

ARTICLE

The Unrequited Love of Power: Biopolitical Investment and the Refusal of Care.

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Between *Zoe* and *Bios*: Men and Citizens in the Stratagems of Power

The Foucauldian problematic of biopower and biopolitics is presently attracting increasing interest in political and international relations theory. In the aftermath of influential readings by Agamben and Hardt and Negri, the application of the concept of biopolitics has moved from the more philosophical usage in the industry of 'Foucault-commentary' to the forefront of more explicitly political discourses on both contemporary domestic politics of Western democracies and current global politics of the 'neoliberal Empire'.¹ At the same time, the character of these readings, often criticised as not entirely faithful to Foucault's own argument, entailed that the application of the concept of biopolitics, particularly in political and IR theory, which remains constituted by the foundational concept of sovereignty, has been problematic. Despite evident differences, Agamben's and Hardt and Negri's approaches are both marked by the *conflation* of sovereign and biopolitical

1 See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000); Hardt and Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2004); Nikolas Rose, "The Politics of Life Itself", *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 18, no. 6 (2001): 1-30; Mitchell Dean, "Liberal Government and Authoritarianism", *Economy and Society*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2002): 37-61; Dean, "Powers of Life and Death Beyond Governmentality", *Cultural Values*, vol. 6, no. 1-2 (2002): 119-38; Michael Dillon, "Sovereignty and Governmentality: From the Problematics of the 'New World Order' to the Ethical Problematics of the World Order", *Alternatives*, vol. 20 (1995): 323-68; Dillon, "Cared To Death: The Biopoliticised Time of Your Life", *Foucault Studies*, no. 2 (2005): 37-46; Julian Reid, "War, Liberalism, and Modernity: the Biopolitical Provocations of 'Empire'", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2004): 63-76; Mika Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue on Biopower: Agamben and Foucault", *Foucault Studies*, no. 2 (2005): 5-28.

modalities of power. While Agamben's *Homo Sacer* presents an ontological thesis on the originary indistinction between sovereignty and biopolitics that are linked in the figure of 'bare life' as their product, Hardt and Negri's argument posits a quasi-empirical indistinction of the two forms of power as a result of the 'epochal transformation' of late modernity, whereby the sovereignty of the nation-state gives way to the 'biopolitical sovereignty' of the decentred Empire. This conflation has been replicated in other studies to the effect of increasing conceptual and empirical indistinction between sovereign and biopolitical modes of power relations. Ultimately, biopower becomes little more than a new, fancier term for sovereign power or, alternatively, sovereignty becomes generalised to embrace additional objects of rule. Inevitably, such confusion also produces problems when one attempts to theorise resistance to contemporary biopolitical government, which remains conceived in traditional and decidedly un-Foucauldian transcendent terms of emancipation. The objective of this article is to reassert the irreducible difference between sovereign and biopolitical forms of power, problematise their synthesis as a 'demonic' contradiction of Western modernity and outline the ways in which biopolitics may be, and historically has been, resisted by those subjected to it.

Let us begin with specifying this subjection in terms of the two notions of life and the two correlate forms of subjectivity that correspond to sovereign and biopolitical power. In his argument for the indistinction between sovereignty and biopolitics Agamben recalls (only in order to dismantle) Aristotle's distinction between *bios* (political or social life) and *zoe* (physical life of man-as-species). To this dualism correspond two forms of subjectivity, respectively *citizen* and *man*. Foucault's famous distinction between sovereign and governmental power recalls this duality of the subject in the two 'games' of power relations: the city-citizen game of the Greek polis, which (through a detour into the imperial Rome) was foundational for the Western tradition of sovereignty and the Judeo-Christian 'shepherd-flock game', from which there descends the other, less articulate tradition of Western pastoral power, based on Christian love (*agape*) and care of the living. In contrast to the paradigm of sovereign power, the shepherd's power is exercised not over the land, but the flock; i.e. its prime object is the population, not territory. Secondly, in contrast to the city-citizen game, characterised by government of law, which presupposes a community with a life of its own that the law restricts and regulates, the notion of the flock indicates a constitutive function of government: the flock does not exist without the activity of the shepherd. Thirdly, the shepherd-flock game has no place for the question of legitimacy, since the shepherd is a superior type of being without a need for consent or approval of his activity by the object he brings into being. Fourthly, while the city-citizen game is totalising and unifying with respect to the governed, the shepherd's activity caters to the individual needs of the members of the flock.

Finally, in contrast to the political power in the *polis*, which was bestowed as an honour or a privilege, the power of the shepherd is posited as a duty.²

In a simplified contrast, the subject as a citizen is conceived as, first and foremost, a political being, part of a political unity, and his existence depends entirely on the nature of that unity. Thus, in a paradigmatic structure of absolute monarchy the subject's existence is exhausted in his capacity to be killed by the sovereign, whose power consists precisely in the right of decision of making die or letting live. In a democratised version of sovereignty as *popular* sovereignty, the political existence of the citizen is endowed with a greater density, which consists in his participation in the *bios* of the community as a free subject of (self-)government. At the same time, even in democratic regimes of sovereignty (or perhaps particularly there), the subject remains present as a part of a total unity of the 'people' (community, civil society) and present as *identical* to other citizens, an assumption that is essential to sustaining the ideal of democratic equality.³ The singularity of the subject as an individual is entirely external to the discourse of the 'city-citizen game'. This game is rather constituted by a division between the political existence of the subject as a participant in the 'good life' of the community and his 'biological existence' as part of the human species, which is of no concern to this community. In other words, the immanence of the life of the *population* is contrasted with the transcendent unity of the *people* as a collective sovereign. The entire problematic of division and distinction, central to the political thought of Western modernity, emerges within the context of the city-citizen game: the public vs. the private, state vs. society, the political vs. the social, etc.⁴

In contrast, the subject as a member of a flock is from the outset endowed with a synthetic notion of life, which embraces all aspects of human existence.⁵ As Mika Ojakangas has argued in an incisive critique of

2 See Michel Foucault, "Politics and Reason", in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings: 1977–1984* (London: Routledge, 1988), 60-63. See also Barry Hindess, "Liberalism, Socialism and Democracy", in Andrew Barry et al, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 117-19.

3 Cf. Carl Schmitt *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985); Chantal Mouffe, ed., *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 1999); Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

4 For the analysis of this problematic of division in the Foucauldian tradition see Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in the Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999); Graham Burchell, "Peculiar Interests: Civil Society and Governing 'the System of Natural Liberty'" in Graham Burchell et al, eds, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991): 119-50; Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self' in Andrew Barry et al, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government* (London: UCL Press, 1996): 19-36.

5 See Dillon, "Cared to Death", and more generally Foucault, *The Order of Things: An*

Agamben's thesis on the indistinction of sovereignty and biopolitics, within the regime that Foucault termed 'pastoral power' *bios* and *zoe* do enter a zone of indistinction, yet not in Agamben's sense of *reduction* of *bios* to the austerity of *zoe* (a bare life of the subject at the mercy of the sovereign), but rather in the sense of the embrace by the *bios* of the *plenitude* of *zoe*.⁶ This entails that unlike the 'city-citizen game', which is inherently preoccupied with the idea of *limits* (to the power of the sovereign, to the freedom of the subject, to the domain of legitimate governmental intervention, etc.), the shepherd-flock game is *limitless* by definition, if only because, since life is everywhere, its politics must necessarily embrace everything.⁷

And yet, this limitlessness is different from the absolute character of sovereign power, from which Agamben derives the ontological indistinction between sovereignty and biopolitics as a form of 'inclusive exclusion' of *zoe* from *bios*. Aside from the right of killing, sovereign power largely does not *care* about its subjects and it is this absence of care that differentiates it from the biopolitical tradition of the shepherd-flock game, whose paradigm of intervention is indeed not decapitation but the loving embrace. Biopower takes as its object the entire domain of human existence, no longer making any distinction between the political and the physical, the public and the private, the collective and the individual. "Biopower aims for the destruction of hierarchies and separations, be they hierarchies or separations between biological life and contemplative life or those between bare life and the life of the mind."⁸ We may therefore oppose *sovereign subjection* (the power of absolute exclusion, deprivation or negation) to *biopolitical investment* as the power of mobilising, fostering and, ultimately, creating life. The total or absolute nature of biopower has nothing to do with transcendence (not even a 'democratic' transcendence of popular sovereignty), but on the contrary owes itself to the purely immanentist perception of life; biopower is in a strict sense a power *over* all life *for the sake of* all life.

Moreover, unlike the sovereign regime of power, which logically must seek to exclude its subjects from the domain of power, viewed as transcendent in relation to human existence, "the modern biopolitical order does not exclude anything, not even in form of 'inclusive exclusion'".⁹ Ojakangas sums up this difference in terms of a distinction between form and content. While sovereign power operates with the notion of a 'pure law' *without content*,

Archaeology of the Human Sciences (London: Routledge, 1970).

6 See Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue".

7 See Francois Ewald, "A Power Without an Exterior", in T.J. Armstrong, ed., *Michel Foucault: Philosopher* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992): 169-75; Sergei Prozorov, "Three Theses on 'Governance' and the Political", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2004): 267-93.

8 Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue", 13.

9 Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue", 14.

exhausted by the form of the sovereign decision, whose validity does not depend on its substance, biopower operates with a norm *without form* of the law, a command reduced to pure content that is derived from the substance of synthetic life: “Power in biopolitical societies is not political power at all, but purely administrative power – power of the experts and interpreters of life.”¹⁰ This reconfiguration entails the dissolution of the dualistic structure of power relations (the transcendent sovereign / the immanent life of the subjects), and, more importantly for the present discussion, of any meaningful vision of democratic equality. The subjects of biopolitics are only equal to the extent of being members of the flock, subject to the power of *agape*, which nonetheless caters for their individual needs and ultimately constitutes them *as individuals* in a differential distribution of their capacities as living beings. Moreover, all the members of the flock are *equally unequal* in relation to the power of ‘interpreters of life’, who must logically be superior to the members of the flock by virtue of their knowledge of the processes of life that they are to secure.

Thus, the regimes of sovereignty and biopower are entirely distinct in their paradigmatic structure, which of course has never prevented their admixture in actual practices of the modern state, which Foucault has famously labelled a ‘demonic project’.¹¹ On the ontological level, what is demonic about this project is its uncanny coupling of absolutely incommensurable elements: the negative and the positive, the transcendent and the immanent, scarcity and plenitude, etc.¹² On the ontic level, the demonic nature of the modern state is owing to the confluence of the murderous power of the sovereign’s sword and the productive, vitalist power of biopolitics. The modern state is a monstrous unison of the executioner and the physician. The diabolic consequences of this confluence are illustrated by the two totalitarian projects of the twentieth century, German Nazism and Soviet Stalinism, which both combined sovereign and biopolitical imperatives in a radicalised manner. In the Foucauldian reading, Nazism is approached as the simultaneous universalisation of both sovereign and biopolitical imperatives on the basis of the primacy of the former. The positive and productive biopolitical imperative of maximising the life of the population

10 Ojakangas, “Impossible Dialogue”, 16.

11 Foucault, “Politics and Reason”, 71. See also Burchell, “Peculiar Interests”; Hindess, “Liberalism, Socialism and Democracy”.

12 While a detailed reading of Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* is beyond the scope of this article, we suggest that Agamben’s thesis on the indistinction between sovereignty and biopolitics is inspired by this ontological paradox, which Agamben proceeds to generalise as *the* paradox of the entire Western political tradition. However, the monstrous fusion of sovereignty and biopolitics is only monstrous because the two elements are paradigmatically incommensurable. What appears lacking in Agamben’s argument is a greater appreciation of this incommensurability, which might generate theoretical and political efforts to uncouple this unison.

reinscribed in terms of race became subsumed under the sovereign right of killing, effecting, in Foucault's words, "an absolutely racist state, an absolutely murderous state and an absolutely suicidal state".¹³ In this alignment of sovereignty and biopolitics, the cultivation of the life capacities of the race meant not only the right of the indiscriminate murder of those not belonging to it, but also, since the sovereign power of death was absolutised, the right to "expose its own race to the absolute and universal threat of death",¹⁴ evidenced by Hitler's Demolition Order in Spring 1945, which sought to destroy the living conditions of the German people.

The rationality of Soviet Stalinism features a diametrically opposite form of combining sovereignty and biopower, whereby it is the sovereign right of killing that is subsumed under biopolitical imperatives of managing and optimising social life, with the effect that it is the sovereign decision that establishes whose life government must foster and support. In Foucault's argument, the logic of sovereignty enters socialist biopolitics through the theme of class struggle, when there arises the question of the confrontation of the newly established socialist state with the class enemy.¹⁵ In this constellation, the class enemy becomes more than a political opponent and acquires the status of a biological danger to the life of the society, which requires no longer his merely political defeat but rather, in Stalin's formula, his 'liquidation as a class'. While the Nazi regime made the status of a citizen in the *bios* conditioned by the attributes of his *zoe*, i.e., the belonging to the privileged race or the possession of certain physiological traits, the Soviet regime made one's status as a (wo)man conditioned by the political virtues of citizenship, relegating the 'dubious classes' to the status of inferior beings, whose life it was not the state's task to take care of.

Thus, while the Nazi regime primarily exercised violence against the external enemy in interstate wars on behalf of the superior race, the Soviet order could paradoxically maintain the outward appearance of a pacific project, while domestically undertaking what amounted to a permanent civil war. In both cases, we observe the macabre effects of the conflation of power of death and power over life, which even in less extreme cases, for example in Western liberal democracies, is characterised by an uncanny paradox, whereby the 'experts of life' take upon themselves the right of deprivation of life and, conversely, the sovereign, whose historical metonymic symbol was the sword, is entrusted with a thoroughly alien function of the care of the living. On the level of the subject, the unity of man and citizen in the governmentality of the modern state similarly entails problematic

13 Michel Foucault, *'Society Must be Defended': Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), 260.

14 Foucault, *'Society Must be Defended'*, 260

15 Foucault, *'Society Must be Defended'*, 262.

implications: in the condition of both the politicisation of the biological and the biologisation of the political the subject's *entire* existence becomes amenable to governmental interventions that operate in the zone of indistinction between *bios* and *zoe*.

Resisting Biopolitical Investment: Radical Autonomy and the Refusal of Care

This brings us to the normative question of whether one of these two forms of power is less violent and hence more preferable than the other so that we may avoid the perils of the synthesis of sovereign and biopolitical power by opting for a predominance of one form of power over the other. It would of course be facile to infer the inherent benevolence of biopower from its paradigmatic structure of 'power-as-care': "Biopower is love and care only to the same extent that the law [...] is violence, namely by its origin."¹⁶ One should not oppose biopower to violence as such but only to the violence of the law, and ultimately, to the violence of politics, which is unthinkable without the presupposition of difference, conflict and violence. What biopower effects in its displacement of the city-citizen game is the de-activation of the transcendent violence of the law in favour of the immanent power of the norm that no longer merely threatens life, deducts from its forces and constrains its energies but rather incites and supports life, maximises its potential and nurtures its capacities. It is precisely in these operations that biopower *is* violent: at the same time as it disqualifies death from politics, it deploys a myriad of techniques of intervention into human existence that, in Michael Dillon's words, allow the individual to be 'cared to death' by the 'experts of life' who are capable of what no sovereign ever cared for: manipulating the life choices of the individual, intervening into the most mundane individual practices, restructuring the entire period of human existence in terms of a variable distribution of restrictions, sanctions and regimens.¹⁷ If the paradigm of sovereign violence, so illustriously depicted by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*,¹⁸ consists in inflicting unbearable pain on the living being through torture to the point of death, biopolitical violence consists in making life itself unbearable. "Sovereign power may be lethal but biopower is suffocating. Consequently, biopower may be kind but sovereign power allows for freedom."¹⁹ This difference carries important consequences

16 Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue", 20.

17 See Dillon, "Cared to Death".

18 See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977)

19 Ojakangas, "The End of Biopower: A Reply to My Critics", *Foucault Studies*, no. 2 (2005), 53. For the more general discussion of this theme in the context of Carl Schmitt's political ontology see Ojakangas, *A Philosophy of Concrete Life: Carl Schmitt*

for theorising resistance to the biopolitical investment of human existence. While the modalities of resistance to sovereign power, ranging from the retreat into the *zoe* of private life to the rebellion for the purpose of the institution of the new *bios*, are well-known both as historical examples and theoretical artefacts, the question of resistance to biopower is a far more complex question. Thus, our discussion of anti-biopolitical resistance in the remainder of this article is primarily conceptual rather than normative, which also accords with our Foucauldian points of departure. The question is not whether biopower *must* be resisted, which is always decided in concrete situations by concrete subjects, but how it *might* be resisted, given its idiosyncratic *modus operandi*.

What ought to be problematised from the outset is every attempt to resist the subjection of *man* from the perspective of the *citizen*, i.e., to challenge biopolitics from the standpoint of sovereignty. This strategy is arguably at work in the contemporary global discourse of human rights, which ventures to resist domination by extending what are evidently the rights of a citizen to all humanity and in this manner explicating the particular *bios* into the universal *zoe*. However, our preceding discussion permits us to make an undoubtedly controversial claim that the very notion of human rights is meaningless in the biopolitical terrain of late modernity.²⁰ Indeed, it is only citizens who can make recourse to rights as members of a certain political *bios*, while the synthetic life of the 'man' of biopolitical investment is not a right but rather a *duty* of both the individual and the state. The 'human rights' listed in innumerable scriptures of contemporary world politics are, of course, historically nothing other than the *civic* rights of the citizens of Western liberal democracies, which are a result of political struggles in particular settings rather than essential attributes of a human being. In other words, the subjects of Western democracies have gained these rights as citizens rather than as men and these rights belong to the domain of the *bios* rather than *zoe*, even if their function is precisely to delimit the domain of *zoe* from state intervention. The logically necessary form of promoting these rights globally is the establishment of the structure of the 'world state', in which all men are present as citizens.²¹ Anything short of that, for example 'regime change' military operations that seek to establish democratic structures of citizenship

and the Political Thought of Late Modernity (Jyvaskyla: Sophi, 2004); Prozorov, "X/Xs: Toward a General Theory of the Exception", *Alternatives*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2005): 81-112.

20 For a critical discussion of the global discourse of human rights see William Rasch, 'Human Rights as Geopolitics: Carl Schmitt and the Legal Form of American Supremacy', *Cultural Critique*, vol. 54, no. 1. (2003): 121-141.

21 Cf. Alexander Wendt, "Why a World State is Inevitable", *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2003): 491-542. For a detailed critique of Wendt's argument see Prozorov, *Understanding Conflict Between Russia and the EU: The Limits of Integration* (London: Palgrave, forthcoming), chapter 6.

in target societies, only serves to subject these populations to the *sovereignty of another state*, establishing what, irrespective of all emancipatory rhetoric, is a relationship of domination.

Alternatively, even if it were possible in practice, the extension of these rights to all men *qua* men in the absence of the corresponding structures of citizenship would merely entail their subjection to the *biopolitics of another state* without their participation in the democratic sovereignty of this state. As a number of critical studies have indicated,²² the beneficiaries of ‘humanitarian’ interventions of Western powers actually become the objects of the biopolitical practices of discipline and surveillance, containment and confinement that deprive them of human dignity in the name of their final endowment with ‘human rights’. As non-citizens, these human beings figure in the ‘humanitarian’ governmentality solely as the objects of the a priori asymmetrical ‘shepherd-flock’ relationship, in which the very idea of rights is in fact meaningless.

The idea of global promotion of human rights is therefore fraught with contradictions that are unfortunately not merely conceptual. Indeed, the killing in the name of human rights that we observe today in the murderous crusades of rampant ‘anti-terrorism’ and ‘democracy promotion’ is possible precisely because the discourse of human rights insistently seeks to introduce human life into the domain of global politics. Rather than do anything to resist biopolitical investment, the discourse of human rights replicates exactly the monstrous conflation of sovereignty and biopolitics that permits the state to kill in the name of the care of the living.

It therefore appears that the first step in articulating a mode of resistance to this dual structure of power relations is to dissociate sovereignty and biopolitics, citizen and man. Man does not have rights, only citizens do. Man, on the other hand, possesses *freedom*, a freedom of a living species that precedes politics and conditions its possibility. One can resist political power not because one has rights (which, as an object of law, are logically always an effect of political power) but precisely because one *does not* have them as a living being, because the being of man precedes politics, citizenship and rights. For all its vitalist overtones, this argument is not an essentialist regression, but rather, in full accordance with Foucault’s notion of tactical polyvalence of discourses, a deployment of the synthetic notion of life that is the ontological foundation of immanentist biopolitics in resistance to the

22 See e.g. Jenny Edkins, “Sovereign Power, Zones of Indistinction and the Camp”, *Alternatives*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2000): 3-26; Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, eds., *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (London: Zed, 2001); Raymond L. Bryant, “Non-Governmental Organisations and Governmentality: ‘Consuming Biodiversity’ and Indigenous People in the Philippines”, *Political Studies*, vol. 50 (2002): 268-93; Morgan Brigg, “Empowering NGOs: The Microcredit Movement Through Foucault’s Notion of Dispositif”, *Alternatives*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2001): 233-59.

latter, or, more precisely, as a means to *restore transcendence into biopolitical immanence*. If the transcendent aspect of sovereign power is contained in the figure of the sovereign exterior to the immanence of the life of its subjects, a sovereign who kills but does not care, the transcendent moment of immanentist biopolitics may well be embodied by the figure of a living being who does not care so much for being cared for by power, a being that rebels against being 'cared to death' and would rather die (or kill) than live *like that*.²³

As both Foucault and Agamben argue, one gains nothing by resisting biopower on the terrain of sovereignty with its conceptual armour of laws and rights.²⁴ However, it is possible to resist biopower on its own terrain by asserting the 'power of life' against the 'power over life' that is ultimately life-negating in the Nietzschean sense.

Life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object. [...] When power becomes biopower, resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be contained within the paths of a particular diagram. Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism, in which Foucault's thought culminates? Is not life the capacity to resist force? [...] There is no telling what man might achieve 'as a living being', as a set of forces that resist.²⁵

If resistance to sovereignty, which in all its versions is essentially a relationship of command, consists in *disobedience* and *revolt* either for the purposes of establishing a new form of sovereignty or refusing sovereignty as such in a variably conceived ideal of anarchism, resistance to biopower must entail the *refusal of care*, an attitude of indifference no longer to the threat of power, but to its loving embrace. The well-known lesson of Foucault's critique of the 'repressive hypothesis' is that one should not *hate* power, i.e., one should not reduce power to a mere negation or restriction and conjure a chimerical bright future of human self-fulfilment in the absence of power. In our view, a more intricate lesson to be learnt from Foucault's conception of power relations is that one should not *love* power either, neither in the sense of being obsessed with seizing and possessing it nor in the sense of

23 Cf. Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression" in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 32-33. See also Prozorov, *Political Pedagogy of Technical Assistance: A Study in Historical Ontology of Russian Postcommunism* (Tampere: Studia Politica Tamperensis, 2004), chapter 5 for the more detailed discussion of this theme.

24 See Foucault, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 91-99; Foucault, "Politics and Reason"; Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 181-182.

25 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 92-93.

reciprocating its *agape* in the utopia of a 'better' biopolitics. Instead, a Foucauldian strategy of resistance is enabled by an attitude of indifference with regard to power, a refusal to submit to the temptations of possessing it or being cared for by it.

With a number of serious reservations, the strategy of refusal of care is implicit in Hardt and Negri's discourse on the 'democracy of the multitude', which descends from the *autonomia* tradition in Italian Marxism.²⁶ However, in contrast to our reading above, Hardt and Negri do not make a clear distinction between sovereign and biopolitical forms of power, choosing instead to speak of the sovereignty of biopower as transcendent in relation to the biopolitical production of the multitude: "Biopower stands above society, transcendent, as a sovereign authority, and imposes its order."²⁷ From this perspective, which is entirely heterogeneous to Foucault's original conception of biopower, it is possible to articulate the resistance of the multitude in rather traditional, 'liberationist' terms that are not distinct from, e.g., Habermas's affirmation of the emancipatory potential of communicative action. In such an account, constituted by the grand dichotomy of the biopolitics of *production* and the biopower of *domination*, resistance to biopower is cast in the conventional mode of resisting transcendent sovereign power by affirming the 'self-government' of the immanent social forces. As Nicholas Thoburn notes in his incisive criticism of this thesis, for Hardt and Negri biopolitical production is always already a site of autonomy and all that is required for the liberation of the multitude is the assault on the transcendent sovereignty of the Empire.²⁸ As the very idea of sovereignty is presently theorised into decline in almost all quarters of political and IR theory, we may understand Hardt and Negri's quaint optimism regarding the 'democratic project of the multitude' that is so alien to the low spirits on the contemporary Left: if sovereignty is the primary obstacle to this project, there is apparently not much left to be done to achieve it.²⁹ In an ironic confirmation of Foucault's criticism of the 'repressive hypothesis' in mainstream political theory, which remains transfixed on the 'head of the king', Hardt and Negri mount an attack on the form of power, which presently appears to expire by itself and as a result of a reorientation of its own rationalities.³⁰

26 See Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003) for a detailed interpretation of Hardt and Negri's work in the context of Italian Marxist thought.

27 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 94.

28 See Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, chapter 5.

29 See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 411-413; Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 341-358. Cf. Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 144-145.

30 See Foucault, *History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 10, 83-91.

Yet, to remain faithful to the authors' own immanentist ontology of Deleuzian Spinozism, the societal 'plane of immanence' must be perceived as thoroughly suffused by biopower, to the effect that it is impossible to dissociate biopower from biopolitical production, since the latter is the effect of the investment of the former. In this understanding, the problem is not the transcendence or exteriority of power, but, on the contrary, its interiority to the social realm of the multitude. Thus, the vision for the democracy of the multitude, proposed in the following statement by Hardt and Negri, begins to appear problematic:

The autonomy of the multitude and its capacities for economic, political and social self-organisation take away any role for sovereignty. Not only is sovereignty no longer the exclusive terrain of the political, the multitude banishes sovereignty from politics. When the multitude is finally able to rule itself, democracy becomes possible.³¹

Ironically, this vision of a purely immanent self-organising and self-governing community of men may be read as a *manifesto* of biopower rather than an articulation of resistance to it. Hardt and Negri's somewhat perverse fascination with the biopolitical productivity of the Empire leads them to an unconditional valorisation of the plenitude of biopoliticised existence as an emerging force of freedom.³² The vision of the democracy of the multitude in terms of the liberation of the immanence of biopolitical production from the supplementary excess of sovereign transcendence appears to be nothing other than a demand for the absolute *closure* of the space of biopolitical investment, a call for a 'pure Empire' rather than an Empire ridden with demonic contradictions between biopolitics and sovereignty.

Thus, if the assumption of interiority of biopolitics to the life of the multitude is taken seriously, the pathway of resistance must consist in the gesture opposite to that of Hardt and Negri, i.e., the *relegation of power to a position of pure exteriority*, i.e., the refusal of biopolitics through what ironically appears to be a certain reaffirmation of sovereignty. In other words, the objective of resistance is not freedom *from* the transcendent apparatus of

31 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 340. Emphasis added.

32 Within the context of communist thought, this valorisation of production corresponds to the Marxist discourse of 'workers' self-management', which, as the *autonomia* trend in Italian Marxism asserted during the 1970s, comes down to enhancing the efficiency of the working class within the *capitalist* terrain. See Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 108-112. By the same token, the valorisation of biopolitical production on the global level of the Empire appears to point to a certain self-harnessing of the multitude to the imperial mechanisms of biopolitical regulation, a self-disciplining action of the multitude posing as democratic self-government.

power but rather freedom *within* the immanent space of biopolitical production. The target of resistance is thus biopolitical production itself, i.e., the production of *power over life* that maximises the capacities of man as an object of government and simultaneously diminishes the freedom of man in the sense of the *power of life* that precedes the deployment of biopolitics. To assert one's power as a living being against the power, whose paradigm consists in the 'care of the living', is to affirm the radical autonomy of the human being that precedes governmental care and does not require governmental love to sustain its life.³³ The method of anti-biopolitical resistance is to externalise power from human existence and thereby leave its *agape* unrequited.

This is of course not to suggest a thoroughly non-Foucauldian thesis on the possibility of a human society without power relations: what is at stake here is not an eschatology of a final liberation but rather the logic of resistance, which is *itself* necessarily immanent to the plane of biopoliticised existence, but whose *effect* is to purge the rationalities of biopolitical investment from this plane towards a position of exteriority. When resistance to power takes place from the perspective of indifference to its biopolitical productivity, power is reduced to its pure form of transcendent sovereignty, equally indifferent to the life of its subjects. To externalise power from human existence is not to defeat power, let alone seize it; it is rather to *leave it to its own devices*, to 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's' with the proviso that outside the biopolitical terrain there is little rendered unto Caesar other than a pure presence of 'law without content'. The reaffirmation of sovereignty outside the biopolitical terrain restores it as a purely formal ontological condition of all power relations and thus of all politics. We are therefore in agreement with Agamben's ontologisation of sovereignty but not with his conflation of ontological sovereignty with the biopolitical investment of life.³⁴ As an immanent form of power, biopolitics depends on the possibility to endow the transcendent sovereign form with concrete historical content by grafting power onto the immanent processes of the life of the subjects. Biopolitics is thus thinkable as a historically variable 'substantialisation' of sovereignty, which nonetheless remains in a demonic contradiction with it: the greater the immanence of power relations, the more one disavows the transcendent, negative and lethal character of sovereignty. Conversely, the reaffirmation of sovereign transcendence introduces a wholly alien element and thereby ruptures the immanentist rationality of biopolitics.

33 See Prozorov, *Political Pedagogy*, chapter 5 for the detailed presentation of this 'austere ontology of freedom', drawing primarily on Foucault's work. See also Thomas Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom* (London: Sage, 1996); James Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Towards an Ethics for Thought* (Atlantic Highlands: NJ Humanities Press, 1990).

34 See Prozorov, "X/Xs" for a more detailed discussion of this theme.

The externalisation of power via its reduction to sovereignty is therefore equivalent to the deprivation of power of all its positive substance.

It is here that an anti-biopolitical argument breaks with the discourse of Hardt and Negri because of the latter's remaining commitment to the socialist ideal. In fact, this commitment is strongly expressed in the biopolitical lexicon of *agape*: "Love serves as the basis for our political projects in common and the construction of a new society. Without this love, we are nothing."³⁵ Evidently, Hardt and Negri's focus on the exploitative nature of the Empire of global capital and its recourse to war as a means of self-reproduction entails their oblivion of the extent to which the modern biopolitical tradition is *already* based on love. Once again, the excessive focus on the violent and transcendent nature of sovereignty obscures the actual operation of biopower, which in fact is constituted on the basis of a diametrically opposite paradigm. During the 1970s, Foucault already cautiously linked biopolitics with the socialist ideal, arguing that there was little in the practices of 'really existing socialism' that contradicted the 'demonic project' of Western modernity which merged sovereign and biopolitical imperatives.³⁶ In the contemporary discussion, Ojakangas has insightfully argued that the paradigmatic subject of biopolitics is not, *pace* Agamben, the *homo sacer* of the concentration camp but rather the Swedish middle-class social democrat, the object of universal care.³⁷

What is at stake is not merely an uncanny association between the socialist ideal and its darker biopolitical underside: isn't the very ideal of socialism paradigmatically biopolitical in its disavowal of all exterior and transcendent power and the utopia of a society that governs itself for the purpose of care of life, the maximisation of human forces, the fulfilment of man's needs, the fostering of man's potential? As long as government is both expected to and actively seeks to promote the well-being of the population (which is manifestly a category denoting the multiplicity of men rather than citizens), we remain in the biopolitical terrain. Moreover, the force of biopolitical investment is owing precisely to its effectiveness as a 'caring power', hence the indissociability of social subjection and social welfare.

The assertion of the radical autonomy of man in resistance to biopower must thus necessarily traverse the stage of the 'refusal of care'. A mere critique of social policy as an instrument of subjection is insufficient here, since what is at stake is not the perversion of the ideal of social welfare but the perverse nature of this ideal itself. It is here that the tradition of *autonomia*, with its concept of the 'refusal of work' and the deconstruction of one's very subjectivity as a 'worker', re-enters the picture as a creative attempt to

35 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 352.

36 See Foucault, 'Society Must be Defended', 261-263.

37 Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue", 27.

envison the politics of the radical Left that is freed from all biopolitical imperatives.³⁸ Similarly, by refusing biopolitical care, one denies oneself as a productive force in the biopolitical terrain and thereby diminishes (rather than enhances, as in Hardt and Negri's utopia) the plenitude of biopolitical production. Ironically, Hardt and Negri frequently describe their strategy of resistance in similar terms, e.g., when they define resistance in terms of "the emptying out of the enemy's power".³⁹ At the same time, this fortunate formulation runs entirely contrary to the authors' valorisation of biopolitics against sovereign transcendence, since such a goal can only be achieved by emptying out the biopolitical *content* of power, leaving it in its pure form of sovereignty, and not, as the authors claim, by eliminating the sovereign excess from the immanent plenitude of biopolitical production. Sovereignty cannot be emptied out since it is always already devoid of all positive content. Any properly anti-biopolitical resistance must therefore abandon all valorisation of production and productivity.

What is at stake in this strategy of *counterproductivity* is not the emancipation from exterior power but rather the relegation of power itself to a position of exteriority with regard to human existence, i.e., the *reduction of all power to sovereignty*, a negative, restrictive and subtracting power with only death as its ultimate instrument. By ceasing to be mere living material for biopolitical production, the 'power of life' leaves governmental power with nothing more than negativity on its side and thereby 'empties it out'.

The Impotence of Production and the End of Soviet Biopolitics

Although this understanding of resistance to biopolitical investment may be perceived as philosophically abstruse, it has a historical precedent in the process of the demise of the Soviet system, which, as we have argued above, was characterised by the subsumption of sovereignty under the overall biopolitical project of the socialist state. The peaceful and pitiful demise of the Soviet order is owing to the fact that what expired in 1991 was no longer the regime of biopolitical socialism but merely a ritualistic form of Soviet sovereignty, an empty shell that formerly contained the most ambitious biopolitical project in human history ('the creation of the new Soviet man'⁴⁰), a project that was defunct long before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The period of the stagnation of the Soviet order starting from the 1960s

38 Cf. Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 111: 'Politics is hence not a reclamation of work against an 'external' control, but a refusal of work and the very subject of worker'. See more generally, chapter 5.

39 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 69.

40 See Alexander Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 1986) for the detailed account of the 'anthropological project' of the Soviet civilisation.

may be viewed in terms of the *deconstruction of Soviet biopolitics*. The Soviet system of socioeconomic planning became notoriously ineffective as soon as it resolved, successfully if violently, the most elementary problems of social welfare and was faced with the tasks of fulfilling the demands of the 'late-industrial' society, whose basic needs were already satisfied. The very successes of Soviet socialism (forced industrialisation and urbanisation, the introduction of universal education) laid the basis for its subsequent failure, as it could not properly care for a relatively affluent and highly educated society.⁴¹ Moreover, the socioeconomic development of the Soviet Union slowed down in the pacific post-World War II period, when the state could no longer mobilise its subjects as citizens for the self-sacrificial defense of Soviet sovereignty and became fully devoted to the biopolitical task of the construction of a 'communist society'. Ironically, the Soviet system entered a period of decline as soon as it became capable of competing with liberal-democratic capitalism in the biopolitical terrain.

The economic difficulties of the Soviet regime produced a gradual alienation of the society from the system whose own proclamations of the biopolitical *agape* became increasingly vacuous, which in turn contributed to the decline of Soviet productivity. In the absence of any institutional channels of voicing it, the dissatisfaction with socialist welfare generated a plethora of creative forms of *supplementing*, in the Derridean sense, the Soviet biopolitical investment of life. The development of the 'shadow economy' and the 'shadow society' in the Soviet Union may be viewed in our terms of the 'counter-productive' refusal of governmental care and the creation of new forms of societal self-reproduction that by the end of the Soviet regime were quantitatively comparable to the volume of the entire Soviet economy.⁴² The danger of these shadow domains to the existence of the Soviet Union as a biopolitical project is well evidenced by the introduction as early as the Khrushchev period (mistakenly referred to as the Thaw) of death penalty sentences for all private operations with foreign currency (the main instrument of exchange in the 'shadow economy').⁴³ Faced with the blunt

41 See Andrei Fadin, "Modernizatsia cherez Katastrofu?", in *Inoe: Antologiya Novogo Rossijskogo Samosoznania* (Moskva: Argus, 1995): 313-45; Vladimir Mau and Irina Starodubrovskaya, *The Challenge of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) for a more detailed discussion of this theme.

42 For a discussion of the Soviet shadow economy and its role in the process of 'transition' to the market economy in the 1990s see Andrei Schleifer and Daniel Treisman, *Without a Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001); Alena Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Fadin, "Modernizatsia".

43 For a brilliant revisionist interpretation of the Khrushchev period see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley:

indication of its incapacity to care, the state reverted to its powers of killing. This reduction of biopower to sovereignty subsequently became the characteristic response of the Soviet government to socioeconomic problems: unwilling to recognise the existence in the socialist state of such ‘vices of capitalism’ as private trade, counterculture, prostitution or drug abuse, the government banished these phenomena from the public discourse, forfeiting all efforts at managing these problems with the participation of the society and resigned itself to the excessively harsh prosecution of the infinitesimal share of the acts it resented. This is of course a paradigmatic mode of sovereign punishment with a primarily *exemplary* rather than *corrective* function, which displays the revenge of the sovereign for the violation of his law rather than any desire to transform social life.⁴⁴

The proliferation of forms of life in the shadow society that were dramatically at odds with the state’s biopolitical imperatives, from the invisible ‘sexual revolution’ to the rise of consumerist lifestyles, evidently did little to challenge the sovereignty of the Soviet state – after all, the government could, and frequently did, respond to these activities with brute force, although the ineffectiveness of such reprisals was apparent to everyone. Nor was Soviet sovereignty ever the target of these forms of resistance. Aside from narrow circles of political dissidents, whose significance in bringing about the end of the Soviet order should not be overestimated, the Soviet ‘shadow society’ lacked any pronounced ideological orientation and, as post-Soviet developments demonstrate, extended its disenchanting scepticism to the entire spectrum of political ideologies.⁴⁵ Instead, these developments amounted to a fundamental biopolitical challenge to the state. The societal refusal of the Soviet biopolitical investment produced a universal sense of contempt for everything official, formal or public, and a general inversion of values, whereby the society automatically conferred value on anything exterior to the positivity of the Soviet order. Among the ‘counterproductive’ practices in the

University of California Press, 1999). See also Erik Kulavig, *Dissent in the Years of Khrushchev: Nine Stories about Disobedient Russians* (London: Palgrave, 2003) for a microsociological study of practices of dissent in the Soviet ‘shadow society’ during this period.

44 Cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 46-55; James Miller, “Carnivals of Atrocity: Foucault, Nietzsche, Cruelty”, *Political Theory*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1990): 470-91.

45 See Marc Garcelon, “The Shadow of the Leviathan: Public and Private in Communist and Post-Communist Society”, in Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 321-323; Oleg Kharkhordin, ‘Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia’, in Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 355-360; Lev Gudkov, ‘Russia: A Society in Transition?’ *Telos*, no. 120 (2001), 18-19; Kulavig, *Dissent in the Years of Khrushchev*.

Soviet society we may recall the lax and malingering attitude to work, absenteeism and sabotage, widespread practice of theft of state property by employees, the use of public offices for private gain at all levels of administration, and the increasingly ritualistic participation of the population in all governmentally designed activities, from military training exercises for youth to 'social campaigns' for world peace.⁴⁶ While obediently performing Soviet rituals as *citizens*, Soviet (*wo*)men gleefully participated in what amounted to a surreptitious destruction of the biopolitical apparatus: any 'informal' form of life, from ethnic mafias to underground rock culture, impaired the biopolitics of the 'new Soviet man' by actualising the possibilities of 'being otherwise' and testifying to the possibilities of sustaining life in the absence of, or even in confrontation with, the governmental care.⁴⁷ We ought to emphasise that what was at stake in these practices of 'counter-production' was not at all a demand for a different, better, more just or effective biopolitics (a demand for reform that takes place within the biopolitical terrain), but rather, by virtue of the creativity of being otherwise outside the governmental embrace, a refusal of biopolitical care as such, a gesture of *pure negation* of anything like a 'biopolitical legitimacy', which every genuine resistance must traverse in order not to be incorporated into the order of power.⁴⁸

Pace the interpretations which argue that this cynical dissimulation was in fact helpful to the maintenance of the Soviet regime⁴⁹, itself thoroughly permeated by cynicism, we must venture to say that the flaw of these

46 The work of Alexander Zinoviev remains the best account of these 'shadow' social practices in the late-Soviet period. See e.g., Zinoviev, *The Yawning Heights* (London: Bodley Head, 1979) and *The Radiant Future* (London: Bodley Head, 1981). See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times – Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) for a brilliant study of the descent of the 'shadow society' in the Stalinist period.

47 For a more detailed reading of the Soviet 'shadow society' from a Foucauldian perspective see Prozorov, *Political Pedagogy*, chapter 4.

48 From this perspective, it becomes impossible to argue that resistance to Soviet socialism merely sought to substitute for it a different, e.g., a 'Western' or a 'liberal' biopolitics. Like every revolutionary practice, this resistance traversed a moment of what Foucault in 'A Preface to Transgression' terms 'non-positive affirmation', an affirmation not of any alternative to the system but of the sheer possibility of difference beyond its reach. As the universal ideological scepticism in the postcommunist period demonstrates, anticommunist resistance was *not* about the affirmation of 'democracy', let alone liberalism. If anything at all was affirmed in it, it was the very possibility of shadow 'forms-of-life', modes of being otherwise in relation to power. For a similar reading of the Russian anticommunist revolution see Artemiy Magun, "Opyt i Ponyatie Revolutsii", *Novoje Literaturnoje Obozrenie*, vol. 64 (2003).

49 See particularly Slavoj Žižek, "Attempts to Escape the Logic of Capitalism", *London Review of Books*, vol. 21, no. 21 (1999); Gudkov, *Russia: A Society in Transition?*. Cf. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual*.

accounts consists in the analytical privilege granted to sovereignty at the expense of biopolitics. Of course, cynical participation in the official rituals of health promotion, international solidarity, adult education and, ultimately, work itself did not challenge the sovereignty of the regime as radically as an open rebellion would. At the same time, a frontal attack on Soviet sovereignty would almost undoubtedly have been defeated by the state apparatus of violence and achieve nothing more than reassert the regime's sovereign power to inflict death. In fact, the one thing that could possibly prolong the life of the Soviet order would be precisely an open ideological assault on it, which would permit the reactivation of the themes of class struggle and civil war and efface the biopolitical failures of the regime in the government of men through their mobilisation as citizens.

In contrast, the refusal of the government's biopolitical care through the simulation or perversion of its official practices, coupled with a simultaneous creative development of 'informal' forms of life, gradually ebbed away at the biopolitical foundations of the Soviet order, ultimately leaving it with little more than a *pure form* of sovereignty devoid of any content. While these developments have been conventionally described in negative terms of 'internal emigration', the societal *exit* from the totalitarian public space, we must venture an alternative interpretation. Instead of speaking of society emigrating, we might rather speak of the biopolitical authority of the government being displaced and ultimately *expunged* from the life of its subjects, the richness of forms of life in the shadow society contrasting with the utter impoverishment of 'public life' in the Soviet Union, reduced to a parody of official ideological maxims. The late-Soviet period can no longer be described in the Foucauldian terms of the biopolitical reign of discipline and normalisation, but rather recalls Agamben's austere description of sovereign power, in which the law remains 'in force without significance',⁵⁰ i.e., as a meaningless menace deprived of all productivity.

By the beginning of the Perestroika in the 1980s, all the biopolitical credentials of the socialist order were in a state of manifest disrepute. The universal provision of free health care and education by the state, historically championed as the essential achievement of socialism, was in fact necessarily supplemented by an elaborate quasi-market of bribes and favours.⁵¹ The official image of the 'new Soviet man', championing socialist patriotism and international solidarity and lacking any of the vices of capitalism, coexisted with the reality of the Soviet individual as a dissimulating cynic, characterised by a profound contempt for 'all things Soviet' and reveling, in a hyperbolic form, in precisely the 'bourgeois lifestyle' that the Soviet order tried to

50 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 51.

51 See Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours*; Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*.

eradicate.⁵² The stagnation and the subsequent crisis of the Soviet economy was made more bearable for the population by the existence of a 'shadow economy', considerably more attuned to the public demand. By the middle of the 1980s, the Soviet regime exercised its sovereignty over the population, whose evasion of the governmental care entailed that the 'form-of-life' governed by it was *not at all socialist*. Even prior to Gorbachev's political and socioeconomic reforms, the Soviet regime was already no longer biopolitical, but reduced to pure sovereignty. The failure of Gorbachev's reforms is also understandable in the context of this reduction: at the moment of this final attempt of the Soviet regime to transform society, it no longer possessed any biopolitical instruments for this project but could only rely on the formal structure of sovereignty. Once it became clear that under Gorbachev the government did not intend to resort to its sovereign power to inflict death, its sovereignty could easily be dismantled by the 'democratic opposition'. Indeed, after the withering away of the Soviet biopolitical project, all it took to defeat the Soviet regime was a simple and necessarily superficial ideological reversal, a replacement of a doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist socialism by an equally doctrinaire version of economy-centric liberalism, within which biopolitical imperatives were in fact explicitly relegated to the secondary position. The new regime, arising on the ruins of the state whose clumsy attempts at care of the living eventually led to its own demise, made a virtue of necessity and, studiously citing the maxims of neoclassical economics, *made a point of not caring*.

We must therefore locate the conditions of possibility of the demise of the Soviet Union in the slow decline of the Soviet biopolitical project of the government of men (and the construction of the 'new man'), whereby the *zoe* of the Soviet population became thoroughly dissociated from the ritualised *bios* of Soviet citizens. After this dissociation, Soviet individuals were paradoxically present in the positivity of the Soviet order only as citizens rather than as men, and since the domain of citizenship was reduced to ritualised autocracy, it became difficult to think of a reason why anyone at all would entertain any attachment to this regime. The unity of care and fear that characterised the Soviet sovereign biopolitics was uncoupled through the societal refusal of care and, as soon as the governmental power to instill fear was drastically diminished, the fate of the system was sealed.

52 For the detailed genealogy of postcommunist individualism, which locates its conditions of possibility in the late-Soviet practices of dissimulation, see Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual*.

Neoliberal Empire and the Politics of Refusal: Fulfilling the Will to Power

Despite the singular nature of the Soviet experiment, the lessons from the demise of Soviet socialism may well be timely for articulating resistance to the contemporary biopolitical sovereignty of global (neo)liberalism that Hardt and Negri term the Empire. Despite the surface ideological divergence between international communism and contemporary global liberal-democratic capitalism, we may observe certain uncanny similarities between the two regimes with regard to their biopolitical productivity. It appears evident that the developmental and modernising promise of the liberal globalisation has ultimately come down to the simultaneous subjection of the target populations to the sovereignty of Western powers and the biopolitics of neoliberal governance, which paradoxically practices care through the disciplinary practices of the formation of the self-reliant, enterprising subject. Within Western societies, the sovereign biopolitics of the Empire has similarly entailed the dismantlement of the structures of the welfare state and the installation of quasi-market regimes in social policy.⁵³

Yet, rather than pointing to the governmental exit from the biopolitical domain, these developments arguably exemplify the hegemonic deployment of a particular and indeed paradoxical mode of biopolitics, which reduces the potentiality of forms of life to the universalisation of the prescriptive ideal of 'natural liberty', allegedly present in the market domain.⁵⁴ Thus, it would be facile to view neoliberal globalisation in negative terms as a mere 'downscaling' of state powers. As contemporary studies of neoliberal governmentality indicate, neoliberal biopolitics of quasi-marketisation is actually marked by an *augmentation* of governmental powers through the establishment of liaisons between state instruments of governance and private regulatory mechanisms.⁵⁵ Moreover, this biopolitical expansion finds its correlate in the unprecedented increase of state powers in the domain of security, both internal and external. Hardt and Negri's suggestion that the

53 See Rose, "The Crisis of 'the Social': Beyond the Social Question", in Sakari Hänninen, ed., *Displacement of Social Policies* (University of Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 1998): 54-87; Hindess, "The Liberal Government of Unfreedom", *Alternatives*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2001): 93-112; Ilpo Helen, "Welfare and its Vicissitudes", *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 43 (2000): 157-63; Dean, "Powers of Life and Death"; Brigg, "Empowering NGO's"; Bryant, "Non-Governmental Organisations and Governmentality"; Prozorov, "Three Theses".

54 For the discussion of the paradoxical character of the liberal political ontology see Prozorov, *Political Pedagogy*, chapter 3; Dean, "Liberal Government and Authoritarianism"; Burchell, "Peculiar Interests".

55 See Dean, "Liberal Government and Authoritarianism"; Hindess, "The Liberal Government of Unfreedom".

global liberal Empire may only sustain itself through permanent war⁵⁶ should therefore be taken seriously, particularly in the light of our preceding discussion of the deleterious effects of peace for the Soviet project. Presently, the neoliberal welfare appears to equal the Soviet one in satisfying ever fewer individuals while neoliberal warfare proves itself to be a frustratingly costly exercise in all senses of the word, which cannot be sustained at the present level without being suicidal for the West itself.

Given these internal contradictions, it appears highly questionable to attempt to breathe life into the system that can only devour it by proposals for 'democratising' or 'socialising' imperial governance that correspond in their paradigmatic structure to the biopolitical Empire but vainly hope to do away only with the repressive 'biopower' that sustains it. Indeed, at the risk of oversimplification, we may reduce Hardt and Negri's project of the multitude to the formula 'biopolitics without sovereignty', which entails that this project belongs squarely to the immanentist metaphysics that in Foucault's argument conditioned the possibility of the rise of biopower. From this perspective, Hardt and Negri may be read not as the *critics*, but rather as the great *metaphysicians* of the age of biopolitical immanence.

The gnawing suspicion that Empire and counter-Empire may ultimately be the same thing may also be approached from a different angle. As we have noted above, any socialist project remains on the biopolitical terrain, insofar as it is committed to the telos of care of men, and remains on the sovereign terrain, insofar as it takes the structural form of the state. The 'anarchist' disposition of the project of the multitude does, in its paradigm, dispense with the principle of sovereignty but does nothing to diminish the power relations involved in the 'shepherd-flock' game of biopolitics. What the project of 'biopolitics without sovereignty' ultimately comes down to is a disconcerting vision of a thoroughly depoliticised immanentist community without any exteriority of either power or resistance. There is no longer a need for either in this society of Nietzsche's 'last men', which has overcome the 'master-slave' relationship by making *everyone* a slave to his own desire for happiness and welfare. The project of 'biopolitics without sovereignty' is therefore best understood not as an alternative to the present-day biopolitical sovereignty of the Empire, but rather as its teleological utopia.

In contrast, the modality of resistance that we have outlined above may be summed up as the inversion of this formula, i.e. 'sovereignty without biopolitics'. By eliding the governmental powers of care and practicing radical autonomy in relation to one's existence one externalises power from the immanent domain of life and thereby reduces power to the negative form of sovereignty. However unsavory the prospect of the exteriority of a self-consciously *careless* power may be, any such reaffirmation of sovereignty

56 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 3-62.

must always bear in mind Foucault's claim that the succession of sovereign forms of power by biopolitical ones was due to the manifest ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the former.⁵⁷ The exteriority of power to human existence posits a stumbling-block to any positive intervention into the life of men. As our brief genealogy of the demise of Soviet socialism demonstrated, in the absence of biopolitical instruments, power is reduced to an empty shell, a container, a limit. However spectacular, the violence of sovereign power is always already a symptom of its impotence.

Thus, the refusal of biopolitical care logically implies the reduction of power to an empty shell of impotent sovereignty, which certainly makes it a problematic prospect. It is hardly a debatable fact that the biopolitical government of the last two centuries has made genuine advances in medical and social care of the population, the provision of education and the establishment of certain guarantees of positive equality. To seek liberation from biopolitics in a serious sense is indeed to seek liberation from *all that*, at least in the sense of a radical destabilisation of the biopolitical apparatus if not its total destruction. Similarly, our reading of the demise of Soviet biopolitics ends not in a blissful eschatology of the advent of a 'free society' but in the condition that many observers hyperbolically liken to a demographic catastrophe. However, we must also recall that a genuine catastrophe in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union was avoided precisely by virtue of the existence of 'shadow' forms of life, which permitted continual care of oneself and of others. As the Russian novelist Andrei Levkin succinctly put it, "suddenly it became clear that there was no power left in the country, but somehow everyone remained alive".⁵⁸ This expression sums up the essence of anti-biopolitical resistance: we will know that this resistance has been successful when the autonomous forms of life in the society render the existing biopolitical apparatuses redundant, when these apparatuses of power are left to their own devices and when their demise appears to be of little concern or consequence to the lives of the subjects. In other words, anti-biopolitical resistance weakens power to such an extent that, even if it remains in force, its force is entirely without significance.

In his reading of the global Empire, which assumes the retreat of biopolitics in the neoliberal exploitative project, Ojakangas suggests that 'perhaps, this exploitation is the result of the *weakening* of power, of *all* power, at least if we believe Nietzsche who says that it is precisely weakness that

57 See Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 85-106; Foucault, "Governmentality" in Graham Burchell et al, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 95; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 86-87.

58 Andrei Levkin, "Russkaya Razborka", in *Tsygansky Roman* (Moskva: Amfora, 2000), 372. For the discussion of the impact of 'shadow' forms of life in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union see also Fadin, "Modernizatsia"; Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours*; Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*.

produces the harshest forms of violence'.⁵⁹ Since in contrast to Ojakangas we assert that the retreat of biopolitics is not immanent to the rationality of the Empire but rather an effect of resistance to it, the conclusion about the weakening of all forms of power must similarly be reconstructed. If and when it takes place, this weakening would be not an 'objective' historical process but a result of resistance to biopolitics by way of refusal of its care and the consequent reduction of power to the pure form of sovereignty. This reading reverses the traditional understanding, according to which the ideal of sovereignty, as paradigmatically an absolute form of power, legitimises the unlimited expansion of state powers. On the contrary, the absolute and transcendent character of sovereignty only marks it as a limit to every political order, the limit of its immanence and simultaneously the locus of its transcendence.⁶⁰ A power reduced to pure sovereignty is in its own existential status a *zoe* without a *bios*, a power that simply *is* without *being anything*, a presence with no capacity for action, a power that is, strictly speaking, meaningless, because meaning concerns the finality of power and is thus to be found in the positive domain of immanent life. Thus, it is precisely the reduction of power to sovereignty that achieves a *weakening of all power*.

This form of resistance is evidently a radical gamble. After all, if power is productive and productivity is, in turn, an effect of power, the weakening of power must logically entail the decrease of productivity in the broadest sense of the word – a prospect entirely different from Hardt and Negri's valorisation of the plenitude of biopolitical production. Besides, insofar as biopower does indeed care and provide welfare, however dubious or exploitative, and fosters life, however sterile and regulated, its refusal exposes living beings to dangers that they were spared by virtue of the biopolitical embrace. The very idea of securing the processes of life as a telos of politics arises only in the context of biopolitics and has no meaning in the absence of the biopolitical investment. It is all very well to refuse enslavement, domination, exploitation and even work, but to refuse care, and particularly *effective care*, is a different matter altogether that involves concrete costs and losses. Finally, the desire for the weakening of all power marks a departure from most emancipatory projects of humanity which were rather animated by the desire to liberate and mobilise in men and citizens the power necessary for the creation of better worlds. Since power is not alien to human existence, then the weakening of all power ultimately means that it is, in a sense, also *our* power that is diminished.

Paradoxically, the vitalist resistance to the biopolitical investment would arrive at its own limit, were it ever to succeed, insofar as the retreat of biopolitics does not liberate or enhance man's 'power of life' but rather

59 Ojakangas, "The End of Biopower", 52. Emphasis original.

60 See Prozorov, "X/Xs" for the more detailed exposition of this thesis.

weakens all power as such. However, since biopolitical resistance is a permanent and possibly never-ending process of confrontation rather than a momentary emancipatory event, the paradox finds its resolution on a more fundamental level: life as a will to power in all vitalist thought from Nietzsche to Foucault is animated precisely by the passion of this endless confrontation with its biopolitical negation *and exhausts itself in it*. There is therefore no ‘life itself’ that could enjoy liberation after the eschatological moment of the defeat of all power, just as there would be no purpose for such liberation, since the will to power has no meaning outside the context of antagonism. Instead, the life of man as a finite being acquires its power and its freedom from the permanent confrontation with the power that seeks to dispose of it and must logically *expend* its own power in this struggle so that its every victory marks a correlate expenditure and an exhaustion of its powers – only a most lifeless metaphysics could assert that man becomes more powerful in the course of struggle. What is at stake is not reinscribing weakness in terms of power,⁶¹ but rather pointing to the necessary finitude of the power of life, the nature of its exercise as an expenditure of forces, an expenditure that has nothing to do with productivity, so that a certain ‘powerlessness’ is a necessary effect of resistance. The universal weakening of power as a result of the retreat of biopolitics is therefore not a limitation of the human ‘will to power’ but rather its fulfilment.

61 This appears to be an increasingly prominent strategy in continental political philosophy and is best exemplified by the new interpretations of the figure of St. Paul. For two radically different constructions of a ‘Pauline politics’ see Alain Badiou, *St. Paul. The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). It should be clear from our preceding discussion that our approach to anti-biopolitical resistance is distinct from a Pauline a priori reinscription of weakness as a form of power and rather posits the weakening of all power as an effect of its expenditure in the course of resistance, similarly to Georges Bataille’s notion of ‘unproductive expenditure’, at work in Foucault’s understanding of transgression. See e.g., Georges Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure”, in Allan Stoekl, ed., *Visions of Excess* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 116-129; Jacques Derrida, “From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve” in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 251-277; Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression”.