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Decapitating Power

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ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT: In *"Society Must Be Defended"* Foucault examines 17th century race war discourse not so much in order to understand 20th century racism or concepts of race but primarily because it constitutes an historical example of an attempt to think power without a head or king. This essay examines his account of race war discourse and the sources he used to construct it. It then takes issue with his claim that early race war discourse can be separated from 18th and 19th century racisms. Finally, it returns to the question of power and argues that the effect of the 1976 lecture series was to dislodge the sovereign model of power but also the model of power as war.

Keywords: Foucault, Levellers, power, race war discourse, racism.

In *"Society Must Be Defended,"* Foucault distinguishes between "race war discourse," which he says arises in the early seventeenth century and persists in a variety of forms in a variety of contexts through the nineteenth century, and "racism," which he identifies as "a particular and localized episode" in the long history of race war discourse.[1] While he is highly critical of modern racism, Foucault sees value in seventeenth-century English race war discourse insofar as it "functioned as a counterhistory"[2]—in other words, insofar as it enabled critique of the dominant arrangements of power and supported alternative regimes of truth capable of generating alternative practices of subjectivation. My first task in this essay is to examine Foucault's account of early race war discourse and some of the sources he used to develop it. Then, with that description set forth, I will take issue with Foucault's suggestion that race war discourse can be separated from racism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Using Thomas Jefferson's writings as an example, I will show that eighteenth and nineteenth century race war discourse does not have the features that Foucault sees as laudable and in fact has many of the features he critiques in twentieth-century racism. Having blurred some of the distinctions that Foucault takes such pains to make, I will then re-center the question that initially animates the 1976 lecture series, the

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[1] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, translated by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 65.

[2] Ibid., 66.

question of how to conceive of power, and argue that the value of Foucault's genealogy of racism lies not in his account or racism, but rather in the ultimately unbearable stress that the account puts on the model of power as war. The effect of the 1976 lectures is to dislodge both the sovereign model of power and the model of power as war and to launch Foucault's thinking in a different direction, albeit one inspired by seventeenth-century English race war discourse.

Foucault's Account of 17ᵗʰ Century English Race War Discourse

Foucault begins the 1976 lecture series by expressing his frustration with available tools for analyzing power. His genealogical research through the early 1970s had revealed that power operates in modern institutions and practices in ways not captured by traditional political theories. Power is simply not reducible to something like lawmaking and enforcement, and subjugation is simply not reducible to something like obedience under threat of punishment. Yet these are exactly the elements of power that theories heir to classical liberalism emphasize and ultimately insist upon as universal and foundational: Every system of political power invariably has its equivalent of "the sovereign" (the source of "law") and, likewise, its equivalent of "subjects," those who must submit to sovereign decree or suffer some form of penalty; whether the system one is analyzing is narrowly governmental or is educational, therapeutic, financial, or martial, one must locate the "sovereign" and articulate "his" "laws" in order to understand whatever struggles or suffering occur and to assess whatever potential for resistance might exist. But, Foucault had insisted, this methodological procedure obscures more than it brings to light. Careful observation reveals not that one person or group holds power (makes law and inflicts punishment) while another person or group is powerless (obeys or suffers) but that there is much "give and take" within systems where, nonetheless, it is obvious that power is in play, freedom is curtailed, and suffering is rampant. Divisions are not binary—the haves versus the have-nots, the powerful over against powerless. There are multiple stratifications, multiple networks of relays and subject-positions carrying differential capacities and ranges of options, and as a result the constant possibility for realignment of forces. Within individual institutions such as schools and hospitals, across institutional arrangements such as the carceral system, and ultimately over the conjoint and overlapping institutions that might be called "society itself," the emerging picture is one of something less like a grounded hierarchical structure and more like a dynamic ordering generated at every moment by the current balance of numerous local struggles.

If that empirically-informed picture is incompatible with the model of power operative in traditional political theories (a model Foucault characterizes as "economic"), then those theories must be discarded. Classical liberal theories fall by the wayside, as do Marxist theories[3]; they simply do not have the analytic resources to enable adequate understanding of such systems. But discarding them leaves us with local genealogical descriptions only, bereft of a coherent model. Foucault expresses dissatisfaction with what he calls

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[3] Ibid., 13-14.

"fragments of research"[4] and turns his attention to the question: "What is power?"[5] He quickly backs away from that formulation, however, which he condemns as "theoretical," and identifies two alternative analytical models of power, that of repression and that of war. Highly skeptical of repression, he is nonetheless unsure that a model of power as war will better accommodate the empirical and historical descriptions that his researches have thus far generated. "Are we really talking about war when we analyze the workings of power?"[6] The purpose of the next ten lectures is to see how far the war model might take us.

Adoption of that model would seem to commit us to three claims, Foucault contends: (1) Force relations operative in a given society were preceded by actual warfare. (2) Subsequent political shifts and reversals must be interpreted not as a cessation of that actual war but as a continuation of it—Clausewitz's formula reversed. And (3) the only way for political struggle to end would be through decisive victory; in other words, a final state beyond politics would be a state of domination without possibility of reversal, and in the absence of domination struggle will simply continue.[7] Just such a conception of power can be found, Foucault maintains, in the race war discourses of the seventeenth-century English radicals.

Foucault's exploration of English race war discourse occurs primarily in lecture five, where it is prefaced by a discussion of Thomas Hobbes. A naïve reader might think that Hobbes himself would be an exemplary theorist of political power as war, but Foucault argues the contrary. Hobbes worked hard to eliminate war from our conception of the state; there may have been real warfare preceding the establishment of the English state, but that war ended, and the political give and take that has occurred since its end excludes war and is untainted by it. Indeed, Foucault believes that Hobbes insisted upon the mutual exclusion of war and politics and the absolute irrelevance of any historical conquest to the state's legitimacy because so many of his contemporaries were arguing so strenuously that whatever rights they claimed for themselves stemmed from their versions of the historical facts.

Hobbes had three main groups of rivals. (1) According to the Monarchists (including, of course, the monarchs themselves), James I and, subsequently, Charles I had no obligation to bow to the will of Parliament because the absolute right to rule was conferred upon them by God after the Norman Conquest.[8] (2) Not conquest, the Parliamentarians insisted, but legitimate succession from the Saxon king Harold gave the Stuart monarchy the

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[4] Ibid., 3.

[5] Ibid., 13.

[6] Ibid., 18.

[7] Ibid., 15-16.

[8] James I, who was also (and first) James VI of Scotland, stated his divine and absolute right to rule by conquest before Parliament and also in several pamphlets, including *Basilikon Doron* in 1599 and in "The True Law of Free Monarchies" first published in 1598, then reissued when he took the English throne upon the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603 and again in 1616. His son Charles I held the same views from the time of his accession in 1625 until his beheading in 1649.

right to rule—but that meant that they were morally bound by Saxon law, which gave authority to Parliament. (3) The Levellers held (contrary to the Parliamentarians) that conquest rather than succession had indeed instituted the Norman government of England but that (contrary to the Monarchists) conquest conferred no *right* to rule; hence, not only was the Norman state illegitimate, but its laws and governmental institutions constituted continual acts of war against the Saxon race. Hobbes endeavored to make the whole question of conquest irrelevant by arguing that commonwealth by acquisition (i.e., by conquest) was equivalent to commonwealth by institution (i.e., by contract) because indigenous survivors of a given war of conquest either consented to the conqueror's rule or were killed. Consequently, all sovereigns rule by consent, he maintained, even those who obtained that consent at the point of a sword. No one, therefore, has the right to rebel against the sovereign.[9] This effort to justify state power earned Hobbes the title of "the father of political philosophy,"[10] but the theoretical tradition that Hobbes' work inaugurated is precisely the one that Foucault finds inadequate to account for the current operations of power.

Foucault is particularly interested in Hobbes' most radical opponents, the Levellers and the Diggers (the latter of whom called themselves True Levellers[11]), who asserted that the conquest was an actual historical fact: William the Norman (a.k.a. William the Bastard) defeated Harold the Saxon in 1066 and took the land by force. However, they maintained, the Saxons never consented to the installation of William as sovereign ruler and throughout subsequent history resisted and struggled against "the Norman yoke."[12] In the face of this opposition, William and his descendants maintained control by court and law, as pamphleteer Gerrard Winstanley pointed out: "For what are prisons, whips and gallows in the times of peace but the laws and power of the sword, forcing and compelling obedience and so enslaving, as if the sword raged in the field?"[13] Laws are not instruments of peace, as contract theorists would claim from Hobbes forward. They are Norman weapons deployed against the Saxons in an ongoing struggle; "they do nothing at all to restrict power. They are the instruments of power."[14] There is no chance for Saxon liberation unless the law itself is cast aside.

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[9] See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 20.

[10] Michel Foucault, "*Society Must be Defended,*" 99.

[11] A 1649 manifesto is entitled "The True Levellers' Standard Advanced: Or, the State of Community Opened and Presented to the Sons of Men." For the full text see Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings,* edited by Christopher Hill (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973), 75-95. For discussion see Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1972), chapter 7. See also Aylmer's response to Hill's thesis regarding the True Levellers: Gerald Aylmer, *The Levellers in the English Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 49.

[12] This view was not peculiar to the Levellers. It was also commonly held by Parliamentarians and had been developed by English jurists over the past several decades.

[13] Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings,* 180

[14] Foucault, "*Society Must be Defended,*" 107

To this point in the analysis, radical English discourse may sound much like any anti-colonial discourse. In the name of a supposedly indigenous population, revolutionary leaders declare that the colonial government is an illegitimate imposition and its laws but tools in the project of colonial exploitation and oppression; the people seek to "throw the bastards out" of the country. What makes this discourse different from more typical oppositional discourses, according to Foucault, is that it neither appeals to universal rights and justice nor seeks to substitute a sovereign of its own. It declares the illegitimacy of the Norman monarch and his noble brethren on the basis of a particular history and race; Norman rule is odious to the Saxons because what instituted it was an actual war, a definite historical event, and the acts of rebellion noted in English history since 1066 are clear indications of Saxons' refusal to consent to it. But what radicals want in place of Norman rule is not another, truly Saxon, sovereign, a legitimate heir to Harold. Rather, they want no sovereign set over them at all; they want a return to the ancient institutions that they believe truly represented the Saxon people, a return to race rule.[15] Race war discourse thus dispenses with the sovereign by putting in his stead the entirety of the race. It posits a body politic with no need of a head.

Foucault cites a few radical tracts in his depictions of English race war discourse but makes no reference to modern historical analyses. However, David Macey, the English translator of *"Society Must Be Defended"*, asserts that Foucault's central (and perhaps only) secondary source is Christopher Hill's classic 1956 article "The Norman Yoke."[16] Comparison of Foucault's lectures and Hill's seventy-page article supports Macey's claim.[17] At times Foucault's selection of passages from primary texts closely parallels Hill's choices, a fact to which the French editors of *Il faut défendre la société* allude in an endnote to the fourth lecture where they supply a reference to Hill's essay.[18] But beyond the coincidence of citations is the similarity in interpretation. Like Hill, Foucault emphasizes the crucial role that history played in the radicals' anti-sovereign political practice. According to Foucault, the radicals claimed "a right that is both grounded in history and decentered from a juridical universality. And if this subject who speaks of right (or rather, rights) is speaking the truth, that truth is no longer the universal truth of the philosopher," but is instead the perspectival truth of the partisan.[19] In a similar vein, Hill declares: "History was politics."[20] The

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[15] This construction of Leveller discourse reflects Foucault's interests. In fact there was a tremendous diversity of opinion among the Levellers, especially if we include among them the Diggers as Hill does, and those opinions changed over time as military and economic conditions changed.

[16] David Macey, "Some Reflections on Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* and the Idea of Race," in Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave (eds.), *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Essays on Biopolitics and the Defense of Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 126.

[17] It is possible that the article came to Foucault's attention because Hill published a new major work in 1972 entitled *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. Perhaps Foucault read that book as well or at least reviews of it.

[18] Michel Foucault, *It faut defender société* (Paris: Gallimard Seuil, 1997), 99 note 28. See also Michel Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 114 note 27.

[19] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 52.

radicals generated their entire political agenda out of a particular construction of history and appealed to history as an authority much as they and their contemporaries appealed to the vernacular Bible. "The appeal to the past, to documents (whether the Bible or Magna Carta), becomes a criticism of existing institutions, of certain types of rule. If [those institutions] do not conform to the sacred text, they are to be rejected."[21] Thus truth is relative to the history of a particular people. It is not neutral; it is "a weapon within the relationship of force."[22] In the midst of political struggle, one seeks this historical truth in order to augment one's own actions and counter those of one's enemies. "Either the truth makes you stronger, or the truth shifts the balance, accentuates the dissymmetries, and finally gives the victory to one side rather than the other. Truth is an additional force, and it can be deployed only on the basis of a relationship of force."[23]

Foucault's interest in English race war discourse, then, is not so much that it is about race—although race is a crucial component of it, since the Saxon and Norman races together constitute the lever with which the revolutionaries dislodge the sovereign—but that it develops a new practice of history that implies a new epistemology, one that brings immanent within it a new conception of truth. Of course, the practice of history had always been political, as Foucault points out: "…the traditional function of history, from the first Roman annalists until the late Middle Ages, and perhaps the seventeenth century or even later, was to speak the right of power and to intensify the luster of power";[24] historians constructed narratives that secured the sovereign's genealogy and glorified his deeds. But the English revolutionaries practiced history precisely to counter that practice of history, to render the sovereign's genealogy questionable and recast his allegedly glorious deeds as, on the contrary, spectacular crimes. "Historical discourse was no longer the discourse of sovereignty, or even race, but a discourse about races, about a confrontation between races, about the race struggle that goes on within nations and within laws. To that extent it is, I think, a history that is the complete antithesis of the history of sovereignty, as constituted up to that time."[25]

Sovereignty is acknowledged in this practice of history—sovereignty as historical fact—but it is denounced. "Henceforth, in this new type of discourse and historical practice, sovereignty no longer binds everything together into a unity—which is of course the unity of the city, the nation, or the State. Sovereignty has a specific function. It does not bind; it enslaves."[26] The truth of the English state is not that it is the government of a great nation but that it is the government of two nations, one of which is privileged by virtue of

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[20] Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke," in *Puritanism and Revolution: The English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York: Schoken Books, 1958), 63.

[21] Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution.*

[22] Foucault, "*Society Must be Defended,"* 53.

[23] Ibid., 53.

[24] Ibid., 66.

[25] Ibid., 69.

[26] Ibid., 69.

the laws of that state and the other of which is denigrated and impoverished by those very same laws. "A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England," a pamphlet signed by forty-five men involved in the attempt to cultivate St. George's Hill in April of 1649, aligns the English nobility with the invading Normans:

> …the power of enclosing land and owning property was brought into the creation by your ancestors by the sword; which first did murder their fellow creatures, men, and after plunder or steal away their land, and left this land successively to you, their children. And therefore, though you did not kill or thieve, yet you hold that cursed thing in your hand by the power of the sword; and so you justify the wicked deeds of your fathers, and that sin of your fathers shall be visited upon the head of you and your children to the third and fourth generation, and longer too, till your bloody and thieving power be rooted out of the land.[27]

Sovereignty was established by murder and plunder; the king and his laws are but a cover for the crimes of one entire people against another. In reality there is no head of state acting apart from the race that his administrative practices enrich; there is simply the Norman race, "Normanism" as the Levellers sometimes called it, encroaching upon the Saxon from every angle. Far from instruments to secure the peace, property and inheritance laws are weapons with which the Norman race exploits and oppresses the Saxon race.

This practice of history—or "counterhistory"—is a means for producing truth, Foucault maintains; it is a regime of truth with some capacity to counter the regime manifest in the practices of historians who glorify sovereignty. As such—that is, as a practice of history that can produce political resistance—race war discourse may be placed among what Foucault in the first lecture of the 1976 series calls "subjugated knowledges."[28] The plural, "knowledges," is important. This regime of truth stands fundamentally opposed to universalism, to unification. It simply will not acknowledge a body of truth that transcends racial identification. There is no single truth about the Normans and Saxons that comprehends the experiences and histories of both races. Whatever truth race war discourse generates will be Saxon truth, and that is all that its practitioners care about. There are perspectives, all historically conditioned; there is no acknowledgement of any possibility of epistemological unity in transcendence.

One might be inclined to think that however much seventeenth-century English revolutionaries may have believed in historically conditioned "knowledge," they surely did not believe in historically conditioned truth. After all, were they not Christians who believed in a transcendent, omniscient God? In fact, they were not. Many common people in England through the late Middle Ages and into the seventeenth century vigorously opposed the church establishment. Some were simply dissenters or Christian heretics, but many were atheists. Hill notes that during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, many Englishmen and women publicly denied Christ's resurrection as well as the existence

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[27] Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings,* 99.
[28] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 7.

of God.[29] As far as they were concerned, there was no transcendent perspective, only multiple historical perspectives. The king's head was cut off not only on a scaffold outside Whitehall but also in their operative political philosophies and epistemologies; just as there was no sovereign ruling England, there was no universal right ruling human action and no unitary truth ruling human belief. Reality would never be comprehended and governed by a single regime. Truth was a thing of this world.

In the 1970s, Foucault was deeply interested in the history of truth. His May, 1973, lecture series at the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro—published as "Truth and Juridical Forms"—is an extended analysis of the history of truth in the West. In the first lecture of that series, he remarks: "My aim will be to show you how social practices may engender domains of knowledge that not only bring new objects, new concepts, and new techniques to light, but also give rise to totally new forms of subjects and subjects of knowledge. The subject of knowledge itself has a history; the relation of the subject to the object; or, more clearly, truth itself has a history."[30] In an interview in 1977, he asserted, "My aim is not to write the social history of a prohibition but the political history of the production of 'truth'."[31] And in 1978 he said, "It's not enough to do a history of rationality; one needs to do the history of truth itself").[32] This idea—that truth itself is historical—has never prevailed among Western scholars or the general public. But Foucault finds it in race war discourse. His fascination with race war discourse has at least as much to do with his reading of it as a practice of history closely akin to his own genealogical practice in both its guiding assumptions and some of its political effects as with the particulars of its claims and internal mechanisms, including the concept of race. It is for this reason that he praises race war discourse.[33]

Race War Versus Racism

At the beginning of the fourth lecture, Foucault asserts that in praising race war discourse he is not praising racism. Racism, he maintains, is not only separable from race war discourse but is a latter-day usurpation and perversion of it. "Racist discourse was really no more than an episode, a phase, the reversal, or at least the reworking, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the discourse of race war. It was a reworking of that old discourse, which at that point was already hundreds of years old, in sociobiological terms, and it was reworked for purposes of social conservatism and, at least in a certain number of cases,

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[29] Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, 26; see also 163, 173, 184, 192, 205.

[30] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," in James B. Faubion and Paul Rabinow (eds.), *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 3*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 2.

[31] Michel Foucault, "Power and Sex," in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 112.

[32] Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," in James B. Faubion and Paul Rabinow (eds.), *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 253.

[33] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 65.

colonial domination."[34]   With this linking of racism and biology, Foucault suggests that prior to the nineteenth century, race war discourse was free of what we would call "racism."[35]

This section has two objectives. The first is to mark the differences that Foucault sees between race war discourse and racism. The second is to argue that Foucault's distinction does not hold after the seventeenth century, at least not consistently. Something closely akin to racism as Foucault describes it comes into play by the mid-eighteenth century; by Thomas Jefferson's time, race war discourse is not separable from racism.

Foucault contrasts race war discourse and racism along three axes: (1) operation, (2) level, and (3) effect. (1) Race war discourse carries out a bifurcating operation. It divides a population into two warring races by highlighting differences of religion, language, custom, and material wealth and interest and tying those differences conceptually to a violent political past. Racism, by contrast, carries out a unifying operation. It identifies a population as a living totality, a biological whole, and treats selected differences of morphology, behavior, or belief as biological deviations to be contained or eliminated. (2) Race war discourse is, obviously, a *discourse* first and foremost. It operates and produces its effects in thought, judgment, and desire—in short, at the level of mentality. Racism functions at a different level. "The specificity of modern racism, or what gives it its specificity, is not bound up with mentalities, ideologies, or the lies of power. It is bound up with the technique of power, with the technology of power… [A]nd that takes us as far away as possible from the race war and the intelligibility of history. We are dealing with a mechanism that allows bio-power to work."[36] Finally, (3) the effect of race war discourse is to dispense with the sovereign. It is revolutionary in the most common sense of the word; it enables people to dissociate themselves from and organize to overthrow a governmental apparatus. Racism's primary effect, on the contrary, is to reinforce prevailing structures of power, in particular the state apparatus. As a mechanism, racism enables a state apparatus to wield both bio-political and sovereign/juridical technologies of power simultaneously; it gives the state apparatus authority over both life and death.

Different as they are, however, racism in the West develops in part on the basis of race war discourse, Foucault maintains; racist rhetoric amounts to a political inversion of the older discourse, which was resistant to hegemonic networks of power and fundamentally oppositional to established political institutions. Prevailing sovereign and/or disciplinary regimes appropriate the category of "race" but refuse race *war*'s bifurcating operation.

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[34] Ibid., 65.

[35] That is not to say that race war discourse was necessarily egalitarian by any means or even that it was always a way of resisting oppression. As Foucault himself makes clear, "the discourse was immediately ambiguous": Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 49. It can be used by an underclass as a way of resisting oppression, but it can also be used by the bourgeoisie as a way of resisting an aristocracy while continuing to oppress underclasses or by an aristocracy against an absolute monarchy, as it was in the late seventeenth century in France. See *"Society Must be Defended,"* lecture 7.

[36] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 258.

Instead of war, racist discourse posits a species-wide struggle for biological existence, insisting in the process on the fundamental unity of a given population. Unified as a single nation, a racist society must strengthen or heal itself (and thus insure its survival) by purifying itself of what it deems its pathological and heterogeneous elements. These may be variously labeled as immigrants from "less developed" regions or as members of inferior branches of *Homo sapiens* ("races" in the ordinary sense of the word, usually morphologically defined) or as deviant individuals within its own population (the chronically ill, the mentally challenged, the sexually perverted—in short, those individuals who depart from valorized developmental norms). In one way or another, all of these misfits allegedly pose threats to the integrity, security, and continued biological success of the unitary nation.

As is evident from the foregoing description, racism on Foucault's view is a post-Darwinian phenomenon. It treats differences of all sorts as evolutionary differences.

> Basically, evolutionism, understood in the broad sense—or, in other words, not so much Darwin's theory itself as a set, a bundle, of notions (such as: the hierarchy of species that grow from a common evolutionary tree, the struggle for existence among species, the selection that eliminates the less fit)—naturally became within a few years during the nineteenth century not simply a way of transcribing a political discourse into biological terms, and not simply a way of dressing up a political discourse in scientific clothing, but a real way of thinking about the relations between colonization, the necessity for wars, criminality, the phenomena of madness and mental illness, the history of societies with their different classes, and so on.[37]

"Less developed" regions of the world can be colonized and their peoples exploited or killed because those peoples are not among the advanced of the human species and ultimately will not survive no matter what. As nineteenth century Euro-Americans frequently said of Native Americans and African Americans, those people (being biologically inferior) will die out regardless of what "we" do.[38] Within the dominant race, criminals are throwbacks to a savage past, people whose violent and acquisitive behaviors were adaptive in previous millennia but out of place in the civilized present; they cannot be allowed to roam free in the modern world. Likewise, mental impairments of all sorts are evidence of inferior genotypes, as are deviant behaviors. People who fail chronically in the capitalist economic system are biological failures as well, and charity and social welfare programs only prolong their misery and give them more opportunity to reproduce their kind and inflict themselves as burdens on the productive members of society. All of these people endanger the health and progress of the more fit and the species as a whole. In sum, it is right for some people

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[37] Ibid., 256-57.

[38] For a long list of 19th and early 20th century studies purporting to show the impending extinction of peoples of color, see John Haller Jr., "The Physician Versus the Negro: Medical and Anthropological Concepts of Race in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 44 (March/April 1970), 154. For a discussion of this topic, see Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 145-150.

to be left—or perhaps even helped—to die. In the midst of a politics focused on the culti-
vation of living potential, racism supplies a justification for death-inducing practices and
criteria for identifying the people rightly subject to them.

What is important about racism, however, is not its justificatory rhetoric—for in fact
at its most robust it hardly needs to articulate any justification. It is a mechanism; it *ope-
rates*. In a post-Darwinian world, all things are developmental and all individuals who do
not conform to prevailing social expectations are deviants, developmental abnormalities
whose ultimate fate is one or another form of extinction. They are not a separate race in a
society of many races; like normal individuals, they are members of the one single human
race, but they have failed to develop to the standard required for success. When chal-
lenged, racist configurations of power may generate stories—e.g., African Americans are a
subset of the human race whose ancestors' development was arrested at a primitive stage
and who now, as a result, lag behind the norm in intelligence, forethought, and moral
restraint. But most of the time racist regimes go unchallenged and so remain inarticulate,
mutely marking individuals as dangerous—and therefore making them targets of restraint,
confinement, or violence—or as worthless, mere victims of nature whose suffering makes
no legitimate demand on moral sensibilities or social resources.

> …[R]acism 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 as individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous
> I will be. I will be able to proliferate." The fact that the other dies does not mean simply
> that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the
> death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is some-
> thing that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.[39]

At the turn of the twentieth century this position was articulated repeatedly and was of-
fered as justification for many state policies in both the US and elsewhere. A century later,
the idea that individuals and entire nations are appropriately eliminated through economic
competition that reflects and indeed effectively instantiates an allegedly natural, purifying
process of biological competition requires no justification in most quarters. The world sim-
ply works that way. The mechanism simply operates. And if it did not, Foucault believes,
biopolitical regimes could not sustain themselves.

Racism, then, on Foucault's view, is a unifying mechanism (as is sovereignty). It
unifies at the level of population or species by incorporating the rhetoric of race, which it
assimilates to an understanding of life as essentially biological competition. Instead of poli-
tical history, we have organic development; instead of oppression and injustice, we have
biological inefficiency and failure to thrive. Truth is thus insulated from any history of
struggle, allowing it political neutrality and universality. In light of this biological truth,

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[39] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 255.

hegemonic regimes may more or less routinely kill or at least refuse life-sustaining resources to those whose functional performance is beneath the current standard of biological success. Racism is also a mechanism of individuation; it underwrites practices that isolate nonconformities and identifies them as aberrations to be neutralized. Thus, as a technology, racism easily articulates with both sovereign power, in its unifying action, and disciplinary normalization, in its individuating action and its pathologization of deviation. It renders critiques from non-normal perspectives inaudible at the level of rational debate by treating them as biologically threatening behaviors rather than as claims to truth.

I have argued elsewhere that Foucault is right to see a transformation in race theory and practice in the nineteenth century as race is assimilated to developmental biology and put to work in networks of biopower.[40] However, I believe he is wrong to suggest that the race war discourse of the eighteenth century could still function primarily as opposition to unified state power. At least in Britain's mid-Atlantic colonies and eventually the United States of America, race war discourse began serving the sovereign state and affiliated institutions much earlier, prior to the conversion of "war" to a Darwinian "struggle for survival." And as it did so, it took on many of the characteristics Foucault sees in modern racism.

Long after the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy in 1660 and even after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, British subjects continued to argue over the political meaning of the events of 1066, because they continued to struggle over the question of parliamentary versus royal prerogative. The Levellers were defeated. The True Levellers were denounced for their communism, decimated, and scattered. England would never be a pure democracy, let alone a set of independent agrarian communes. But "Normanism"—meaning absolute monarchy and feudal law—was still widely despised and harshly criticized wherever it was identified.

The heirs to seventeenth-century English revolutionaries were eighteenth-century Whigs. Their "whiggish" history was informed by many of the same writings that informed radicals of the previous century. Like their predecessors, historian Trevor Colbourn explains, they were seeking "to support Parliamentary claims upon the royal prerogatives by exalting the antiquity of Parliament and by asserting that their political ambitions had solid foundation in ancient customs. They presented an idealized version of an Anglo-Saxon democracy, which they usually found overturned by Norman treachery and feudalism."[41] According to Paul de Rapin-Thoyras's *History of England* (a favorite text of eighteenth-century Whigs), the English were the direct descendants of Tacitus' noble Germans, the people who had overthrown the Roman Empire.[42] These ancient Germans took their

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[40] McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*.

[41] Trevor H. Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1965), 6.

[42] For an initial discussion of Rapin, see Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, 27. Colbourn offers a full discussion of popular authors and lists of which books were in which revolutionary leaders' libraries, esp. appendix II of *The Lamp of Experience*, 199-232.

political traditions with them wherever they went. In England, as elsewhere, they elected their executive officers, held trials by juries of peers, established what they called a *witenagemote*, a legislative body in which every adult male had a vote, and held their lands outright, allodially, rather than as leased concessions from the crown. There were no feudal property laws—no primogeniture, no entail, no quitrent. There was a Saxon constitution, long since lost, that guaranteed these democratic liberties.

After defeating Harold, the Whigs held, William promised to rule by Saxon law. On these terms, Saxons accepted him as king. By deceit he then took control of land that was never rightly his, imposing "Normanism"—feudal property laws, taxes, and military obligations. His son William Rufus vowed to restore Saxon law during his reign, but he too broke his promise. Subsequent Norman monarchs from Henry I forward made similar promises, but all failed to keep them, forcing the Saxons to wrest some measure of control away from King John by means of the Magna Charta. But even with that concession, the race war continued.[43] According to Whig historians, it was a struggle between two political traditions and two bodies of law, which they expressed in the racial terms of the previous century. The Normans had imposed themselves and their laws and institutions on an unwilling Saxon population who, long used to self-determination first in a direct and then in a representative democracy, had resisted ever since.

For Whigs in England the main issue was, as it had been for their forefathers, the status of Parliament, which they claimed was the successor to the ancient *witenagemote*. But for those in America, who claimed to be tied to England not through a legislative body that accepted no colonial representatives but only through the person of the monarch,[44] by the 1770s the biggest issue was feudal land law, the allegedly Norman institutions governing territory. According to feudal law, the Crown held its territories in allodium and granted estates to subjects at will, usually as a reward or fee for military service. A subject then held the granted land but with restrictions on its disposal. Ultimately, all land still belonged to the Crown, which retained the right of seizure. Colonists insisted that this feudal land law did not apply in North America; the Crown did not hold title to colonial land. Instead, colonial proprietors themselves owned it outright. As Thomas Jefferson put it in "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," (1774) "Our Saxon ancestors held their lands, as they did their personal property, in absolute dominion, disincumbered with any superior, answering nearly to the nature of those possessions which the feudalist term Allodial."[45] At first William took only the land of those individuals whom he defeated at Has-

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[43] For this account, see Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, 32-36, who offers a composite view but numerous references to specific authors.

[44] Not only did colonists make this claim, but they cited monarchical authority to do so. Colbourn notes, for example, that in a speech as Massachusetts Governor, John Adams pointed out that both Charles I and James I had denied the British Parliament any right to legislate for the colonies. See 94.

[45] Thomas Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," in Philip S. Foner (ed.), *Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Wiley Book Company, 1944), 16. Jefferson refers to the Saxons as "our ancestors" throughout his *Commonplace Book*, where he also copies out long quotations from jurists such as Blackstone. See for example Thomas Jefferson, *The Commonplace Book of Thomas Jefferson: A*

tings, Jefferson reminded his readers, not all the land of England. Then, over the next two decades with help from his "Norman lawyers," he took much more land and imposed feudal law upon it. But no sovereign ruler took American land. Descendants of Saxons came freely to these shores, wrested ground from the natives, and developed it themselves.[46] "America was not conquered by William the Norman, nor its lands surrendered to him or any of his successors."[47] Feudal laws could not possibly apply to land that the king himself had not won.[48]

Jefferson and many of his colonial contemporaries found much of the English revolutionary rhetoric of race war useful in the process of dissociating themselves from British government. Steeped in Whig history, they thought within its framework.[49] They did not call the American Revolution a race war or view Tories as a distinct race, but they did believe that George III was actively imposing an eighteenth-century version of "the Norman yoke" upon them and that, as self-respecting, freedom-loving Saxons, they were honor-bound to resist. Thus, the race war discourse of the seventeenth century served the purpose of bifurcation in eighteenth-century Anglo-America. It also enabled new processes of subjectification; it provided a means by which people who had thought of themselves as British subjects were able to re-imagine themselves as something else entirely and take up arms against a sovereign they once counted as their own.

Like their rebellious seventeenth-century predecessors, the "Americans" found it necessary to rewrite history to create and support their new self-image. Although Jefferson

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Repertory of his Ideas on Government, edited by Gilbert Chinard (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926). 192-3. He again makes the argument that the Crown did not own colonial territory in his autobiography; see Thomas Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790,* edited by Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 14.

[46] As Barbara Arneil has persuasively argued, Jefferson and others also relied upon an innovation in property theory developed by John Locke, namely, that the natural right to private property accrues to those who enclose and till rather than to those who conquer or merely occupy. Whether the natives were conquered or not, according to Locke at least, they had not tilled the land they occupied and so held to right to it. For a long and very interesting discussion of this aspect of Jefferson's argument for the property rights of English colonists in America, see Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1996), chapter 7.

[47] Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," 17.

[48] The issue was complex for slaveholders such as Jefferson, however. According to historian Aziz Rana, many feared that if they relinquished claim to fall under the jurisdiction of the British parliament, the king could simply outlaw slavery on a whim and begin recruiting former slaves into the British military to march against their former masters, and colonists might lose a number of rights, including land property rights, guaranteed to Englishmen. See Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 83-88.

[49] For a thorough discussion of the colonists' use of whig history, see Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*. Colonists also drew upon the natural law tradition of John Locke, arguing that their "improvement" and cultivation of the land gave them right to it, including right to acquire territory from the indigenous population without Crown approval. See Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom*, 68-70; and Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism*, esp. 171-87.

regularly asserted the Saxon identity of "our ancestors," it was in fact impossible to know which eighteenth-century colonists were descendants of Saxons and which of Normans, if indeed there was any real distinction to be made seven hundred years after the Norman Conquest. One could also question the assertion that all British colonists or their ancestors had arrived in North America by their own efforts or of their own free will and that they, rather than the British military and officials acting in the stead of the monarch, had taken the land from the Native Americans.[50] But it was necessary for Americans to substantiate and believe these historical claims in order to recognize themselves as an independent people ready to establish an independent government, in order for the body politic to sever itself safely from its traditional head. In asserting the non-feudal status of North American land, Jefferson and his contemporaries devised a history that turned severance into an accomplished fact long before hostilities actually broke out.

Proclaiming equality, the Americans refused to institute a new monarchy, preferring instead something like the representative democracy Whigs believed had existed in the institution of the Saxon *witenagemote*. But this turn to racial (as opposed to monarchical) rule raised issues of a new and disturbing sort. Historian Peter Onuf notes, "Jefferson's version of the Saxon myth, stipulating a primal national identity and a latent claim to independence for all migrating peoples, offered a narrative account of how the Americans could now find themselves on the threshold of independence, claiming equality in the empire as a question of right, not royal favor." But that was not all the myth did in a post-revolutionary context. "This invented history also threw the forced migration of enslaved Africans to the New World into stark relief…"[51] Steeped in the rhetoric of English race war, Jefferson and his Whig contemporaries could not help but understand their relationship to the black slaves in their midst on the same model. Inferior though they may be—and Jefferson and most of his white contemporaries did believe they were inferior—Africans were a nation of people free by nature. Enslaving them was an act of war against their race, and holding them in bondage was a perpetuation of that war.

"Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free," Jefferson wrote in his autobiography. "Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government."[52] A people, a nation, must be self-determining. (White) Americans had to control their own government and territory—not share control with members of an alien (black) race—and, likewise, given the chance through emancipation, Africans as a race would seek governmental and territorial control. Though

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[50] As Colbourn points out, Jefferson's argument to this effect in "A Summary View" suggests that the colonies were actually free all along, thus raising the question of why they ever submitted to British rule in the first place. Jefferson attempts to respond to this potential criticism by stating that the early colonists, being farmers rather than attorneys, just found it easier to submit to royal rule than come up with laws for themselves. See Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, 161-63.

[51] Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 154.

[52] Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790*, 77.

slavery was unjust in Jefferson's view, emancipation was worse, because emancipation would inevitably unleash suppressed hostilities that would threaten the very foundation of the new nation and the continued existence of both races, white and black. The only answer was to emancipate and deport individuals to Africa or the Caribbean until North America was empty of blacks. Jefferson laid out a plan of deportation in 1781 in *Notes on the State of Virginia*,[53] and he continued working on deportation schemes throughout his career. Forty-three years later he discussed a similar proposal with abolitionist Jared Sparks, noting that "I have never yet been able to conceive any other practicable plan."[54] He could not conceive of any other plan because the same history he used to emancipate himself from his own British identity chained him to the belief that cross-racial coexistence, cooperation, and peace were simply impossible.

Thomas Jefferson and many of his revolutionary counterparts were awash in the discourse of race war, which supported their revolutionary democratic strivings. But that same discourse also supported their very anti-democratic racist attitudes and actions. To Jefferson, at least in his political thinking, African-Americans were not individual people with varying backgrounds and values but one single nation, a unified racial body that would inevitably act as a body—a threatening body—if given the chance. The racial characteristics he attributed to members of that imagined body sound very much like the blatantly racist claims of the mid-twentieth century: Blacks are ugly, lusty, fickle, and incapable of delaying gratification and planning for the future; furthermore, although slavery may have stunted them, it is likely that they are inherently inferior to whites in body and mind.[55] If this way of thinking does not count as racist, it is hard to know what does.

Further, with Darwin's work still decades away, we find in Jefferson's version of race war discourse a precursor of scientific racism's concept of race as staged development and nonwhite races as developmentally arrested analogues of primitive whites. In Africa blacks are savages, he maintains, just as the Native Americans in the far west are savages, living as our white ancestors lived hundreds of generations ago. Human history, he tells his correspondent William Ludlow in 1824, is a story of progress:

> Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains, eastwardly towards our seacoast. These he would observe in the earliest stage of association living under no law but that of nature, subsisting and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his,

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[53] Thomas Jefferson, *Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* edited by Philip S. Foner (New York: Wiley Book Company 1944), 144.

[54] Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. XVI, edited by Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association 1903), 11.

[55] Jefferson, *Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* 145-46.

> as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day.[56]

In proclaiming white civilization the epitome of human progress, Jefferson prefigures scientific racism and the evolutionary fantasies of twentieth-century eugenicists. And in fact, his speeches and policies as governor of Virginia, Secretary of State, and President of the United States contributed to the production of a world in which those movements could take hold. He is not a modern, biopolitical racist on Foucault's terms. But surely he is a racist, and his racism is inseparable from his conception of history as race war.

In Jefferson's writings we see race war discourse acting to bifurcate populations and make the implicit violence of tyranny manifest. However, while it enables dissociation from England, it also precludes unification of the peoples co-existing in colonial territory. While it repudiates a sovereign king, it reinforces a set of laws and economic policies that establish and help maintain an oppressive governmental apparatus with its own sort of sovereignty. While it embraces a practice of history that in a previous century undercut claims to universal truth, it marks the limit of history with an assertion of universal right in a past state of nature and imagines a developing future that history does not determine. Jefferson is a race war theorist, but he has at least as much in common with scientific racists as with English radicals. The aspects of seventeenth-century English race war discourse that Foucault admired are not much in evidence in its eighteenth-century American incarnation.

Foucault suggests that racism occurs when biopolitical forces usurp race war discourse in the late nineteenth century and put it to use in strategies of population management. I contend that racism is virtually endemic to race war discourse from the eighteenth century forward. Even before evolutionary biology was in play, once history was conceived as progressive, race was historicized as a physically manifest record of economic, technological, and moral success and failure. If Foucault had looked closely at a variety of versions of race war discourse after the seventeenth century, he would have found very few instances where it mobilized resistance to political, let alone epistemological, domination. And in North America, he would have found at least one increasingly prevalent instance where it helped create a new sovereignty and a regime of universal truth.

Recentering Power
Although his work in *"Society Must Be Defended"* is extremely valuable for thinking through race and racism (and it remains so regardless of the criticisms of the previous section of this article), the issue for Foucault in these lectures is not race or racism but, rather, how to think power.[57] Having identified only two ways of conceiving of power in Western societies—the dominant model being that of the economy with power figured as a kind of circulating commodity appropriately invested in a sovereign entity whose yield is law—Foucault

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[56] Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 75.
[57] Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended,"* 87-8.

explores what he sees as the only historically available alternative, power conceived on the model of war. His question is: "To what extent and how can the relationship of force be reduced to a relationship of war?"[58] The lectures end without a definitive answer to that question.

Several commentators have noted that Foucault spoke less and less about power after 1979 and more and more about government or "governmentality," terms which, Pasquale Pasquino asserts, "Foucault gradually substituted for what he began to see as the more ambiguous word, 'power'."[59] Indeed, Foucault did gradually back away from his 1976 conception of the analytical situation in subsequent years. In 1977 he claimed to "have no idea" whether power should be understood as war, although he still held the view that there were but two models available: "One thing seems certain to me; it is that for the moment we have, for analyzing the relations of power, only two models: a) the one proposed by law … and b) the military or strategic model in terms of power relations."[60]

By 1982, however, a new direction emerges in Foucault's work as both models of power are sidelined. In "The Subject and Power," he raises the question of whether "the character proper to power relations [lies] in the violence which must have been its primitive form, its permanent secret and its last resource, that which in the final analysis appears as its real nature…"[61] —in other words, whether power is best conceived on the model of war—and the answer he gives is no. There is another alternative to both sovereignty and war, he says, and he names that alternative "government": "The relationships proper to power would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking [contract] (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government."[62]

Pasquino to the contrary, however, Foucault is not simply substituting a new term for a problematic old one. He is not recasting his account of power relations as governmentality. Something genuinely different is afoot. Foucault is not offering an account of power relations at all. Dismissing the whole project of account-giving, he is instead engaging in a practice that he is simultaneously characterizing; he is setting out an analytic protocol, a research strategy.

> I would like to suggest another way to go further towards a new economy of power relations," he writes, "a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of

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[58] Ibid., 46.

[59] Pasquale Pasquino, "Political theory of war and peace: Foucault and the history of modern political theory," *Economy and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (February 1993), 79.

[60] Michel Foucault, "Power and Sex," in Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.) *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 123.

[61] Michel Foucault "The Subject and Power," in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 220.

[62] Ibid., 221.

> taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. […] Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.[63]

His concern is strategies, and his approach is, fittingly, strategic.

His strategy is to discern strategies. Taking up that task, he first delineates three meanings of *strategies*: (1) means to an end, (2) ways in which one seeks advantage over others, and (3) procedures designed to deprive an opponent of the means to continue a struggle. "These three meanings come together in situations of confrontation—war or games—where the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him."[64] Contrary to the hypothesis he put forward in the lectures of 1976, war and games are not exemplary; they are types of strategic situation among other types. We must distinguish among types of strategic situation in order to see how strategies and the mechanisms employed within in them function in particular confrontations and struggles.

Mechanisms are deployed in strategies in line with objectives. When strategic operators encounter obstacles or resistance, they must develop tactics and deploy mechanisms to overcome those obstacles or break that resistance and deflect or absorb its energy. Here Foucault speaks of action upon action, techniques for affecting conduct. Depending on the strength of resistance or the degree to which multiple strategies clash, direct confrontations can occur, at which point we see refusal, protest, struggle, combat. Analysis of power relations begins with these moments and looks for the objectives, strategies, and mechanisms in play in them, not because confrontation is the essence of power—"power as such does not exist"[65]—but because points of instability and resistance can reveal the outlines of strategies affecting conduct whether open resistance is occurring at a given moment or not. In other words, the "complex strategical situation"[66]—the more or less stable configurations of power relations that shape conduct day to day—are best seen in their perturbations, in those moments when they threaten to become something other than power relations, something more like war. War is not, then, the truth of power, but it can be used to locate and take analytic hold of a configuration of power relations that might otherwise be difficult to detect.

Foucault's lecture series at the Collège de France in 1983 carries forward that project. *The Government of Self and Others* constitutes a partial genealogy of politics—"of the practice of the political game, and of the political game as a field of experience with its rules and normativity, of the political game as experience inasmuch as it is indexed to truth-telling

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[63] Foucault, "Power and Sex," 210-211.

[64] Ibid., 225.

[65] This is from Michel Foucault, *The Essential Works of Foucault, Volume I: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 217, but he gives a much longer and more detailed statement of the same idea in Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), 198-99.

[66] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books 1978), 93.

and involves a certain relationship to oneself and to others."[67] Specifying politics as distinct to institutional governmental forms, laws, or constitutional structures, Foucault aims in these late lectures on *parresia* to trace the ancestry of politics as a region of conduct and experience. Power is still very much what is to be thought here, but it is not to be thought *as* anything; it is to be thought only *in* the occurrence of political interplay, in the antagonism of strategies whose clash produces dynamic tensions that give shape to human conduct. Government, sets of practices and shifting strategies, occurs in this clash of forces as collusions of events in tension, and thus it occurs firmly within the problematic of political power. Like power and politics, government cannot be isolated from agonistic contest or characterized apart from specific historical events. Any attempt to do so results in the concept's collapse into meaninglessness. Thus, by 1983, genealogical practice simply *is* how Foucault thinks power.[68]

Although Foucault more or less abandons the substance of his 1976 analysis of racism and power as war, the way of thinking power that emerges in his work after the 1976 lecture series has much in common with the historical practices that he so admired in (and perhaps at times simply read into) the writings of seventeenth-century English race war radicals. Power relations are very real, but they have no being and no truth outside of enacted strategies, including the strategies Foucault proposes and uses to study them. There is no truth of power that governs history. There is no sovereign epistemology. And in his refusal of conceptual subjection to a sovereign epistemology, the strategy of historical analysis that Foucault outlines and in which he simultaneously engages through the 1980s could well be termed an "anti-Norman" practice of thinking. It is a practice of thinking power "itself" without a head.

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[67] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave 2010), 159.

[68] For a different interpretation of this turn from war to strategy, see Beatrice Hanssen, *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2000), chapter 3.