

# **A brief genealogy of governmentality studies: the *Foucault effect* and its developments. An interview with Colin Gordon**

Fabiana Jardim<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

This interview approaches the intellectual context within the areas of philosophy and social sciences, in the 1970s United Kingdom, and also looks back to Colin Gordon's work as a translator and editor of Michel Foucault's researches on power and politics into English. Finally, it attempts to assess the developments of this strange notion of governmentality within the English-Speaking intellectual world and its relations to present times. The interview has taken place during Colin Gordon's visit to Brazil for the "International Seminar Max Weber and Michel Foucault: possible convergences" (May, 2013). It aims to revisit the context in which the governmentality studies have appeared as a specific field of interest and research, in order to put in perspective the progressive spread of this field since the appearance, in 2004, of both Foucault's lectures at *Collège de France* (*Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*) where the notion is introduced. The possibility to know Colin Gordon's ideas about these themes seemed timely not only because of the range of governmentality studies in education in Brazil (something that can be testified by the number of articles, thematic issues and books that are appearing since the 1990s), but also because of the manner in which the notion of governmentality has been taken by the post-colonial studies. In this sense, the notion still seems to be a very useful tool to confront the task of understanding the problems and problematizations that constitute the specificity of our Brazilian modernity.

## **Keywords**

Governmentality – Governmentality studies – Michel Foucault – Political culture.

<sup>1</sup> - Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.  
Contact: fajardim@usp.br.

# **Breve genealogia dos estudos da governamentalidade: o efeito Foucault e seus desdobramentos. Uma entrevista com Colin Gordon**

Fabiana Jardim<sup>1</sup>

## **Resumo**

*A entrevista aborda o contexto intelectual no campo da filosofia e das ciências sociais no Reino Unido, durante os anos 1970, bem como apresenta um balanço do trabalho realizado por Colin Gordon na tradução e na edição de livros em língua inglesa das pesquisas sobre poder e política que Michel Foucault empreendeu de meados dos anos 1970 até sua morte prematura, em 1984. Finalmente, procura-se avaliar os desdobramentos dessa estranha noção de governamentalidade no mundo intelectual anglófono e sua atualidade. O objetivo principal da entrevista, que foi realizada por Fabiana Jardim, professora da área de Sociologia da Educação da Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo em maio de 2013, por ocasião da presença de Colin Gordon no Brasil, foi revisitar o contexto no qual o campo dos estudos sobre governamentalidade se constituiu, de modo a colocar em perspectiva o intenso alargamento desse campo a partir da publicação, em 2004, dos cursos de Michel Foucault no Collège de France nos quais a noção aparece. Isso nos pareceu oportuno não apenas devido ao alcance dos estudos sobre governamentalidade e educação no Brasil, o que pode ser atestado pelo volume da produção – artigos, dossiês e livros –, mas também tendo em conta as apropriações que foram feitas de tal noção no campo dos estudos pós-coloniais; nesse sentido, a noção preserva sua operacionalidade na tarefa de compreender as especificidades de nossa modernidade à brasileira por meio da identificação de problematizações constitutivas de nossa experiência.*

## **Palavras chave**

*Governamentalidade – Estudos da governamentalidade – Michel Foucault – Cultura política.*

**1-** Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.  
Contato: fajardim@usp.br

## Introduction



Credit: Ana Lucia F. Teixeira (may/2013)

Colin Gordon's intellectual pathway may seem kind of atypical for Brazilian researchers who are not used to the idea of independent scholars or researchers, mainly because there are not really institutional conditions favorable to their appearance: for us, especially in the field of Social and Human Sciences, the first possibility to develop researches seems to be in the University.

Colin Gordon is graduated in Philosophy, at the University of London, has a masters' degree at the University of Oxford, and works as Clinical IT Programme Manager of Royal Brompton Hospital, at London. He is involved within a network of researchers that work with foucauldian themes, and still reflecting about politics and political culture.

In the end of the 1970s, Colin Gordon was responsible for editing in English one of the first volumes that put together Michel Foucault's writings on power. I am referring to *Power/Knowledge*<sup>1</sup>, published in 1980, that brought together some conferences, interviews and short texts by Foucault. According to Colin's acknowledgements in the book and his report in the following interview, the book was largely based on Alessandro Fontana's and Pasquale Pasquino's work on editing *Microfísica*

**1-** The complete bibliography of Colin Gordon can be found in the end of the interview.

*del potere: interventi politici*, which came out in 1977.

Partially related to his work as an editor in philosophy journals, during the 1980s Colin Gordon has taken part in the edition of what became an important mark in foucauldian inspired studies: the book *The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality*, edited with Graham Burchell and Peter Miller. In this volume, the famous lecture of February, 8<sup>th</sup>, on governmentality, reappeared.<sup>2</sup> And, what was probably decisive to turn the book into a kind of philosophical *événement* – in the sense of how powerful it was to inaugurate a new area of studies (or, at least, to make it more visible) – it also presented some of the results of researches carried out by people who were working near to Michel Foucault in those 1970s, amongst colleagues and regulars to his lectures at Collège de France

In his article, published in this same issue of *Education and Research*, Colin Gordon offers us a balance of the *Foucault effect* in the English-Speaking world, in which he evaluates the developments of the book's reception and also the *career* and the uses of the notion of governmentality in studies that try to understand the relationships between politics, State and government and the different settings of these three *axes of experience*, to put it in Foucault's terms.

Sharing the same philosophic attitude that brings thinking and critics close together, Colin Gordon is currently involved in a project of editing a book about the *reports of ideas* produced by Foucault during the Iranian Revolution. In the interview, he tells some more about this work and its relations to present times, in a period of crises of governmentality in the West and also of tensions that has taken form in the Arab Spring.

Colin Gordon has been in Brazil, in the first semester of 2013, invited by the Group of Researchers on Government, Ethics and Subjectivity (GES), in order to participate of the

**2-** A translation had appeared first in 1979, at the journal *Ideology and Consciousness*. n.6.

*International Seminar Max Weber and Michel Foucault: possible convergences.*<sup>3</sup> Author of one of the pieces to first show the fertility of bringing together the works of Max Weber and Michel Foucault, Gordon has presented the initial key notes and has taken part in the roundtable *State, conduct of life (lebensführung) and government of others*, always with an amazing willing to dialogue and listening, and bringing to discussion some of the suggestions taken from the lectures, interviews and all sorts of Michel Foucault's archives that do not seem to cease appearing. The interview happened during this staying.<sup>4</sup>

Since we have talked for more than three hours, some of the questions and answers were reframed during the process of transcription and editing or even made more accurate during further exchange of messages.

The interview with this central character to the *career* of the notion of governmentality in the English-Speaking world can concern Brazilian researchers for at least two reasons.

At first, the interview allows to put in perspective the radical rupture that Michel Foucault's analysis on subject and power represented in the moment he was pursuing them. As Foucault himself has emphasized, if he was lead to give such a central status to the problem of power, that was due to the limits that available theories on power put to the understanding of the subject, at once constrained by the practices of power and responsible to confront them.<sup>5</sup> In other words,

when we get back to the intellectual context of the United Kingdom in the 1970s, it catches our attention the role played by Foucault's and his collaborators' work in what concerns establishing the possibility of another grille to analyze power, capable of displacing the stresses from institution to practices; from function to tactics and strategies; and from "natural" objects to problematizations.<sup>6</sup> The interview allows, therefore, a brief genealogic gaze on the notion of governmentality in English-Speaking world.

Secondly, by bringing up in such a circumscribed way the paths written by this notion in another intellectual field, the interview works to put into perspective the developments of the notion of governmentality in social sciences in Brazil. In fact, it is very interesting that, although the lecture on governmentality of February, 8<sup>th</sup>, 1978 was published in Brazil shortly after (1979), in the volume edited by Roberto Machado, little attention has been paid to the notion and the theme. We can consider the hypothesis that the important presence of researchers working within Marxism as well as the urgent task of reflecting on our singularity in the global order have put under suspicious an author that, although recognized as important, got famous for his microphysics perspective on power.

When *Society must be defended* (1997 [1976]), *security, territory, population* (2007 [1978]) and *Birth of biopolitics* (2008 [1979]) were published in Brazil, first the notion of biopolitics and after the notion of governmentality turned into matters of interest and the Foucault Effect can then be observed through a sort of *editorial explosion* of articles, books, and special issues on journals about Michel Foucault, Biopolitics and/or Governmentality. It is also worth noticing that the interest is not restricted to the areas in which Foucault was already being read, in Brazil, such as Sociology, Education,

**3-**The Seminar, promoted by GES, happened at Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas of University of São Paulo, from May 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013. We have been fortunate to count with the important financial support of the Post-Graduate Program of Sociology (PPGS/USP), of the Foundation of Support to Research in the State of São Paulo (Processo Fapesp 2013/01386-0) e also from the Department of Sociology of FFLCH-USP. I would like to thank here all my colleagues of GES, but specially Ana Lúcia de Freitas Teixeira, for her friendship and for everything we have shared in these eighteen years.

**4-** The interest to propose this interview is related to the theoretical approach of my current research about professional education destined to the Brazilian *working-poor* (1911-1945), Processo Fapesp 2010/20877-6. **5-** FOUCAULT, Michel. The subject and power In: DREYFUS, Hubert; RABINOW, Paul. *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982: p.208-228.

**6-** FOUCAULT, Michel (2007: p.116 ss.).

Philosophy or History. On the opposite: the interest spread out through Economy, Management, Human Resources and even Biotheconomy. Would it be worth to ask ourselves about the conditions that made this editorial explosion possible? Has it to do with some major changes in academic culture in Brazil or would it be that the circumstances of the processes of democratic transition and re-democratization have made Michel Foucault's studies at the 1970s an important contribution to revisit? In what measure both these notions are useful to help us surpass the understanding of ourselves? And what consequences this

possible new understanding can have to the educational studies in Brazil?

The interview is divided in three sessions. The first one is dedicated to Colin Gordon's career and the intellectual context in England, during the 1970s. The second one focuses on the edition and the unfoldings of the book *The Foucault effect: studies on governmentality* (1991), with information that we hope can complement the balance he offers in his article. And last, the third part is devoted to indicate some paths that can still be trod from Foucault's work and all the new possibilities that draw from the appearance of his lectures.

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**Fabiana Jardim** é professora da área de Sociologia da Educação no Departamento de Filosofia da Educação e Ciências da Educação da Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo (FE-USP). É co-líder do Grupo de Pesquisa sobre Governo, Ética e Subjetividade (GES). Integra o Coletivo de Pesquisadores sobre Educação e Relações de Poder (CoPERP) e o Grupo de Pesquisa sobre Desigualdade, Educação e Políticas - Status (FEUSP) (Falta traduzir este trecho)

Thank you very much again, Colin, for agreeing to this interview. To start, I would like to ask you about your education: when did you get your degree in Philosophy and what were your post-graduate studies?

The start of my career was complicated. I went from my school to Oxford, to study English Literature. I was following my brother, who also went to the same College. He was four years older than me. But I wasn't entirely happy with Oxford and with my studies there, although I had some important experiences and friendships. So I took a break after one year and in fact I didn't go back to Oxford. I started working in computers, I got into a career in Information Technology (IT) went to work in Germany on some freelance contracts. Alongside that, I got interested in Philosophy and I registered to do what we call an external degree [program] in London University, so I kind of studied by myself and with help of some philosophers in Cambridge. And then in 1975 I graduated from London University and I was offered a scholarship to go back to Oxford, and do research in Philosophy. So I went back to Oxford in 75 and I had four years doing post-graduate research in Oxford. I began doing analytical Philosophy, in the British traditional style. I was taught by a famous philosopher called Sir Peter Strawson. And then I decided I was more into studying the French philosophers: I had a term with another philosopher, who was huge admirer of Derrida, he was called Alan Montefiore and he supervised me while I did some work on Deleuze and Derrida. I decided I wanted to do a PhD on Foucault and this philosopher found me someone to supervise me, who is still a very dear friend of mine to this day – his name is Graham Burchell; he is now Foucault's translator. So, Graham supervised me (but more like a friend than a supervisor) for the next few years.

Can you tell us something about the intellectual atmosphere in that England of the 1970's?

It's quite hard to describe. I mean...the Left culture wasn't as big as it was in Italy or France, firstly. The Left wasn't so big. We'd had 68, we'd had student movements, which were important but the Left not intellectually quite so dominant and not quite such a powerful presence in the Universities. So, in Philosophy all of these things were much of a minority interest: most of the English Philosophy was for large a very long time analytical Philosophy, centred around people like Wittgenstein; it was reading Wittgenstein that had made me want to do Philosophy.

And then there was also an orthodox left which was being renewed by the previous generation of thinkers – Hegelian Marxism, Sartre and people beginning to discover Lacan, psychoanalysis, the beginnings of feminism, semiology and structuralism: Barthes, Levi-Strauss and Althusser. Actually, the Althusserian people were quite influential for a time because they were very energetic and polemical, so everyone knew about them and they had arguments with people. And then because Althusser himself said good things about Foucault, they decided to study Foucault as well. So he became an interest to them too, as an epistemologist who had some political relevance. So things like his interviews with the *Cercle d'épistemologie* were translated into English at that time. I translated one of his interviews about epistemology myself. So there was a relatively small circle of kind of intellectual, political academic people, left theoretical people who were into these kinds of things at that time.

One of the journals I got involved with, which was called *Ideology and Consciousness*, was formed by those kind of people: a mixture of Lacan, structuralism, Marxist anthropology, linguistics, semiology, feminist studies, and some Foucault... all a kind of big mixture. That became quite a big thing in 1970s when the new Universities were being started, places like Sussex and Essex, Warwick. And so there was a kind of a scene of a sort; it wasn't very, very big but that was the environment of that time.

**And how exactly did you discover Foucault and these other French philosophers that ended up calling your attention?**

I saw Foucault's books in a bookshop in Cambridge, in 1973, I think. And many years later I learned that the reason those books were there was because Ian Hacking, the Canadian philosopher, had told them Foucault was important and that they should display his books. It was just when three of his books had been translated into English, and very recently: *The birth of the clinic*, *The order of things* and *The archeology of knowledge*. I remember I bought *The order of things*, I was really, really excited by it and I think it was actually the link to literary and art history that interested me at that time – when I read the preface about Borges, the chapter about Velazquez at the start of the book, I felt: “wow! This is the kind of intellectual history that I have always wanted to read. Here it is!”. So, that was quite an exciting discovery. The problem was that I also found it very difficult (laughs), I hadn't had the education in 'continental philosophy' which would have let me understand all the references, so it was a long, long time before I actually finished reading *The order of things*. But I knew that Foucault was a very important guy long before I started studying him very seriously.

And then what happened next... well, a lot of things happened! In 1976, I guess, I went to Paris, I discovered Foucault had published *Surveiller et Punir*, and I read one after the other *Surveiller et Punir*, *The birth of the clinic* and *Histoire de la folie* – in the French non-abridged edition, because the English edition was much shorter. So I read *Histoire de la folie*, *Surveiller et Punir*, and *Naissance de la clinique* this was all almost at the same time, in 1975, 1976 and I could see they were like a trilogy.

And then I started to make contact with Foucault and other people like Jacques Donzelot, Giovanna Procacci, Pasquale Pasquino, Robert Castel, so it was all like a big discovery of a lot of things at the same time: a

different way to think about politics, a different kind of Philosophy and a whole lot of people doing research inspired by this work: that was a kind of remarkable thing! So, it was just a very exciting time, for a period. In 1978 the University gave me permission to go to Paris for three months, to go to hear Foucault's lectures. And I had some trouble arranging my accommodation so I got there at the end of January, 1978. When I went to *Collège de France* that week, the very first lecture I heard was the one about governmentality, the famous one, so I was quite lucky that I didn't miss that one.

**So, there were not so many of Foucault's books already translated into English at that time. How did it appear, in your career, the initiative of starting to edit his work?**

The very first book of Foucault's short writings translated to English I think was called *Culture, Counter-Memory and Practice* and that was published, I think, in about 1978 or so, by an American who I didn't know; mainly in that volume there were his literary texts.

When I went to Paris, nobody in Britain knew about the shorter political writings and the interviews. And in fact, during Foucault's lifetime many, many of these shorter texts were completely unknown to most people, even in France. After Foucault died we were still discovering these early writings and then only with the *Dits et Écrits* you discovered nearly all of them. So there was a sort of hidden literature at that time and not everyone even realized how interesting they were.

When I was in Oxford, I got involved with a couple of journals: editing and writing, translating... One was called *Radical Philosophy* and the other was called *Ideology and Consciousness* – one of its original creators was Nikolas Rose, who later became a major figure in the field of work inspired by Foucault. When we proposed some of this material for *Radical Philosophy* I think some people sort of said “ok”, others said “oh, I don't like it so



much; I prefer Jean-Paul Sartre or Hegelian Marxism". So it wasn't immediately popular with everybody: some people liked and some people didn't like it at that time.

By that time I had just discovered and begun translating Foucault's interviews and I realized there were quite a few of them, enough to probably make a book. So we arranged to go see Foucault and to discuss this and then, as I was saying, it turned out that some Italian people had already had the same idea. They had also interviewed Foucault themselves: Pasquale Pasquino and Alessandro Fontana did a quite important interview with Foucault about truth and power.<sup>7</sup> And they also translated two lectures from 1976, so there was a book that was almost ready made there.

Originally we tried to have an interview with Foucault, to be an introduction to that book. And we did an interview, myself and an Australian friend called Paul Patton. But Foucault wasn't satisfied with the result, and he said it would be too difficult to edit into a satisfactory piece. So we abandoned that project at that time. But much later, last year, Alain Beaulieu managed to get permission from the family to publish that interview in French. And also we have translated and published it in the *Foucault Studies* journal, it was published just last year.

So, for *Power/Knowledge* we had some additional and newer materials and I wrote a postface to take the place of our interview, but that was a more or less already made book. Then it was only a problem of finding a publisher. And through *Radical Philosophy* I had a friend who was an editor and he approached one publisher, and he said "no" (laughs). Then he tried another one, and he said "yes". So we had a publisher! And that was more or less it...

So that was in the years up to 1979, 1980. I just happened to know French quite well so I could translate things, or I thought I

could, and there was a journal I was involved with which could publish them, which gave me the pretext to go and meet Foucault and the others, who were quite happy to give the permission to translate – it was all quite a lucky combinations.

## II

**And how did the initiative to edit *The Foucault effect* appear?**

After *Power/Knowledge* we had also been translating texts by some of Foucault's friends and co-researchers, that was people I mentioned like Jacques Donzelot, Robert Castel, Pasquale Pasquino, Giovanna Procacci. And, again with Foucault's permission, we agreed to make a book, a collection of his texts and their texts, and also that the book would include the governmentality lecture which we had translated in 1979. Foucault gave us permission to do that in about 1980 or 1981 and we started working on it, but it was rather slow. I was trying to find a way to write a presentation which would explain the coherence of his work and the work of the people working with him. And this took me a long time to work out. And then, of course, sadly he died in 84, and that made it a bit hard to continue with the project for a time: the problems about contracts and rights and other things were complicated at that time.

**I think something about *The Foucault effect* – when Jacques Donzelot interviewed you, you talked about that a little – is the fact that it kind of introduced the theme of governmentality into the English-speaking world even before it was published or at least commented in France and much before the lectures started being published. Can you tell us more about the place the book had in the English-Speaking world?**

It was a funny period because, on the one hand, in what concerns to the Governmentality

**7-** "Truth and Power". In: Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977. New York: Pantheon Press, 1980, p.109-133.

material, people realized that it was very interesting as soon as it was translated, that one lecture – and we had translated that in 1979. But then nothing else was available at that time, but there was a lot of demand for more of that sort of material. On the other hand, in the journal where we published it, we ended up with only three editors, because the other people left to do other things or they didn't agree with what we were doing. And then we didn't sell enough copies. We had a whole lot of great material ready to be published but we ran out of money to publish the journal. So it was hard to know really whether it was practicable to go on with this kind of activity of translating and publishing. And there were some cuts in the Universities also in 1980, so there weren't so many possibilities for a time.

The book could have been published a lot sooner, except for my part, because we'd collected all the material almost by the time Foucault died. It could have been published about 1986, 1987, except that I didn't finish the introduction for another three years or so. I was uncertain, busy with other things, or I didn't have enough ideas about how to make it all completely clear as an entity, as a collection of material. Eventually Graham and Peter started to push me very, very hard, saying "you have to finish this". I think it was also important for people like Peter, because they were doing work that was related to this work, so they needed these texts to appear as a reference. And I think they almost wrote... they wrote their own pieces about governmentality because we didn't finish this book about it. So, it was a bit late, but I don't think that mattered too much in the end.

When the book was conceived, in the beginning of the 80's, was there some kind of "foucauldian wave" in the British academic world or the book appeared as something very surprising, really new?

I think it was a fairly small wave... At that time, it didn't really make big headlines.

*The Foucault effect* wasn't reviewed very much at the time, for example. So it was a big success with a small audience: I think for some people it was very important and I think it helped to influence the creation of something called *governmentality studies*. And there was a group that was set up, before we published the book but it was kind of related to it, and that was a group in London called "The History of the Present", a research group using the same name as the group that had been set up in Berkeley at that same time by friends of Paul Rabinow and Foucault. We knew this group a little bit; they did a newsletter at that time called *History of the Present newsletter*, which was about studies being done by mainly postgraduate students working with Foucault in Berkeley. So there was this other group that met in London at the London School of Economics (LSE), and I went to it sometimes, not that often. It included people who were friends of mine like Tom Osborne, for example. They were meeting as a group, trying to continue some of the ideas in Foucault, and I think *The Foucault effect* had some stimulating effect on that group. Nikolas Rose was teaching in Goldsmiths College, and he formed a group of researchers in the Sociology Department who've gone to do other work, like Vikky Bell, for example. So, there was this small to medium sub-speciality, I would say, located in the UK, Australia, Canada.

I believe one of the major contributions about *The Foucault effect* and probably one of the reasons why it was so powerful is that you got to publish the lectures on governmentality together with some of the results produced by researchers that were working with Foucault or near Foucault by that time, so, the book kind of shows in a very clear way the possibilities of using that part of Foucault's analyses. So I guess the question is a little bit about that: how to use Foucault's perspectives?

Well, that's interesting. Giovanna told me, for example, that she went to Foucault seminars

and to his lectures for several years and she saw him a number of times and he suggested that she did some work on the field of social economy which is the subject of her first paper and then of her book.<sup>8</sup> So he kind of gave her a topic, an idea, and some suggestions on how to do it but then she mostly did it by herself, and after that with Robert Castel as her official supervisor. So it is quite interesting in a way how these things worked out to be such consistent analyses when Foucault wasn't really controlling and telling people in a way of a head of a school or a movement. It seemed quite a subtle influence: they were on the same wavelength, without being coordinated in a very visible way.

Exactly what I tried to do in *The Foucault effect* was to demonstrate this effect of coherence between their works. Although they disagreed in some things: Jacques and Giovanna had political differences and you can see it reflected in their chapters, in fact. But nonetheless the analyses were quite coherent with each other.

The other thing I wanted to try to show was that you could do a continuous genealogical analysis: it wasn't just this piece or this piece, you could have a sort of a historical continuity or connectivity between analyses which meant it wasn't just a set of... one-off effects, and that it could be approached and people could work within this perspective as well, if they wanted to. So, it was consistent: different people could do it, different people could share the same tools. And that is the things I tried, I hoped the book would show. That was what I wanted the book to show.

**One thing I think it is interesting is that when the lectures were first published, at least here in Brazil, most of the attention was paid to the notion of biopolitics. Even before governmentality. But I think that with the appearance of *Government of self and others*, maybe the notion of governing could be taken more seriously.**

**8-** PROCACCI, Giovanna. *Gouverner la Misère: la question sociale en France 1789-1848*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993.

Yes, I know... well, he says almost nothing about biopolitics in those lectures. Biopolitics, of course, everyone knows, is introduced in the last chapter of *La volonté de savoir*<sup>9</sup> and the last lecture in *Il faut défendre la société*<sup>10</sup>, both in 1976. And then he doesn't even say anything more about biopolitics ever. He says "I am going to", but he doesn't ever do it, he loses interest, I think, it wasn't really his topic, or rather he found, and this is not at all to belittle his hugely important explorations of the government of populations, of the pervasive effects of medicalization, that his theme was something a little different: the politics of ways of living, capabilities for living – you find this emerging in the mis-titled lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* where he talks about the German neoliberals' *Vitalpolitik* and the American neoliberals theories of human capital.

And the whole thing you've described... I mentioned the people in Chile I've been in contact with, they did a conference in Santiago in 2011 and published some of their work. And their whole website is called "Biopolítica"<sup>11</sup> and they are publishing a book next year that's called, I think, *The Government of Life: Michel Foucault and Neoliberalism*. It's an area of discussion partly linked up to the influence of Negri, the influence of Agamben, this whole kind of industry of people who want to think about biopolitics and think about Foucault as someone who talks about biopolitics. And I don't quite agree with that. I think essentially it's a way of turning Foucault into a post-Marxist, and that's what people want, what some people want: to include Foucault within post-Marxism. And for some reason they've decided that biopolitics is the key to understanding neoliberalism. And I am not so sure about that.

**9-** Right of death and power over life. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. *History of Sexuality, volume 1: an Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.133-159.

**10-** 17 March 1976. In: FOUCAULT, Michel. *Society must be defended: lectures at Collège de France 1975-1976*. New York: Picador, 1997, p.239-264.

**11-** Colin refers to the Red de Investigadores de Biopolítica, based on Chile: [www.biopolitica.cl](http://www.biopolitica.cl).

Very smart people like Nikolas Rose and Rabinow have spent part of their careers studying bio-engineering and genomics as new areas of reality, new technologies and so on, new ethical problem-fields, and that is fine, of course. But I don't think that's what these people talked about exactly. And I don't think governmentality is attractive to post-Marxists either. Because I think they still have a problem with that challenge. As Foucault said, if you want to be socialist *you have to invent a socialist way of governing* and no one who is a socialist finds that very easy to deal with (I'm half a socialist myself and I don't know how to deal with it either).

**In this 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the book, what do you think it is the meaning of the researches that came out with the book, in the English-Speaking world?**

It's a bit strange because it's like a continuous present; it seems the same effect continues, and different people feel it. But of course it's very exciting to find that people of your generation are as interested as we were thirty years ago, and a lot of people would have been surprised to discover that that still happens. The obvious factor in this is that these continuing posthumous Foucault publications are just so interesting, no one could have predicted there would be so many new ideas that one is still finding to talk about. And, partly as a result, finding there are some ideas on the old texts that we still haven't finished thinking through.

**In your piece that appears in this same volume, you briefly mention how the governmentality studies have been important to the conformation of the field of post-colonial studies. Could you comment more about that?**

Post-colonial studies are a very big area now. One of the last times I was asked to give a

talk in London was to a group of South Asian Governmentality Studies people and they said that the governmentality studies were almost the orthodoxy now for South Asian Post-Colonial studies, so it is becoming very, very influential. I know some people working in this field, like Stephen Legg, who has written a book about New Delhi and the urban planning of New Delhi, under the Empire, for example.<sup>12</sup> And there is another friend, Stuart Elden, who is a geographer who combines studying Foucault with a huge range of other themes.

I said a little in my talk at Birkbeck about Partha Chatterjee who is of course one of the biggest global figures in postcolonial studies – we were hoping he would join us at the Birkbeck conference, but he couldn't come because of an eye operation. I saw he had written a book called *Politics of the Governed*<sup>13</sup> where he used the notion of governmentality in a rather original way and he was mainly describing the ways marginal populations mobilized around particular demands, for example, in response to major new development schemes or to displacements of populations by development activities in the Third World. And he said that they developed a new kind of political culture which was a way of fighting governmentality, sometimes by non-orthodox kinds of ways or violent ways or outside the existing political structures. So he was rather like taking up Foucault's idea that governmentality is different from traditional political culture and he was saying "this is exactly what is happening: there is a different political culture which is developing through resistance to governmentality in the Third World setting". It turned out that he picked some of his ideas from Anderson, from his *Imagined Communities* and the essays he'd written after that book.<sup>14</sup>

**12-** LEGG, Stephen. *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

**13-** CHATTERJEE, Partha. *The politics of the governed: reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

**14-** ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York/London: Verso, 1983.

Anderson had used governmentality in a rather strange way also, but an original way, to link to his theories about nations and constructions of nations. I am interested in that. Anderson is Anderson, he is obviously not Foucault and he has his own ideas, but that is still an interesting book. What I thought was interesting were the ways in which nations can be created from a toolkit of components, whether it's in Eastern Europe or whether it is in a colonial territory. Those ideas are quite close to Foucault's ideas in some ways, I think.

There is some quite important discussions about the nation in the last lectures of 1976, in *Society must be defended*, which I think are very interesting but they have not been discussed very much. There are some connections there that are to explore, when one's got time. The emergence of the notion of nations in Sieyès, in France, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and the way these ideas are bouncing around the world very fast between North America and Latin America, Eastern Europe and other parts of the world.

The lectures about biopolitics and governmentality are, sometimes, seen as a sort of hiatus in Foucault's work, since the links between these years and the *ethical turn* are not so easily established. Do you think it would be possible to think about this *Greco-Latin trip* that he took as an effort to escape the terms in which the political game was established in our modern western societies? And another question would be: within Foucault's work and also by your experience, what could be the axes of what you were calling, very nicely, the *multiple births of politics*?

Well, the *multiple births* was just my way of saying that Foucault tells you several times "this is where politics starts". There is one beginning in Greece, and there is one around the Reformation period, there is one around the period when governmentality becomes to be formulated as a kind of

rationality in its own right, so you can either fight it, or you can have alternate versions of it, which compete. He's got several different stories about how politics starts and maybe they are all necessary stories. For me this is related to the idea that genealogy should give you some freedom to think things slightly differently – here we are dealing with the origin or invention of political culture in the form that we have it, and a genealogy is supposed to show you in what way you can think there could have been an alternative step at a certain point, things could have been different and they could be different. But I think the areas we haven't mentioned where I think he is doing a genealogy of political culture: the militant model which you get in *Society must be defended*, where he is doing a history of struggle, and forms of struggle, I think that material about the Protestant, the French Protestant tradition is also relevant in terms of an invention of a form of struggle as being the central form of political activity. And then there is a Pastoral model, of course. And then there is the missionary model which is the Cynics, so you have the militant, the missionary and the pastoral, which are all ingredients of the perfect revolutionary. He is trying to think about alternatives to each of those, or problematizing each of those, and so he is trying to think of different forms of sociability for political action, I think. He tries to suggest at certain points ways of political mobilization which don't fall within these particular styles, which don't have these very strong forms of control of subject-formation that are characteristic of these styles, and to try to think of different styles to those one. So the kinds of political activity he tries to encourage or experiment in the Prison Information Group (GIP) or the movements around non-governmental organizations are attempts to structure political activity around different subject positions. That's what I understand of it: different styles of forming subjects.

You've mentioned that Foucault was, in 1984, about to close or to end this *Greco-Latin trip*. Do you think this piece of information is important in order to abandon this kind of idealization of *the last Foucault*, as if this is the most important, the "final" Foucault, almost thinking in a kind of *teleological Foucault* that all his life had worked in the same way to get to this very higher point?

Well, there seem to be a lot of people who were very happy that Foucault had stopped talking about power and started talking about the subject. And the final Foucault is kind of *the good Foucault*, who everyone is now happy with, and so we can forget about the *bad Foucault*. And I thought this story was kind of made for American consumption, especially.

I was very struck reading Hennis' remark, which said that Talcott Parsons had to do a lot of work on Weber to get the *entry-visa*, to get permission to bring Weber into the United States. Foucault is a bit similar to that: you have to do a lot of work on Foucault to make him ok for the Americans, suitable for the land of the free... Don't talk about power, talk about freedom as much as possible. I know some very nice geographers, my brother is geographer and one of my brothers' academic friends is a Californian geographer called Ed Soja, who is a very progressive geographer. Ed only likes Foucault when he talks about space, and he is disappointed when he isn't talking about space, and when he talks about time, he doesn't like it at all, he gets very unhappy. Time is bad, space is good. And for other people power is bad, freedom is good. So the final Foucault is the final gospel and obviously I don't agree with that. Also what I don't like is that... well, I noticed Rabinow quite often says "you shouldn't try to think about what he was going to do next, because you can't possibly know what he was going to do next". But Foucault said he was going to write a book against the Socialist Party and he was going to think more about the military questions and war, so, he had

other plans clearly. My theory is... he looked like he was going to say something more about political culture, in some form.

Recently, I think three or four years ago, a volume called *Governmentality Studies in Education* appeared. You have a very interesting foreword to that, commenting on the moments and contexts where Foucault refers to Education, in *lato sensu*. Could you explain the title you gave to that foreword – pedagogy, psychagogy and demagogy?

None of Foucault's investigations has a central focus on the history, practice or politics of education. These themes, nevertheless, appear often in the course of some key developments in his works, and they have become important for people in this field. Foucault's work has had a dynamic influence like this in several fields of study which were not directly his own.

I think after I wrote that piece I noticed there is even more about education in the last lectures and one thing is that he thinks that Philosophy and *paideia*, are not the same thing. He says there is big, a fundamental difference of approach between *paideia*, in the way you shape people in *paideia*, and Philosophy. And also later between rhetoric and *parrhesia*. So, some of the time Philosophy and education are on the same terms and sometimes he's saying that Philosophy is opposite to education. And it's quite noticeable he has that view. The model of *paideia* producing a well formed person who can use rhetoric, which is what one model of education is for. But he is saying "that's not it at all", we are against this.

About the title, it proposes a triadic framework within which some of Foucault's observations on pedagogy and various sibling practices might be situated. Foucault uses the term *psychagogy* in his 1982 lectures, defining it, specifically in contrast to pedagogy, as "the transmission of a truth whose function is not to endow an individual subject with aptitudes, but to modify that subject's mode of being". Foucault

is saying that pedagogy and psychagogy are often coupled practices in Hellenistic culture, but become decoupled in Christianity. In the 1983 lectures Foucault speaks of “the problem of the government of the soul, of psychagogy. In order to conduct oneself and others, to conduct others well by conducting oneself well, what truth does one need? What practices and techniques are necessary? What knowledge, what exercises etc.?”. ‘Demagogy’ was added on my own responsibility (but maybe with Weber as my guarantor), as a third scoping term, understood in one of its less pejorative original usages, to mean discourse addressed to the people for its formation and edification: the care of the soul, or the conscience, of the citizen.

One of the readings that we always do with our students, in our undergraduate programme in Education, is *Discipline and Punish*, specially the part about discipline. In this same piece, you comment the fact that the mention to schools systems in this work is not only because of the evidence of discipline as a dispositive that organizes time, space, bodies, but also because of its importance to produce a specific truth, through a specific gaze towards students. So, it is a specific relationship that is established in order to produce a truth.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault cites again the educational initiatives of an ascetic and mystically inspired religious group founded in 14<sup>th</sup>-century northern Germany, the Brothers of the Common Life, as he had done in the *Abnormal* lectures. But this time it's not to refer to the historic process of the “colonization of youth” – the pacification, domiciling and segregation of the anarchic and itinerant mediaeval university student population, but to point the significance of their transposal of spiritual techniques to the educational domain for the modern history of discipline. I think Foucault's discussion in *Discipline and Punish* of the individualizing technique of the examination can properly be

understood, at least in part, as a development and extension of a key theme in his earlier *Birth of the Clinic*, which is made explicit in its subtitle, “An archeology of the clinical gaze”. In his later work Foucault makes a key reference to Georges Canguilhem's book on the *Normal and Pathological*, noting the extent to which normalizing and disciplinary practices can incorporate a quasi-clinical component – an individualizing gaze which detects, measures and classifies the deviations of an individual, and of individual development, from a norm. In the *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault had developed the idea that the organized space of the hospital where the clinical gaze holds sway is not only a machine for cure and a machine for diagnosis and research, but a machine for teaching. The clinic is a case, among several that Foucault observes in his genealogies, of the hybridization or symbiosis of pedagogy with other practices.

At one point of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault comments that a disciplinary school is the perfect machine for a democratic society, in the sense that it changes the nature of the individual specificity – it is not anymore a question of collective inequalities, but a problem of individual deviations in relation to the norms. Do you believe it would be possible to think about this process of normalization as a form of producing a subject uncomplaining about his/hers position in an unequal society? Of course, after Bourdieu's and Passeron's work, this idea is not necessarily new, but do you think there is something specific in the way Foucault links this to a more general process of normalization through discipline?

It so happens I was thinking about Foucault on inequality because of a text by Didier Fassin which happens to be included in the Santiago conference proceedings I mentioned, and the forthcoming volume they are publishing in the States.<sup>15</sup> Fassin makes

**15-** FASSIN, Didier. Another Politics of Life is Possible. *Theory Culture Society*, September, 2009, v. 26, nº 5, p. 26-44.

quite a point in this paper of saying that while Foucault is quite useful, he has nothing to say on inequality: he writes “curiously ‘inequality’ is a word that never appears in Foucault’s writings” and “The inequality of lives falls outside of his perspective.” (p. 49, p.54) I haven’t done a complete word search, but I recall that in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault picks up the problem of managing illegalities in a class society, and the problem in Marxian terms of how to separate the workers from the means of production, that is, so that workers don’t steal the commodities they are working on or producing, and this is where policing and the new penal and correctional techniques come in, as well as surveillance in the workplace; and he also explains in this and related texts that bourgeois society develops a differential system of illegalities, which persists to this day, so that crimes such as business fraud tend to be handled with less severity than working-class crimes. Whether that amounts to training the subject to accept inequalities uncomplainingly or not I don’t know, but it has effects which are not unrelated to that. I tried to show in *The Foucault effect* how there is an important thread of discussions of class struggle in Foucault’s work during the 70s, which has tended to be ignored because it is outside the usual safe limits of Marxist class analysis. Then, a bit later, in *The birth of biopolitics* there are some discussions about inequality in versions of neoliberalism, in the lecture dated February 14<sup>th</sup> 1979, which basically says that neoliberalism rejects the pursuit of equality as a goal of social policy, and he cites one of the German economists as saying – a bit enigmatically as he says – that “inequality is the same for all”. So there you have a few indications, maybe. One could also add that in the one 1979 lecture where Foucault talks about neoliberalism in France, which curiously is the lecture which no one ever discusses (including myself, I have to admit, in *The Foucault effect*), Foucault brings out quite specifically the theme in neoliberal policy thinking that full employment cannot be

guaranteed, and that there needs to be a section of the population whose employment status will remain precarious – as he says, reviving the old idea which we know from Marx of the industrial reserve army. This version of neoliberalism says that the underclass is an economic necessity, it will always be with us.

### III

When you wrote the preface to *Power/Knowledge* you called some attention to the fact that although Foucault was always in the public scene, he was not to be mistaken for the same intellectual tradition that goes to Voltaire, Sartre. Can you tell us more about that difference and the possible importance of it for us to think the differences between Philosophy and this critical attitude nowadays?

Well, that was something he said in 1976, approximately. And he was talking about the situation then and he was probably making a contrast between himself and someone like Sartre. And yes, this is something I wrote about a bit in a chapter I wrote for a book about Foucault and law, which was published last year, edited by Ben Golder, replying to people who attacked Foucault for not being interested in law and marginalizing law as a theme within modern society. I try there to understand the reasons why some of that polemic happened about Foucault and I was encouraged by some things that Fabienne Brion writes in the course context for the Louvain Lectures, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, which are published in French,<sup>16</sup> and forthcoming in English, from Chicago.

That [chapter] was partly about the relations between intellectuals and the revolutionary left, and actually I was inspired by some comments that Daniel Defert makes, writing about the history of the GIP (Prison’s

**16** - FOUCAULT, Michel. *Mal faire, dire vrai: fonction de l’aveu en justice*. Belgique: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2012 (Édition établie par Fabienne Brion et Bernard E. Harcourt).



Information Group), which is that famous initiative that Foucault and Defert and others organized in the early 1970s. He said then that the Maoists had a notion of people they called democrats, which were names for famous intellectuals, who would kind of say something to the newspapers whenever someone on the left was arrested, for example, which happened quite often at that time. They had respectable public intellectual figures that would appear to say that the police was being very harsh or that someone should not be arrested who was associated with the revolutionary left, for example. So there was a kind of a game there, in which the revolutionary left used famous liberal intellectuals, in certain situations. And the liberal intellectuals spoke in certain situations to say “as a liberal intellectual, I don’t think that you should lock this person up”. So, it’s kind of a game like that and [Foucault] was saying... well, he did sometimes, of course, sign petitions against people being arrested, but he didn’t believe in that kind of role to the intellectual to be in a certain relationship to the revolutionary movement, in that way, for example. I think because he realized that you were being exploited by the revolutionaries and he didn’t always agree with the revolutionaries who were doing the exploiting. So I think that was a bit of a subtext to all that stuff, at that time.

But the other part was clearly saying that being an intellectual who has written certain books didn’t mean you suddenly became qualified to decide everything, or to give everyone advice, or to say universally what is good or what is bad. So that was the whole point about the specific and the universal intellectual. Obviously, later on he did things that weren’t quite so specific, like the interventions about the Vietnamese boat people. He was asked “why do you care about these people if you’re a specific intellectual?”; he kind of said well, there is a solidarity of the governed which is specific to being governed, although it includes many people. It was a relationship of solidarity but not a kind of universalistic mission, if you like.

I think the other way it comes up later is what I tried to say when I was talking about Habermas and the attacks on Foucault from Americans like [Richard] Rorty or Charles Taylor, those kind of people, sort of saying that Foucault doesn’t have any coherent position, that he doesn’t have a message. I think in America there is a role for public philosophers who are supposed to more or less say what is good and what is bad, to make it possible for people to have a moral orientation and feel they know what is right. And there is a bit of a competition about it too, so not everyone can be this universal intellectual, only some people at the same time. And Foucault was seen as being a bit of a dangerous person, either because he was seen as competing, or because he wasn’t playing the game in the same way. And that’s what is behind all of this. Again, it’s often with people who had kind of a past relationship to the left, people who were Trotskyists, or who had some indirect link to revolutionary movements. And this is part of what someone like Rorty would regard as their duty to be as a public intellectual. And Foucault obviously wasn’t, so that was the difference, I think. So, that’s my idea about that.

**When you mentioned the topics that appeared in *The Foucault effect* but, in your perspective, weren’t really taken into consideration (at least not as much as they should have), you say that you would like to bring this issue of a relation between a society that has been organized in this entrepreneur form, something that has to do with the neoliberal art of government, and a juridical society, that is something that develops itself at least since liberalism. Could you comment on this more extensively, about this kind of blind spot of the analyses that developed since the 2000s, mostly ignoring the dimension of law in neoliberalism?**

I thought that one of the important things that Foucault said in the neoliberal lectures,

at least about Germany, is that law is very important in neoliberalism, because neoliberals don't assume, or at least the German version doesn't assume that there is equilibrium: they say you have to keep things regulated. So there is a lot of juridical activity to create the structure in which the market becomes possible and the social market becomes possible and people behave competitively and are all able to take part of the market. So, that's what I think is interesting about his discussions of the Germans: you have this kind of constructivism, and you have to create artificial legal frameworks in order for the social market to work. That's quite funny because that was completely ignored by all these people of the left who say Foucault doesn't take law seriously and therefore he doesn't really believe in the rule of law either and therefore is not able to be a kind of good democratic philosopher to tell us how to remake society. Whereas in the German case it's all actually there in fact and even today you can sort of think, well, after 2008 the Germans survived quite well, actually, because they had kept quite a lot of regulation in their financial system, unlike the rest of us, especially Americans and British. So there are different styles of neoliberalism and what Foucault noticed about the German style is that it has a very strong juridical element. There is another piece of his that was published only recently, which is the talk he gave to a meeting of the *Syndicat des Magistrats* – the Magistrates Association or Trade Union – in about the late 70's<sup>17</sup>. There, he was warning about the idea that the Socialist Party had to create a lot of new juridical institutions, and regulatory, bodies to manage consumer rights and manage the press and those kinds of things. So he thought there was a risk of a dangerous over-juridification, that you could have too much of this. Not that it was disappearing, but you could have too much of it.

**17-** FOUCAULT, Michel. La redéfinition de judiciaire. *Vacarme*, p. 54-57, n. 29, Automne, 2004.

As I understand, you are suggesting that also when people read these lectures, where he talks about neoliberalism, maybe much more of the attention is paid to the American neoliberalism (that he calls an anarcho-liberalism), as if it is the only model and the prevalent one, but maybe we should also pay attention to what he discusses about ordoliberalism.

I mean, it's hard to say, some people would say that the American model is overwhelmingly most dominant and therefore it's the most important today, but maybe what's happening today isn't necessarily what you find in Chicago School in the 1960s and the 70s either, but something different again. Ewald's work, I mean, was about... *L'état Providence*, the welfare state, it was a genealogy of the welfare state.<sup>18</sup> And he also spent a lot of time saying they reinvented law in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That is another one of those things I felt people overlooked: it comes out of Foucault's seminar that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century they reinvent criminology and they reinvent penal justice, they invent law of insurance and accidents, modifying the relationship between responsibility and fault, and these are fundamental inventions to make the welfare state possible.

I would like to ask you about your current line of work, because Philippe Chevallier has told us that you are editing a book about Iran. Could you tell us something about it?

Yes, certainly. I can't quite think how the idea started but we happened to have a conference in London in 2004, which was the 20th anniversary of Foucault's death, and a very important and interesting Canadian philosopher and historian called Jim Tully, who agreed to come, recommended that we also invited someone called Darius Rejali,

**18-** EWALD, François. *L'état Providence*. Paris: Grasset, 1986.

who was an Iranian-American who had written an interesting book about torture, the history of torture in Iran before and after the revolution of 1979. So he came to talk in that conference. And I think we discussed the fact that Foucault's reports about Iran had not been translated in full at that time. That was partly because people were a little bit nervous about them. And so we thought it would be time to do a proper edition, with some scholarly notes and explanation, to explain exactly why Foucault went to Iran, what he saw, and what should one think about his reports in the light of what happened afterwards and the present situation. And then a few months later we discovered that some Americans had already done this thing in a very different way by publishing, by translating the reports with a long, long commentary, saying that the reports illustrated all kinds of bad, bad things about Foucault's thought, his anti-feminism, his naïve political ideas, and other things.<sup>19</sup>

**It has been translated to Portuguese just last year.**

I saw it in the bookshop, yes. So I was very horrified by this, but it wasn't clear what we could do at that time about properly rectifying things. And so it just happened that in the last couple of years I got to meet several people who were interested in doing it. Philippe had written himself about this, a good article about some of the...commentaries on Foucault's Iran pieces.<sup>20</sup> And then Philippe introduced me to another researcher who is doing a Ph.D. on Islamic revolts. And then I happened to meet Fabienne Brion, who co-edited the Louvain lectures and she is also an Islam scholar. And then lastly, I discovered a book called, in French, *Le cahier d'Aziz*.<sup>21</sup> In translation it's called *Aziz's notebook* and the editor is Chowra

Makaremi, who is a young Iranian-French exile and it's the story of a notebook written by her grandfather about the imprisonment, torture and execution of his daughters, who were both revolutionary activists, in the years after the 1979 revolution. A very, very interesting text. She is now in Paris, doing a very interesting work on the politics of immigration, among other things. So we formed a collaboration to do a new presentation of these texts.

And we also hope to have some research about Foucault's reception in Iran and the availability of his writings in Iran. Some years ago I happened to discover that the governmentality work was known in Iran and that a journal issue, of a journal called *Goftogu*, had a very interesting chapter about governmentality in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Iran, based on Foucault. Governmentality studies, written under the Islamic Republic, by somebody in Iran. So there is quite a lot of interesting material around this question, I think. And I also think that it's still quite interesting to see whether Foucault's analyses do actually help to think about the Iranians' story, both in the past and in the present. I noticed that since the Green, or so called Green Revolution of 2010, there is a big new movement in Iran against the Islamic Republic and a lot of the ideas are quite close to the ideas of 1978, 1979 in fact: that people believe there are still potentials within Islamic political spirituality which are productive and creative – just as Foucault had suggested in 1978; although I am told by Chowra that many Iranian people on the Left nowadays still bitterly blame Foucault for not warning them what *Islamic government* was bound to become...

For very personal biographical reasons I had some sympathetic contacts with Islam when I was quite young. I had friends who joined a Sufi order, in Algeria, and that was a quite influential thing for me when I was discovering Philosophy around the same time. So I always had some personal inclination to feel sympathy for Foucault's writings on Iran.

**19-** AFARY, Janet; ANDERSON, Kevin B. *Foucault and Iranian Revolution: gender and the seductions of Islamism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

**20-** CHEVALLIER, Philippe. *L'espiritualité politique*, Michel Foucault et l'Iran. *Projet*, 2004/4 n° 281, p. 78-82.

**21-** MAKAREMI, Chowra. *Le cahier d'Aziz*. Paris: Gallimard, 2011.

I didn't like it that people had attacked him for unfair reasons. It is very frequent to read people saying that Foucault simply endorsed and approved Khomeini's theocratic regime whereas this is not true, in fact: even the accusations are radically self-contradictory – Foucault failed to see what a monstrous thing the Khomeini's regime would be, Foucault failed even to see that there would be a Khomeini regime, *and* he endorsed the Khomeini regime in all its monstrosity. Whereas Foucault's actual comments on what he saw still seem to me to be quite perceptive and they don't deserve to be attacked in the way they often have been. It's a curious thing because many of the people who are sympathetic to Foucault were very reluctant to talk about these texts, they prefer to not talk about them. When I worked with Paul Rabinow on the selection of the materials to take part in the English edition of *Dit et Écrits*, the three volumes that we did – I selected material for him – I said I would like to select some of the Iran material and he was not particularly keen. I recall he said, "I am not very sure the Americans are very interested in this, most of them do not know where Iran is". And this was about 1999, before 9/11, of course. But he finally agreed that we would include two of the pieces.

How do you see the possibilities of "using" Foucault nowadays?

I think there are still opportunities there for doing research in new ways, that his books can still help one to find. I think there are still bridges to be made between his work and the work of other scholars, too. I just think of somebody called Keith M. Baker, I've actually mentioned his work in my article. That's a very good example of a very intelligent historian of thought, who understood Foucault's work quite quickly and then thinks about him in a quite creative way, he thinks of the history of the French Revolution and how he imagines Foucault might have studied French Revolution. But he doesn't know of all of Foucault's work, and there is work he wasn't aware of, where Foucault *did* write on French Revolution; that would have been even more interesting for him. Therefore I think the opportunities are still there to make creative connections. Especially of course because so much of the lectures have only been published in the last ten years, obviously including the ones that I was writing about in *The Foucault Effect*. I did what I could from the tape recordings that we had. But obviously with the good editions you can do much more. You can go back to the same lectures many times and constantly find something new. In these sources there are so many original ideas that it takes a long time before you run out of them, the things you can find in them. So that could still be happening I think. I still think so.

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