# Michel Foucault and the Ontology of Politics: *E Pluribus Unum?**

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*Summary*

The problem of ontology in the work of Michel Foucault is discussed. First, ontology is defined as the layer of a social theory, encompassing the essential building blocks of the social world presupposed by that social theory. Second, three different ontologies in Foucault's work are identified, which roughly correspond to the chronological phases of his theorizing: the ontology of discourse (1960s), the ontology of power (1970s), and the ontology of the self (1980s). While it is not easy to bring these different ontologies together, an attempt at ontological synthesis is made via the concepts of productivity of power and governmentality. A single "un-ontology" of aleatory power-politics is constructed as a result of that theoretical operation. Finally, some basic guidelines for political theorizing and research are drawn from that ontological world picture attributed to Foucault's theory.

*Keywords:* Foucault, ontology, discourse, power, self, governmentality, political theory, political science, aleatory, politics, genealogy

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### 1. Introduction: Foucault and the Question of Ontology in Political Science

After the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, a group of French psychoanalysts conducted a collective interview with Michel Foucault. In the interview, published in the journal *Ornicar?*, Jacques Lacan's son-in-law Jacques-Alain Miller asked Foucault who are the subjects of the societal conflicts he writes about, since the classes, which Marxist analyses usually presuppose, in Foucault's opinion obviously are not. Foucault's response was that in a society everybody is opposed to everybody:

> It is just a hypothesis, but I would say: all against all. There are no immediately given subjects, of which one would be the proletariat and the other the bourgeoisie. Who fights against whom? We fight all against all. And there is always something inside us that fights against some other thing inside us.

When Miller asked him if "the first and the last element" of his theory were "the individuals", Foucault replied affirmatively ("Yes, the individuals"). And to complicate things a bit, he added: "and sub-individuals at the same time" (Foucault, 2001b: 311).[1]

If we temporarily bracket the puzzling "subindividuals" addendum, it seems that Foucault is at odds with himself, as he is notorious for the negation of the autonomous individual subject. It is well known that the individual, endowed with reason and free will, is the ontological foundation of the Enlightenment movement and liberal-democratic political theory. For Foucault, on the contrary, the individual subject is only an epochal construction, resulting from the play of forces external to him. The closing lines of *The Order of Things* state that, when the existing epistemological order breaks, "one could bet that the man will then disappear, like on the seashore a face in the sand" (Foucault, 1966: 398). And other, almost equally famous lines, from his methodological statement in the early 1970s, speak about the chimera of the unity of the self: "The body: the surface of inscription of events

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[1] For an alternative translation of this interview, cf. Foucault, 1980: 194-228. All translations from original French texts are mine. I intended the translations to be as literal as possible. Since I am not a native speaker of English, some of the translations could strike the native speakers as aesthetically inappropriate, but I hope their probable ugliness is compensated by their decent semantic accuracy. The quotes from Foucault's essays and interviews are from the French edition of his collected works. The edition contains the whole of Foucault's authorized work, with the exception of his published books and transcripts of the Collège de France lectures (Foucault, 2001a; 2001b). In the writing of this article, I used the French editions of Foucault's works, with the exception of *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Collège de France lectures (Foucault, 2005; 2007), and the three tomes of *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1988; 1990a; 1990b). For those, I used the English translations which I happen to possess.

(as language marks them and the ideas dissolve them), place of dissociation of the Self (to which it tries to bring the chimera of a substantial unity), and volume in perpetual disintegration" (Foucault, 2001a: 1011).[2] Then again, it seems that something resembling the autonomy of the self – and consequently, the individual subject – (re)appeared in the last phase of Foucault's work. Examples include the Collège de France courses on the hermeneutics of the subject (Foucault, 2005) and on the government of the self and others (Foucault, 2008; 2009), as well as the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990b; 1988). In these works, Foucault used concepts such as *epimeleia heautou* (the care of the self), *enkrateia* (the mastery of the self), and *parresia* (the faculty of honest speech), which seem to presuppose an agency of the individual subject. Thus, it once again looks like Foucault needed the autonomous self capable of agency (Bevir 1999: 359; 2006: 287-290).

Foucault was, of course, aware of the tensions appearing in his work, when it is approached as a consistent whole, at least when its methodology is in question. He explicitly elaborated on the differences in his methodological approach that turned from archaeology of discursive statements to the analytics of power, and genealogy of strategies and tactics (Foucault, 1969, 2001a: 1004-1024). In more than few occasions, he also rejected the idea that his work should be taken as a single, unitary whole. Already in the late 1960s, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* he wrote: "Do not ask me who I am and do not demand of me to stay the same. Those are the ways of the bureaucracy; it checks if our papers are in order. However, it leaves us alone when it comes to writing" (Foucault, 1969: 28). In *The Order of Discourse*, his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, he spoke about "the principle of the author" as one of the procedures used to control the production of discourse in a society (Foucault, 1971: 10-11, 28-31), and in the short preface to the second edition of *Madness and Civilization*, he wrote about "the monarchy" and "the tyranny" of the author (Foucault, 1972: 10).

The aim of this introductory play of quotations is to set the stage for a research dilemma. The first option of the dilemma is just to leave things as they are, as it is sometimes done. Within that perspective, we are quite comfortable to accept Foucault's opus as incoherent as it appears on its surface and take its parts one at the time. It is, no doubt, a legitimate move to separate "Foucault I", from "Foucault II", from "Foucault III" etc., and not to insist on "the tyranny of the author" – as the author himself has suggested. In that spirit, one could also conclude, as Hayden White did, that Foucault's own discourse has no centre; that it is "all surface – and

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[2]  Originally published as "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire" in: *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, Paris, PUF, 1971, pp. 145-172.

intended to be so", and that it revolves around the fundamental trope of catachresis, that is, irony and "misuse" of language (White, 1990: 105-106).

But there is another option, perhaps more challenging, or at least more interesting to the political theorist. The option is suggested by the other, often present species of Foucault's exercises in self-interpretation. Namely, contrary to his own statements, Foucault often succumbed to the tyranny of the author and tried to interpret his own work as a coherent whole. The beginning of a new phase of his research usually contains reinterpretations of his former lines of inquiry, which present it as a specific case of the new research project. It is the famous "hermeneutic spiral". The introductory lecture from the 1976 Collège de France course *Society Must Be Defended* contains a piece that is indicative of this type of interpretive effort:

> It seemed to me that I pretended to be a bit like a whale who emerges on the surface of the sea, leaving there a small temporary trace of foam, who leaves one to believe, pretends to believe, or would like to believe – or he himself, maybe, indeed believes – that down below, where one cannot see him, where he is not seen and controlled by anyone, he follows a deep, coherent and reflected trajectory. (Foucault 1997: 6)

This second perspective, illustrated by a powerful maritime metaphor, suggests that there could be a coherent whole beneath the messy surface of Foucault's discourse, and that the quoted closing lines of the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* could be no more than an exaggeration – or mere irony.[3] Or at least, it suggests that the question of unity of Foucault's work could be worth a theoretical investigation.

But, of which unity exactly are we speaking? If the lines from *The Archaeology* are not completely ironical, they could well be constrained to the problematic of methodology of Foucault's research projects, and leave the other levels of his theorizing untouched. This article takes that chance and tries to find out if there is a unity of Foucault's thought on the other layer of his theory, namely the *ontological* one. Not surprisingly, the question of Foucauldian ontology has already been tackled by the vast industry of Foucault scholarship. In an early interpretation, Gilles Deleuze introduced the distinction between three fundamental elements of Foucault's ontology ("three irreducible dimensions" – "three 'ontologies'"): the knowledge, the power, and the self (Deleuze, 1988: 121-122). In his interpretation,

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[3] In that perspective, the quoted lines from *The Archaeology* could be a personal remark, not a substantive claim. What they could be saying is that one has a general freedom of expression and a specific academic freedom to change positions. It is not crucial whether the lifespan work of an author is coherent or not; it does not necessarily have to be so.

these are not pregiven, "apodictic" entities, but mutually determined factors that vary in the process of history. There is also a number of journal articles. For example, Neve Gordon (1999) gave a Heideggerian reading of ontology of the last phase of Foucault's work ("Heidegger's ontological conception of freedom is compatible with Foucault's notion of care of the self"), seeing it as an attempt to "resituate the subject, seeking a balance between agency and structure, activity and passivity" (1999: 395). And Ismael Al-Amoudi argued that Foucault's implicit meta-theory – at least in his 1970s work – ontologically corresponds to the framework of critical realism, "as it assumes a relational conception of society and considers structures as both enabling and constraining for agency" (2007: 553). Finally, Foucault's ontology is also a theme of current debates and conferences. For example, at the conference *Ontology and Politics*, held in London on June 16th 2008, Johanna Oksala held a presentation entitled *Foucault's Politicization of Ontology* in which, judging by the summary, she argued that Foucault's ontology is radically political ("political ontology"), because it understands the social reality as not consisting of "subjects and objects existing in the world as pregiven constants", but as a result of political struggles and thus constituted by the effects of power.[4]

This short overview already gives a pretty variegated picture. It first offers a tripartite ontology, consisting of three irreducible elements which together constitute the social and political field in a historical setting. Then we have a single ontology constricted to the model of the self: a Heideggerian ontology of free self that power necessarily presupposes (if there is no ontological freedom, there is no possibility of domination). We also have a picture of Foucault as a critical realist, whose conceptual and explanatory structures can be compared to Bhaskar's, and finally we have a picture of Foucauldian ontology as a radical political theory of power. These valuable interpretations stress different interesting aspects of the ontological problem in Foucault's work. The difference of approach in this article consists of two elements which none of the mentioned works, and none which I know of at all, have combined together. First, I pose an ontological question to Foucault's work as a whole. That means that I am not interested in just one phase. I try to take the whole picture in perspective. Second, I try to use a specific conceptualization of ontology, used in the tradition of political science, perhaps somewhat deprived of philosophical "depth" that is rightfully expected in the orthodox philosophical tradition.

The article proceeds as follows. The introduction ends with the explication of how exactly ontology is understood in this article (1). In the second part, the article assesses different phases of Foucault's work from the perspective of the ontological

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[4] The conference was organized by the Politics Department and the Graduate School for Humanities and Social Sciences, Queen Mary, University of London. The program and the abstracts are available at http://qmulontologyconf.wordpress.com (accessed in April 2010).

analytics (2). Three different provisory ontologies that correspond to three different phases of Foucault's work are constructed (2.1, 2.2, 2.3). That part is an attempt to map out breaches in the ontological perspective of Foucault's political thought. In the third part, the article tries to compare and further explain the interpretive constructions from the previous part, and possibly to synthesize them (3). The main questions of this part are whether there is a single ontology underlying Foucault's work and what could this unitary ontology be? Finally, the short concluding remarks try to sum up the argument and find out what these ontological investigations mean for political science and political theory, for their conceptualization of politics, the directions of their research and the modes of their theorizing (4).

It is a common place of the metatheoretical apparatus in contemporary political science to make the distinction between epistemology and ontology. While epistemology refers to the problematic of how something is known, that is, what are the criteria our statements have to fulfill to be taken as valid knowledge claims, ontology refers to the problematic of what is known, that is, what there is in the world (Marsh and Furlong, 2002; Burnham et al., 2004). Ontology is, thus, concerned with fundamental entities and structures which fill our theoretical world. The ontological question is, then, what kind of the world is "out there" and with what matter is it filled, or – to use another familiar metaphor – from what "building blocks" is it made? Different political theories populate the world with different ontologies. For example, the rational choice approach fills its world with utility maximizing individuals, institutionalism with institutions, feminism with sexes and genders, Marxism with classes and economic structures, and so on. These are the bases of their theoretical constructions, the essentials of their theories and explanations, which are, at least in shorter and medium periods of time, exempted from "falsificationist morality" (Lakatos, 1974: 133, 176).[5] The question of this article is, thus, with what entities has Foucault filled his theoretical world and what is their "nature"? Have they always been the same? Do we speak of individuals, "subindividuals", or of something else, and what does it have to do with politics? Since the worlds do not consist of atomic or pregiven events (the ones that political theories build certainly don't), but of theoretical "things" and "mechanisms" (Bhaskar, 2008: 47, 51), one has to pay special attention to those fundamental layers of theory.[6]

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[5] Whether one speaks of theories or, less ambitiously, of discourses about the social world, is of lesser importance, because ontology as a metatheoretical concept remains as relevant in the latter case. One can speak of an ontology of discourse as well as of an ontology of theory (cf. Dryzek, 1990: 159-160; 2006: 165-166).

[6] If one just negates ontology one falls into what Roy Bhaskar termed an 'epistemic fallacy', in an analogy to the more famous 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics (Bhaskar, 2008: 36-45). The point is that there is no "ontological vacuum" (40) which some variants of positivism seem to presup-

However, two remaining remarks concerning the question of the "size" of ontology have to be noted to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. How big should it be, or how important? Or, on the other hand, how small may it be, before it becomes ephemeral? In this article ontology is not big, philosophical and ultimately deep. It is not constrained only to epochal differences in worldview, e.g. between the culture of old Greeks and today's Western Europe.[7] From my perspective, different theories can populate their worlds with different ontological entities in the same epoch. This problem, however, has another face as well. If ontology is not too big, it also must not be too small, which leads us to the often evoked distinction between the ontological and the ontic, which should be only briefly treated here. Usually, the ontological roughly refers to something more essential, firm or fundamental, and the ontic to something phenomenological, immediately available, in a sense ephemeral, or changeable, i.e. something perhaps above the deeper structures ontology is interested in.[8] All the possible usages, connotations and metaphors aside, the important point is that one can have more different entities of ontical order within the same ontological order.[9] Thus it is important to note that we seek here Foucault's onto-

pose, and that the questions of ontology also have to be discussed in philosophy of science. The "impossibility of ontological neutrality" (28), of course, does not mean one has to subscribe to the metaphysics of "transfactually active structures" (262) postulated by Bhaskar's transcendental realism.

[7] An example from literature could be of help here. In the beginning of *The Elementary Particles*, Michel Houellebecq writes about ontology in that deep epochal sense: "The metaphysical mutations – that is, the most radical and global transformations of the vision of the world, adopted by the greatest number – are rare in the history of mankind. For example, one might mention the appearance of Christianity" (Houellebecq, 1998: 7-8). Then he continues on how economy, politics, aesthetics, etc., all evolve from this deep ontological change, and traces two of such important transformations in the West: the arrival of Christianity, which replaced the Order of the Roman Empire, and the arrival of Modern Science which erased the Medieval Christian Order (the third great "metaphysical mutation" takes place in the near future, on the genetic level, since the depraved Western civilization cannot achieve a new leap on the mental level). This simplified picture is not to be discussed here since it serves only as an illustration of how ontology is *not* used in this article.

[8] Probably the most famous work of philosophy where this distinction is used is Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (2008). The book is self-described as an ontological investigation that "deconstructs" the ontological tradition of Western philosophy, which is replaced with "the existential analytics of Dasein" and its specific language. In the book, ontological is usually connected with the reflexive, fundamental and important, and juxtaposed with ephemeral, foggy, average, etc. – "just" the ontic.

[9] For example, Schmittian ontology can accommodate different ontic political programs, as one recent article suggests: "This political ontology is capable of accommodating a variety of ontic modes of political praxis, including those that are manifestly inconsistent with Schmitt's own normative orientation and aim to function as alternatives to 'Schmittian' politics, e.g. Chantal

logy rather than different ontic varieties in and of his theorizing, which are quite numerous. The point is that different ontology means something fundamentally different and theoretically important, while the ontic differences are something we can expect and not be bothered with. So if ontology here is not ultimately serious and epochal, changing only rarely in history, it is not completely ephemeral either. It stays, so to say, somewhere in the middle.

## 2. A Short Chronology of the Change of Ideas:
   ## Three Ontological Faces of Foucault

Three distinct ontologies can be extrapolated from Foucault's work. They fit into a fairly tidy chronology. The first ontological phase is, quite obviously, ontology of *discourse*, which emerges in the 1960s, in Foucault's research of psychiatry, medicine and sciences and humanities. It culminates in methodological treatise *The Archeology of Knowledge*, and then it is gradually being dismantled, exemplified by *The Order of Discourse* as a transitory work (2.1). It is replaced with ontology of apparatuses and techniques of power, or to put it short, the ontology of *power*. This phase encompasses the 1970s. Methodologically, it corresponds to genealogy. Thematically, it comprises research on penal techniques, prison, disciplinary society, biopolitics and sexuality (2.2). In the late seventies it is replaced with the last ontology, the ontology of autonomous techniques of the *self*, which Foucault analyses in Collège the France courses from *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and onwards,[10] and in the last two tomes of *The History of Sexuality*. To put it briefly, it is the ontology of the caring self (2.3).

(2.1) Discourse is the main building block of Foucault's theories in the 1960s. This ontological approach is exemplified by all of his major works from that period. Already in *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954) – a work he renounced, reworked, and then renounced again – discourse, as a historical form of knowledge, is of utmost importance for determining the status of mental illness and the mentally ill. According to Foucault, illness and its aspects shouldn't be made into "ontological forms" (101), but only understood in historical context, inside a discursive formation of a particular culture. In that book, organic evolution, psychological history and existential philosophy are all understood as discourses, even as "mythical forms", which shape the experience of the mentally ill. It is the language, its means

Mouffe's 'agonistic pluralism', Slavoj Žižek's reaffirmation of revolutionary class struggle and Jacques Derrida's ethics of deconstructed decisionism" (Prozorov, 2009: 220).

[10] The elements of this phase also appear in the two earlier Collège de France Courses, *On the Governing of the Living* (*Du gouvernement des vivants*, 1979-1980) and *Subjectivity and Truth* (*Subjectivité et Vérité*, 1980-1981).

and artifices, which imprint sense in mental illness (12, 104). In other words, discourse is a key ontological player in that early work.

In *History of Madness* (1972), Foucault's dissertation published in 1961, the ontology of discourse is also evident. In that book, Foucault is interested in how madness was perceived and shaped within different historical discourses.[11] There is neither subjective agency (177), nor causality (484-485), in the theoretical field of that work. Instead, different discourses in different epochs which create its discursive objects: discourses of medieval times, renaissance, classicism and modern age (including the arrival of psychoanalytical discourse), all shape "madness" in different ways. Foucault's following book *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) conducts operation with medicine and disease, similar to what the former book did with psychiatry and madness. It is an analysis of medical discourse, which enabled conditions for modern medical experiences, written "without any prescriptive intentions" (xv). Illness doesn't exist by itself except "within the element of the visible, and consequently utterable [*l'énonçable*]" (95). Medicine and medical perception are seen as discourses that appeared in history, within "the changes of fundamental dispositions of knowledge" (202). Clinical medicine appeared within certain episteme and historical formation that enabled it, which makes a naked empiricism common sense view of medicine look naïve. Both books show how different discourses shape the same objects differently and how they enable the emergence of different experiences, and have important social and political consequences. Methodologically, they are, in Foucault's own words, "patient construction of discourse on discourse" (xii). Thus, the ontology of discourse is again clearly stated.

This approach culminates in Foucault's research of sciences and humanities, which he ventured upon in *The Order of Things* (1966), and in the analysis and elaboration of methodology of discursive analysis employed in his 1960s work, which he conducted in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault is interested in structures that shape scientific knowledge in different epochs. This type of meta-discourse, which governs knowledge across disciplines in an epoch, is called "en episteme" [*épistémè*]. The book is an archeology of modern episteme, and man as its creation, which could both be in decline now. Three areas in which scientific discourse is formed – analysis of production of goods ("economy"), analysis of life forms ("biology"), and analysis of language ("linguistics") – are analyzed in three epochs (renaissance, classicism, and modernity) in

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[11] As Foucault later noted: "Madness exists, which does not mean it is a thing" (Foucault, 2007: 118). It acquires sense only within a discourse. In that sense, it is appropriate to evoke Jacques Derrida's instructive remark from *On Grammatology* about "the illusion of the thing itself" [*le mirage de la chose même*] and his famous adage that "nothing exists outside the text" [*il n'y a rien hors du texte*] (Derrida, 1967: 226, 233).

which three epistemes shape knowledge: variations of similarity (Foucault, 1966: 40), classification of *taxinomia* and *mathesis* (88), and modern thought of social sciences, in which the structuralism is "awakened and uneasy conscience" (221). In sum, Foucault sees sciences as subjugated to epistemes, i.e. as discourses, which neatly fits into the ontological picture suggested here.

*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, on the other hand, while it is not "the exact description" (Foucault, 1969: 26-27) of what Foucault has done in former works, gives a pretty much accurate picture, and a mature elaboration of the mentioned works (Foucault, 2001a: 1026). While intentionally a methodological work, *The Archaeology* has important ontological clues and presuppositions in it. Thus, here it can play a role of an implicit ontological statement for the 1960s. The book suggests that Foucault is primarily interested in the analysis of statements [*énoncés*], which are neither phrases, nor propositions or speech acts (Foucault, 1969: 115). *The Archaeology* is what one could call "il ne s'agit pas"-book, i.e. a polemical book where Foucault distances himself from all the positions that could be imputed to him. There are no Weberian ideal-types in his approach; there is no teleology, and no structuralism. The idea of a deeper level that determines discourse (like economy, in the typical trope of Marxism) is also rejected. His former works are also qualified: *Madness and Civilization* carried a danger of implying a general subject of history; *The Birth of the Clinic* was too structural, while *The Order of Things* seemed to presuppose discourses as large structures, almost governing culture as a whole. But the essential ontological picture of discourse remained. What Foucault's approach boils down to, after all negations, is the archaeology, or analysis of "rules for formation of collection [*ensemble*] of statements" (218), that is, discourse analysis on the surface of discourse (182). That implies the ontology of discourse argued here. The statements are chained in discursive formations, which form subjects and objects. The individual appears as a function of discourse, she can say something because discourse presupposes so (68-74). Individual agency is thus negated, in favor of the ontology of discourse and its statements.

(2.2) This ontological picture breaks in the seventies, already with *The Order of Discourse* (1971), the inaugural Collège de France lecture, "a piece [Foucault] wrote at a moment of transition" (Foucault, 1980: 183). In that work Foucault does not discuss the internal rules of discourse anymore, understood as an ontological *a priori*, but discusses the rules which govern the production of discourse: "I suppose that in the whole society the production of discourse is at the same time controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures, which have the role of putting aside power and dangers, of mastering the aleatory events [*l'événement aléatoire*], of escaping the arduous, the perilous materiality" (Foucault, 1971: 10-11). These procedures include forbidden speech (one might say

"taboo"), distinction between reason and madness, the distinction between truth and falsity, and also a set of internal procedures which strengthen and reproduce discourse, such as commentary, translation, explication and the principle of the author. Here discourse becomes a part of the bigger picture of the research of ensemble of techniques, disciplines, apparatuses and discursive formations, for which the term genealogy is introduced (62, 67).

The transition suggested in *The Order of Discourse* – from archaeology of discourses to genealogy of technologies and strategies, and analytics of power – is completed in the 1970s works. This phase includes works on power techniques that discipline the bodies of the individuals: *To Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975), the first tome of *The History of Sexuality* (*The Will to Know*), published in 1976 (Foucault, 1990a), and the Collège de France Courses from the early to the middle 1970s: *The Will to Know* (1970-1971), *Penal Theories and Institutions* (1971--1972), *The Punitive Society* (1972-1973), *The Psychiatric Power* (1973-1974; Foucault, 2003), *The Abnormal* (1974-1975; Foucault, 1999), and *The Society Must be Defended* (1975-1976; Foucault, 1997). The last lecture of *The Society Must Be Defended*, together with the concluding part of *The Will to Know*, entitled *The Right of Death and Power over Life* (Foucault, 1990a: 135-159),[12] and the two after-the--sabbatical Collège de France Courses *Security, Territory, Population* (1977-1978; Foucault, 2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-1979; Foucault, 2004), form the theoretical corpus on biopower and biopolitics, which also counts into the second ontological phase of power techniques. Few interwoven theoretical elaborations from this phase, which together form the ontology of power, should be singled out. These include methodology for the analysis of power, metaphor of war for understanding relations in society, and three models of power relations: sovereign power, power over bodies and biopower.

First, when analyzing power relations, Foucault insists on the nominalism of his position. That means he is not giving a general theory of power, and there is no trait essential to power relations outside the particular historical situation. However, his methodological guidelines from *The Will to Know* seem to give an ontological picture of power (Foucault, 1990a: 92-102).[13] There Foucault defines power as

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[12]  That part is also published separately (Foucault, 2006).

[13]  Perhaps a linguistic remark is in order here. The French word *le pouvoir*, translated here with the English word *power*, has different grammar, modes of usage, and layers of meaning produced by different historical and ideological contexts. It is important to note that "the French language conveys a more cynical view of political life than that suggested by the neat opposition between 'power' conceived as force, and 'authority' defined as legitimate authority" (Hegy, 1974: 335). And Foucault uses the term even more cynically. He is not talking about "powers in the political sense of the word", but about "capacities, possibilities, forces [*des puissances*]" (Foucault,

"capillary". It is not a system of laws, it is not held by one social class against the other. It neither has a centre, nor is it reserved for the apparatus of state power. It comes "from everywhere" – from small interactions in the numerous societal and state institutions, such as schools, hospitals, barracks or prisons, and the specific strategies, tactics and apparatuses which traverse the boundaries of these institutions. Power is not possessed as a resource, but exercised in power relations, connected with knowledge in the apparatuses [*dispositif*] of power. It is immanent in them, while "power is not founded on itself or generated by itself" (Foucault, 2007: 2). In a nutshell, power is "the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (93).[14]

Second, the crucial metaphor of war for understanding relations in society corresponds as well to the ontological picture painted here. In *The Society Must be Defended*, Foucault reverses the dictum of Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, who described war as a continuation of politics with other means. Foucault instead sees politics (power) as a continuation of war: "power, it is war, it is war continued by other means" (Foucault, 1997: 16). This interpretation of society is heavily qualified later. Foucault starts to describe it as a hypothesis, but then retreats, speaking of it only as a "species of discourse" (44), and finally as a "mythology" (48). In addition, in the former Collège de France course *The Psychiatric Power*, he distanced himself from using the concept of violence [*la notion de violence*], because it implies "irregular power, passionate, unrestrained power", while power relations in the institutional settings he analyzed are "meticulous, calculated, of which tactics and strategies are perfectly defined" (Foucault, 2003: 15-16). Nevertheless, the metaphor clearly points to conflict and power struggles as an essential trait of society – be they calculated or openly violent – and thus adds to the ontology of power from the second phase.

Third, while methodological guidelines for analysis of power have an air of generality, they specifically correspond to the power relations in a disciplinary society, that is, they primarily make a theoretical elaboration of power mechanisms referring to the type of society in which techniques and apparatuses of anatomo-

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1997: 37). (However, the connotation of legitimate authority – no matter how high the level of Foucault's cynicism – is unavoidable: *le pouvoir* is never just *la puissance*, power is never simple force; it keeps at least some connotations of legality and legitimacy. On the surface, these connotations give Foucault's theoretical discourse a touch of catachresis which White observed. "Below the surface", they constitute it as a species of critical theory, which exposes the real mechanics of power under different ideological guises.)

[14] This picture should also be complemented with five methodological precautions for the analysis of power, concerning the material operators of power, the forms of subjection, the utilizations of power, the strategic apparatuses, and the techniques and tactics of power (cf. Foucault, 1980: 102).

politics of the body are the prevalent characteristic. However, there are other models of power, such as sovereign power and biopower. I shall briefly describe these three models.

Sovereign power was developed in the medieval times, with the emergence of nation states. It has a center, the person of the sovereign; it is a virtual position in the model, to which a new physical sovereign is appointed when the old sovereign dies, according to the doctrine of King's two bodies (Kantorowicz, 1997). Sovereign power proclaims legal rules which apply over the territory under the sovereign's control. It ultimately functions as power to take the life of those who oppose the will of the sovereign, by breaking the rules that sovereign power established. Its work is exemplified in the beginning of *To Discipline and Punish*, in one of the famous scandalizing contrasts Foucault uses to effectively illustrate the differences of discourses and power formations in different epochs. There, the brutal torture of Robert-François Damiens in 1757, who attempted to assassinate Louis XV, is described, and juxtaposed to the detailed daily timetable from a juvenal delinquents' home 75 years later (Foucault, 1975: 9-12).

While sovereign power is brutal and spectacular in its ultimate functioning, it is also weak and ineffective, perhaps for the same reasons. It is the power of "a weak tyrant" [*un despote imbécile*] (Foucault, 1975: 122). In the classical age[15], it is replaced, or more exactly – complemented, by disciplinary power of the anatomo-politics of the body. Foucault describes this shift in *To Discipline and Punish* – a genealogy of the scientific-judicial complex of punishing power, which turned from brutal punishing of the individuals' bodies to the reworking of the individuals' souls. The book is, in his words, the "correlative history of modern soul" (30). It describes how torture was replaced by punishment, and then disciplines, and how prison was born. Different disciplines are described and ontology of that new power model, an individual understood as a machine, is offered as well. Symbolical representation of the ideal working of that new power is illustrated by Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon: the ideal prison in which the behavior of the body is disciplined through the possibility of constant surveillance. In Foucault's interpretation, Panopticon is not "a dreamlike structure" but an ideal diagram of this new power, "a figure of political technology that can be, and must be, detached from all the particular usages" (239). Anatomopower is best exercised in small tactics, strategies, and quasi-scientific discourses and practices such as criminology and psychiatry. It is enacted in architecture and practiced in constant surveillance which produces "docile bodies". Schools, hospitals, barracks, prisons and so forth, form a network of institutions, the

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[15] The classical age [*l'âge classique*] spans roughly from the end of Renaissance to the beginning of Modernity, i.e. from the middle of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century.

"local hearths of power", where this power is applied, and where this "microphysics of power" is at constant work.

There is also a third model of power – biopower, emerging in the 18th century, together with the concept of the population. The object of biopower is "human as a living being", as a member of the aggregate population. Unlike sovereign power, biopower is not the power to take life, and to let live, but exactly the opposite: it is the power which makes one live, and lets one die (Foucault, 1997: 214). This power includes regulatory techniques which try to control population as a whole. They are closely connected with the science of statistics gaining prominence at the same time. The *modus operandi* of biopower is intervention in the environment [*milieu*]; it tries to control the aleatory events [*les événements aléatoires*] in the environment (219). It includes e.g. demography and demographic policies, as well as the epidemiology and policies with the goal of sanity of the population. Biopolitics devised for control of the labor force is the important building block of capitalism, while modern racism is, in Foucault's analysis, specifically defined by its biopolitical technologies of population control. Once again, it is the ontology of power techniques that is at stake.

These models of power are not exclusive historical formations, but rather idealistic models.[16] One model may pervade in a certain epoch, but they are not successive chronological formations: "There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security" (Foucault, 2007: 8). In fact, in the modern epoch they coexist. Sovereign power is still operative, but the axes of anatomopower and biopower – "the double play of technologies of discipline on one side, and the technologies of regulation on the other" (Foucault, 1997: 225) – are more important for the effective functioning of power.[17]

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[16]  There is also another important model of power – the pastoral power. It is the power of "leading the flock", which emerged in ancient Jewish monotheistic society. As power over soul, Foucault opposes it to sovereign power over territory. It was developed in Christianity, with the institutionalizing of confession [*l'aveu*] as an important technology of power. This type of power is closely connected with the introduction of the concept of governmentality and Foucault's project of writing the history of governmentality in the West. I will elaborate a bit more on that in the third part of the article.

[17]  Foucault gives a neat example of these three models of power as complementary layers of one complex system of power relations. Penal law has a simple form that forbids certain actions and prescribes sanction. That is sovereign power at work, the power of law over territory. Then there is a system of disciplines, supervisions, inspections, of control mechanisms. There is the prison system and the apparatus of surveillance. That constitutes the system of anatomopower over the body. Finally, there are crime statistics that analyze criminality rates, and policies prescribed on the bases of those analyses, e.g. if the crime rates become too high. That is biopolitics (Foucault, 2007: 1-20).

The second phase is marked by the ontology of power. Power relations are the building block that determines other things in Foucault's theoretical world. If power is centralized in sovereign hands, different theories of law and different political knowledge and techniques emerge; if it is in the disciplines, than disciplinary apparatuses with their specific forms of knowledge and prescriptions emerge. While Foucault gives no theory of a single all-encompassing power model, and insists on the nominalistic epistemological character of his theorizing ("simply a theory of power in terms of the set of mechanisms and procedures"; Foucault, 2007: 2),[18] it is exactly the political power that is the key ontological player in his theories from the 1970s, no matter its concrete forms. Like in the first phase, autonomous agency of the individuals is strongly negated here: "The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces" (Foucault, 1980: 74).[19] Individuals are also effects of power – the undisputed ontological *a priori* of this phase, like they were an effect of discourse in the former phase. However, the autonomous self seems to enter the picture in the last phase of Foucault's work.

(2.3) The transition from the ontology of power to the ontology of the self is hinted in the theories of pastoral power and governmentality, developed in the *Security, Territory, Population* Collège de France Course (Foucault, 2007). It further emerges in the two still unpublished Collège de France courses from the end of the 1970s, *On the Governing of the Living* (1979-1980) and *Subjectivity and Truth* (1980-1981). The transition is finalized in the last three Collège de France courses *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1981-1982; Foucault, 2005), *The Governing of the Self and Others* (1982-1983; Foucault, 2008), *The Courage for Truth: The Governing of the Self and Others II* (1983-1984; Foucault, 2009); and the last two published tomes of *The History of Sexuality*: *The Use of Pleasures* and *The Care of the Self* (Foucault, 1988, 1990b).

In this phase Foucault analyzes mainly the philosophical texts of the ancient Greek and Hellenistic civilization. Analyses of discourse and power are substituted with analyses of the ancient "practices of the self". Foucault asks himself what it meant to master oneself, to achieve spiritual knowledge which is today forgotten. The questions of the early "history of sexuality" are how one conducted oneself in the spheres of dietetics (different diet regimens), economics (in the original ancient Greek meaning of household management) and erotics (love relations)? The fun-

[18]  Foucault writes "not of a theory of what power is, but simply a theory of power in terms of the set of mechanisms and procedures..." (Foucault, 2007: 2).

[19]  Cf. also: "One has to dispense with the constituent subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework" (Foucault, 1980: 117).

damental question that interests Foucault, together with the ancient authors whose texts he interprets, is how one must lead his life? What is his life technique that produces the self, the *techne tou biou*? In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he insists that the famous aphorism *gnothi seauton* (know thyself) presupposed *epimeleia heatou* (the care for yourself), which is today forgotten. This spiritual knowledge was erased by intellectual knowledge of the Enlightenment, thus making Goethe's Faust in Foucault's interpretation one of the last heroes of the waning spiritual knowledge (Foucault, 2005: 309-311). In the ancient times, it was a common place that one cannot achieve knowledge without the necessary preparation of the self; the opposite of the built self is *stultus*, the "wreck" of a person who hasn't cared for himself. These investigations of the self finally lead Foucault to the research of *parresia* in the last years. It is the honest speech that one produces, crucial for the constitution and governing of the self (and others).

In this phase, ontological priority is taken by the caring self, building his existence as a project, with the techniques available for the mastery of oneself: "One lives with the relationship to one's self as the fundamental project of existence, the ontological support which must justify, found, and command all the techniques of existence" (448). The idea of these investigations is to search for the differences in the constitution of the self in different historical epochs and cultures. In Foucault's interpretation, the ancient Greek culture of the self understood the self as built by different techniques, bios as "the correlate of a *tekhne*", while in Christianity the life became instead "a test of the self". In contrast to the techniques of the self from "the dusk of thought" (486), the contemporary West can better understand its ideas on subjectivity. That is one of the ideas of Foucault's project. That project, *expressis verbis*, becomes an ontology of modern man, that is, an ontology of ourselves: "What is the actual field of our experiences? What is the actual field of possible experiences? We are not talking about an analytics of truth, we will talk about what one could call ontology of the present, an ontology of actual moment, an ontology of ourselves" (Foucault, 2008: 22).

The last phase thus seems to offer the ontology of the self. One needs autonomy and agency to produce oneself. The constitution of oneself, as a practical enterprise of the individual, seems to put the former workings of discourse and power in the second place. The aim of the next part of the text is to question if that was really so and to attempt a synthesis of Foucault's thought at the ontological level. Then, in the conclusion, this ontological picture will be summed up and qualified, and some rudimentary guidelines for political science theorizing and research will be given.

### 3. *E Pluribus Unum...*: An Attempt at Ontological Synthesis and the Question of Politics

This is where the titular motto of American federalism – inscribed on The (Great) Seal of United States and on the Dollar bills – comes in. Do we have many irreconcilable ontologies, or a single ontology that can be built from the many? The second ontological phase, the one of power techniques, to which I devoted the largest space in the article, seems to me as the most elaborated and the most convincing phase of Foucault's work. The first phase (to a certain degree) smoothly evolved into the second, and the third one was unfinished in the time of Foucault's death; it was a work in progress that never took definite shape. Thus I will try to build an ontological synthesis around the second phase. However, that doesn't mean that a single ontology will stay within the narrower limits of the ontology of power. It is more of a hybrid that will come out, containing the hints of the first and the last of the previously constructed ontological phases.

If we choose power as our ontological anchor, we have to deal with two ontological breaches: the first one, between the ontology of power and the previous ontology of discourse, and the second one, between the ontology of power and the ontology of the self that succeeded it. The first breach is easier to deal with. It is obvious that two first ontologies have something in common. There is no subjectivity or agency of the individual subject in neither of the phases. Thus, they are easier to bring together. Discourse can be interpreted as a subspecies of the latter ontology of power techniques and apparatuses. Foucault gives some clues to do that. In reinterpretations of his earlier work, discourse becomes an apparatus of power. It becomes a specific apparatus of language and verbalization, placed in the wider ontological field that includes the other mechanisms, such as architecture and different non-linguistic practices and techniques of power. In the bigger picture, Foucault is interested in the "heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms", in "the said as much as the unsaid"; he is interested in the "connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements", and in the "major function" they play "at a given historical moment" (Foucault, 1980: 194). Likewise, episteme, as a discursive structure from *The Order of Things*, becomes "a specifically discursive apparatus" (197). This interpretation makes the ontology of discourse simply a type of the ontology of power, which clearly emerged and became explicit only later. The first breach thus becomes "ontic", it is not ontological anymore.

In the third phase, a previously inexistent autonomy of the subject appears, making the breach harder to mend. Is that so? Not quite, because it is not at all clear that the self becomes autonomous in the last phase. In fact, when one carefully reads him, Foucault doesn't write of autonomous agency of the self, at least no more than in his former work. What he describes is the specific "vast culture of the self"

(Foucault, 2005: 447) that existed in the Greek and Hellenistic culture. Foucault states that he is writing in the genre of "pragmatics of the self" [*la pragmatique de soi*], not in the "history of subjectivity" [*l'histoire de subjectivité*]. He insists on continuing his old research project, a sort of nominalistic genealogy of techniques, which now takes a new hermeneutical turn. His ontology is not changed fundamentally, but the perspective of research is changed. Foucault continues to write history, but a history of experiences with slightly changed conceptual lenses:

> To substitute a history of knowledge [*connaissances*] with the historical analysis of the forms of veridiction, to substitute a history of dominations with the historical analysis of the procedures of governmentality, and theory of subject and history of subjectivity with the historical analysis of the pragmatics of the self and forms they have taken; these are the different approaches [*voies d'accès*] which I tried to use in indentifying a bit the possibility of what could be called 'experiences'. (Foucault, 2008: 7)

Foucault repeats this conceptualization in the introductory lecture of his last Collège de France course. The substitution takes place in three domains, which are explicitly separated as "three distinct elements, which do not reduce themselves one on another". The three mutually irreducible domains are: the domain of knowledge [*les savoirs*], the domain of power relations [*les relations de pouvoir*], and the domain of the modes of the constitution of subject [*les modes de constitution du sujet*]. These domains and the relations between them – although with some qualifications: "one could, it seems to me" [*on peut, me semble-t-il*] – should be "studied, without ever reducing one to another, the relations between truth, power and subject [*les rapports entre vérité, pouvoir et sujet*]. In these domains, the mentioned displacement of perspective is made: from knowledge, domination and subjectivity, to veridiction, governmentality and pragmatics of the self (Foucault, 2009: 10). That is Foucault's succinct description of the last phase of his work.

Within this perspective, autonomous agency of the subject ceases to be the ontological problem in Foucault's theory. The second ontological breach also becomes an ontic one. But with the acceptance of this solution, a new ontological problem appears. How to build a single ontology if the author himself splits his theorizing into three irreducible ontological domains? There is, clearly, no single ontology, but a tripartite ontology of elements in three domains, whose mutual relations should be studied! This strongly suggests that Deleuze's interpretation is in the right place. In Foucault's mature theory, there are "three irreducible dimensions, constantly implying each other, knowledge, power and self". There is no universally valid ontological picture of the social world, but in every historical formation these three entities are determined by the interplay of different forces (Deleuze, 1986: 121-122). And as the "rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses" – one of the methodological rules for analysis of power from *The History of Sexuality* – states:

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (...) Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (Foucault, 1990a: 101-102)

Thus discourse becomes irreducible to power; discursive knowledge plays an important role, which rehabilitates the first ontological breach. The pragmatic self, although not necessarily autonomous, is the third ontological element, and we are back at the beginning, with the tripartite ontology, only not chronologically separated but brought together (or more exactly: "apart") in the hermeneutical synthesis of Foucault's mature theory.

Obviously, there are no easy solutions here. Perhaps the self and discourse have their own ontological validity. They could be too strong elements in Foucault's work, only to be subsumed under the ontology of power. However, the breaches might be surmountable. I think it is possible to place discourse and self more convincingly into the ontological perspective of power via two helping concepts: the productivity of power and governmentality. The methodology for the analysis of power also speaks of the productivity of power. Power *produces* relations, techniques, and discourses also, making them a derivation of power. The concept seems to make discourse ontologically secondary to the power. Thus discourse, as an apparatus of power, is also produced in the wider picture of power relations. Deleuze also opens up this possibility of interpretation when stating that "[t]he general principle of Foucault is: every form is composed of the relations of forces [*rapports de forces*]" (Deleuze, 1986: 131). Discourse is then a specific form in the field of power, produced by power relations. Let us say that we have, by the means of this theoretical operation, mended the first ontological breach between discourse and power – the one that seemed less ontologically problematic from the beginning. But what about the self, is there another way to place it more firmly into the ontology of power?

The answer lies in the concept of governmentality [*la gouvernementalité*]. It is an important concept that stretches the ontology of power a bit, while staying within its limits. Governmentality is the concept that explains how the self is produced by politics. It places the self within the ontology of power, not as an autonomous actor, but as a product of techniques for governing, of governmentality which is also a form of power. The development of governmentality emerged with Foucault's analysis of the concept of pastoral power. In Foucault's interpretation, it is the type of power that shaped the subjectivity of the Western individual: "Western man is individualized through the pastorate". It "fixes his identity for eternity" (Foucault, 2007:

231). While sovereign power of the state controlled the territory, pastoral power of the church controlled the souls via the institution of confession: "The Western sovereign is Caesar, not Christ; the Western pastor is not Caesar, but Christ" (156). For Foucault, the crucial moment in the history of the techniques of the self, moreover the "crucial moment in the history of subjectivity in the West", was the institutionalization of confessional truth telling. In contrast to ancient Greece, where the spiritual guide is "within" the truth, in Christianity, the guided subject produces the truth (Foucault, 2005: 364, 409), which produces a different governmentality.

Governmentality refers to the leading of the self, especially on the aggregate level of the population, that is, within a wider political framework. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault gives a comprehensive definition of governmentality, almost in the form of a short encyclopedia entry. He includes under it all the institutions, procedures, analyses, tactics, calculations, together forming the ensemble of power procedures. Its target is population, political economy is its knowledge, and security apparatuses are its instrument. Foucault also speaks of government as a most important type of this ensemble, and of the "governmentalization of the state", which disposes us of the Nietzschean "romanticizing" of the state as a "cold monster", and replaces the ideological fears of state encroachments on society with the analytically more accurate picture of the governmentalization of the state (Foucault, 2007: 108-109).[20] In sum, governmentality becomes a concept encompassing the elements analyzed by genealogy of power from the second phase, supplementing

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[20] Reinterpretation of the state within the framework of governmentality is a very important theme in Foucault's opus. He returns to it on several occasions in *Security, Territory, Population* and he continues to develop the theme in *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

In Foucault's analysis of governmentality, the state becomes an epochal form of governmentality, a "mere" episode in the wider history of power: "But the state is only an episode in government, and it is not government that is an instrument of the state. Or at any rate, the state is an episode in governmentality" (Foucault, 2007: 248). Foucault takes an explicitly anti-ontological stance concerning the state. In his opinion, it would be wrong to "develop the ontology of this thing that would be the state" (248). The state is instead an object of genealogy of governmentality: "You can see that we can perfectly well construct a genealogy of the modern state and its apparatuses that is not based on, as they say, a circular ontology of the state asserting itself and growing like a huge monster or automatic machine" (354).

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, ontology of the state is negated as well. "The State, it is nothing else but a mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities." Besides that, it has "no essence" (Foucault, 2004: 79). In that perspective, political economy of neoliberalism becomes intelligible as an autolimitation of government. Neoliberalism becomes the key for understanding biopolitics (15, 18, 24), and, for that reason, the Course is mainly devoted to the analysis of neoliberalism. For example, in the Course Foucault gives an account of how in neoliberal governmentality punishment becomes a form of economy (47-48), how criminality is understood through the economic lens, i.e. how *homo penalis* becomes *homo oeconomicus* (253-255).

it with the touch of subjectivity techniques. Governmentality ultimately guides indi-viduals. They are the political effects of governmentality as a type of power. Thus, what we have in the end, are the second two ontological phases falling into each other. Power stays in the picture as a key ontological player, framed as a form of governmentality, that is, of forming subjects through the ensemble of apparatuses of power. The modern state is interpreted as a form of governmentality. It is the old political power from a new point of view.

Governmentality is the final turn in our hermeneutical spiral, which rounds the ontological picture of Foucault I attempted to paint here. The picture certainly contains flaws which will hopefully be pointed out in further research. It readily acknowledges that Foucault's ontology can be subjected to countless reinterpreta-tions, and knows that it will be done. However, it was the best I could do within the limited space of this article, and it is now time to draw from this ontological argu-ment some conclusions for political science. What, then, does this picture have to do with the analysis of politics and why is it the ontology of politics?

## 4. Conclusion: What is there for Political Science?

In this article three separate ontologies were extrapolated from Foucault's work: the ontology of discourse, the ontology of power, and the ontology of the self. An attempt at synthesis was made, to establish a single ontology of power. The mend-ing of the breach between discourse and power was attempted, first, via Foucault's reinterpretation of discourse as a power apparatus, and, second, via the conception of productivity of power, which also produces discourses among other things. The apparent agency of the self of the last phase, which posed an ontological problem, was discarded upon more careful reading, and reinterpreted as an investigation of the techniques of the self. These were subsumed under the ontology of power, or more exactly hybridized with it, via the concept of governmentality, referring to the techniques of the self as techniques of political power, which can for example be illustrated by Foucault's analysis of political economy of neoliberalism as the form of governmentality (Foucault, 2004). Even in this interpretation, breaches between discourse, power and the self are still existent, at least as deep bruises. A too big on-tology would have made those breaches ontic, while a small one would have made of them insurmountable ontological cuts. With the middle size, these breaches are somewhat paradoxical: when they appear, they seem to be a bit excessive, and when they are erased, it seems that something is missing from the picture. This interpreta-tion of the ontological problem in Foucault cannot avoid that uneasiness, but it can at least hope that it makes the interpretation theoretically interesting.

What kind of ontology is it in the end? First, discourse and the self certainly hold an important role in Foucault's ontological field. Discursive knowledge plays

an important role, while power is never bare and solely repressive. It needs knowledge and rationalizations. And although power is productive, it attempts to dominate and thus implies the self. Deleuze's triple ontology has a point, Al-Amoudi's remarks within the framework of critical realism about Foucault's "stratified and differentiated social reality" probably hold (Al-Amoudi, 2007: 554), and Gordon's humanistic claim that Foucault "did not abandon the notion of power, the idea that humans are always within a web of constraints, but rather strove to enrich and go beyond his earlier work in order to solve some of the problems arising from it" (Gordon, 1999: 402) probably stand to some degree. Although it would make no sense to completely erase discourse and the self, in the end I chose to be closest to Oksala's political ontology, which understands Foucault's theory as a radical political theory of power, and I tried to provide arguments for that position. It seemed to me that in Foucault's theorizing, discourse and the self were of interest in the analysis of social field primarily as stakes in the game of power. Power relations are what is ultimately important in a society.

Second, these relations are always historically specific. That is where Foucault's nominalism comes into play. Power is the name for relations and techniques that shape the societal situation. That is why I used "ontology of power", "ontology of power techniques", and similar terms as interchangeable. Foucault stated that "all ontology, finally, should be analyzed as a fiction" (Foucault, 2008: 285). In a way, that also counts for Foucault's ontology. Content-wise, it is not fixed in any way. Ultimately, it is determined by the perspective of the historical epoch. Power works in historical aleatory field of techniques, in which power procedures spring in various places and come to be employed in an unsuspected way. They don't have a preexistent teleology. What is probably most impressing in Foucault's work – and what unfortunately did not come into the first plan in this kind of abstract treatise, which has a somewhat scholastic air – are his original analyses of concrete power relations in historical situations. This is where the interplay of different strategies, techniques and discourses in the field of power is most clearly shown. Foucault's analyses convincingly show how techniques of subjectivation appear in different places and are used differently in the struggles of power, for example how the state and its judicial system gradually accepted new penal procedures as a disciplinary tool after the efficacy of disciplinary techniques in other institutions and fields was shown.[21] This kind of historical aleatory "un-ontology" implies that effective procedures appear, develop, and are used in politics, but also that chance plays an important role: how and where something will develop and be taken into power relations

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[21] Cf. for example just Foucault's very interesting short presentation on that theme in English from 1983, available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk9ulS76PW8 (accessed in April 2010).

cannot be determined in advance.[22] Politics does not comprise classes, or national--states as primary building blocks. And certainly not autonomus individuals of liberal political theory, bringing us back to the beginning of the article. It is the mentioning of *subindividuals* in the interview with psychoanalysts that is crucial for the understanding of Foucault's position. It means that individuals are not autonomous; instead they are part of power struggles, inside the apparatuses of power, and their "subindividual" parts – bodies, "souls", professional identities, etc. – are at stake in the power struggles.

To conclude, why was the question of ontology of *politics* raised in the title of this article? Simply, the other name for these power struggles is politics, and the synonym for the ontology of power is the ontology of politics. Thus, biopower and biopolitics, anatomopower and anatomopolitics, sovereign power and sovereign politics, can be used as synonyms. If power and politics are seen in this way, what does that mean for political science – which is in Foucault's genealogical gaze, not to forget, just a part of one of the historical forms of governmentality ensembles (Foucault, 2007: 106)?

If everything is, at least potentially, political, and power is omnipresent, and knowledge, procedures, and even the individual self, are important parts of power struggles, then one must move the political analysis beyond the institutions of state.

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[22]  All of this is excellently shown in the well known treatise on Foucault written by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983). Although it primarily focuses on methodological change in Foucault's work, and discusses what is his ultimate methodological position (neither structuralist, nor hermeneutical, but subsumed under the label of "interpretive analytics"), the treatise is congenial with this article's tackling of the ontological problem in Foucault's work in three ways.

First, it stresses a somewhat nihilistic ontology of power explicated here, which is brought into Foucault's work "under the guise" of his genealogical research and genealogical methodological position. That is, genealogical approach implies that "things" have "no essence" or that "their essence is fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (107), etc. (formulations from *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*).

Second, it stresses how all of the techniques and tactical mechanisms ("things") do not necessarily come out of some grand scheme of things, but can have a low, "un-political" origin. Thus the Nietzschean *pudenda origo* applies as far as techniques of power are concerned (cf. pp. 106--109).

Third, at the very end of the afterword to the second edition, the treatise rightly discards any Hegelian interpretation of Foucault: "Although Foucault has no argument to buttress this interpretation of social reality as perpetually changing because it is perpetually dangerous, it does seem to be the 'unthought' of his historical ontology. Although this may sound Hegelian, it is radically opposed to all dialectical thought" (263). But, n.b., it also rightly rejects strictly Nietzschean or Heideggerian interpretations: Foucault's position is neither entirely nihilistic, nor pessimistic. To describe it, Dreyfus and Rabinow instead use the interesting term "hyperactive pessimism". That corresponds to the position which a political scientist employing Foucault should take in his political research, which is briefly sketched here.

Governmentality implies that politics is a complex field pervading the whole institutional complex of the societal body. Political analysis must find politics in obscure places, where micro-struggles of power take place, in contrast to the analysis implied by the traditional concept of state politics, or power struggles of Schmittian or Marxian aggregates (Foucault, 2007: 390). The old modes of analysis are inappropriate. In Foucault's words: "We need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that still has to be done" (Foucault, 1980: 121).

This omnipresence of power implies Foucault's genealogy as an appropriate mode of analysis and theorizing. As he observed, genealogy should be meticulous and patient in the performing of political analysis (Foucault, 2001a: 1004). It should seek details in obscure places to uncover the real effects of power in historical situations. And genealogy also has another face, which makes it a usable weapon in present political struggles: "Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (Foucault, 1980: 83). It can be used tactically to influence politics. This opens a place for political science theorizing as critical work, employable as political tactics that can perhaps be aggregated into the political strategies. Analysis of power techniques makes them visible in political discourse and enables the creation of counter techniques. Good tactics, used with healthy pessimism, could be more politically effective than naïve grand plan theoretical critiques of the enlightenment type.

Finally, if we accept this un-ontology of power – that sees the social world as a place where power is omnipresent and almost everything can become or cease to be at stake in power relations in a historical situation – as a working principle for the ontological field of politics, it also makes a good argument for political science. As Bent Flyvbjerg noted: "Foucault's view of the value of universals in philosophy and social science stands in diametrical opposition to that of Habermas. 'Nothing is fundamental,' says Foucault. 'That is what is interesting in the analysis of society'" (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 100). But when incalculable power determines things, something is close to being fundamental, namely this aleatory un-ontology of power. It makes politics possible; it makes politics interesting, and opens a possibility for political science to be important.

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MICHEL FOUCAULT I ONTOLOGIJA POLITIKE:
*E PLURIBUS UNUM*?

*Sažetak*

Autor raspravlja o problemu ontologije u opusu Michela Foucaulta. Najprije se ontologija definira kao ona razina socijalne teorije u kojoj se zahvaćaju bitni građevni elementi društvenog svijeta koji ta socijalna teorija pretpostavlja. Autor zatim identificira tri različite ontologije u Foucaultovom opusu, koje ugrubo odgovaraju kronologijskim fazama njegova teoretiziranja: ontologiju diskursa (1960-e), ontologiju moći (1970-e) i ontologiju sebstva (1980-e). Iako nije lako pomiriti te različite ontologije, autor ih pokušava sintetizirati pomoću koncepcija produktivnosti moći i guvernmentalnosti. Ishod te teorijske operacije jest konstrukcija jedinstvene "ne-ontologije" aleatorne politike moći. Na kraju, autor iz te ontologijske slike svijeta, koju je pripisao Foucaultovoj teoriji, izvlači neke osnovne smjernice za političko teoretiziranje i istraživanje.

*Ključne riječi*: Foucault, ontologija, diskurs, moć, sebstvo, guvernmentalnost, politička teorija, politička znanost, aleatorno, politika, genealogija

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