

Etho-poietics and Anti-political Anarchism

INTRODUCTION

In his late lectures, Foucault is deriving the concept of *ethopoietics* as a pure creation of the properties of one self, which is a divergent process contrary to main self-production in the Western civilization: externalization of the self into a discursive formation as an obligation to truth. *Ethopoietics* is quite opposite *energia*, as an internalization of the outer discourses as a matter for artistic self-creation. According to authors, Foucault is completely a Kierkegaardian thinker using the same Kierkegaardian tropes to express the self-relation of the self as a nonsystematic praxis. Self-artism is a refuse to get out into the “transcendence”, where power is the transcendental thing that conditions the appearance of the subject. The only ontological immanence is the epistemological field of the power and the State, in which we are reduced to a public thing and transparent self, a self-for-the-state. But, does this postmodern artism have any political relevance (a foundation for State-abolition program), or is it only a doxology, an irrelevant private project, that is, in sensu strictu, a detail on the structural archeology? In both perspectives, we are speaking about the “ontological dance of the Absolute” (Levinas), and that is the inner Hegelian root of the postmodernist’s self-artism as a negation. Political postmodern anarchism is an impossible task. As a revolt and resistance, postmodernism is constantly being returned back in to the knowledge of the State as a Hegelian immanent God, and restored as a moment of the same epos, of the same system.

But in Kierkegaard’s philosophy there is a deep concern about the creation of subjectivity, and the need to bind it with the transcendence. Kierkegaard is seeking

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for the meaning of the subjectivity out of the immanence, as a completely deontological search for the Absolute. "The Self is a relation which is related to itself." The Self is a synthesis of the finality and infinity, "which is in relation to itself, and whose task is to become a being by itself, that could be achieved only through God". This is a grounding of the existence into another existence, but existence that opens the perspective for an absolute self-creation, a creation that cannot be reduced to any system of morality and representation. This radical concept of *ethopoiesis*, that distorts the immanent ontology of the world, is a base for an anti-political anarchism that can be derived if we use Kierkegaardian radical thinking.

FROM KIERKEGAARD TO FACULT

„Heidegger clearly states that being-with (*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*, and *Mitdasein*) is essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself“ (Nancy 1991, 26). Being-in-Common, as Being-with, is the **ontological question** that requires political articulation. Thus, the question of co-existence is the ontological question of political. For Nancy, this question is urgent in modern times. But the answer can lead us to failure and creation of new modern totalitarian societies. Why is this so?

In the modern times, there is an obvious longing for an 'original community' – considers Nancy. It is the longing for an immediate being together, out of the idea that we once lived in a harmonious and intimate community, but that this harmony has declined throughout history. The modern society, the *Gesellschaft*, stands for the opposite of the warm and cosy pre-modern community, the *Gemeinschaft*. According to this line of thinking, we live now in an anonymous society full of selfish individuals and the close communal ties are no more than memories. So far in the political thought the solution to fight this disintegration was twofold: the first one is to turn back to the period where the communal ties were present, or to strive for a future community where the former ties are restored. But none of these aren't Nancy's way.

Albeit, longing for community, longing for establishing genuine community is not something unreal. It is our human need, although that need often lead us to nowhere or even worse to totalitarianism. In „*La Communauté désœuvrée*“ (*The Inoperative Community*, 1986), Nancy claims:

„The gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, the one that possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer (by virtue of some unknown decree or necessity, for we bear witness also to the exhaustion of thinking through History), is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community. Communism, as Sartre said, is "the unsurpassable horizon of our time," and it is so in many senses-political, ideological, and strategic.“ (Nancy 1991, 1)

What constitutes us today, who are “we” today, that is the question of social being. The question of co-existence is, as we said, an ontological question of the political arises at the moment of the evaporation of the possibility of a “polity” that would incarnate such a being-with. Thus, “evaporation” of communism made the necessity of the community even more obvious. It is thanks to the fall of the communism that the question of being-with can be raised, and not despite that fact.

Thanks to the success of natural sciences, this intervening of theirs in the sphere of the social and the political, and in this case also in the religious, creates appropriate *discursive practices*, as Foucault would say, that suppress the religious phenomenon. Finally, knowledge joins to power. Bearing in mind that, according to Foucault, that relationship knowledge-power is **constitutive** for the political, it is clear in this case that we are witnessing an absolute instrumentalization of knowledge, which creates a "regime of truth"³ (Foucault 1988: 30) in the field of the political, which sanctions any attempt to articulate any religious truth, or any religious attitude. The mode of truth of neo-liberalism in this case creates an anti-religious discourse, which together with the ideology of humanism coupled with capitalist logic, do not have the need for transcendence. In the end, the power of scientific knowledge and the technological production of life, in turn, give birth to the age of **biopolitics**. It is a post-political era in which control is complete and mainly corporeal. This is enabled precisely because of the accumulation of knowledge and its opposition to the religious phenomenon. Finally, it is knowledge versus ignorance, science versus religion. Religion must not

³ For the first time Foucault discusses the concept of the "regime of truth" in *Discipline and Punish*, where he speaks of the 19th century penal system and the emergence of a formation of knowledge, techniques, and 'scientific' discoveries that intertwine with practice of the power to punish.

only be completely rejected, but every relationship to transcendence must also be completely cut off; transcendence must be abolished.

This reaches its peak with the development and dominance of capitalism. The supremacy of "economism" as the dominant determinant of relations in society leads to the loss of the meaning of the political and its dissolution into the economic. Capitalism and the supremacy of economism in general as a **principle**, treats the entire society as a field of economic relations. Therefore, biopower is needed for a full control of the life: "This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern." (Foucault 1990a: 157). That is why capitalism "needs" a healthy body, bodybuilding, healthy food, but also the management of life, birth, death, life span, disease, food, living conditions in general...

That is why politics is being depoliticized, and life is being economized. Thus, finally, **sovereignty and freedom** have also died. In the era when knowledge dominates and through which power is exercised, the notion of "sovereign" and "sovereignty" dies. "In order to conduct a concrete analysis of power relations, one would have to abandon the juridical notion of sovereignty," says Foucault (Foucault, 1997: 59); because the classical understanding of sovereignty relied precisely on this understanding of power as the exclusive right of the sovereign.

Namely, according to this understanding, the power is invisible, absolute and supremative. According to this model, power is exclusively "state property" and executed from top to bottom, based on the established "allowed-not allowed" distinction. God is the sovereign, his power is not owed to anyone and in monarchies the king is his recognized representative on earth. The sovereign is the highest, legally independent and unelected government - this is how we could define sovereignty.

The nuances in the interpretations of the practical implementation of this understanding bear problems in the legal science. "The relationship between real power and the highest legislative power is the fundamental problem of the concept of sovereignty" - says Carl Schmitt (Schmitt 1993: 27) - and he defines it as follows: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 1993: 10). As we can see Schmitt defines the essence of sovereignty as the decision over what is an exception and decide the measures taken to eliminate such an exception. The state of exception is both the monopolistic domain of the sovereign and reveals the sovereign itself. But sovereignty, too, then, is also he who defines what's "the normal."

It is exactly this concept that Foucault challenges, when through his archeology he determines that from XVII century onwards there have been new technologies of power which strongly differ from the sovereign's power typical of the state. The classic privilege of the sovereign was "the power of life and death" (Foucault 1990a: 136), unlike in biopolitics - the power to **give life and let die**. Liberalism in general, for Foucault, was not born from the idea of a political society based on a contractual relationship; liberalism is preoccupied with **the technical form of governance**. And in that sense, liberalism as biopolitics, is not at all connected with the **rule of law** in the sense it was in the idea of a social contract and the idea of national sovereignty.

Finally, all of this today, instead of leading to ruling in that classical sense, leads to governmentality/manageability (Foucault, 2009)⁴, that is more about skills of management techniques, i.e. control. Foucault's concept of manageability refers to all aspects of governance in a society through knowledge; he analyzes governance and new techniques of governance such as statistics, medical examinations, police, social affairs ... that are regulated by means of numbers. Techniques for governing abolish *nomos*. There is no need for *nomos*, *nomos* does not exist - only spheres of interest.

⁴ The term governmentality (Fr. *Gouvernementalité*), is Foucault's neologism derived from the French *gouvernemental* by which he describes the specific way of administering the population in modern European history, but this concept also covers the techniques and procedures designed to regulate the behavior of individuals or the population of each, not only administrative or political level.

However, Foucault's analysis rarely discusses the attitude to the religious phenomenon in society,⁵ but in this case I will try to use these techniques of governmentality for analysis of the religious phenomenon. Namely, he finds this relationship knowledge-power in various practices: psychopathology (*Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*), medicine (*The Birth of the Clinic*), prison practices (*Discipline and Punish*), sexuality (*The History of Sexuality*) and political economy (*The Birth of Biopolitics*), but nowhere does he have the topic of the religious phenomenon. But I think that the knowledge-power dispositive constitutes such practice in the sphere of religiosity also, instrumentalizing this phenomenon too by bringing it under the management techniques.

Simply, the religious sphere cannot remain unregulated, so it must be transferred into the sphere of political, public, and finally - biopolitical; and as, for example, sexuality for biopower is not something that only applies to pleasure, but also to knowledge, so religiousness must also move from the exclusively intimate life, to the public, political, or more precisely, biopolitical, and regulated life. As sexuality passes from *ars erotica* to *scientia sexualis* (Foucault 1990a: 51), so too religion must turn from mysticism into a science, from the inexplicable into the explicable, to descend from the untouchable sphere of transcendence and to pass into the field of immanence. Finally, from a personal, mystical experience it must turn into an experimental frog for sectioning. There is nothing sacred any more, nothing mysterious. I believe that with the attack on religiosity as the last instance of personal intimacy, which is obviously orchestrated today by the authorities in science, the power of the biopolitical is in its final stage.

All this must be seen precisely in the light of liberalism and capitalism, i.e. the economic logic as the dominant determinant of today's social relations, which does not tolerate **irrationality** and indetermination. And that is why, finally, the spirit had to become flesh, the soul had to be turned into a body, the religious into the political; since only this has not been demystified yet. Sexual satisfaction is completely demystified, brought under the techniques of manageability, so the faith remains the last shelter to which the public spotlights do not reach. The final clash with

⁵ Probably understandable, given the fact that Foucault was a declared atheist.

sovereignty is happening right through the battle with the religious, as it was primarily derived from the religious sphere. So, when the religious with the tools of the science will be demystified completely, when it will be drawn back in to the field of the political, then it will be possible to intervene in it as in to a body, ergo, to control it.

Thus through the religious sphere the notion of the sovereign is destroyed completely and finally, and thus the power of economic relations is fully established. Why do I set this thesis? Namely, the capital and the neo-liberal logic in general are equal in a certain sense to rationality; they are an expression of rationalism in its most operative variant. If we follow Schmitt and his definition of sovereignty as a state of exception cited above, we will easily come to the conclusion. What is a **miracle** in religion, that is an exception in the theory of law (Schmitt 1993: 51), and the sovereign is based precisely on the right to decide on the condition of exception. Exception as the essence of the sovereign – of which Schmitt speaks and later also Agamben (Agamben, 2005) - is in that sense constitutive of the legal and social order, but in the new liberal and economized era miracles must be thrown out, miracles must not exist. Rationalism does not tolerate exceptions, only rules. The exception violates the order and the system of each rationalistic scheme. And the religious phenomenon is based on an **exception**, an excess, a miracle. In that sense, the entry of the **hypostasis** in history is an exception, an event, a miracle, and it cannot be specified, classified, defined... and as such controlled.

Therefore, in order for the capitalism to function impeccably, it must not only rationalize all relations in society, but even more – to throw out the irrational, i.e. surrational, emotional, willful, or throw these out precisely by rationalizing. It therefore requires the exclusion of the religious as being irrational, mystical, in fact, which is not subject to control as it is. If, according to Foucault, the knowledge-power relationship is localized and acts primarily through the body, then what should be done in this case with the religious phenomenon is to "embody" the spirit, to transmit the religious onto the ground of the flesh where it can be "dissected" with the tools of

science (knowledge) and controlled, i.e. to specify it under the relationship: knowledge-power.

CONCLUSION

The killing of God has one purpose: the final killing of the notion of sovereignty and complete manageability and free practice of biopower. Because we have seen that today's management techniques require the abolition precisely of the notion of sovereignty that is actually the **locus of the political**. Liberal logic is interested above all in the technical form of governance, and not at all in legitimizing of the political sovereignty. The biopolitical occurs precisely by "dissolving" so to say, of the sovereignty into the economic. This dissolution has been made possible by the increasing economization of social relations. This tendency, on which Foucault insists, was noticed by Carl Schmitt, whom Foucault probably owes much more in his theory than can be seen at first glance, or what Foucault admits. And the following lucid observation of the tendencies in society and politics by Schmitt, sounds like future Foucault with the ideas of manageability: "Today nothing is more modern than the onslaught against the political. American financiers, industrial technicians, Marxist socialists, and anarchic-syndicalist revolutionaries unite in demanding that the biased rule of politics over unbiased economic management be done away with. There must no longer be political problems, only organizational-technical and economic-sociological tasks. The kind of economic-technical thinking that prevails today is no longer capable of perceiving a political idea. The modern state seems to have actually become what Max Weber envisioned: a huge industrial plant" (Schmitt 1993: 89). Indeed, politics is dead, everything can be managed, we do not need legal procedures anymore, or in Foucault's words: "The new types of management are colonizing the legal procedures and destroying the legal system of sovereignty" (Foucault 2003: 55). In order to be manageable, the legal system founded on sovereignty must be destroyed at its base. And how else if not by destroying the **transcendental condition of sovereignty - the transcendence of the sovereign**: God must die. However, let me clarify this claim closely.

Namely, if we follow Schmitt: "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts." (Schmitt 1993: 51), we will see that development of political ideas were accordingly to metaphysical and theological doctrines. Both Foucault and Schmidt historically pinpoint the issues of sovereignty and their treatment throughout history, and there is no need to elaborate these in detail, just briefly in order to get to my point. It is clear that until the XVII and XVIII centuries were dominated by the idea of a single sovereign who drew his sovereignty from the theological ideas of one God. The monarchist law identified the theistic God with the king and he drew his sovereignty from there. With this the ruler is God moved to the world. The sovereign is a unique, singular and transcendent entity. But these elements slowly began to be lost in the concept of sovereignty, and it was slowly entering the field of **immanence**. From the 1st religious aspect: from theism, through deism to atheism - the sovereign increasingly dissolved and fragmented. From the 2nd philosophical aspect: The Absolute is slowly introduced into the world and all concepts must arise from the immanence of the objectivity. Finally, from the 3rd aspect of the law: slowly from common will, towards the will of the people, and it was turned into the democratic public and the civil society. From governance it changed into supervision and regulation, Foucault would say.

This is also confirmed by Schmitt when he claims that in today's age: "the concepts of transcendence will no longer be credible to most educated people who will settle for either a more or less clear immanence - pantheism or a positivist indifference toward any metaphysics" (Schmitt 1993: 70). That is why today's policy, Foucault would say, is actually **biopolitics**, which is a structurally different kind of realization of power, formerly concentrated in the sovereign. In today's politics, the state is not governed, managed, and therefore, as Foucault says "we have to abandon the model of Leviathan" [...] "We have to study power outside the model of Leviathan, outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the State. We have to analyze it by beginning with the techniques and tactics of domination. (Foucault 2003: 34). The legal-political theory of sovereignty is dead, and now the source of the sovereign - God must also be killed.

The transition from the sovereignty inherent in the medieval state to governmentality in modern state is obvious. Even the "notorious" Machiavelli's "*The Prince*" nevertheless portrays power in its political form; despite bad means, the main goal still was how to maintain sovereignty (Foucault 2003: 134). For Machiavelli, it is clear - the ruler stands **outside** in relation to the subject of his rule, he is a **singularity** and **transcendence**, which is not the case with the concept of governmentality which is **plural** and **immanent**, versus that transcendent singularity of the ruler - sovereign. The modern **skill of governing** (governmentality) does not require that transcendence, on the contrary, it is an obstacle. Therefore transcendence should be denied completely, everything needs to become immanence. If in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault analyzed how, through the practice of punishment, the soul of the delinquent was actually produced, by disciplining the **body**, can not the same analogy be made with faith and religion: in order to control, supervise, regulate and punish, even the last topos of transcendence must be destroyed: Faith, religion must become a body, so as to intervene in the soul through it.

In that sense, we can safely say that - the last degree of biopolitics is the biopoliticalization of the religious, or rather, its economization and mercantilization through the exact sciences. Its involvement in the field of rational calculations and defeat on that terrain. If you accurately "prove" not only that religion is an evolutionary product, as Dawkins tries to do, and the rest of them in the *New Atheism* movement, but from today's point of view unnecessary redundancy, and, even more so, if you prove God's non-existence⁶, then the principle of transcendence which is behind the concept of sovereignty, is forever dead. This is the last "microstrategy" of power: the involvement of the religious in the field of power. As irrational, religion always slips out to power, in the sphere of transcendence power cannot do anything to it. By its rationalization, however, putting it under the scrutiny of the rational mind, the biopolitization of life is final, because the most intimate sphere of man - the relationship to transcendence - is finally brought into the public discourse and thus

⁶Although it is really unclear how they will succeed in this!?

governmentality over it is made possible. The Sovereign is ruined in its last foundation, from which it originally arises - religion.

The destruction of the sovereign and the "colonization", as Foucault puts it, of legal procedures, means the introduction of the means of **war** as a political tool. If for Clausewitz the war was "a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means" (Clausewitz 1951: 53), then for Foucault "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2003: 15). When the sovereign does not exist, the law does not exist, so you can intervene from any point on the globe without invoking international law. Wars against the Islamic world mean precisely that: disrespect of law, colonization of legal procedures and, finally, negation of the sovereignty of those states. Precisely because of such an episteme, which creates such a discourse, Sam Harris can freely state: "We are at war with Islam. It may not serve our immediate foreign policy objectives for our political leaders to openly acknowledge this fact, but it is unambiguously so. It is not merely that we are at war with an otherwise peaceful religion that has been "hijacked" by extremists. We are at war with precisely the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Koran [...] A future in which Islam and the West do not stand on the brink of mutual annihilation is a future in which most Muslims have learned to ignore most of their canon, just as most Christians have learned to do. Such a transformation is by no means guaranteed to occur, however, given the tenets of Islam." (Harris 2005: 110). This is how far today's new, "scientific" atheism got - to a "scientifically substantiated" confirmation of war against Islam!?

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