

# Bio-Politics and Neoliberalism

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# Neoliberalism

- ◆ Born in the 30ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- ◆ Birthplace: Germany and USA
- ◆ 2 founding schools: Freiburg / Chicago (associated: v. Hayek)
- ◆ Coming into being, three milestones: Germany: “Soziale Marktwirtschaft”; Chile: Pinochet-Regime, UK: Thatcher-Era
- ◆ Not bound to certain political parties (e.g. liberal parties, see: Social Democracy in Europe)
- ◆ Not necessarily linked with democracy (!)
- ◆ Ideologically flexible (more or less state-regulation); re-adjusting of political programs to the concrete situation
- ◆ Neoliberal intellectuals are collaborating in clubs/private societies; who interact and discuss via international networks
- ◆ What is common: market as only realm of freedom that has to be protected and vitalised

## Ralf Dahrendorf, 24.12.04 (Die Zeit)

- ◆ Refers to German Neo-liberals (“Ordo-Liberalism”) of the “Freiburg School”, which was in the post-war era involved in politics via the “Wissenschaftlichen Beirats bei der Verwaltung der Wirtschaft” (Franz Böhm, Alfred Müller-Armack) and the “Sonderstelle Geld und Kredit” (Ludwig Erhard)
- ◆ “Soziale Marktwirtschaft”, the social in this compositum consisted of a concrete agenda with three tasks, first: Reconstruction of housing, second: To bring electricity back, third: Integration of 3 million refugees into post-war society.
- ◆ In the core of the social there had been concepts of bio-political regulation: who should be settled where? How to compose the newly emerging society? In short: How to regulate the freedom of the citizens so that welfare can be distributed to everybody?

# Ralf Dahrendorf

- ◆ general goal: to liberate free forces of concurrence from excessive state-control
- ◆ Lord Dahrendorf expects a new form of “Soziale Marktwirtschaft” (label: “responsible capitalism”) to come, because it became evident that only to stress market-economy
  - ◆ a) introduces a short-time perspective
  - ◆ b) de integrates society
  - ◆ c) certain markets do NOT work properly, eg. labour-market, housing-market etc. (arguments from Adair Turner, Just Capital”)
- “redistributive market liberalism”

# Biopolitics 1

- ◆ Three sources in order to come to terms with the “occupation” “intensification” “problematization” of “life” through/in political practices:
- ◆ 1) Michel Foucault, writings and lectures from 1975-76 and the book “The will to knowledge” (1976): the discipline targets individual body; bio-politics refers to social body (population) that has to be vitalised and regulated at the same time: disciplinary power and regulative power have an intermediate relation (“verknüpft”, “überlagert”)
- ◆ 2) Antonio Negri/Michael Hardt, “Empire” and “Multitude”: bio-power, which is the sovereign occupation of life through permanent war, **vs.** “bio-political production”, which is the productivity of the “living alternative” / multitude; critique to

## Biopolitics 2

- 3) Giorgio Agamben, “Homo sacer”, politics as a permanent decision on “naked life”; camp as a “hidden matrix of politics”. Theoretical sources of Agamben are critical readings of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin (the anti-liberal string of German state-philosophie). The camp is the materialisation of modern sovereignty that calls for a permanent “state of exception”.

## The Birth of Biopolitics

- ◆ Text is the summary of Foucault's series of lectures which took place in the “College de France” in 1979. In this lectures he investigates the strategy of the Ordo-Liberals as a reaction to National socialism and of Chicago School to New Deal. While the “Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer) parallely was searching for a new social rationality to overcome the “irrationality of market-capitalism”, the Freiburg School endeavoured to re-define the capitalist rationality to prevent irrational effects. National socialism was not the result of capitalist accumulation, in contrary, it was the result of anti-capitalist and anti-liberal policies, the Ordos thought.
- ◆ Market mechanisms have nothing to do with natural laws, they must be produced through governmental activities. State and market economy are inter-related, they pre-suppose each other; capitalism as an

## The Birth of Biopolitics

General approach: “By [biopolitics] I meant the endeavour, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalise / the problems presented to governmental practice / by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings / constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race... [...]

It seemed to me that these problems could not be dissociated from the framework of political rationality within which they appeared and developed their urgency. “Liberalism” enters the picture here, because it was in connection with liberalism that they began to have the look of a challenge.

In a system anxious to have the respect of legal subjects and to ensure the free enterprise of individuals, how can the “population phenomenon”, with its specific effects and problems, be taken into

## The Birth of Biopolitics

- ◆ Development from the “reason of state” (in “Polizeiwissenschaft”) where bio-politics (health, birthrate, sanitation) were a prominent problem of the state (“How to compose the society? How to treat the 'male subjects' for they pervert the energies of the whole social organism?”) vs. “One always governs too much” (Neoliberalism), where the question is posed, why must one govern; critical approach to governmental activities.
- ◆ “American neoliberalism” / “Chicago boys”: contrary moment to German Ordo-School lays in the extension of market rationality to areas that are “not exclusively or not primarily economic. For example, the family and birth policy, or delinquency and penal policy.” (Foucault, *The Birth ...*, p.79)
- ◆ Biopolitics here becomes a test-field for the generalisation of market rationality, restructuring and re-generalisation of

## The birth of Biopolitics

- ◆ But this process does historically NOT develop top-down, one way (here: governmental practices, there: passive population). It was brought into being through massive popular struggles as:
- ◆ Absentism in the fordist enterprises in the 70ties, resistance to discipline, self-organisation
- ◆ Environmental movement since the middle of 70ties, critique on productivism which usually were state-driven sectors
- ◆ Punk resistance, right for laziness
- ◆ Womens lib movement, critique of the gender work division
- ◆ Self esteems movement to criticise governmental social policies, also: various social movements like: anti-psychiatry movement etc...

## The market conform subject

In the following section I want to make visible the practices that constitute the market conform subject as a social constraint, a self-technology, an individual desire and a bureaucratic figure.

You have to be / or to become / an outstanding individual, you have to conceptualise your life in regard to your written CV, in order to beat your concurrents in the rally of life.

You have to relate to yourself and to the others as a manager of yourself – and as a possible manager of your social environment. You have to calculate gains and losses, your physical and psychic energies and the expected outcome of your activities.

But this subjectivation is ambiguous, for *on one hand* the subject in fact gains possibilities and power in order to master his or her life. This

## The market conform subject

*On the other hand* the market conform subject is a subjugation, a cross-cutting point of governmental technologies in order to regulate the potentials of the multiplicity of individuals.

Ludwig Erhard (German Neo-liberal and Minister in the post-war Adenauer-Government) stated the following confession of the market conform subject: “Ich will mich aus eigener Kraft bewähren, ich will das Risiko des Lebens selbst tragen, will für mein Schicksal selbst verantwortlich sein. Sorge du, Staat, dafür, das ich dazu in der Lage bin.”

/ “I want to make it according to my initiatives, I want to bear the risk of life myself, I want to master my destiny, you, the state, take care that I

# Permanent exercises



<http://www.dak.de/content/dakgesundleben>

Stichwort: Ergonomie



# Conformities



Aus einem Ratgeber für Bewerbungen:

„Seriose Bekleidung anziehen: Kostüm oder Sakko mit Krawatte.

Schauen Sie nett, freundlich, gepflegt mit einem leichten Lächeln in die Kamera.

Das Farbfoto sollte nicht zu traurig oder trist, aber auch nicht zu bunt wirken. Hintergrund und Farben ihrer Kleidung müssen einen guten Kontrast ergeben.

Achten Sie auf Lichtspiegelungen in der Brille und auf fettiger Haut.

# Self-evaluation

Auszug aus einem Fragebogen zur Selbst-Evaluation von Referendaren/Referendarinnen:

2. Wie ging ich mit meinen eigenen Defiziten und Vorzügen im Fach um?
  - a) Habe ich sie wahrgenommen und an ihnen gearbeitet?
  - b) Habe ich sie ignoriert und überspielt?
  - c) Habe ich sie dramatisiert und hochgespielt?
  - d) Habe ich sie einordnen können in den Ausbildungsstand („Was ich schon kann - was ich noch entwickeln muss“)?
  - e) Habe ich sie als aktuelle Anlässe oder Angebote in die offene Anfangsphase der Fachseminarsitzungen eingebracht?

4. Wie bin ich mit den Materialien und Aufgaben, die ich im Fachseminar erhalten habe, umgegangen?

## Conclusions

- ◆ Biopolitics – in the perspective of Foucault's lecture “The Birth of Biopolitics” – consists of an ensemble of different techniques and strategies producing and targeting the population of the society that is not composed of classes but of individuals. It is part of a political rationality that governs the fluid compositum of individuals in a fragmented society.
- ◆ In his texts from 1975/76 Foucault has conceived biopolitics in the form of “biopower”: the power to make to live, the power to optimise life which consists of two series: “body-organism-discipline-institution and the series population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms. State.”(March 1976)
- ◆ There we find racism as a fundamental mechanism of power

## Conclusion 2

- ◆ For a theoretically grounded analysis of post-fordist social formations biopower (problematization: population) and biopolitics (problematization: individual) should be conceived as techniques, which might overlay and coincide but which are not restricted to state-activities.
- ◆ Therefore neo-liberalism will continue to shape post-fordistic societies. It will intensify the constraint of market conform subjectivities but it will also re-consider the role of the social in market economies. As a result we will have a market economy which will have regulated “common” economies (like public transport, social services).
- ◆ Probably: Struggles for more self-determination and more access to the control of enterprises by the employees.