

foucault studies

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EDITORIAL

Foucauldian Studies

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This second issue of *Foucault Studies* builds upon the success of the first, offering a range of perspectives on Foucault's work, his relation to the tradition, contemporaries such as Derrida, and the way in which his thought is being appropriated in the contemporary period, for example by Giorgio Agamben.

The bulk of the issue comprises two sets of papers, which deserve some introduction. The first is an exchange around a bold and provocative paper by Mika Ojakangas on the relation between Agamben and Foucault. Of all Agamben's books, *Homo Sacer* has perhaps attracted the most attention in its reading of a range of sources to advance an argument about the contemporary uses of sovereignty and the right of death and power over life. While Agamben shares Foucault's point of departure, examining where modern politics turns into *biopolitics*, and where 'bare life', as Agamben terms it, is included in the mechanisms of state power, there is also a tension between the two thinkers, which is what makes the confrontation between them so interesting. Thus, if Foucault separates sovereign power and biopower, Agamben claims that the biopolitical body is in fact produced by sovereign power. Agamben also pursues the point of intersection between the production of the human being as an object and his or her production as a subject of political power. In pursuing this project he makes the claim that he is *completing* the Foucauldian problematic. Ojakangas' paper is followed by two responses which acknowledge the article's importance but contest some of its key claims. These responses are in their turn followed by a reply from Ojakangas. It is our hope that the open spirit of dialogue found in these papers might act as a model for continued discussion in the virtual pages of this journal.

While the exchange element here was provoked by our sense of the importance of and challenges posed by Ojakangas' paper, with the responses being actively commissioned, the other set of papers is more the product of happy coincidence. Three different perspectives on Foucault's later thought are offered, demonstrating the rich vein of interest in this period of his work.

Sebastian Harrer and Paul Allen Miller both analyse Foucault's late lectures at the Collège de France – in Miller's case lectures not yet published – treating the question of subjectivity and the reading of Plato as a critique of Derrida respectively. The other piece, by Matthew Sharpe, rethinks Foucault's relation to Kant through the notion of critique as itself a technology of the self.

The rest of the issue includes the first of an irregular series of articles which will report on Foucault's influence in a particular discipline. In this case, the discipline is theology and the analysis by John McSweeney is likely to serve as an essential point of reference for assessment of Foucault's work in this area. Alan Rosenberg is coordinating this feature and invites suggestions for possible inclusion in this section. Amongst others, we are especially interested in articles that focus on the relevance of Foucault to both classical studies and to queer theory. The issue closes with a selection of reviews of recent work related to Foucault.

In the editorial to the first issue we drew attention to the growing impact and uptake of Foucault's work. This process has been given a further boost by the creation of a new association - the 'Foucault Society'. This group, based in New York, is dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of Foucault's work in the scholarly, artistic and activist arenas. Full details can be found on their website at <http://www.foucaultsociety.org>. We would like to take this opportunity to wish the Society every success in its venture.

Foucault Studies is committed to publishing work both on and informed by Foucault. The former case has been well served by the papers in this and the last issue, and we continue to welcome work of this kind. Some of this work usefully relates Foucault to other movements in thought, contemporary perspectives and related issues. To date, however, we have received fewer submissions which seek to go beyond Foucault's own analyses through a utilisation of his tools and perspectives on contemporary or historical problems. The key exception would be Simon Enoch's paper "The Contagion of Difference: Identity, Bio-politics and National Socialism" in the first issue.

While there are a few pieces of this kind in the review process and likely to appear in issue 3 and beyond, we would like to reiterate our invitation for more papers of an applied nature. We do not mean to be prescriptive, but it strikes us that the current global climate is ripe with issues that could be usefully illuminated by Foucauldian perspectives. Let us take just a few examples.

The recent British General Election was scarred by discussion of the notion of immigration. The strongest message from a mainstream party came from the Conservatives who declared in a notorious campaign poster that "it's not racist to impose limits on immigration", asking the voter, "are you thinking what we're thinking?" Fortunately the chorused answer was largely no, with Blair's Labour party returned with a smaller majority. Nonetheless Labour felt a need to respond in kind, tacking on an extra pledge to their

programme at a late stage, promising, “your country’s borders protected: ID cards and strict controls that work to combat asylum abuse and illegal immigration”. Several issues lend themselves to analysis here, notably the agenda setting of the media; the complexities of conduct within a liberal democracy; the conceptual confusion between ‘refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘economic migrant’, along with the exclusionary practices of thought, rhetoric and practice this implies- all of this accompanied by proposed solutions of stricter border controls and ever-more technologically proficient surveillance techniques. The Conservative party, for example, proposed the setting up of a new border police and off-shore processing centres – an instance perhaps of where Agamben’s notion of ‘spaces of exception’ might come in useful. Labour’s plans for ID cards with biometric data, although a manifesto commitment, and in the recent Queen’s speech proposed for the new parliament, look likely to encounter severe pressure from backbenchers in their own party. ID cards are of course part of a putative response to the concern with terrorism, which travels far beyond the borders of any one country.

If these issues are of global concern they are played out in quite specific ways in different locations. In Australia, for example, these same discussions take place against the overwhelming backdrop of a geography which sees a relatively small enclave of essentially European derived culture living on an island with a desert heart, bounded by an immense and indefensible coastline and non-European neighbours. In more populous and more powerful nations, the implications of the U.S. Patriot Act, and the debate over its renewal, as well as the growing pressure to limit immigration into the U.S., together with the prohibition against the wearing of the Muslim headscarf in state schools in France and the debate over the capacity of the Netherlands to accommodate a Muslim population, exacerbated by the murder of Theo van Gogh, raise numerous concerns in the present political climate. The rhetoric of the Bush administration and the neo-conservative project more generally, especially around the concern with the exceptional, cry out for critical analysis. Foucault’s work on the ‘dangerous individual’ and the practices that follow such conceptual divisions would be profitable avenues of exploration. Indeed, Foucault’s own work on terrorism, especially around the case of the Baader-Meinhof gang (officially the Red Army Faction) and the extradition from France of their lawyer Klaus Croissant, seems to us to be under-analysed and ready for reassessment. Similarly Foucault’s much criticised views on Iran, although more widely analysed and discussed, also merit continued discussion within a contemporary context. One of the benefits of Foucault’s work is its capacity to allow for a refined on-the-ground analysis of the way in which the most global of issues manifest themselves in specific contexts – an analysis which then provides room for reflection and change at practical and local levels.

We therefore invite work that relates Foucault to such and other issues. This work can obviously take the form of full articles, which will be peer-reviewed in the usual way, or perhaps shorter editorial/commentary items on issues of contemporary concern. The latter would be reviewed by the editors.

The two senses intended and implied in the title of *Foucault Studies* – studies of Foucault and Foucauldian studies - that is inspired and provoked by Foucault – mean that the journal is open to a range of submissions. We actively encourage such work, not least because it seems to us that in the current climate, informed, intellectual and critical commentaries would be valuable additions to the public arena. We look forward to seeing your work.