"Society Must Be Defended"* (Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76)

Lectures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 11

Let me begin these Study Notes by asking you to consider a painting:

Above is an 1886 painting by Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1911) depicting the French psychiatrist, Dr. Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), releasing the mentally ill from their chains at the Salpêtrière asylum in the heart of Paris in 1795. Almost a century after the famous events in the history of medicine that are pictured here, Robert-Fleury idealizes and sentimentalizes his subject (a male physician and his female patient). Yet his painting tells us a great deal, more perhaps than it in fact realizes.

In his painting, Robert-Fleury recalls the moment when Dr. Pinel, said to be the father of modern psychiatry, orders the release of women who were imprisoned in the Paris asylum because they were considered to be "mad." Once enchained and abandoned, the mentally ill women are now unshackled–not free to leave the asylum, but no longer treated like caged animals. The Salpêtrière asylum was in fact where women who were "delinquent" were regularly sent: some were living with significant mental illness, but others were petty criminals, impoverished, deemed to be immoral, unruly, or simply "different," women who refused to reproduce the culture's normative expectations of them as women. In other words, the asylum was a kind of collection bin for women who didn't "fit in." The asylum continued to function in this way long after Enlightenment physicians like Dr. Pinel freed its inmates, as we will see in another painting reproduced below. The chains disappeared yet women continued to be admitted in numbers to the asylum, where they were both confined <u>and</u> closely observed and analyzed. Once locked up and forgotten, these women now find themselves living in a kind of display case, i.e., made available to observation and assessment by medical authorities. Notice how the painting is also caught up in this labour of looking, compelling <u>you</u> to be a spectator of illness and suffering.

To be sure, a major sign of the immense and consequential progress in medicine in the Enlightenment is the liberation of the "mad" from being abandoned to the dungeons of the asylums. But what does it mean to be "liberated"? Foucault always argues that terms like these need to be worried. (In our course Primo Levi too will ask what it really means to be "liberated," in his case "freed" from the murderous conditions of a Nazi death camp. But what world was I "liberated" into?, he in effect asks, given that I am a stateless person, my citizenship stripped of me, my friends and family murdered. What world am I "liberated" into when that same world is the one in which the death camps happened and were allowed to happen? What world am I "liberated" into when I was raised to believe in Enlightenment values of progress, education, knowledge, and rationality only to discover that none of those values withstood the onslaught of Nazi murderousness . . . and may, in fact, have colluded with that murderousness? Germany, after all, considered itself to be the most "cultured" nation on the planet, and was home to leading scientists, physicians, engineers, not to mention artists . . . and yet this was the same nation that democratically elected the Nazi regime into power and that subsequently supported the "Protection Laws" and "Nuremburg Laws" that gave racism and anti-Semitism a legal-constitutional basis.) Note that the "mad" in this painting are shown being released into the hands of a rather paternalizing physician who treats these women as objects of careful scrutiny and control. Why is the physician unchaining the women? First, to relieve their suffering and to treat them as treatable, i.e., as worthy of medical help; second, to reinforce the idea that worldly, knowledgeable, and compassionate men are the ones who are uniquely positioned to save women from themselves; and third, to better to

understand the symptoms and etiology of "insanity" not only, on the front lines, to treat the mentally ill but also to feed into the French State's growing thirst for demographic knowledge of the lives of citizens, i.e., knowledge about how, at the level of populations, the life of a society can be enhanced, secured, and made orderly, productive, and, above all, *legible to power.* Where once the state was happy to abandon these women to the isolation of a kind of prison, now they are to be brought into the full light of understanding. Where once they were cast-offs, now they prove important to the state's understanding of what accounts for illness, the better to manage both individuals and populations. So are Dr. Pinel's actions for the benefit of the women or for the benefit of the State? A benign gesture by an enlightened physician turns out to be more complicated than the stories told about him, including the idealizing story told in this painting. In the Eleventh Lecture, Foucault will famously call the knowledge that Dr. Pinel extracts from his patients--and that the state will then put to good use--"**biopower**." When the state develops mechanisms that puts *biopower* to use, those mechanisms are called **"biopolitics."** Foucault develops a historical methodology that allows us to see something unexpected in this painting. In his work on "the history of madness in the age of reason" (the subtitle of Foucault's 1961 book, based on his doctoral thesis), he argues that the enchainment of the mentally ill is not, strictly speaking, followed by freedom . . . but rather is replaced by another and more "refined" kind of enchainment. That is not to say that the ill aren't being treated or treated humanely; it is only to acknowledge that treatment, like every other practice of knowledge, is imbued with power, not least because power of the sort that thrums through Enlightenment society requires bodies to be certain kinds of bodies: at once compliant and visible. Although this painting depicts a scene specifically in the asylum, it also represents French society as a whole, a society now dedicated to ensuring that all bodies are legible to power: the woman we see at the centre of the painting is also us, as it were, a body that is brightly lit, partly naked, and vulnerable in the face of normalizing authority, i.e., authority that determines *on her behalf* what it means to be "normal," to "fit in," "to play along," to be a "woman," to be "respectable" and not to be causing "any trouble." The painting, in other words, holds a kind of mirror up to Enlightenment society, a mirror that reinforces the idea that surveillance and regulation are only benign and helpful. The painting gives viewers permission to congratulate themselves on the creation of a regulated, orderly society, one central sign of which is that the "mad" are managed, sorted, segregated, and understood. What then do you make of the fact that it is a male physician and his male subordinates who release the female patients, one of which kisses his hand as a sign of her gratefulness? The women in this painting are "released" into a world, after all, that is increasingly devoted to extracting from "delinquents" and the "abnormal" the keys to consolidating an orderly and normative society, both on the ground and from the point of view of the population. Women in particular are compelled to feel this normalizing power very sharply; and, as Mary Wollstonecraft argues in the same year that this painting was completed, women are thereby "rendered," i.e., fashioned from birth into strange types of human beings, creatures primarily to be looked at (by men and by women trained only to think about being looked at by men), creatures who have been made into harmless and inert "dolls." Are those women not also prisoners?, Wollstonecraft asks. Schooled into believing that they "lack" the rational powers of men, women are in some sense "mad," i.e., not in

possession of their faculties. As Wollstonecraft says, women are not born without the capacity to reason but they are brought up on a society that schools reason out of them. Women are manufactured by a highly normative society to be passive spectators of society rather than active participants. In fact, from the point of view of the law, they are not even "persons." In that sense, Wollstonecraft introduces an insight into the nature of power that Foucault would only elaborate almost two hundred years later: power not only represses, not only restrains; power also *creates*. To use Wollstonecraft's sobering word, power *renders* women into very particular kinds of human beings, "fit" for the home but "unfit" for social and political life. It creates subjects that are peculiarly available to probing scrutiny. (You might consider the twisty paradox here: women are rendered into creatures without reason, i.e., mostly inert and harmless . . . and yet they are subject to enormous, ongoing scrutiny, constantly subject to policing actions governing what they can say and do, what they must look like, and how they must think and feel. That's odd, really odd. As the great Canadian philosopher and historian of science, Ian Hacking, once said, "In every generation there are quite firm rules on how to behave when you are crazy.") Note in this painting how the woman at the centre of the image is uniquely bathed in light, partly disrobed, and oblivious, as if caught in the process of becoming legible to forms of scrutiny over which she has no control. She is shown as having surrendered herself to her illness; but she is also shown as having surrendered herself to the physician. The actual source of that illuminating light is unclear, which makes it seem as if Dr. Pinel is somehow responsible for bringing it into the scene, as if her were on a stage followed by a spotlight.. As for Dr. Pinel himself, he has an odd look on his face–it is as if he is looking *through* his patient, even if the presumptively male viewers of this painting are asked to look *at* the partly naked and vulnerable body of the same woman. Looking *through* the woman captures the use to which women like this one will be put–i.e., as an exemplar, not as an individual. In a sense, she is already a "text-book," less a flesh and blood human being and more a "case study" from which to learn and to generalize. As Foucault notes of Enlightenment France, strictly speaking*, the bourgeoisie doesn't give a damn about the mad* (33) or about delinquents or other kinds of exceptions in society: their main focus is exercising the normalizing forces that are to be applied generally. The "mad" and the "delinquent" are in that sense the means by which to perfect regimes of discipline and regulation applicable to the entire social body. That's why Dr. Pinel is depicted as looking through the patient he is in the process of freeing. Are the women that Wollstonecraft describes, "doll-like" creatures, she says, designed only to serve the interests of men, not also prisoners–not prisoners literally in chains, of the sort that we see Dr. Pinel ordering to be removed, but prisoners of a normalizing society thrumming with ferociously policed notions or ideals of what it means to be a "proper," "healthy," "helpful" woman? Does the scene that Robert-Fleury paints to honour Dr. Pinel's accomplishment depict the liberation of women . . . or merely their transition from one kind of incarceration to another?

Let me then invite you to consider how, in your own lives, disciplinary power is at work, shaping you in quiet and unquiet ways, governing how you think of yourself and others, how you experience your body, sexuality, gender, desires, appetites, thoughts, usefulness, past, and future, i.e., what scripts overwrite you at every turn, holding you accountable to certain ideals about what to think, how to feel,

who or what to want, how you are compelled to make yourself legible to others and to yourself, how, if you go "off-script" or vary from these ideals, you are schooled into feeling moralizing and guilt-inducing forms of judgement–as not good enough, not worthy enough, not happy enough, not productive enough, how you are not only highly regulated but are taught to spend enormous energies regulating yourself. Now, it is important to recall that Foucault never doubted that mental illness was real. People do live with all sorts of mental illnesses, some of them debilitating, many of which respond well to treatments even if their origins continue to remain unclear. What interests Foucault, and the painter, Robert-Fleury, is how women in particular are *administered* under the guise of being deemed to be an "outlier," "unfit," and "a trouble-maker," i.e., not conforming to certain societal expectations. Foucault gave his lectures–and this is a point to which I will return–when it was well known that the Soviet government regularly locked dissidents away in mental hospital wards. They thereby weaponized psychiatry as an instrument of social and political control. What fascinates Foucault is how a society at large functions as a vast, interlocking disciplinary machine.

Let's now consider another painting, Pierre Aristide André Brouillet's *A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière* (1887).[1]

We are back at the Salpêtrière asylum in Paris, but a hundred years later than the scene depicted in the previous painting. The influential French neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), is shown

[1] An interesting essay topic would be to analyze this particular genre of paintings, i.e., medical scenes, which would include two masterpieces: Rembrandt's 1632 *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* and Francisco de Goya's 1820 *Self Portrait with Dr. Arrieta*. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Anatomy_Lesson_of_Dr._Nicolaes_Tulp#/media/File:Rembrandt_-_The_Anatomy_Lesson_of_Dr_Nicolaes_Tulp.jpg and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-portrait_with_Dr_Arrieta#/media/File:Francisco_Goya_Self-Portrait_with_Dr_Arrieta_MIA_5214.jpg

giving a lecture on "hysteria," an illness–commonly diagnosed in Europe in the 1800s--that inflicted mostly women, women whose various symptoms–body contortions, lameness, blindness, emotional excesses or outbursts–had no discernable neurological cause. Many physicians at the end of the nineteenth century said that these women were pretending to be ill. But Charcot disagreed: he sought to show that his patients were living with a *bona fide* illness, even if its origins remained very unclear. These women possessed, it seemed, psyches that chained them up in their own bodies, bodies that behaved in ways over which they appeared to have no conscious control. Charcot struggled to understand what he was seeing: he arranged to have thousands of photographs of his patients taken in an attempt to document and categorize what he was observing in his female patients. But he gradually comes close to the conclusion that the illness with which his patients are living is not simply "physical" in origin. But where then does it come? If you look carefully at the painting, you can see in the back of the classroom a painting inside this painting, a ghostly image of a naked man suffering from a fatal tetanus infection, his body contorted in silent agony. The physicians attending Charcot's lecture are all turned away from that image–they are now beginning to learn how to look at illness as more or other than having "physical" origins, as is the case with the man with tetanus. (The man with tetanus has suffered an infection from a war-wound, in fact; that painting on the back wall is a version of an earlier painting by Charles Bell–for whom Bell's palsy is named–who, in 1809, painted a remarkable image of a British soldier dying of tetanus.) Yet Charcot's female patients, whose bodies are also often contorted, had no "physical" illness. But as Charcot presented these patients to medical students and fellow physicians, as he is shown doing in this painting (for example, the man in the foreground wearing a white apron and earnestly leaning forward, inviting us as spectators to do the same, is Dr. Georges Gilles de la Tourette, the clinician who first described Tourette's Syndrome in 1885), one young student in particular paid particular attention, namely Sigmund Freud. Freud had considered a career in neurology himself, but it was seeing Charcot's patients and realizing Charcot's puzzlement about them that turned the young Viennese medical student towards psychiatry and towards the practice of psychology that Freud will call "psychoanalysis." (The term itself, in English, was already in use earlier in the 1800s.) Brouillet's painting is contemporaneous with Robert-Fleury's painting of Dr. Pinel. They each depict a scenes of a physician treating women at the same institution, but moments in time that are a century apart, the first at the end of the 18th century, the second at the end of the 19th. And yet the scenes share some important details: the brightly lit and partly undressed female patient is depicted as pacified, beside herself. In both paintings, the male physician's gaze is not directly *at* the female patient. She is the subject of the physician's focus, yet in both paintings the physician is looking elsewhere. Why?

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Let me turn then to five of Foucault's eleven lectures:

Lecture One: 7 January 1976*

*As usual with Study Notes, italicized terms are terms found in the text, i.e., terms that Foucault uses.

Foucault begins his lectures by considering the immediate material conditions in which he is speaking and teaching. Although his tone is jocular and casual, this opening move is not accidental or incidental. Foucault was always fascinated by the *situatedness* of thinking, meaning the myriad ways in which *what* someone says--especially someone speaking, as Foucault is by this point in his career, from a position of considerable authority--is profoundly caught up in the circumstances in which that person speaks. Indeed, the very idea of offering analyses from some lofty perspective divorced from the complexities of the here and now was for him a mere fantasy–albeit a powerful fantasy, and one with a long history. The discourse or language that claims to speak for everyone because it speaks from no particular place is in Foucault's work a discourse calling for close and careful analysis. That kind of discourse is putting claims of universality to use to <u>mask</u> what is in fact a particular position expressing particular understandings and experiences and demands. Foucault will return to this move several times in his lectures: first, when he questions the explanatory power of "scientific" knowledge, i.e., knowledge that claims that it speaks in a universal language, one shared by all who share allegiance to systematic thinking; second, when Foucault notes that sovereigns, kings, for example, obscure their ascent to power through brute force and luck by claiming to be speaking in the name of universal peace and orderliness, claiming to speak in ways that perfectly align with the hopes and needs of the people. The eighteenth-century philosopher, Rousseau, argues that those who have all the power can't in fact be all-powerful, so they seek another strategy to preserve their authority: they make what is the application of sheer force look lawful, principled, normal, given, and to-be-expected. In Rousseau's words (this is from "The Social Contract"), "The strongest is never strong enough to be master all the time unless he transforms force into right." In *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), Kant is especially sensitive to this ruse, i.e., to the ways in which sovereigns so readily claim to be acting by right (answerable to rational principles) . . . when in fact they are only acting from selfish motives.

Foucault goes on to affirm his responsibilities as a public intellectual and as a faculty member at one of the world's most prestigious universities to share his research directions and findings with others and to do so, as it were, in real time. But, winking at his audience, he notes

that as more and more people come out to hear him speak, so many, in fact, that they fill up adjacent rooms connected through loud-speakers, that he misses closer contact with his students. In a Zoom world, we all know the feeling! In any case, Foucault notes, this strange new classroom only underlines what was always the case, regardless of the size of his classes or how they are being delivered: namely, that he cannot control what happens to his work and his teaching and that he has no wish to do so. Like Avital Ronell points out in *Examined Life* (Where, exactly? What does Ronell say?), part of sharing knowledge and "speaking up" is acknowledging that it will take on a life of its own when it is taken up by others.

After these preliminary remarks about the local constraints on his teaching and learning practice, Foucault turns to the larger setting of humanities and social science research (or "the human sciences," as they are still collectively called today in France). What does that landscape look like? What signs of intellectual insurgency or disruption are making their unruly presence felt in Europe? What are the new futures of scholarship focused specifically on the social and political life of human beings? Foucault acknowledges that he is working in an environment that is for the most part dominated by *all-encompassing and global theories* of social and political life (6), theories that make a claim to scientific rationality, meaning knowledges that possess *a rational structure and whose propositions are the products of verification procedures* (10). Today, many disciplines remain founded on that very claim and derive their considerable authority from it: for example, sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, human geography, and demography. In the universities of Europe in the 1970s, three fields in particular fit into this category: Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Semiology. Semiology, the scientific study of sign systems (i.e., languages in the broadest senses of the term, from the grammar and syntax of particular languages to cybernetic or computer languages), is mentioned only in passing, which is odd, since it was enormously important in European universities when Foucault was a professor. Many thought that in the end, almost all of the human sciences could be answerable to semiology! But it is Marxism and Psychoanalysis that attracts Foucault's most attention here. Marxism is a species of *economics*, he points out, i.e., a systematic and verifiable analysis of the nature and effects of capital; Psychoanalysis, rooted in psychological and medical science, is a systematic and verifiable analysis of the nature and effects of desire and of the unconscious in our lives. Both had enormous sway among the human sciences in Foucault's day, which is a bit hard for us to imagine given how little attention is paid to them in Canadian universities now. (What human sciences today have equivalent influence? What are the *prestige* social sciences and sciences today, i.e., the ones who speak with the most authority? The very fact that Psychoanalysis and Marxism were dominant practices of knowledge in France in the 1970s but have almost no role at all in the Canadian 21st century, puts to us that practices of knowledge are

culturally situated and variable, not fixed, i.e., always subject to normative pressures that value or legitimate one kind of knowledge in one place at one point in time and then not in other places and other times. If you were a graduate student looking for training today in Marxism or Psychoanalysis you would find it quite difficult. That being said, some of the country's most accomplished researchers pursue projects that are pervasively informed by the many branches of psychoanalysis: for example, Deborah Britzman, Distinguished Research Professor at York Univrsity and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, has devoted a lifetime of research into education that is entirely rooted in psychoanalytic insights, which she demonstrates form an enormously clarifying lens through which to understand the difficulties and possibilities of teaching and learning. To be sure, psychoanalytic thinkers, like Marxist thinkers, remain in the minority. The absence of new researchers in these fields helps police them, keeping these fields "silent," under-developed, and marginal. It can be very trying to establish a research profile in de-legitimized practices of knowledge. In this way, a university and a research field are disciplinary machines, designed to reproduce the status quo, research-wise, determining ahead of time what is acceptable, what is deemed to be truly "scientific.")

What Foucault is doing here in these opening moves is what he did all of his life as a theorist–namely, to unsettle the premises of "European" thought and "Western" social and political life *from within*, indeed, from the vantage point of the beating heart of that world. In this way he models a stance that characterizes contemporary critical theory through and through, namely a sustained and pointed *critique* of "Western" ideas of modernity, progress, the concept of the human, institutional practices, disciplinary organizations, power, and knowledge. Contemporary critical theorists continue to learn from his example. That's not to say that Foucault's work isn't without its limitations or, for that matter, problems. But he confirmed for critical theory that the only substantial way forward was to try always to think, teach, and write *against the grain* of founding "Western" ideas and ideals.

Foucault makes two important points at this early stage in the lectures: First, that he is not questioning the explanatory power of these kinds of research (i.e., he is not saying that these human sciences are false or bunk), only asking what happens when any field or practice of knowledge claims first and foremost to be a *science*? (Given the current anti-scientific impetus that thrums through our society–for example, people who deny climate change or the efficacy of vaccines–it seems important to emphasize here that Foucault is not against scientific research; he is interested instead in the ways in which, quite quickly, beginning in the 18th-century, it became a prestige practice of knowledge. Two related points worth raising: First, enormous bodies and practices of thought do not claim any empirical, much less scientific basis: Continental philosophy, literature, and the many forms of Indigenous wisdom are only wildly different

examples. Are these bodies and practices of knowledge somehow less deserving of attention than those describing themselves as "scientific"? Second: what happens when someone tells you that these bodies and practices of knowledge are merely "subjective," i.e., always judged and found wanting when measured against practices of knowledge that claim to be "objective," where "objective" means testable, fact-based, shared, and common-sensical? But consider the narratives that are invented to shore up this normative distinction. For example, the evaluation of "subjective" knowledges is sometimes said to be only "arbitrary"--that is, ungoverned by any principles or conventions, and entirely dependent on the whims of individual researchers and teachers in the field. Evaluating your knowledge of this knowledge is sometimes said to be mostly a matter of discerning what an individual professor is imagined to "want," rather than developing competences in a larger field. The latter kind of evaluation is reserved, the story goes, exclusively for those fields that are "objective." Foucault does not doubt the existence of knowledge that describes itself as "objective;" what interests him is the normative force of the description, how it renders "non-objective" knowledge a lacking, i.e., as "un-proven," as "opinion," not fact, as "untestable" or only arbitrarily measurable, etc..) By asking the question–what happens when a field claims to be "scientific"?-- Foucault helps inaugurate an enormous shift in social and political thought, which, as William Davis puts it, was

> suspicious of the experts' magical absence from their own discoveries. What role did statisticians play in the creation of this thing called "society" that they claimed to know so much about? What power were doctors accruing to themselves to make people "healthy"? What were scientists doing to make "nature" speak with such clarity in their laboratories and papers? ("Destination Unknown" *London Review of Books* 9 June 2022 p. 15)

Second, Foucault notes that practices of knowledge that make a claim to being scientific do so not neutrally or in isolation but by relegating *other* practices of knowledge to a marginal or inferior status. --No assertion of the norm without also declaring what is <u>not</u> normal: that might be a motto for Foucault. *What types of knowledge are you trying to disqualify when you say you are a science?* (10), he asks. For Foucault, knowledge is always saturated with the question of power: in this case, certain disciplines do not disinterestedly describe themselves as *scientific*, i.e., as systematic, rule-governed, and verifiable; they describe themselves as *scientific* by implicitly, if not explicitly, distinguishing themselves from other practices of knowledge that are said to be <u>un</u>-scientific. (Today, what disciplines or practices of knowledge cannot make a claim to be a "science"? Isn't the entire distinction between the "humanities" and the "social sciences"

rooted in one faculty claiming to be scientific and the other declared to be not scientific? What are the consequences of that normative sifting of practices of knowledge on campus?) Foucault wonders aloud here about the ongoing importance of knowledges that the human sciences say are not scientific, or what he calls the *subjugated knowledges . . . knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity* (7). But there are attractive signs of change, Foucault notes, perhaps a it too optimistically . . . evidence of the *reappearance* on the intellectual landscape of *singular, local knowledges, the noncommonsensical knowledges that people have, and which have in a way been left to lie fallow, or even kept at the margins* (8). Foucault points to examples that he has himself been exploring: *the knowledge of the psychiatrized, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, that is parallel to, marginal to, medical knowledge, the knowledge of the delinquent* . . . (7). Foucault here distinguishes between *medical knowledge*, the scientific study of health and illness, on the one hand, and *other* knowledges associated with the mentally ill, for example, the actual experiences of those living with mental illness, in addition to accounts of health care practitioners, who, working at the front lines, as it were, bring normative assumptions to bear on the bodies and souls of their patients that aren't described in the textbooks from which they were taught medicine. Not all subjugated knowledges are emancipatory or progressive; all that they share is that they are not deemed to be *scientific*. What knowledges and understandings, he asks, can we glean from the close and careful examination of the day-to-day practices of staff, families, and patients on psychiatric wards or mental hospitals, knowledges and understandings that are otherwise often obscured because of the emphasis given to the supposed neutrality of *medical knowledge*?

Let me point briefly to an example that an Arts and Science student from a previous year, Rachel Fisman-Guarascio, kindly gave me. Consider the case of the HeLa cell line, the oldest and most widely used cell line in biomedical research. These cells were originally harvested from a cervical cancer patient being treated at Johns Hopkins University in the 1950s. These cells proved to be uniquely durable and prolific and have been extraordinarily useful in research projects, including investigations into various cancers as well as HIV/AIDS. The development of the vaccine for cervical cancer caused by particular strains of HPV depended on this cell line. Seventy years later, Johns Hopkins University makes the HeLa cell line available to qualified researchers at no cost. But Foucault would say that this is only part of the story. For the cells were harvested from a particular person, a black woman named Henrietta Lacks, a mother of five who died of cancer at age 31 in 1951. For many years, the actual origins of the cell line were not acknowledged and indeed the family itself did not know that Lacks' tissue had been used around

the world for scientific and medical research. Her story, and the larger story of the history of the use–often without consent–of black bodies for research and of how blacks are disproportionately susceptible to a host of illnesses, including the cervical cancer that would take Lacks' life, would be examples of subjugated knowledges. What would it mean for, say, a biology class or a class in cell biology, classes devoted to scientificity, to have structured into them the subjugated knowledges that *medical knowledge* often ignores?[2]

Foucault also mentions *the knowledge of the delinquent*. Rather than accepting, for example, a sociologist's account of delinquency as being the most authoritative, Foucault is fascinated by other questions: *Who* gets to declare another person or group of persons to be "delinquent"? What exactly *is* delinquency; and more important, how does the definition of "delinquency" change over time and in different historical and cultural circumstances? What does "delinquency" mean not only in medical or legal or social scientific textbooks but also on the ground, at the moment that someone, declared to be "delinquent," is apprehended by authorities, punished by criminal courts, and subject to imprisonment? What are the species of delinquency? (Foucault paid a great deal of attention to what might be called "sexual delinquency," i.e., sexualities, gender presentations, and sexual practices that were deemed to be perverse, derelict, infectious, and unproductive, in short, <u>abnormal</u>. The lectures that Foucault had delivered in 1974-5, one year prior to "Society Must Be Defended," were in fact entitled *Abnormal*. I wish that we could study these lectures together!) At what point did delinquency change <u>from</u> being a matter of doing certain things, <u>from</u> behaving in particular ways, <u>to</u> being a certain kind of person, i.e., <u>to</u> a specific sort of identity? Foucault discovered that, at a certain point in the 18th and 19th century, "delinquency" shifted from being certain <u>acts</u> to being acts carried out by particular kinds of <u>persons</u>: "delinquency" shifted from what one did to what one was. –An enormous change, and one calling for investigation.) What <u>normative</u> powers or force determine when someone is "a delinquent" as opposed to someone who is "productive," "cooperative," and "fitting in"? What groups are disproportionately assigned the name "delinquent"? Are there moments in history in which delinquency or certain kinds of delinquency suddenly become a particular concern to, for example, schools, the police, or physicians? Which of the human sciences are marshaled around the labour of understanding, grasping, administering, policing, and rendering "the delinquent"? These are all questions that Foucault

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[2] For discussions of Henrietta Lacks' story, and in particular the terribly belated call for finally writing a history of the *subjugated knowledge* surrounding her life and death, see, for example, the 2020 editorial in *Nature*, "Henrietta Lacks: science must right a historical wrong: In Henrietta Lacks's centennial year, researchers must do more to ensure that human cells cannot be taken without consent." https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02494-z

explores at length elsewhere in his work and that, as he says here in his lectures, marks the *reappearance* of knowledges and experiences that are otherwise obscured by the atomic light of the human sciences.

In the background of Foucault's remarks are two other contexts to consider:

First, Foucault was attentive to what was called "the anti-psychiatry" movement in Europe, i.e., a broad-based criticism of psychiatry's claims to be at root an objective and scientifically detached analysis of psychological health and well-being, i.e. a purely medical science. Is such purely scientific and objective treatment of this complex subject possible? That question doesn't interest Foucault nearly as much as another one: What knowledges and experiences of mental health and mental illness are obscured or *subjugated* when priority is given to those knowledges that declare themselves to be "medical"? Some proponents of anti-psychiatry went so far as to say that mental illness did not exist and that the mentally ill were in fact individuals who were declared to be "ill" only because their mentation, their states of mind, didn't fit in, because they were declared to be different from those who were said to be "healthy." Foucault never aligned himself with that more radical element of the anti-psychiatry movement, although he would be the first to agree that certain mental illnesses diagnosed in women--like "hysteria"--did seem to be more about a patriarchal society's need to police women's minds than a pathology in the conventional sense of the term. Could a society make women sick? Could a society that dispossessed women of any kind of agency create women who expressed that condition of dispossession in their very bodies? Quite possibly. Foucault did write extensively, prior to the lectures that we are taking up here, on how the definition of "madness," how it was understood and treated over the course of modern European history, changed, and specifically about how, beginning in the 18th-century, psychiatry or the precursors to psychiatry as a medical specialization were caught up in a larger emphasis on normality and normalization, i.e., enormous pressures brought to bear on individuals to behave in certain prescribed ways. Psychiatry, a discipline that hoped to be entirely helpful and benign, could not help but be coloured by a society that became more and more deeply invested in monitoring and policing conformity to certain prescribed ideals about behavior, thinking, and feeling. What fascinates Foucault, as the rest of his lectures will argue, is the degree to which European society becomes a society that is tightly controlled and anxiously self-regulating, even and especially without the presence of a single authority or *sovereign* telling people what to do or how to think. (Consider the ways in which youth today are encouraged to become "resilient." On the face of things, that sounds more or less okay: who could gainsay the importance of developing skills at negotiating

life's challenges. But you don't need to dig very deep to see that the call to "resilience" is also an attempt to train youth into making-do, into a kind of learned docility, and into learning how to endure rather than defeat structural inequalities and impoverished social circumstances. As Tracie Williams (an American civil-rights lawyer) says, "Stop calling me resilient. Because every time you say, 'Oh, they're resilience,' you can do something else to me."

Second, as Foucault notes, the example of the fate of psychiatry in what was then the Soviet Union was very telling–and a kind of salutary warning. Psychiatry as a medical science had made enormous advances in the Soviet Union; but it was also the place where that progress in *medical knowledge* had been weaponized. Dissidents and political insurgents of all kinds were "diagnosed" as ill and locked away in mental hospitals. By pathologizing political resistance, i.e., by treating dissidents not as politically oppositional but as "sick," the argument could be made, in effect, to quarantine dissidents until that stricken individual could be "healed" or made "better" again. *Society must be defended*, so the argument went, and defended specifically from these kinds of internal threats to the "health and well-being" of the nation. One way to control political resistance is to say that that resistance is an infection that calls for quarantine. It helps also to recall that Foucault is developing this line of research only twenty years after the horrors of the Holocaust in a nation, France, that struggled–and arguably still struggles–to acknowledge its terrible complicity in the atrocities. During--and for many years prior to--the Second World War, German physicians, scientists, and social scientists had, after all, also weaponized their respective practices and bodies of knowledge to justify the mass murder of Jews, homosexuals, Communists, and other minorities. It was German physicians who were among the first to implement what Foucault will describe in his lectures as *State racism*, i.e., the murderous elimination of those who were deemed to be biologically "inferior" or "compromised" and thus a burden threatening the integrity of the body of Germany and its conquered lands (what the Nazis called the "Aktion T4 program"). The state socialism of the Soviet Union and the fascism of Nazi Germany were each in their own way sobering reminders for Foucault that knowledge, including medical knowledge, never takes place in a vacuum and that the "normal" and the "abnormal" are never neutral categories but instruments of authority that contaminate and activate every aspect of society. His uneasiness around scientificity is partly rooted in memories of examples of the abuse of science. Isn't some of the vaccine hesitancy that we see today, for example, in communities of colour, also rooted in those kinds of memories?

Subsequent lectures will identify another problem with the practices of knowledge that garner prestige because they make a claim to being scientific. Marxism and psychoanalysis each focus on a species of power or authority that doesn't finally interest Foucault: each practice of

knowledge assumes that human beings must endure the restraint and wounds of a superior force. This is a habit of thought about power that Foucault says we must try to break. In the case of Marxist analyses, the proletariat (or landless poor who are compelled to sell their labour in order to survive) are compelled to endure exploitation at the hands of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie; in the case of psychoanalysis, individual human beings find their otherwise free desires and instincts checked and controlled by the controlled demands of the society. Foucault doesn't dispute that this kind of power, or what he calls *sovereign power,* exists in everyday life. It certainly does! The end of royal dynasties and absolute monarchs doesn't bring an end to *sovereign power*, far from it. Even without a masterful king commanding assent, our lives are still beholden to many kinds of sovereign authority. Think of the brutally violent powers that the police wield over youth, especially black youth, today. (And it can help to remember that modern police forces in North America are modeled on 19th-century "slave-catchers," i.e., on armed, state-sponsored organizations, backed by the full force of the law, whose purpose it was to track down fugitive slaves and return them to their owners.) But as Foucault will make clearer in subsequent lectures (and this is the wager of his entire project), <u>other</u> kinds of power are also fiercely at work in society, with quite different kinds of consequences. As illuminating as Marxism and psychoanalysis are as ways to understand the nature of social and political life, Foucault argues, they are blind to these other kinds of power, two kinds in particular: *disciplinary power* and *biopower* (or what he calls, in passing, *regulatory power*). He says nothing at all of the field of political science, the implication here being that its methods are in no way calibrated to understand or analyze power that isn't *sovereign*.

Lecture Two: 7 January 1976

By allowing an otherwise *subjugated knowledge* of social and political life to *reappear*, Foucault sees European modernity in an entirely new light: everywhere he looks, he argues, he sees the signs of *war, struggles, and confrontations*. Beneath an often carefully polished surface of orderliness, peaceableness, stability, and governance (remember that the unofficial "motto" of Canada is *Peace, Order, and Good Government*), beyond the self-congratulatory stories that national spokespersons delight in telling about their nations (stories, for example, of how they came to be nations through the good work of confederation, i.e., of agreeing to set aside differences to form a greater whole), . . . underneath this myth of integrity and wholeness rage the fires of forms of deep and unresolved antagonisms. Foucault calls those antagonism *race war* or *race struggle*. That disorder is then the theme of his second lecture. Peaceableness within a nation is for the most part an illusion promulgated by authority to consolidate that authority and

to pacify the population. But it is only an illusion designed to mask that fact that national stories are only stories told by the victors about their victories, stories that always make it seem that those victories were destined and rightful rather than won mostly through a long history of brute force and luck. (When, for example, a non-Indigenous person begins an address by acknowledging that you do so on "unceded lands," i.e., lands that were taken from Indigenous peoples by settlers, you evoke this other history, a history anchored in violent dispossession. "Land acknowledgments," however, are very complicated kinds of gestures, well worth exploring in more detail. In what ways do these acknowledgments end up consolidating rather than disrupting the history of national pacification? Do they sometimes come to replace a more frankly detailed acknowledgment of not only the history of settler colonial violence but of its ongoing effects and expressions in the present day?)

Key to the illusion of national stability and governance is the idea that those in power, and therefore the state that that power represents and leads, are there by *right*, i.e., that the *sovereign* is in place, exercising authority, both legitimately and legally. Foucault observes that *royal power* or *royal command*, i.e., sovereign authority whose claims to power are said by that authority to be above reproach, is always enmeshed in what he calls *right* or *the juridical edifice* (24-5). That is to say, wherever there is authority there is an accompanying set of discussions and assertions and institutions that claim that that authority is *rule governed and legitimate* (27): apologists and defenders of authority, legal-constitutional scholars, educators and influencers, social and political practices, structures, and institutions, all align affirming sovereign power's legitimacy, and affirming *the legitimacy that has to be respected*. So, for example, royal families in Europe typically don't simply ascend to the throne because they can but instead by claiming that they have the ancient and abiding right to rule. All of the elaborate ceremony in which the royals are enmeshed work to justify their power, for who but the powerful deserve or require such constant, spectacular celebration? That feedback loop of the credentializing of power fascinates Foucault: sovereign forms of authority seem to require different kinds of external support from individuals and institutions that praise power for its rightfulness, its legitimacy, its "deservingness." The sovereign somehow needs the justifications of those who say that the sovereign's authority needs no justification but itself: after all, his or her power is there by right. *Right is an instrument of domination*, Foucault concludes, meaning: legality is a question of force rather than justice. Foucault would agree with Tom Rachman, who, in a reflection on the late Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee celebrations, pointed out that many of her subjects were questioning the monarchy, "this rah-rah and curtsying to people whose ancestors happened to be better warlords than yours" (*Globe&Mail*, June 3, 2022). Rightfulness, i.e., all the worrying about whether any given ruler is legitimately the ruler or not, is ultimately about *procedures of*

subjugation. That is why the great 18th-century French philosopher, Denis Diderot (1713-1784), made the following point: if the great kings and queens of Europe commissioned statues and monuments that were in fact truthful, the inscriptions at their base would be made up mostly of longs lists of massacres, murders, injustices, and other crimes for which those sovereigns were responsible. (Consider, for the moment, the current debate about statues of authorities in Canada and the United States: what if these statues and monuments were designed not to affirm their legitimacy but instead to make clear that the figures they celebrate came to power or arrogated authority to themselves as worthy of remembrance through violence, criminality, and subjugation? When these statues effectively fade into the background, are we letting that violence, criminality, and subjugation also fade into the background? And who is "we"? If you are a member of a community who was violently subjugated by the person being commemorated, or an ally of that community, how can you be expected simply to walk by and let that statue fade into the background? In what ways are these monuments actually monuments of the *subjugation* of knowledges, the papering over or burial of injustice and violence?)

One measure of the enduring strength of this feedback loop, Foucault notes, is how social and political thought about sovereign power is almost exclusively devoted to *juridical* questions. Whether one supports sovereign power or speaks against it, all the questions and discussions about that power are mobilized around a strikingly limited set of questions: Is the sovereign rightfully or justly in power? What exactly are the limits of that power? At what point does the sovereign exceed his or her limits and behave in ways that are unjust or in violation of right? When we gave up certain freedoms to the government in exchange for the promise of security and orderliness, were the terms of that social contract good? Discussions about power, in other words, are almost entirely *juridical* in nature. The founders of modern social and political theory, philosophers like John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, insisted that when we speak of power we should speak of it exclusively in these sorts of terms.

(*Juridical theory* haunts discussions about the powerful to this day: consider, for example, how, days before Joe Biden became President, much of the chatter about President Trump was whether or how he could pardon himself. The focus here was on the nature and limits of his authority. But this *juridical* focus served to turn the eye away from President Trump's application of brute force, the way his regime operated not in ways answerable to the law or to rightfulness but as the fountainhead of a cult of the leader ("the cult of the leader" is a form of political life that cynically circumvents *all the apparatuses, institutions, and rules that apply to it* [27] and instead pretends to appeal directly to "the people" who "want" to be ruled, who "want" a leader to do the leading for them, without having to "waste" time with *juridical* questions or concerns.)

Foucault then turns to the consideration of forms of power that are markedly different from *sovereign power*. As he says, let us instead understand *power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the points where it becomes capillary; in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions*" (27). The central reason why he makes this turn is something about social and political life that is both completely obvious and yet also very obscure: namely, the degree to which, even to the most untrained eye, individuals and communities live highly scripted, regulated, administered and self-administered lives <u>and do so in the absence of anything like a centralized or sovereign authority</u>. (You have to wonder why so many dystopian science-fiction movies require some form of "Big Brother," i.e., sovereign rulers who unfairly attempt to crush "rebels:" are these movies in effect scripts to convince you that authority is mostly "sovereign" in nature, and to be thought about as a *juridical* problem, thereby turning your eyes away from how authority is in fact more diffuse, more about regulation, self-regulation, and normalization rather than merely top-down repression?) Far from the imagined centre of society, the worries about whether power or authority is rule-governed or rightful no longer seem nearly as relevant. In the *capillaries*, to use Foucault's wonderful metaphor of the social body, power operates in very different ways. Foucault's focus becomes how *power acquires the material means to intervene* in human affairs, including intervening *in violent ways*. I am trying *to understand power by looking at its extremities*, Foucault says to his assembled students, *at where its exercise becomes less and less juridical* (28). Consider the myriad ways your own life is subjected to all sorts of normative pressures about what it means, for example, to be the "good" or "dutiful" child, the "good" student, or to have the "right" body or "healthy" deisres, or to be behaving in "correct" ways or to be approaching your education in the most "productive" and "goal-oriented" way? No sovereign in the conventional, juridical sense is standing over you; no "Jiminy Cricket" either (i.e., the Disney character who represents your conscience and who insists that you remain conscientious, the critter who sits on your shoulder telling you how to stay off the "naughty list.") And yet you may feel some of these normative pressures acutely, especially if you veer off a certain heavily prescribed path for your life . . . even though this is *your* life. Why? How do these prescriptions work? How do they gain such powerful purchase over us, making us feel guilty or wasteful or deviant? What are their origins?

Foucault points to examples that have formed the focus of his previous research: penal practices and mental hospitals (or the precursors to mental hospitals) in Enlightenment France. Working diligently in the archives of the great libraries of Paris, the philosopher observes how, towards the end of the 18th century, and with the emergence of a new social class, the property owners or bourgeoisie, as well as the State and the human sciences that are born at the same time, are fascinated with understanding, classifying, administering, and policing *the mad* and *delinquents*. Delinquents include criminals, including petty criminals, as well as those deemed now to be sexually abnormal or deviant. Once upon a time, the state showed little or no interest is grasping who the mad were or what caused delinquency, i.e., the wilful neglect of one's responsibilities as a useful, productive citizen, integrated into the larger social whole. Instead, these individuals were deemed to be disposable, and cast off, whether into awful asylums or dungeon-like prisons—assuming they were addressed by power at all. Sovereign forms of authority could only be in so many places at one time, and so on the ground, day-to-day, society was quite chaotic, a rough-and-tumble world and in fact expected to be so: that was just the way that is was. Painters like Pieter Breughel the Elder captured that pell-mell life in paintings like his 1559 *Netherlandish Proverbs* or *The Topsy Turvy World:*

But as Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, the book on the strange history of prisons and criminality that he had published just before the lectures we are reading, and then in *The History of Sexuality*, a multi-volume series of books, the first of which is published immediately after the same lectures, as the 18th century draws to a close, there is an explosion of interest in these hitherto forgotten souls. Orderliness and normalization are now the norm. Once abandoned, now these "derelict" members on the outskirts of society are <u>medicalized</u>; now, suddenly, they are of interest to physicians and the subject of *medical knowledge*—as well as lots of other kinds of knowledge, including penology, economics, and demography. As Foucault argues, strictly speaking, the new human sciences and the state apparatuses putting their research to work in administering society are not actually interested in the well-being of *the mad* and the *delinquent*. No, the focus of the *system of power over the mad*, as Foucault puts it, is not treating an individual person's mental illness even if such treatment did take place. No, all this energy devoted to *delinquency*, all of this worry about these exceptional characters in society, is, finally, an excuse for improving and strengthening *the techniques and tactics of domination* (34). The disorderly person is not finally the real subject of normative power; it is <u>disorderliness</u> itself. The *mad* or the marginal become an <u>means</u> by which a new form of power flexes its muscles, a form of power that in fact pervades society, shaping and regulating it at every turn. It is not the individual health or well-being of a *mad* person that this new *normalizing* society cares about, in the end, but instead what can be gleaned or extracted from these *delinquents* the better to understand more generally how to administer and regulate society as a whole: *The bourgeoisie is not interested in the mad, but is interested in power over the mad . . . The bourgeoisie does not give a damn about delinquents, or about how they are punished or rehabilitated, as that is of no great economic interest* (33). What does matter is exploiting those who are deemed to be marginal to grow *knowledge apparatuses* whose real subject is society at large.

In subsequent lectures, Foucault will expend upon this particular form of power–or rather power*s*, in the plural, since he will finally see two distinct forms of power operating in the normalizing society. On the ground, as it were, normative expectations came increasingly to governed everyday behaviors, thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears: this power, which Foucault calls *disciplinary*, shapes and forms and polices individuals. Disciplinary power is *one of bourgeois society's great inventions*. *It was one of the basic tools for the establishment of industrial capitalism and the corresponding type of society* (36)–meaning a society that puts extraordinary emphasis on regularity, efficiency, orderliness, and productivity. Industrial capitalism, in other words, manufactures new kinds of human beings, <u>ones more perfectly</u>

calibrated to the rhythms and the clock-work timing of industry and the regular flows of capital. As Foucault points out, by the 19th century, a *grid of disciplinary coercions* are in place *that guarantee the cohesion of the social whole* (37). Earlier in history, any given European society was a curious mixture: on the ground, quite chaotic, yet also under the thumb of a sovereign who held his or her subjects in thrall, never knowing, as Foucault points out, if they would be allowed to continue to live. But by the 19th century enormous emphasis is placed on orderliness–orderly statutes, orderly economy, orderly behavior, etc.. Norms come to govern bodies as much, and perhaps even more, than laws. In the meantime, the state and its affiliated institutions–including the then new burgeoning human sciences–closely study people at the broad level of populations, exercising that Foucault will call, in the last lecture, *biopower* or *regulatory power.* As the 18th century passed into the 19th century, the State took an interest, for the very first time, in the *life* of the entire social body: it is during this time that we see the very first systematic attempts to understand society as a whole, and to understand its health so as to administer and regulate it more effectively. (Indeed, Foucault suggests that the very idea of a "society," a single social entity, doesn't, strictly speaking, exist as a useable concept until it becomes possible to study, address, and manipulate the life of a population. When the life of a population becomes the primary focus of power, "society" comes into existence.) "Demography," the study of populations, would have been unthinkable early in the 18th century; but by the start of the 19th century, no state could imagine itself thriving without devoting considerable resources to demographic analyses of all kinds–analysis of mortality rates, birth rates, sanitation, the incidence and prevalence of disease, the movement of peoples between urban, suburban, and rural zones, income levels and distribution, the interaction of populations with their physical geographies, etc.. Why did that happen?, Foucault asks, as he dives into the archives. Where once upon a time, illness as well as forms of social deviancy simply befell individuals out the blue, now these same phenomena and behaviors become the subject of intense scrutiny, and with that scrutiny, a constant sifting of what was deemed to be abnormal, unhealthy, and nonproductive from what was deemed to be normal, healthy, and productive. The normalizing society is born, and with that change, the emergence of new kinds of power not easily described as *sovereign*. The *mad* are now no longer "accidental exceptions" in society–tolerated by some as part of the social body, free to come and go, cared-for by some and reviled and feared by others--but now deviations and deviants. As such, they are the means by which power practices the administration of life, both at an individual level (*disciplinary power*) and at the level of populations (*biopower* or *regulatory power*).

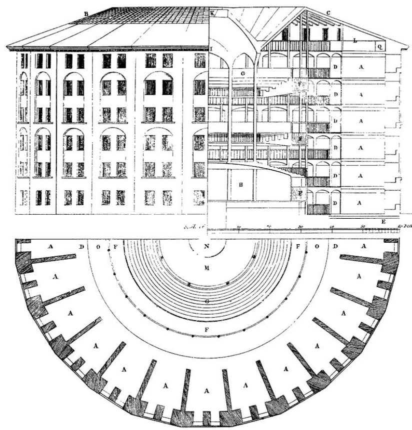
As Foucault says, beginning in the 17th century, but intensifying over the two subsequent centuries, *we see the appearance–one should say the invention–of a new mechanism of power*

which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment. A complex picture begins to emerge in his lectures, a picture of European societies thrumming with different kinds of power. Foucault warns against the temptation to see, for example, *disciplinary power* as simply supplanting *sovereign power*. As he points out in the fourth lecture, *I am obviously not saying that great apparatuses of power do not exist* (45). Sovereign authority thrives in France, he notes, long after King Louis XVI was guillotined in 1793. Top down power simply migrated to a new set of laws and legal instruments, namely the Napoleonic Code, the extensive body of laws that France adopted in 1804 (and is in many ways still in effect) and that extinguished all of France's medieval laws and codes. In European societies (and in the societies that these countries created and imposed in their respective colonies), different forms of power operated simultaneously, sometimes in tension, sometimes invading each other (38), sometimes in cooperation. The *right of sovereignty*, meaning top down authority that was understood primarily in *juridical* terms, could work alongside *a mechanics of discipline*. As the human sciences emerge and proliferate in the 18th century, gaining more and more authority because they make a claim to scientific rationality, *biopower* will also emerge as a force that shapes and recreates society.

Now, Foucault gives his students fair warning that he is proceeding in a deeply counter-intuitive way, and that to do so means being on guard against falling back into older notions of the nature of power and the nature of human beings subjected to power. The temptation to do so is a sign of the degree to which we have been schooled into understanding social and political life in very particular ways. Foucault calls for a number of *precautions*, as he puts it. For example, he warns that his work doesn't rely on a common presupposition of social and political thought: namely, that the radical or elementary particle of any given society is the autonomous or free-standing subject who then finds herself subjected to power, whether by force or with consent. He points to Thomas Hobbes (and by implication to John Locke), the great 17th century political theorists who argued that a rule-governed society worthy of the name begins with individuals freely giving consent to a sovereign authority, trading certain freedoms in exchange for a guarantee to live and work in an orderly, peaceable society in which no one can violate your personhood or steal your property without facing the full force of the law. (In *Examined Life* Martha Nussbaum gives us a good description of that subject–and expresses her doubts about it. These are sentences well worth returning to!) Foucault is very suspicious of what Jacqueline Rose, discussing the influential work of the British-Caribbean political philosopher and activist, Stuart Hall, calls "an autonomous, self-centred political subject who proudly takes care of themselves at the cost of pretty much everyone else" ("The Analyst" NYRB 21 Sept 2023). Are

human beings ever truly autonomous subjects, and thus "free" to forge contracts with power, as Hobbes had suggested? Or are human beings always enmeshed in networks of interdependence, relying on others in explicit and implicit ways? When social and political thought always assumes that it is describing an autonomous individual as the basis of its analyses, what does that thought miss? Foucault is similarly suspicious, but for more radical reasons. As he argues, human beings are not pre-made entities that then suffer or agree to the imposition of power; no, subjects are the *effects* of power. Subjects in a society do not freely give up power into order to secure protection but are themselves the result of power. No subject exists outside of power. *Bodies*, Foucault says, *are constituted as subjects by power-effects* (29). Power is *exercised through networks*, creating certain kinds of subjects while also passing through them, as if they were mostly nodal points or *relays* in a larger mesh or ecology. (Question: in what ways is Foucault's argument here a precursor to the remarks that, for example, Judith Butler makes about the *interdependence* or *permeability* of human life?) *It is therefore, I think, a mistake to think of the individual as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom or some multiple, inert matter to which power is applied or which is struck by a power that subordinates and destroys individuals* (29). Bodies are compelled to be legible to power, just as power creates specific kinds of bodies that are legible to it: a remarkable, self-supporting circle in which power and bodies are mixed promiscuously together.

As Foucault says at the opening of the third lecture of *"Society Must Be Defended,"* the key to understanding new forms of power is to break with the idea of the political subject *understood as meaning an individual who is naturally endowed with rights, capabilities, and so on*, and instead to think of *how a subject . . . can and must become a subject, this time in the sense of an element that is subjectified in a power relationship* (43). Subjectification or subjection (both translations of *assujettissement*) go on to become centrally important terms in Foucault's work. Sovereign power *presupposes* the first kind of political subject. Why? Because, in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, consenting individuals freely "give" power over to the sovereign who, in exchange for protection, exercises authority over those individuals. But Foucault's interest is in other forms of power. He is not *asking how, why, and by what right they* [political subjects] *can agree to be subjugated*. You'll recall that that is the core of *juridical* understandings of power, i.e., understandings that focus on the how, why, and by what right questions. Instead, Foucault's work going forward will be devoted to *showing how actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects* (45), a process he calls *subjectification* or *subjection*.



Above, consider the details for the plan of Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" penitentiary, drawn by Willey Reveley, in 1791. In *Discipline and Punish*, the work that Michel Foucault published just prior to the lectures that we take up in our course, the French thinker had explored how the nature of punishment had changed in Europe, moving from abandoning prisoners in the darkness of medieval dungeons to--at the end of the 18th century—seeking to comprehend, master, and shape the minds and bodies of criminals. Prisoners were now compelled to be legible to authorities, not abandoned in darkness, i.e., fully available and transparent to rectification, administration, exploration, and manipulation. In that controlling spirit, the British utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, dreamed of prisons being built so that their very architecture made every prisoner always open to inspection, apprehension, and domination. In some sense, this imagined building, called the "Panopticon" (meaning, "seeing from everywhere"), took the place of actual jailors: the building itself takes on the labour of altering the criminal into understanding themselves as forever surveilled, controlled, and understood. Very few actual panopticons were ever built (one of them here in Ontario, in Goderich), but Foucault's point is that they didn't need to be. By the 19th century, an intensifyingly normative society, a society whose growing bourgeoisie embraced the virtues of self-control, restraint, efficiency, and productivity, had itself become panoptical: it mostly regulated itself. What an extraordinary transformation. In urban spaces all over Europe, including factories, schools, barracks, and planned workers' estates, the key was to create zones in which individual bodies could be coordinated and normalized at the same time as entire populations were subjected to new forms of knowledge, the better to administer them and especially to ensure their optimization and productivity. What Foucault calls the *disciplinary* and the *regulatory* society is born. Where once upon a time, *sovereign* power was the law of the land, now new forms of force thrum through social and political life, making "life" its primary focus and creating or *manufacturing* individual lives in their own image.

–Few actual "panopticons" have ever been constructed, as I have said: panopticism is a more general cultural phenomenon that describes what it is like to become a human being that is never not under scrutiny, surveillance, and administration, never not under the knowing and policing gaze of figures of authority: not only parents and professors but also, more consequentially, all the normative expectations that thrum through society, all the assumptions that govern what it means to be the "good," "dutiful," "productive," and "resilient" student, political subject, "man," "woman," "son," "daughter," consumer, etc.. Foucault's point is that it is the panoptical *idea* that matters most, rather than actual buildings. But one notorious example of a bricks and mortal panopticon is the Presidio Modelo ("the model prison"), the enormous prison constructed in Cuba in the 1920s and that remained in use until the 1960s. Fidel Castro and his brother were incarcerated in this prison. I sometimes wonder if communism, at least as Castros imagined it, was an attempt to turn the panoptical society inside-out? But didn't they recreate another panoptical society, a society of surveillance, management, and control, a society that treats

difference only as an aberration to be purged? Note in the photograph how all of the separate cells are visible from one central observation tower. As Foucault argues in *Disipline and Punish*, strictly speaking, a panoptical society doesn't even need an actual observer–just the *idea* that you are being watched can be enough to make you behave certain ways and become a certain kind of person, a person that yields herself or himself up to the clutches of power. At a certain point, Foucault suggests, we end of watching over *ourselves*, constantly monitoring our own behaviours, thoughts, habits, and feelings: we become wardens over ourselves.

Lecture Three: 21 January 1976

Foucault had earlier promised to speak about *war* and about society as a scene of perpetual *war*. He now makes good on that promise. *The manufacture of subjects rather than the genesis of the sovereign* is *our general theme* (46), he tells his students; in other words, his focus is not how, in a *juridical* sense, individual subjects grant sovereigns their power, but instead how political subjects are created by power. And this process of the manufacture of subjects and the subjectification of subjects, takes place amid sharply warring conditions. Battlefields are not what Foucault is talking about, however; no, it is the *relationship of confrontation, a struggle to the death*, that takes place everyday, and takes place *beneath peace, order, wealth, and authority, beneath the calm order of subordinations, beneath the State and State apparatuses, beneath the laws* (46). Below the orderly surface *we hear and discover a sort of primitive and permanent war* (47). Exploring the nature of that very particular form of war will preoccupy him for *years to come* (47), he says. (In fact, he will end up sidelining that project, pursuing in its place the unique ways in which Europeans soldered what one is to who or what one desired. As Foucault discovers, in previous centuries, the question of what one is had little or nothing to do with who or what one desired. Your identity was tied much more powerfully to things like your faith, your family circumstances or social class. But by the 19th century, oddly enough, identity was tied more and more tightly to the nature of your desires so that, for the first time, your identity was determined in its most elemental form by, for example, whether you desired others of the same or a different sex. Identity becomes at its root level *sexual* identity, leading Foucault to argue that "the homosexual" and "the heterosexual," as particular kinds of persons whose every thought and behavior was finally rooted in their "sexuality," come to be invented only as late as the 19th century. Of course, for centuries lots of women loved and desired women, just as men loved and desired men, and thank goodness for that, but it wasn't until quite late that disciplinary and regulatory power required sexual identities, the better to be surveilled, administered, and understood. In *History of Sexuality*, for example, Foucault considers the history of so-called

"sodomy laws." Up until the end of the 18th century and the start of the 19th century, "sodomy" was a category of crime under which a very wide range of acts fell–for example, adultery, licentiousness, public sex, sex with minors, etc., whether committed by men or women. "Sodomy" was characterized as an illegal act. But by the 19th century, the same crime is restricted to a narrower range of particular acts, acts, moreover, that are now identified with what are deemed to be particular kinds of individuals. "Sodomy" is for the first time treated as emanating from an identity and that identity is now what is treated as illegal and punishable. The "sodomite" is born, and with that invention, that subjectification, power can fix itself on a clearer, more substantial, and more worrisomely legible target, focusing on the ways in which that subject is "dangerous," "pathological," "nonproductive," and "immoral." –An awful turn in social and political history whose effects are still widely felt today.)

Now, back to Lecture Three. Foucault recalls a famous argument by Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), the Prussian officer and military theorist who had fought for Prussia and then Russia in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. He was severely wounded in battle, but nevertheless began a long and influential treatise, unfinished at his death, called *On War*. In that treatise, Clausewitz said that *"It is quite possible that war is the continuation of politics by other means"* (47). What that means is that war has a rational impetus, a design; it isn't simply about brutalizing force and chance, but is one way, a singularly important way, in fact, that a state brings about policy, makes its intents and interests felt and known in the world. Foucault inverts Clausewitz, rewriting him: *Politics is a continuation of war by other means* (48). That means that social and political that is happily called "peacetime" is in fact always a state of ongoing turmoil and warring forcefulness . . . if you have the eyes to see it. Foucault notes here that theorists in Clausewitz's day, perhaps Clausewitz himself, fully realized that social and political life in general teemed with warring factions and that what Clausewitz had claimed in his ground-breaking text in fact *reverses* an otherwise well-known truth: in other words, Clausewitz knew full well that political life is at heart a warring life, and that a nation-state is always at constant war with itself, but that he said completely the opposite, namely that war is how nation-states express themselves politically when dealing with others. So, then, Foucault inverts a claim that Clausewitz made that was itself an inversion, thereby returning Clausewitz to what he knew but could not bring himself to say: social and political life is war.

To clarify Foucault's point, consider some contemporary examples: Let's say that you are someone who looks outside and sees that the streets are being plowed, the electricity is on, the city has a mayor and elected counselors, people are almost all obeying the laws of the land. For some, everything looks more or less fine. For others, though, that picture is a patronizing illusion. That same lawful society is also riven by terrible division: income inequality sharpens and

deepens, the gap between a tiny minority who are wealthy and getting wealthier, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, individuals and families who are not able to make ends meet, grows–and in fact grows now more quickly than ever in the midst of the pandemic. As Marx reminds us, class war does not mean the impoverished going to the barricades or shutting down a city via a general strike; class war takes place everyday and everywhere, as a minority mercilessly exploits workers, wounding them in body and soul. Marx was hardly the first or last social and political thinker to point out that while liberal democracies offer formal equality, meaning that citizens are equal before the law, materially these same liberal democracies are scenes of unrelenting and growing inequality, with all the life altering violence and exclusion that that inequality entails. The great political theorist, Rob Nixon, calls this kind of warfare "slow violence," focusing on how the degradation of the environment incrementally sickens the most vulnerable populations. It gets worse: we live in a country that brims with long-standing forms of racial injustice: racialized communities have poorer access to healthcare, education, and housing; they are incarcerated at disproportionate rates, and endure COVID-19 infections, illness, and death in grossly disproportionate numbers. Gender and sexual minorities face incommensurable levels of harassment, exclusion, violence, and suicide. The disabled and differently abled, as Sunuara Taylor argues, not only live with *impairment* but also *disability*, meaning the societal forms of exclusion that are the true source of pain and suffering for the impaired. McMaster's Dr. Henry Giroux has written extensively on what he calls *the war on youth*, the ways in which, at this neoliberal moment, youth in particular face historically unprecedented forms of loss, not to mention being prevented from gaining a liveable foothold in society, burdened with debt, poor prospects for meaningful employment, and repeatedly mocked by major media pundits as incompetent and easily duped by crazy ideas promulgated by their progressive humanities professors. Without necessarily sending youth to fight other youth in Afghanistan, as Canada did for a decade, youth are nevertheless subject to war everyday. It is worth noting that earlier forms of fascism were especially interested in conscripting youth into their ranks–it was important to fascists to enrol young people in the cause. But contemporary forms of fascism can be different: youth are expendable and disposable, not necessarily material to be co-opted. Black youth (as we will see later in this course) are especially vulnerable to unchecked power.

War, Foucault says, pervades society, but incredibly, it seemed to him, many people seem oblivious to it. Question, then: Who can afford to live life as if society wasn't the scene of brutal combat between the rich and the impoverished, the advantaged and the disavantaged? (Here would be a good place to go back to reread Cornel West's description of American democracy as a political form that in inseparable from wars against Indigenous peoples, women, and gays and lesbians. The question is who can afford to ignore those wars? Who of us is schooled into not

seeing their wounding effects? How does that schooling take place? As the black Canadian slam poet, Des Mckenzie, says in her poem, "The Original Pandemic,"

> Peace can be simply be delivered
> At school,
> In days at home
> Riding the bus
> peace can be delivered
> By simply calling the cops...
> But not for us.
> Not here, not now, not ever actually.

(To listen to McKenzie performing "The Original Pandemic," see: https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1759658051758/)

But to understand the notion that society is not at peace but instead the scene of perpetual war, Foucault looks at the history of warfare at the nation-state in the European tradition. As he points out, as Europe transitions from its medieval to its modern condition, states and nation-states coalesce, and as they do so in large part by acquiring *a monopoly on war* (48). In other words, one of the principle expressions of the social contract, the agreement to give authority to the sovereign in exchange for protection from violence, is to give the state the sole authority to wage war. That is why Europe moves quite rapidly from a chaotic and localized scene that saw hundreds of separate cities, family estates, principalities, palatinates, and territories, each armed against the other and in a condition of unregulated and unchecked war with each other (a condition Foucault describes as one of *bellicose relations*), to a collection of larger states in which war and waging war becomes the sole responsibility of the sovereign and a matter of conflict between sovereigns. This centralization of authority is key to the formation of modern states as we understand them today. As Howard Williams observes, "Within feudal states there were always rivals to the monarch's authority. Without the condition of competent authority being observed [i.e., without giving over authority to a single person] there was always the danger of states sliding into civil war" (*Kant and the End of War* 109). (One of the central reasons why plans for a peaceable Europe by philosophers like Kant and Rousseau were dismissed was that these plans often called first and foremost for the authority to wage war to be taken away from sovereigns.) Where once violent confrontations and the threat of open combat was woven into the very fabric of life, each neighbor a law unto their own, now fighting is the

prerogative of the State and the State alone. Not surprisingly, this transition also sees the formation, for the first time, of *the army as institution*. As Foucault argues, *It is only at the end of the Middle Ages that we see the emergence of a State endowed with military institutions that replace the day-to-day and generalized practice of warfare, and a society that was perpetually traversed by relations of war* (49). This transition fuels a self-congratulatory story about how states "civilized" themselves, shedding the terror of daily mortal threat and replacing that bloody everyday with one in which war was fought mostly at the borders and beyond. War is now something we do elsewhere, not the elemental condition of our lives in the homeland. More: "we" are who "we are" as a people, we find common ground, common principles, by virtue of making peace amongst ourselves, or at least having peace imposed on "us:" peaceableness, the relinquishment of arms to the sovereign and thus the giving up of living at war with our neighbours, is what makes "us" *us*.

(Here is a contemporary example of the phenomenon Foucault is describing: Consider the social and political situation in Kashmir, the long disputed territory bordering India, Pakistan, and China. India claims sovereign authority over this region and part of its mandate has been severely to limit the ability of local residents–mostly Muslim–to acquire or service firearms, including hunting rifles, the concern being that an armed Muslim populace (or, for that matter, any armed citizenry, can only pose a threat to the federal government's power over the region. But of course prohibiting residents from acquiring weapons also renders them vulnerable to Indian authorities–like the army–who have weapons. A disarmed population helps, in theory at least, to ensure that armed conflict will be mostly an war between Indian and Pakistani forces, not a war within Kashmir.

Another example to consider: during the early part of the Napoleonic War (1803-1815), when it seemed like Napoleon might risk an invasion of Great Britain, the British government encouraged the populace along the east coast of the country to arm themselves in anticipation of having to defend the homeland. But after that threat–which was mostly manufactured by the British government, the better to consolidate its power as the "savior" of Britain–subsided, the British government faced a difficult problem: an armed populace. Britain had to slowly but surely convince the British people that, in fact, the authority to wage war was the unique task of the government and the armed forces, not the populace. Interestingly, when the war finally ended, and tens of thousands of soldiers were "discharged," i.e., released from the army or navy and told to go home, the British government was afraid of the idea of all these experienced and traumatized fighters fanning out across the country. So discharged soldiers were given strict time limits on how long they were allowed to take to return to their towns and villages, subject to severe penalties–including punitive fines and jail. But the war had deeply disrupted the British

economy. There was no work for these soldiers and so often nowhere to go. They were casualties of war, yet they were criminalized as threatening "vagrants." [It is worth emphasizing that homelessness remains a terrible problem for veterans in Canada and the U.S..] By criminalizing the former soldiers, the British government was trying to rest institutional control over society, trying to ensure that that society was in fact internally "peaceful," denying the sorrowful and wounded reality on the ground. Poets like William Wordsworth wrote about seeing these soldiers, who haunted the streets and byways of the country, and knew, looking into their eyes, that Britain might have won the war against Napoleon but that didn't mean that the homeland was peaceful, far from it. The end of the war abroad only threw into relief the hurtful economic wars–conflicts between classes, between the haves and the have-nots--marring the happy face of the homeland.)

Foucault will subsequently demolish the claim that the sovereign retaining the authority to wage war means peace at home-- for example, pointing to the severe conflicts and warring relations that thrum *within* any given society, warring relations that put the lie to these lovely fictions of living in a land of "peace, order, and good government" (the latter is a motto often used to describe Canada). Looking back at modern European history, Foucault makes a curious discovery. At the same historical moment that war is exported to the border a new kind of thinking and writing emerges in Europe, which he calls *an historical-political discourse*–a thinking and writing that insists, against the state's promise of peace, order, and good government, and against the sovereign's guarantee that individuals will be safe and secure once they pledge allegiance to the sovereign, that in fact war is *the ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power* (49). A paradox emerges: at the moment that armed combat, war in the conventional sense of the term, becomes something that the state primarily controls, in the name of ensuring that stability and lawfulness rather than violence prevails, certain individuals and communities speak up to complain that they in fact live in the midst of a perpetual and unjust war. Foucault will explore different examples of this *historical-political discourse* in the subsequent lectures (for which you are not responsible), but right away points to two vivid and very different examples: 1) *the great political struggles of* [mid-]*17th century England*, the moment in which a restless merchant classes merges, flexing its political muscles, and when groups like "*the Levellers*" (59), a political community devoted to equality before the law and to religious tolerance, were active; and 2) at the end of the 17th century, and at the close of the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), when the French nobility wages a *bitter* (59) struggle against the absolute and god-like authority of the monarchy. The English example is politically progressive in nature, democratizing in its impetuses, while the French example is politically reactionary, a

wealthy minority seeking to consolidate its authority and wealth in the face of an even tinier but wealthier minority, i.e., the King, Queen, and their immediate circle. Tellingly, the phenomenon that Foucault is describing is a divisiveness and a war that can be either progressive or conservative. What matters is that the state secures its authority by winning a victory over all of these insurgent communities. But it is a precarious victory at best; at any moment, a state's account of itself as ending war and consolidating itself into a unified and peaceable country, in which the sovereign and his people are said to be on the exact same page, is contradicted by those who remind that state that every rightful or lawful society *is born of real battles, victories, massacres, and conquests . . . [T]he law was born in burning towns and ravaged fields. It was born together with the famous innocents who died at the break of day* (50). *Law is not pacification*, Foucault continues, *for beneath the law, war continues to rage in all the mechanisms of power, even in the most regular . . . War is the motor behind institutions and order* (50).

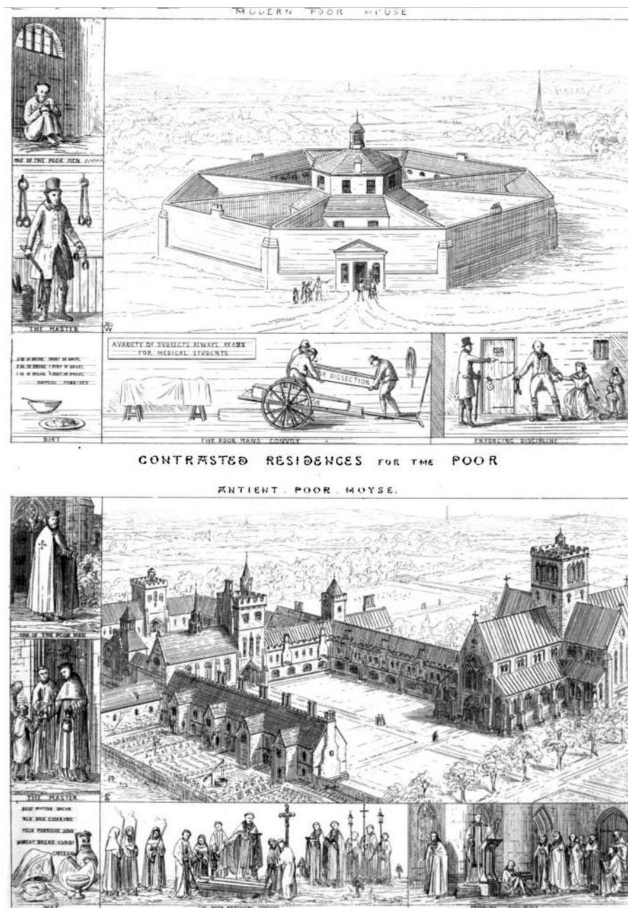
In subsequent lectures, Foucault will analyze in a more detailed and fine-grained fashion what various insurgent groups, including the English Levellers and the French nobility, say and do. He notices a curious similarity among these groups, notwithstanding their very different political views, one liberal, the other arch-conservative. He notes how these groups speak in unabashedly partisan ways, meaning they are conspicuous for refusing to adopt the sort of voice that is emanating from the seat of sovereign power, a voice that claims to be neutral and universal, an overseeing voice that typically says it speaks from a position of benign detachment, speaking for all and in the name of the whole. The insurgent voices or *counter-histories* (66), as he calls them, whether reactionary or progressive in kind, are unembarrassedly *perspectival* (52), i.e., spoken from a specific, identified place and condition, namely the place and condition of the unfairly oppressed. *Race war* is fundamentally asymmetrical, one people or community holding all the cards, the other, the aggrieved, none or very few. So the main objective of the insurgent and minor voice is to attack *the illusions and errors that are being used by your adversaries to make you believe we are living in a world in which order and peace have been restored*—and rightfully restored. These are communities that are always *fighting a war*, not pretending, as the victors do, to have achieved peaceableness by right, i.e., claiming that they are in charge because they are in the right, because it is only "just" and "right" that they are in power, because they are the group who "naturally" has power. Foucault points to a number of strategies that sovereign power puts to use in an attempt to silence these insurgent counter-histories and to characterize the nation as one that is living in the best of possible worlds. For example, sovereigns enlist historians to establish ostensible connections *to ancient kingdoms and great ancestors*. That way the sovereign can claim that he or she has the weight of generational history behind them.

Sovereigns arrange to have stories told about themselves that demonstrate *that what . . . kings do is never pointless, futile, or petty, and never unworthy of being narrated* (67). Foucault even takes a swipe at Kant's *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the Prussian philosopher's great 1795 anti-war pamphlet that criticizes European monarchs for prosecuting so many armed conflicts. But as Foucault suggests, when Kant speaks of *perpetual peace*, he does so from a universalizing and supposedly non-partisan perspective that is structurally indistinguishable from the ruling monarchs, who also talk of peace but in fact mean pacification: Kant can only speak of "perpetual peace" because he happens to belong to the community in Prussia that doesn't experience day to day life as aggrieved, defeated, and dispossessed of its future. In any case, Foucault points out, the aggrieved voices refuse to embrace these stories of sweetness and light, and they do so in part by writing stories of their own, often tales that predict *the coming of the new kingdom that will wipe out the defeats of the old*, or stories that evoke the re-awakening of a leader who has been asleep or lost or waiting in the wings. One example Foucault evokes here is the case of the restoration of the Prussian monarchy in Germany: when the Nazi Party was in its infancy, railing against the powers that be, it claimed that one of its central objectives was to restore the Prussian monarchy, which had been abolished at the end of the First World War. In the 1920s the Nazi party claimed to speak for the aggrieved and for the nostalgic groups who wanted to "Make Germany Great Again," groups which included the veterans of the First World War and the monarchists who longed for the return of a Germany that had been lost or stolen by others--including, the Nazis claimed, globalist Jewish business interests both within and without Germany. *Historical discourse* can be deeply reactionary as well as progressive.

The *permanent struggle* that Foucault describes as roiling through European societies specifically in the 17th and 18th centuries is called *race war*. He uses such a super-charged term for at least two reasons: 1) because it captures the existential depth of the conflict, the intensity of the difference between the victors and the vanquished, the ones who speak of rightful peace and the others who experience that peace only as forced *submission* and the continuation of war; and 2) because it distinguishes this conflict from a more commonly known phenomenon, namely <u>class war</u>. Foucault is not a Marxist thinker, not least because he refuses the explanatory power of *economisms*, i.e., of any *scientific* treatment of capital, whether on the Left or Right, that claims that all of social and political life is rooted in production and consumption and the commodity form. For Foucault, a great deal of what happens in society simply cannot be reduced to the circulation of commodities or to the savage conflicts between the predatory bourgeoisie and the predated proletariat. In the Fourth Lecture, he even goes so far as to quote an 1882 letter by Marx in which Marx reminds Engels that "'*You know very well where we found our idea of class struggle; we found it in the work of the French historians who talked about race struggle*'"

(79), i.e., that Marx and Engels derived their idea of class war from reading discussions of wars between individual "races." (It is interesting to note that this letter does not in fact appear to exist, at least not exactly as Foucault is quoting it. But the point is intriguing, i.e., that "race war" is older than "class war," and that Marx came to see "class war" by first considering "older" forms of sharp, partisan, internal conflict in society that were not necessarily organized around or precipitated by class difference or class conflict.)

But as Foucault points out, anticipating what he will also outline in the next lecture and then again in the Eleventh lecture, *race war* undergoes a horrifying mutation, beginning in the 19th century. Warring internal conflict endures what he calls a *biological transcription* (60). The vast social, political, cultural, and linguistic differences between two peoples in one pacified country gets caught up in pseudo-sciences like eugenics, which argue that the most important differences among human beings are rooted in genetics. What was once two nations at war within one country becomes something appalling: namely, one country in which *a superrace and a subrace* are at war with each other. The terms of the conflict are radically changed: now the war is between *the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, . . . against those who deviate from the norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage* (60). Once the aggrieved community said *"'We have to defend ourselves against society,'"* meaning, we are elementally at odds with "society," with that supposedly unified social whole for which those in power claim responsibility and guardianship; we are, in a sense, "anti-social," if by the social or society you mean the community who believes that we live together at peace and in peace. Now, the community in power says: *"'We have to defend society against all biological threats posed by the other race, the subrace'"* (61). In other words, *"Society must be defended."* We see how bitterly ironic the title Foucault gave his lectures and why that title is in quotation marks, for the title cites the voice of what he memorably calls *State racism* (62): *a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products. This is the internal racism of permanent purification, and it will become one of the basic dimensions of social normalization* (62). *"We have to defend ourselves against society"* is mutated into *"Society must defend itself."* That is to say, *State racism* will involve *sovereign power*; but it will also invoke *disciplinary power.* Of course, Foucault has Nazi Germany primarily in mind here. By the Eleventh Lecture, Foucault will suggest that one of the distinguishing features of the criminal enterprise of Nazism was how it so effectively combined all three kinds of power, *disciplinary power, biopower, and sovereign power*.



In 1841, Augustus Pugin*,* who was critical of Jeremy Bentham's "panoptical" architectural designs on the social and political life of Europeans, published this image, which contrasts, on the one hand, the urban design of the gothic buildings in a medieval town, centred on a church and depicting, along the margins, idealizing scenes of pious unity, with, on the other hand, the layout of a modern town (seen in the upper half) now overwhelmingly dominated by a "poor house" (i.e., a prison-like facility for the indigent and other "delinquents") that is panoptical in form and function. Scenes of enslavement and incarceration ring the upper half of the image.

Lecture Four: 28 January 1976

Foucault begins his lecture by discussing the various ways in which *history*, by which he means here the narratives and practices of historians, have in the past shored up the authority of sovereign power. (Remember that *history* here is the opposite of what he calls *historical discourse*, the latter being the language of the aggrieved minority, the former the practice of

knowledge that sovereign authority marshals to justify its authority.) It is that authority against which *counterhistory* must be pitched (66). Traditionally speaking, from classical *antiquity* to the Middle Ages to *the seventeenth century*, *the discourse of the historian* was one that provides *a justification of power and a reinforcement of that power* (66). Just as with the *rituals, coronations, funerals,* and *ceremonies* that swirl around sovereign power, historical writings act as *an operator of power, an intensifier of power*. Historians in the past, for example, took on the *genealogical task* of looking back in time to ancestors and heroes of which the current sovereign is said to be the direct inheritor and descendent, whether literally or in spirit. In this way, the *pettiness and mundanity* of a current ruler could be transformed into *something equally heroic and equally legitimate*. Historians also serve a *memorialization function* (67), i.e., carefully taking on the labour of recording the day to day lives of sovereigns, thereby producing the illusion that *what sovereigns and kings do is never pointless, futile, petty, and never being unworthy of being narrated* (67). To scrupulously narrate the king's days is to invent and to reinforce the idea that the king's days are worthy of being recorded. Who but the natural ruler would live his or her days in ways that called for a careful record? Foucault's point is that careful record helps *produce* that naturalness of the natural ruler, meaning there is nothing natural about the ruler's rule: it is all an invention, a ruse.

Counterhistories or what Foucault calls *historical discourse* (69) must therefore contend with the official discourses of the historians. Historical discourse is not devoted to sovereignty–to the work of honouring and remembering ruling power or the work of anchoring that power in an ancient past; it is instead *a discourse about races, about a confrontation between races, about the race struggle that goes on within nations and within laws* (69). How then is this historical discourse different?, Foucault asks. *This is the first non-Roman or anti-Roman history that the West had ever known* (69), he says, meaning that historical discourse isn't interested in tracing the authority of the current sovereign back to classical antiquity or obscure ancient eras, a common practice in Europe, for example, in the Middle Ages. British monarchs repeatedly claimed to be related by blood to the mythical King Arthur, the monarch who, in the late 400s, defeated the Saxons and secured Britain for the British. The fact that King Arthur is mostly a creature of myth and legend, not fact, works to the advantage of subsequent monarchs, who can claim to be descended from him without having to actually show the continuity of that bloodline. British monarchists were no more expected to be able to historically locate King Arthur as the origin than adults can be expected to remember their infancy. (In Monty Python's 1975 film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, King Arthur gallivants through the countryside announcing that he is "Arthur, King of the Britons," unifying all his people under one national banner . . . only to be confronted with not one but two counterhistories:

Arthur:	How do you do, good lady. I am Arthur, king of the Britons. Whose castle is that?
Woman:	King of the 'oo?
Arthur:	King of the Britons.
Woman:	'Oo are the Britons?
Arthur:	Well we all are! We are all Britons! And I am your king.
Woman:	I didn't know we 'ad a king! I thought we were autonomous collective.
Man:	You're fooling yourself! We're living in a dictatorship! A self-perpetuating autocracy in which the working classes--
Woman:	There you go, bringing class into it again...

Counterhistories shun these sorts of self-congratulatory and self-consolidating stories told in the name of figures like King Arthur. No, this is a discourse, a set of writings and practices, that refuses *the implicit identification of people with the monarch and nation with the sovereign*, the identification that the historians, the apologists for the king, had made and underlined. Historical discourse tries its best to make legible that *sovereignty no longer binds everything into a unity*. Sovereign power exists and indeed thrives; but it is now said not to speak for everyone or to everyone: *The history of some is not the history of others* (69). ("King of who?," the rebellious peasants ask, not recognizing their sovereign or his authority or even the land he claims sovereignty over.) The sovereign and the sovereign's stories act to blind and immobilize populations. But the counterhistory has another point of view to offer: *It reveals that the light–the famous dazzling effect of power–is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that*

illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness (70). The counterhistory speaks for the one who says: *"We do not have any continuity behind us; we do not have behind us the great and glorious genealogy in which the law and power flaunt themselves in their power and their glory. We come out of the shadows, we had no glory and we had no rights, and that is why we are beginning to speak and to tell of our history"* (70).

Foucault notes how, in the European tradition, counterhistory often resorts to language that *is articulated around the great biblical form of prophecy and promise* (71). *The Bible was a weapon of poverty and insurrection; it was the word that made men rise up against the law and against glory, against the unjust laws of kings*. The English Revolution is a vivid case in point for Foucault, i.e., the twenty years of deep political and social unrest and rebellion in the middle of the 17th century in which the Parliamentarians, a highly diverse group who fought for limits to the authority of the monarch, battled against the Royalists, who supported the historical privileges accorded to the king. Various elements of the side fighting against the king's absolute authority absorbed the powerfully emancipatory language of the Old Testament that prophesizes the end of the rule of tyrants and looks longingly ahead to the arrival of a new and truly just "Jerusalem." William Blake, the great late 18th-century poet and artist, also put the same biblical language to use, as he marshaled himself against what he considered to be the obscene imposition England's royal power and the State church. The radical nature of his poems and paintings speaks to his break with sovereign authority's often repeated story of Great Britain's supposed "greatness," its stabilizing and reassuring traditions guaranteeing the rule of law, its putative fairness, decency, and grit–all awful lies that Blake saw *as* lies, but from a place of abject powerlessness. In a sense, all he had to voice his dissent were the voices of beleaguered dissent that he read in the Bible. More recently, the great speeches and texts of Dr. Martin Luther King, who of course was steeped in the biblical tradition, also spoke of an America whose otherwise exiled peoples–African-Americans who had been banished to the harsh wilderness of racial injustice--would one day triumph over the iniquities and inequities of a white supremacist state: "I have a dream," he famously said at the very seat of sovereign white authority. Counterhistory unabashedly makes legible what sovereign power and its historians would rather keep hidden: namely, that sovereign power ascends to its place of authority mostly through violence, privilege, and luck. The sovereign's success, the sovereign's consolidation of power, all of the sovereign's *victories*, counterhistorians point out, *were someone else's defeats* (72). *Another history now begins to challenge* sovereignty: *The counterhistory of dark servitude and forfeiture* (73). Foucault recalls something Petrarch, the great 14th-century poet, scholar, and humanist, once pointedly asked: *"Is there nothing more to history than the praise of Rome?"*

(74). Even to ask the question is to begin to imagine *a society whose historical consciousness centers not on sovereignty and the problem of its foundation, but on revolution, its promises, and its prophecies of future emancipation* That's a question we might ask ourselves here in Canada, a nation-state that consolidated itself during the Victorian era, notorious for its stake in the image of normalizing orderliness, rather than the time of the French Revolution, which was when the United States of America was born. What histories of Canada have we been taught and schooled into reproducing? In what ways are those histories designed to reinforce the brilliantly blinding illusion that the nation is naturally a place of "peace, order, and good government"? Is there nothing more to history than praise of confederation, of the gathering-togetherness of the nation?

Foucault ends this Fourth Lecture by addressing the question that he will take up in the final, Eleventh Lecture: the grotesque mutation of race war, by which he means deep existential and asymmetrical social and political division with nations, especially nations whose dominant narratives proclaim unity and stability, into something fundamentally different: *The theme of the counterhistory of races was, finally, that the State was necessarily unjust. It is now inverted into its opposite: the State is no longer the instrument that one race uses against the other: the State is, and must be, the protectors of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race. The idea of racial purity . . . that is what replaces the idea of race struggle* (81). Race war was about the *emancipatory struggle* (81) of an oppressed minority against a State that that minority views as unjust–and perhaps never more unjust than when the State proclaims that 1) it is in power for just and right reasons and 2) that it speaks for the whole when it says that its wishes align perfectly with the people. But as the nature of power moves *from law to norm*, from sovereign authority *whose luster and vigor were no longer guaranteed by magico-juridical rituals but by medico-normalizing techniques* (81), race war or *race struggle* is replaced by *racism*. That is to say, with the diffusion of sovereign power and all of its supportive trappings (ceremonies, celebratory and propagandistic histories), and with the rise of a normalizing society, thrumming with regulatory and disciplinary power, it becomes possible to grab *the discourse of race struggle and reutilize it*. The State now proclaims that its role is to defend "society" (hence the ironic title of Foucault's lectures) from an interior threat that has been deemed to be parasitic on the otherwise "pure," productive, healthy body of the people. *State sovereignty thus becomes the imperative to protect the race* (81). *State racism* emerges as the particular form that *racism* assumes by *the end of the nineteenth century* (82)–i.e., *a biological and centralized racism*, a racism that biologized difference, identified certain groups as genetically inferior to what was now said to be a genetically superior "race." Defending society, defending the State, means defending it against individuals and communities that cannot, strictly speaking, claim to be fully human.

Lecture Eleven: 17 March 1976

With spring just around the corner in Paris, Foucault draws his lecture series to a powerful close. He does so by gathering together strands of his previous arguments and by opening up new questions and new arguments that will go on to have a profound impact on humanities research and teaching. Social and political theorists are still reading and rereading this lecture, developing and modifying and wrestling with its implications. In the previous five lectures (i.e., Lecture Five through to Lecture Ten, for which you are not responsible, although I warmly encourage you to read them!), Foucault has explored in exquisite detail what he calls again here *a war between races*, meaning, the sustained and deeply felt conflicts between, in effect, different communities within nation-states as they took on their modern shape in Europe. What Foucault discovers is striking evidence of how countries like France were sharply riven from within by warring factions with entirely separate visions of the past, present, and future of the nation. But the evidence of those visions, and the history of the asymmetrical war between the faction in power and those that were not, was mostly *eliminated from historical analysis by the principle of national universality* (239), i.e., the *counter-histories* of the nation were rendered illegible or forgotten under the blinding glare of the light of the dominant narratives, narratives that make a claim to *universality*, that is, to speaking in a non-partisan and objective manner about how a nation came to be and how the sovereign authority ruling that nation came to be in power and to speak for everyone.

Now Foucault tells us that he must turn our attention to *something very different, namely State racism*. To do so, he returns, as always, to the complex question of *power*. Foucault's thesis is that in the transformative years during and after the French Revolution (i.e., at the start of the 1800s), power has a new and fiercely attentive focus: *life*. In a way that would have been unrecognizable to, say, medieval European authorities, power is now dialed closely into the lives of citizens, i.e., into the *techniques* of understanding, organizing, regulating, and policing human vitality. *A whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and reports–all the technology that can be described as the disciplinary technology of labor*. What people were doing, who they were doing things with, what they were thinking and desiring, whether they were productive or unproductive, and why, whether they exhibited signs of *delinquency* or not, all aspects of the *life* of a person became power's business to monitor and to administer. Even and especially the architectural design of buildings reflected this shift–the very way in which space was distributed and organized in buildings was altered so as to maximize observation and control. *Schools, hospitals, barracks, workshops, and so on* (250) morph into something new: all are dedicated to ensuring that *disciplinary power* works, and works mostly invisibly, and that a

normalizing society, one governed not only from above, by *sovereign power*, but also laterally, through countless active networks, shape human beings through *surveillance and training* (250). But in this last lecture Foucault points to another form of power, one hinted at in the opening lectures, but finally evoked more directly here. This new kind of power–new in the 19th century, but today endemic–doesn't replace *disciplinary* power, but it does work at a different *scale* and *makes us of very different instruments* (242). *Unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new nondisciplinary power* is applied not to individuals but to entire populations. *So, after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species* (242, 247, 250). Insofar as human beings are of political interest–in the form of institutions, bodies of knowledge, social practices, etc.--they are interesting as *living*, i.e., for the life that they possess and should possess. Foucault gives this other form of power a new name: *a "biopolitics" of the human race* (242). A few pages later, Foucault will also call this kind of force *biopower*. *Biopower* is what compels bodies to be legible to power as living creatures; *biopolitics* is the political forms that that power takes. In the years that followed, and certainly in the present day, thousands of articles and books have been written about "biopolitics" and "biopower" and on what it means to live in a biopolitical regime. An enormous question for social and political thought right now is: are there practices of knowledge or forms of solidarity that are not examples of biopower? Would we even recognize those practices and knowledges, given how much social and political life is administered by and through biopower? Note how even to speak of social and political life is already to have conceded to the demands of biopower because I have just referred to the object of political and social analysis as a matter of life. The social and political theorist, Clare Colebrook, for example, has recently called for thinkers to look for signs of what she calls "the unlived," meaning practices and phenomena that play out in excess of conventional understandings of "life" or that cannot easily be understood as expressions of "life," and thus something that needs to be optimized, sheltered, defended and therefore sorted into "life" worthy of these protections and enhancements and "life" deemed to be unworthy of the same. As Foucault goes on to ask (253), where does *the exercise of this biopower reach its limits* (253)? What bears emphasizing here is this: power focused on optimizing, protecting, and administering life is inherently normative, because to optimize, protect, and administer life always means knowing–or claiming to know--what kinds of life do not warrant optimization and protection. To know or to claim to know what is properly human means power sees its task as one that is principally devoted to sifting the properly human from all those who are deemed not to be properly human.

Biopolitics operates mostly a the level of demography, i.e., at the level of overall

populations: for example, *the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of the population, and so on*, as Foucault observes (243). In sentences that have been quoted many times in recent critical analyses of the COVID-19 pandemic, Foucault notes that at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, mass infectious illnesses inflicting communities–for example, cholera and yellow fever–came to be treated not as an otherwise inexplicable blow suddenly striking people down but rather *as phenomena affecting a population* (244), now a *permanent* part of European life, a *phenomena* that *sapped the population's strength, shortened the work week, wasted energy, and cost money, both because they led to a fall in production and because treating them was expensive* (244). As he points out, it is probably more accurate to characterize pandemics as *endemics* because the latter word better captures the many ways in which mass illness is now understood to be an ongoing threat from within, meaning, a matter that calls for rational, systematic, scientific and social scientific analyses, not an outside act of god or a merely inexplicable natural disaster to be endured but a phenomenon specifically of human life that must be understood, accounted-for, worried about. The question of the overall health, well-being, productivity, and orderliness of human beings activates new *more subtle, more rational mechanisms: insurance, individual and collective savings, safety measures*, among other practices and institutions. For the first time, power is interested in human geography, that is, in how human beings live in their environments and how environments shape human life, how environments might be altered or transformed the better to enhance and administer that life (245).

Foucault pauses to ensure that his students are with him as he advances this new thesis. A *biopolitical* regime is when human beings are required to be legible to power at the level of populations: the population is now a *political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem* (245). Contrast this kind of power with *the theory of right and disciplinary practice*, Foucault notes. Power understood through the *theory of right* is concerned only with *the individual and the social body*, and specifically on the *contract* formed between them: what do I as an individual consent to give to sovereign authority in exchange for the chance to live and thrive in a social body? Is that authority meeting the terms of that contract? Power understood through *disciplinary practices* addresses *individuals and their bodies in practical terms* (245): at a day to day level, the normative forces circulating among individuals or between individuals and various social structures, practices, and institutions (for example, schools, the work place, the streets of a city). *Biopolitical* power, on the other hand, is distinguished not only in terms of its scale but also its *mechanisms*: these *include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures* (246). The object of these mechanisms is control and optimization of populations through a systematic understanding of what enhances life and what compromises or threatens life. Foucault calls these mechanisms *regulatory* (246). *Regulatory*

power is simply another name for *biopolitical power*: "regulatory" here means, in part, regularizing power, understanding and administering life in ways that draw on large, repeatable demographic patterns.

(Note: It can help sometimes to use the word *regulatory power* rather than *biopolitical power* because, in the years following this lectures, *biopolitical power* will come to stand for both *regulatory* and *disciplinary* power. Why? Because even Foucault came to see that both *disciplinary* and *regulatory* power have as their sole focus optimizing, sheltering, sifting, and policing *life*; both are about making bodies legible to power and about how power creates bodies that are legible to it. Foucault suggests that *discipline* is distinguished from *regulation* (top of page 247), but that may be a distinction without a difference. Why? Because it is impossible, given Foucault's argument, to see how *regulatory* power or *biopolitical power* isn't also always *disciplinary* or *normalizing* in one way or another.)

Foucault is much clearer though on the distinction to be made between sovereign power and biopolitical power. In what would become perhaps the most widely influential sentences in these lectures, Foucault says that *Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making life and letting die* (247). Foucault's phrase, *And now* does not mean that biopolitical power wholly supercedes sovereign power, although sometimes there is a certain looseness to Foucault's argument that almost allows for that story to be told. But sovereign power in its *great absolute* form (247), i.e., the "right" of kings to kill individuals or to allow them to continue living, does start to fade as the dominant form of power, ceding to another kind of power that can also most certainly be deadly. Power in the shape of *biopolitical power* is focused on optimizing life, regularizing it, *making* in the sense of creating and sustaining and enhancing the lives of the living. But as always in Foucault, these energies or forces devoted to *making* are normative and hierarchical: certain lives are deemed worthy of optimization, while other lives are deemed to be expendable. Power is not only a process of *making life*; it is also a mechanism of *letting die,* that is to say, of withdrawing or withholding the labour of enhancing or optimizing life, and in that absence, effectively relegating life to death, and leaving the living to die.

Foucault underlines how disciplinary and regulatory power can coexist in different ways. For example, the police are the source and scene of both forms of power–both operating in normalizing and controlling ways on individual bodies and as an instrument as *a State apparatus* (250). He leaves it to you and I to consider how the police today can be described this way. Consider, for instance, what the Black Lives Matter movement has now described in agonizing detail: on the one hand, the day-to-day harassment of black youth at the hands of the police, the ways in which the mere presence of the police alters and coerces the demeanor of black youth in

public spaces, how behavior, dress, etc., are subject to surveillance and administration by the police, how an increasingly militarized police operates like an armed threat directed at racialized populations; and, on the other hand, the ways in which policing now makes claims to being a kind of social "science," rooted in demographics and psychology, the purpose of which is to "serve and protect," yes, but to "serve and protect" those populations that are deemed worthy of optimization, security, and respect. One might add that when the police use violence in racialized ways, when they assault or murder black youth without any legal repercussions, they are also examples of sovereign power. When assessments of police brutality centre mostly or entirely on whether force was "legally" justified, then we see an example of how sovereign power is always discussed, i.e., as a *juridical* question or a *the theory of right*, i.e., whether the social contract between individuals and the community, in which citizens consent to the police bearing arms and the permission to use armed force, has been honoured or violated: was the lethal force legal or justified or excessive? But by focusing the discussion on the *juridical* question, we ignore the larger question of the long history of police brutality directed at racialized populations, just as we ignore the different mechanisms by which the police are an instrument of disciplinary and regulatory power, of punishing individual bodies and regulating communities, keeping them in line. So when Black Lives Matter calls for the abolition of the police, the movement is calling for the eradication of policing as this destructive and lethal combination of regulatory, disciplinary power. (For a revealing discussion of the question of power and the police, see, for example, Robyn Maynard's *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present*, selections from which we will take up later in this course. Other research explores the origins of the modern police force in the U.S. in "slave-catching" or "slave patrols," i.e., armed groups of white men hired to find and return slaves. See, for example, Jill Lepore, "The Invention of the Police: Why did American policing get so big, so fast? The answer, mainly, is slavery," *The New Yorker* July 20, 2020.)

In addition to the police, Foucault points to the example of *the model town, the artificial town, the town of utopian reality that was not only dreamed of but actually built in the nineteenth century* (251). What the philosopher has in mind is primarily the enormous planned *working-class housing estates* built around factories and factory-complexes to accommodate the enormous and growing populations of workers need to fuel the industrial revolution in Europe. (As I will note below, Foucault is conspicuous here for not referring to the unbearable conditions of the Paris suburbs where France's immigrant working-class communities lived . . . and still live.) Here disciplinary and regulatory power work together. Individual workers and their families live in grid-like housing, laid out in ways that ensured that everyone saw and knew what everyone else was doing, *made visible*, i.e., that the very urban geography of these new spaces worked as *a*

sort of spontaneous policing or control . . . carried out by the spatial layout of the town itself (251). Medieval forms of living, which is to say congregate living in which many families and several generations of families, not to mention animals and humans, shared certain common domestic spaces, gives way to modern practices of housing that works by *localizing families (one to a house) and individuals (one to a room)* (251). In his earlier work on criminals and prisons, Foucault called this *localizing* strategy *cellularization*, i.e., using the architectural organization of space to inhibit lateral communication between subjects, thereby controlling and immobilizing dissent. But at the same time, as a planned community, the workers' estates were also the site of intense regulatory scrutiny, everything from attention to the *patterns of saving related to housing* to *health-insurance systems, old-age pensions; rules on hygiene that guarantee the optimal longevity of the population* (251). Planned workers' communities are the scene of the alignment of both disciplinary and regulatory power.

Surveyor's plan of Salt Lake City (c.1870)

Foucault then turns to a *very different* example, namely *sexuality*, which will be the subject of his next book and, indeed, of a series of books (under the title *The History of*

Sexuality) that he will be writing up to his death in 1984, less than ten years after these lectures. I've pointed to the argument he develops earlier in these notes but it is worth recapitulating here. Question: *Basically, why did sexuality become a field of vital strategic importance in the nineteenth century?* (251). As Foucault will analyze at length in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, published later the same year as these lectures, his research showed that somewhere between the 18th and 19th century, sexuality suddenly became a subject of immense and proliferating scrutiny. And with that scrutiny a new kind of human being is manufactured. Early in the 18th century, and certainly for centuries before that time, European sexual practices were treated as more or less detached from how you identified as a person: i.e., what or who you desired and who you were were not necessarily tied together. The answer to the query, "who are you?," had very little to do with who or what you desired, and much more to do with the family into which you were born, your social and economic status, your religious faith, your ancestry, and so forth. But quite quickly that all changed, such that who you were and what or why you desired became two sides of the same coin. --Hence the extraordinary and wholly unprecedented focus on sexuality in the Victorian era: sexual desires and practices now became the key to understanding the identity–and thus the health and productivity--of a person, and thus, from the point of view of disciplinary and regulatory power, how to administer and normalize that person, how to optimize and organize populations to ensure that sexual practices were productive, a source of life, not a compromising source of degradation, nonproductivity, or death. Foucault cites the example of *children who masturbated*, a focus of concern and a weird worry that, in fact, has surged into the foreground at various points in the social history of Europe and North America. Ultimately, Foucault uses the figure of the masturbating child (or *childhood sexuality*, as he calls it in an earlier lecture) to stand more generally for any sexuality that is deemed by power to be delinquent, *debauched* or *perverted* (252). These kinds of sexuality excite both disciplinary and regulatory forms of power; indeed, as Foucault says, the *extreme emphasis place upon sexuality in the nineteenth century* (ranging from medical case studies to the invention of sexology, and from scandalous confessional treatises about individual sex lives to prudishness for which "Victorian" society was famous, prudishness being, of course, the constant and intense focus on sexual desire in the form of its shaming repression) is itself the principle sign of how it represents a nexus where both regulatory and disciplinary power meet and enhance each other. Elsewhere Foucault calls such uniquely charged meeting places *dense transfer-points* (*History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 103). The "deviant" or "delinquent" sexual body is very carefully scrutinized and worried about, i.e., subject to normalizing pressures of an intensity that is new, historically speaking, and unprecedented when compared to other kinds of normalization. But as Foucault notes, sexual deviancy is now understood as a matter of heredity, so that the individual

"pervert" not only harms herself or himself but also embodies a harm running through a bloodline, *the theory of degeneracy* (252). Medical and social *hygiene* interventions are called for, and techniques of power ranging from social shaming to segregation to surgery are brought to bear on the body of youths, ostensibly to protect them from themselves (*disciplinary power*) and from contaminating the social body (*regulatory power*). By medicalizing childhood masturbation, i.e., by making it a matter of "disease" or "sickness," childhood sexuality is subject to the one practice of knowledge, other than the police, that is most suited to exercising both disciplinary and regulatory power: *Medicine is a power-knowledge that can be applied to both the body and the population* (252), thereby giving it a uniquely authoritative status in social and political life.

Foucault thinks aloud about what he calls *the points where the exercise of biopower reaches its limits* (252). At those limits or at least at what appears to be those limits, certain *paradoxes* appear, he says. Take the example of *atomic power.* By the 1970s, it was well known --and in fact the subject of much social and political debate--that the superpowers possessed nuclear weapons of such potency as to be able to kill every person on the globe several times over. In 1982, Jonathan Schell wrote an influential essay, "The Fate of the Earth," (Feburary 1, *The New Yorker*), that later became a book, describing in terrifying detail what the planet would look like in the wake of a nuclear war. All that would be left, as he says, would be "a republic of insects and grass." In other words, nuclear war would not be war at all, since it would be globally unsurviveable. My Cold War childhood was haunted by that nightmare, by the possibility that everyone and everything would be annihilated in a nuclear war with Russia. Foucault wonders what kind of power thrums through the construction of such weapons and the planetary threat that they pose. Nuclear arsenals would appear to be an expression of maximum sovereign power. But if this is sovereign power it is strange in that it not only *kills, but it has the power to kill life itself*, meaning that it is now no longer a matter of *taking life and letting live*, as Foucault had said earlier in the same lecture was the element of sovereign authority, but of taking all life, and thus letting no one live. In other words, if sovereign power is founded on the principle of allowing some to live, of inhibiting or withdrawing the absolute authority to kill, so that some live, then weapons designed to kill everyone are sovereign in a new and horrifying form. Do such weapons render all human beings into creatures that are neither alive nor dead, as Foucault says is the case under more conventional sovereigns? Under such a king, *the subject is, by rights, neither dead nor alive . . . and it is thanks to the sovereign that the subject has the right to be alive, or possibly, the right to be dead* (240. So, Foucault, asks, is this an example of a form of sovereign power that *suppresses itself*, i.e., inhibits or holds itself in abeyance, thereby granting life to all human beings across the globe even as it threatens them with utter extinction? For

sovereign power to act in this instance would mean the extinction of that power at the same instant that it exercised its authority. How strange. An entire sub-field of social and political thought has since sprung up around this strangeness, called, fittingly enough, nuclear criticism. Jacques Derrida, whose work on hospitality we take up in this course, wrote an influential essay on the subject in 1984 with the wittily ironic title, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)."

Foucault also briefly evokes another horrifying prospect, namely the creation, whether by design or by accident, of a deadly virus in a laboratory (254). In creating new life forms, doesn't biopower–the power, as he says, to *make* life--reach a kind of maximum expression? But what if those life forms end up being a *monster*, as he says (254), in the form of *viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive*? Like the example of a nuclear holocaust, the emergence of a human-made plague for which there is no immunity or survivability marks the point at which the most forceful expression of a form of power is also its self-destruction.

Foucault has suddenly taken his classroom to a very bleak place, a planet scorched by the heat and radiation of nuclear weapons, or laid waste by a life-form that kills all human life. Interestingly, these are, as you know, scenarios that are the subject of lots of movies and novels. Why is that? Why do we savor or rather, why are we schooled into savoring these stories of the end of the world? Social and political thinkers Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek (who we saw in *Examined Life*) have both said that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world then the end of capitalism," meaning that it seems that we would rather indulge in post-nuclear war fantasies and post-plague fantasies than contemplate a world after capitalism: that's how wedded too many are to the wounding violence of intensifying economic inequality, high consumption, human slavery, resource extraction, and the destruction of the climate! –A sobering thought, well worth considering carefully. Foucault throttles back slightly, stepping away from these world-annihilating scenarios but nevertheless turns to world-destroying ones. For as he well knows, social and political history brims with examples of regulatory and disciplinary regimes that are murderously destructive and that meant the end of the world to millions of men, women, and children: two horrifying examples spring to his mind, *colonization, or in other words, . . colonizing genocide* and the Holocaust in Europe. He explores only the latter, much to the disappointment of some of his most critical readers. Racism or *State racism*, as he calls it, racializing and homicidal violence against entire populations that is state sponsored, i.e., not simply permitted by the state but in fact central to its self-definition, is fundamentally connected to practices of *biopower*. But how can that be? *How can a power such as this kill, if it is true that its basic function is to improve life, to prolong its duration, to improve its chances, to avoid accidents, and to compensate for failings? How, under these conditions, is it possible for a*

political power to kill, to call for deaths, to demand deaths, to give the order to kill, and to expose not only its enemies but its own citizens to the risk of death? Given that this power's objective is essentially to make live, how can it let die? How can the power of death, the function of death, be exercised in a political system centered upon biopower? (254) In other words, if biopower is focused on optimizing and administering life, how can it be marshaled not only to kill but to exterminate entire peoples?

Racism is the key. As Foucault says, *It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die* (254). Racism divides *the domain of life*, cleaving it along biological lines: life is now divided from other life, one form of life deeming itself to be essential, healthy, normal, and vitally important (it is *what must live*) and the other form of life now said to be a poisonous and destructive contaminant, a life that *must die*. Where once society was the scene of asymmetrical *war*, called *race war*, by Foucault, i.e., troubled by deep divisions between groups in power and groups who longed for power, now a completely different division is opened up, this time a division about what constitutes the "true" or "healthy" *life* and thus, always, what constitutes the "false" and "sickly" form of *life*. Racism *allows power . . . to fragment, to create ceasuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower* (255), meaning, regulatory power administers and surveys not one national body riven by *political* differences (255) but now, under the aegis of a biologizing racism (a racism that treats different populations as different kind of life, down to the level of genetics), treats a society as suffering a *biological* split or *ceasura* in *life*, a point at which what is vital about the society is divided from something that is deemed to be another and threatening kind of life. Fragmented in this way by a biologically based racism, biopower takes a new murderous turn: now the optimization of life is tied to the labour of ridding the social body of that other life, that life that has been deemed to be "unworthy of life." When I use the phrase "life unworthy of life" I am recalling the memorable phrase, *Lebensunwertes Leben*, used by German physicians in the 1920s and coopted by the Nazis in the 1930s, to determine which patients should be euthanized. These included the mentally ill, the disabled, but soon extended to Jews, communists, homosexuals, and other minority populations. The phrase *life unworthy of life* captures the essence of *State racism putting biopower* to use: "life" is divided by biopower into two kinds of "life," one contemptible, killable, and the other calling for optimization and protection. Indeed, among the first laws enacted by the Nazi party when it was democratically elected to power in the 1930s were the so-called "Protection Laws," laws aimed at shielding those populations deemed to be "true" Germans from internal threats to the health of the body politic. Those threats were anybody power said were threats.

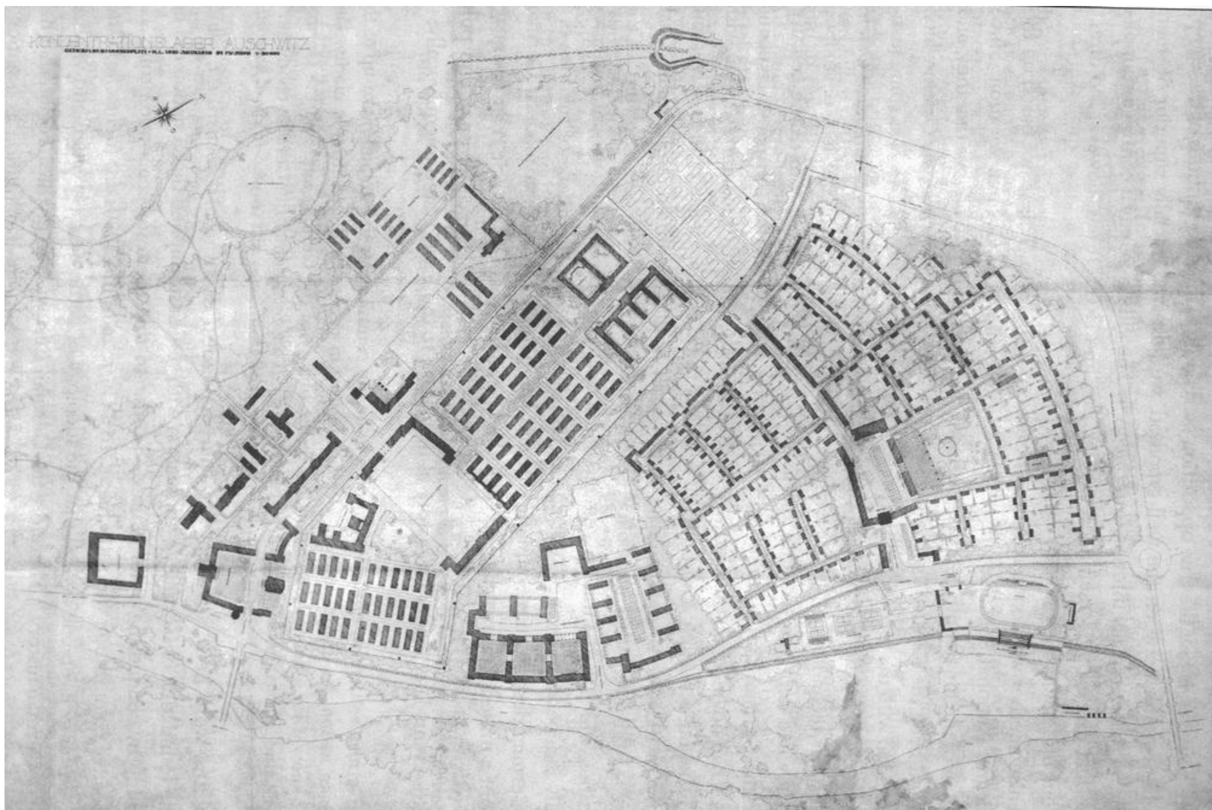
Foucault emphasizes how, under the aegis of State racism, the optimization of one part of

the population is directly tied to the denial of life to another. Those deemed worthy of life can only truly thrive at the expense of those deemed to be unworthy. As Foucault points out, during conventional war it was a common space to say that "'*In order to live, the other must die.*'" (255). But *racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type relationship: "The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole and the more I–as species rather than individual can life, the strong I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate* (255).'" Under these racist conditions, the normalizing power, the authority to determine who is abnormal and who is not, assumes *the old sovereign right to kill* (256). Or, as Foucault notes, perhaps it is the other way around; perhaps Nazism is an example of sovereign power, *the right of life and death* concentrated in the hands of the leader, the *Fuhrer*, that assumes the apparatuses and technologies of biopower and indeed disciplinary power in order to kill, in order to sift the social body into those who are said to be killable. *When I say "killing,"* Foucault says, *I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on* (256)." That's an important point to make and remembers the guiding directive of biopower described by Foucault: *to "make" live and to let die*. Sovereign power was and is all about *the right to take life or let live*. That kind of power is more purely expressed in the capacity of the sovereign to treat his or her subjects as remaining alive only because that sovereign has decided not to kill them. But biopower inverts that structure and practice of power: biopower is the power *to "make" live*," to enhance and protect life, while at the same time *to let die*, i.e., to withdraw support or protection and in that act to leave those who are now unprotected and without power's optimizing interest, to wither and die. A curious paradox is at work here, one that will be explored in much more depth in the work of the Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben: power is expressed in its purest form when it withdraws itself and, in withdrawing, lets others die. Biopower is most evident where it is least supportive. Strange. Letting die, i.e., abandoning individuals or communities, withdrawing the protections ordinarily afforded by the state, ensuring structural inequalities that, for example, deny certain people access to healthcare or education or bodily safety, are all examples of racist expressions of biopower that work not necessarily by murdering people but by still have the same deadly results. Foucault points to the example of *colonization, or in other words, . . . colonizing genocide* (257). France itself had been a powerful settler nation, and like other settler nations had set about exterminating the indigenous peoples of its colonies–whether by outright killing or by denying the means of existence to those peoples. When Foucault was

giving his lectures, France was still reeling from the violence of the war it fought with Algeria, a colony in North Africa whose natural and human resources it had extracted for generations but whose independence it resisted in a bloody conflict that ended only in 1962. Long after the war, France continued to treat Algerians who were born under French colonial rule as second-class citizens if they were citizens at all, barred from the same rights held by those born in France or of French descent. France exploited North Africans for all sorts of labour in France, many of whom were forced to live on the outskirts of Paris, far from the university in which Foucault taught. In the 1970s, many of those who lived in the *banlieues*, zones of disenfranchisement, many of which lacked basic sanitary services during Foucault's life. Many social and political theorists have wondered why Foucault did not speak specifically of the Algerian war of independence or of the State racism thrumming through 1970s France when it came to the treatment of immigrants from Algeria. Is zeroing in on Nazism in Germany, as he does in the next pages, a way not to talk about France, about French settler colonialism, French State racism, and, indeed, France's complicity in the Nazi atrocities (a subject that is still a struggle in France)? Perhaps. Other theorists have developed and complicated Foucault's theory of State racism and biopower, pointing out that in colonial settings the emphasis is so weighted towards *letting* the colonized peoples *die* and so little devoted to *making live*, to optimizing life, that the term *biopolitics* should be replaced with a new term, namely *necropolitics*. (See, for example, Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* [2003, 2019]). In other words, for some social and political theorists, *biopolitics* is what State racism puts to work in Europe; but in the colonies, *necropolitics* better describes the murderousness of settler-colonial masters.)

To give Foucault his due, he does cite colonialism as the practice in which European states first develop forms of State racism. The practices of *making live and letting die* carried out in the colonies are refined there and then put to work in Europe. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why his primary *example* remains *Nazism* (259). As he suggests, Nazism uniquely integrates all forms of power: sovereign, disciplinary, and regulatory (or biopower). *The old sovereign right to take life* runs *through the entire social body of Nazi society*, initially a power *granted not only to the State but to a whole series of individuals*, i.e., *the SA, the SS, and so on* (259). (The SA and SS where different paramilitary organizations–both extremely dangerous-- that, acting at the behest of the Nazi party, terrorized Germans and the peoples of the lands that Germany conquered by force, murdering many and coercing others into accepting those murders as part what it meant to live under Nazi rule.) The relationship that these armed organizations had with the population was one of war, Foucault notes, and so helped create a world in which armed violence became part of everyday existence. To be sure, the Nazis murdered millions of people, principally the Jews of Europe. Together, we will read Primo Levi's eye-witness account of the

death-world that the SS created at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Poland. But as Foucault argues, the Nazi's also sought to *expose its own race to the absolute and universal threat of death* (259), meaning that central to the Nazi program was to ensure that every "Aryan" citizen experience and embrace the possibility of death, experience its threatening closeness, always just a breath away, the "better" to grasp their supposed "superiority." Dying for Nazi Germany was how Nazi Germany would thrive; being murdered by the Nazis was also how Nazi Germany claimed it would thrive. In Germany, then, *We have an absolutely racist State, an absolutely murderous State, and an absolutely suicidal State:* the *racist State* and the *murderous State* are legible in *"the final solution*," the mass murder of the European Jews, and the *suicidal State* is legible in Hitler's last orders (in the so-called and probably apocryphal "Telegram 71), in which he declared that it was necessary that the nation perish to "save" the nation, i.e., to preserve the "idea" of a racially pure Germany, all Germans had to consent to the possibility, if not the reality, of dying: *a suicidal State*. Under these conditions, there was no limit to how many could be killed in the name of sheltering an idea of a State for which power was coincident with both mass homicide and mass suicide.



"Second Master Plan" for Auschwitz (1942).

The fact that Auschwitz-Birkenau, the enormous slave labour and extermination camp that the Nazis built in Poland (it was, in fact, composed of scores of camps and closely connected slave-based industries), had complex and evolving architectural plans and that it required the expertise of qualified architectural planners in the first place is one way to see that the camp or *Lager* was not an aberrant outlier of civil society, an explosion of irrational and murderous ferocity on its margins, but a form of genocidal violence very closely knitted to a certain State-sponsored rationality, i.e., it was highly organized and the expression of enormous forethought, design, planning, and therefore relied fully on collusion by experts, professionals, and social sectors that might otherwise not be associated with mass killing: architects, banks, economists, finance companies, engineers, manufacturers, planners, pharmaceutical companies, transportation infrastructure experts, the shareholders of heavy industries, the military, etc.. The worst horrors are not the exception but the norm, meaning complexly caught up with the trappings of the familiar landscape of rationally organized society.