

biopower foucault

biopower foucault is a critical concept introduced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to analyze the complex relationship between power, knowledge, and life. Biopower refers to the strategies and mechanisms through which modern states regulate populations by managing life processes, such as health, birth rates, mortality, and hygiene. This concept is central to understanding contemporary governance, as it shifts focus from sovereign power—the right to take life—to the power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death. The exploration of biopower foucault reveals how political authority extends into the biological existence of individuals and groups, shaping social norms and institutional practices. This article delves into the origins of biopower within Foucault's work, its key characteristics, and the implications it holds for modern societies. Additionally, it discusses biopower's intersections with disciplines like medicine, public health, and political theory. The following sections provide a comprehensive examination of biopower foucault, its development, and its enduring relevance.

- Origins and Definition of Biopower
- Mechanisms and Techniques of Biopower
- Biopower and the Body
- Biopolitics and Population Control
- Critiques and Extensions of Foucault's Biopower

Origins and Definition of Biopower

Biopower foucault emerges from Michel Foucault's analysis of power relations in modern societies, particularly in his lectures and writings from the 1970s, such as "The History of Sexuality" and his Collège de France lectures. Foucault identifies a shift in the exercise of power, moving from a classical sovereign model—characterized by the power to "take life or let live"—to a regulatory model focused on "making live and letting die." This new form of power targets populations as a whole and intervenes in life processes at both the individual and collective levels.

Historical Context and Development

The concept of biopower foucault is historically situated in the rise of modern nation-states, capitalism, and scientific rationality. Foucault traces the emergence of biopower to the 17th and 18th centuries, when political technology began to focus on managing life through disciplines such as medicine, demography, and hygiene. This period marks the institutionalization of public health measures and social policies aimed at optimizing the health and productivity of populations.

Defining Biopower

At its core, biopower foucault denotes a form of power that regulates human life through an array of techniques and knowledge systems. Unlike disciplinary power, which targets individual bodies, biopower focuses on populations and their biological features—birth rates, mortality, health, and longevity. This dual focus reveals biopower's capacity to control both the micro-level of individual bodies and the macro-level of population dynamics.

Mechanisms and Techniques of Biopower

Biopower foucault operates through a range of mechanisms that govern life processes systematically. These mechanisms are embedded in social institutions and scientific practices that monitor, analyze, and regulate populations.

Surveillance and Statistical Control

One of the fundamental techniques of biopower is the use of surveillance, not only in the literal sense but also through data collection and statistical analysis. Governments and institutions collect vast amounts of information about populations to identify trends and intervene accordingly. This statistical knowledge enables the optimization of public health policies, labor productivity, and social order.

Normalization and Regulation

Biopower foucault also functions by establishing norms for health, behavior, and social participation. Institutions enforce these norms through regulatory frameworks, medical guidelines, and social expectations. This process of normalization compels individuals and groups to conform to standards deemed beneficial for the population's well-being.

Intervention through Medical and Scientific Disciplines

The rise of modern medicine and public health is inseparable from biopower. Medical practices not only treat illnesses but also participate in the regulation of life by promoting hygiene, vaccination, reproductive health, and life extension. Scientific discourses legitimize interventions that shape bodies and populations according to political objectives.

Biopower and the Body

Foucault distinguishes between two poles of power related to the body: disciplinary power and biopower. While disciplinary power targets individual bodies through institutions like prisons, schools, and the military, biopower foucault emphasizes the administration of life processes at the population level.

Disciplinary Power vs. Biopower

Disciplinary power focuses on training, surveillance, and correction of individual bodies, enabling control through docility and utility. Biopower, in contrast, manages birth rates, health standards, and mortality rates, affecting bodies collectively through policies and social engineering.

The Body as a Site of Power

Biopower foucault conceptualizes the body as both a biological and a political entity. The body is subjected to medical knowledge, moral norms, and political regulation, making it a site where power is exercised and contested. This dual nature highlights the intimate connection between life and governance.

Biopolitics and Population Control

Biopolitics, a term closely related to biopower, refers to the strategies employed by states to regulate populations through various political and administrative measures. Biopower foucault lays the foundation for understanding biopolitics as a form of governance centered on life itself.

Population as a Political Object

Under biopower, populations become objects of political calculation and intervention. Governments analyze demographic data and implement policies designed to influence reproductive behavior, migration, and health outcomes. This focus on population management reflects a broader trend of state involvement in biological life.

Techniques of Population Control

- Public health campaigns promoting vaccination and hygiene
- Regulation of reproductive rights and family planning
- Immigration policies affecting demographic composition
- Social welfare programs aimed at improving population health
- Surveillance systems monitoring disease outbreaks and mortality rates

These techniques illustrate how biopower foucault translates into practical governance measures that shape the life and death conditions of populations.

Critiques and Extensions of Foucault's Biopower

Since its introduction, the concept of biopower foucault has generated extensive scholarly debate, leading to critiques and expansions that deepen

its understanding. These discussions explore the limitations, ethical implications, and new contexts of biopower.

Critiques of Biopower

Some critics argue that Foucault's notion of biopower underemphasizes resistance and agency among individuals and groups subjected to power. Others highlight the potential for biopower to justify intrusive state interventions and social control, raising concerns about privacy and autonomy.

Extensions and Contemporary Applications

Biopower foucault has been extended into analyses of neoliberal governance, global health, and bioethics. Scholars examine how biopower operates in contexts such as genetic engineering, pandemic management, and surveillance capitalism, demonstrating the concept's ongoing relevance.

- Neoliberal biopolitics and self-governance
- Global health initiatives and population management
- Bioethical debates on life extension and enhancement
- Technologies of surveillance and data-driven governance

These contemporary applications illustrate the dynamic nature of biopower foucault as a framework for understanding power over life in the 21st century.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is biopower according to Michel Foucault?

Biopower, according to Michel Foucault, refers to the practice of modern states to regulate populations through an array of institutions, practices, and knowledge forms aimed at managing life, health, and bodies.

How does Foucault differentiate between sovereign power and biopower?

Foucault differentiates sovereign power as the right to take life or let live, while biopower focuses on managing life, emphasizing the administration and regulation of populations to optimize health, productivity, and life expectancy.

In which works did Foucault extensively discuss biopower?

Foucault extensively discusses biopower in his lectures at the Collège de

France, especially in 'Society Must Be Defended' (1976) and 'The History of Sexuality, Volume 1' (1976).

How does biopower relate to modern governmental practices?

Biopower relates to modern governmental practices by underpinning strategies such as public health policies, surveillance, and social welfare programs that aim to control and optimize populations rather than exerting direct coercive force.

What role does biopower play in the regulation of sexuality according to Foucault?

According to Foucault, biopower plays a critical role in the regulation of sexuality by producing norms and discourses that govern sexual behavior, identity, and reproduction, thereby integrating sexuality into the mechanisms of power and knowledge.

Can biopower be seen as a form of social control?

Yes, biopower can be seen as a subtle and pervasive form of social control that operates through institutions, knowledge, and practices to shape individuals and populations without overt violence or coercion.

How does biopower influence contemporary debates on public health?

Biopower influences contemporary debates on public health by framing issues such as vaccination, quarantine, and health surveillance as means of managing populations, balancing individual freedoms with societal welfare.

What is the connection between biopower and surveillance in Foucault's theory?

In Foucault's theory, biopower is closely connected to surveillance as a technique of monitoring and regulating populations, where surveillance mechanisms serve to gather information and enforce norms, thereby facilitating the governance of life.

Additional Resources

1. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison

Michel Foucault's seminal work explores the evolution of modern disciplinary societies and the mechanisms of power that control bodies and populations. It introduces key concepts such as surveillance, normalization, and the "panopticon" as a metaphor for modern power structures. The book lays essential groundwork for understanding biopower as a form of power exercised over life.

2. The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction

This foundational text by Foucault introduces the concept of biopower, focusing on how power operates through the regulation of sexuality and the

body. Foucault argues against the repressive hypothesis, suggesting instead that power produces knowledge and discourses around sex. The book is crucial for understanding how biopower governs populations through norms and institutions.

3. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*

In these lectures, Foucault expands on the concept of biopower by linking it to war and the politics of population control. He discusses the shift from sovereign power to disciplinary and biopolitical power, emphasizing how modern states manage life and death. The text is essential for understanding the intersection of biopower with state sovereignty and racial discourse.

4. *Biopolitics: A Reader*

Edited by Timothy Campbell, this anthology compiles key essays and excerpts from various thinkers including Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Roberto Esposito. It provides a comprehensive overview of biopolitics, tracing its theoretical development and applications in contemporary political theory. The reader is valuable for anyone seeking a broader context for Foucault's ideas on biopower.

5. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality*

This book collects Foucault's lectures that explore the emergence of biopolitics in relation to neoliberal governance. Foucault analyzes how economic rationality reshapes the exercise of power over populations, linking biopower with governmentality. It is a critical resource for understanding the evolution of biopower in late modernity.

6. *Agamben and the Signature of Biopower*

Written by Matteo Lucchetti, this book examines Giorgio Agamben's development of Foucault's concept of biopower, focusing on the state of exception and bare life. It discusses how Agamben critiques and extends Foucault's theories to contemporary political crises. The work is important for exploring the philosophical and political implications of biopower beyond Foucault.

7. *Global Biopolitics and Biopower: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*

Edited by Jens Steppacher and Sigrid Schade, this collection addresses biopower from a global perspective, analyzing how power functions across national borders in the management of populations. It includes interdisciplinary case studies that apply Foucault's ideas to contemporary issues such as migration, health, and security. This volume is useful for understanding biopower in a globalized world.

8. *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond*

Authored by Thomas Lemke, this book offers an in-depth analysis of Foucault's concept of biopower and its influence on social theory and political philosophy. Lemke traces the genealogy of biopower and discusses its implications for understanding governance, identity, and subjectivity. The text is valuable for scholars seeking a detailed and critical engagement with biopower.

9. *The Biopolitics of Disaster: Vulnerability, Sovereignty and the State*

By Bryan S. Turner, this work applies the concept of biopower to the study of disasters and state responses to vulnerability. Turner explores how governments manage populations in crisis, highlighting the role of biopolitical strategies in shaping life, death, and social order. The book expands the scope of biopower to include emergency and disaster management contexts.

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biopower foucault: Biopower Vernon W. Cisney, Nicolae Morar, 2015-12-28 Michel Foucault's notion of "biopower" has been a highly fertile concept in recent theory, influencing thinkers worldwide across a variety of disciplines and concerns. In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault famously employed the term to describe "a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them." With this volume, Vernon W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar bring together leading contemporary scholars to explore the many theoretical possibilities that the concept of biopower has enabled while at the same time pinpointing their most important shared resonances. Situating biopower as a radical alternative to traditional conceptions of power—what Foucault called "sovereign power"—the contributors examine a host of matters centered on life, the body, and the subject as a living citizen. Altogether, they pay testament to the lasting relevance of biopower in some of our most important contemporary debates on issues ranging from health care rights to immigration laws, HIV prevention discourse, genomics medicine, and many other topics.

biopower foucault: Foucault Beyond Foucault Jeffrey Nealon, 2007-11-12 In *Foucault Beyond Foucault* Jeffrey Nealon argues that critics have too hastily abandoned Foucault's mid-career reflections on power, and offers a revisionist reading of the philosopher's middle and later works. Retracing power's intensification in Foucault, Nealon argues that forms of political power remain central to Foucault's concerns. He allows us to reread Foucault's own conceptual itinerary and, more importantly, to think about how we might respond to the mutations of power that have taken place since the philosopher's death in 1984. In this, the book stages an overdue encounter between Foucault and post-Marxist economic history.

biopower foucault: Physis, Biopower, and Biothermodynamics Enrique Leff, 2024-04-16 Building upon the idea that our current environmental question arises from the history of metaphysics—which privileged thought about Being (or ontology) over the conditions of life—this book reinterprets Heraclitus's notion of physis as the fundamental, emergent potency of life, as the category to-be-thought by thinkers. In so doing, it deconstructs the interpretation offered by Heidegger and so stresses the struggle between the creative force of life and its subjection to the human Logos or meaning. Physis, understood as the pre-ontological potentiality of life itself, thus becomes the cornerstone of a materialist philosophy of life. Following engagements with the work of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Janicaud to explore the significance of human intervention into the realm of life via the will to power, biopower and the power of rationality respectively, the author explores twentieth-century rearticulations of the concept of physis through a range of developments in biothermodynamics, thus grounding a new philosophy of life and a new bioeconomics in a revisited biothermodynamics centered on the concept of negentropy. An extensive engagement with the history and development of thought about the generative force of life on Earth, Physis, Biopower, Biothermodynamics, and Bioeconomics: *The Fire of Life* will appeal to scholars of philosophy, social theory, and political theory with interests in environmental thought, political ecology, and questions of sustainability.

biopower foucault: Foucault and the Human Subject of Science Garðar Árnason, 2018-10-29 This book offers a clear analysis of Foucault's work on scientific knowledge and its relationship to individuals and society. It suggests a way of using Foucault's tools for science criticism and resistance, while avoiding the pitfalls of vulgar relativism or irrational anti-science views. Two cases

of scientific conflict are considered. The first considers left-handers as subjects of science, in particular studies which purport to show that left-handers die on average younger than right-handers. The second case considers Icelanders as subjects of science in the context of a partly failed attempt to construct a genetic database encompassing the entire nation. The book will be of interest to bioethicists and philosophers who are concerned with the interaction between science and its human subjects, as well as scholars concerned with Foucault's work on science.

biopower foucault: *Foucault's History of Sexuality Volume I, The Will to Knowledge* Mark G. E. Kelly, 2013-02-25 A step-by-step guide to Foucault's History of Sexuality Volume I, The Will to Knowledge. In the first volume of his History of Sexuality, The Will to Knowledge, Foucault weaves together the most influential theoretical account of sexuality since Freud. Mark Kelly systematically unpacks the intricacies of Foucault's dense and sometimes confusing exposition, in a straightforward way, putting it in its historical and theoretical context. This is both a guide for the reader new to the text and one that offers new insights to those already familiar with Foucault's work.

biopower foucault: *Biopolitics* Thomas Lemke, 2011-02-15 The biological features of human beings are now measured, observed, and understood in ways never before thought possible, defining norms, establishing standards, and determining average values of human life. While the notion of "biopolitics" has been linked to everything from rational decision-making and the democratic organization of social life to eugenics and racism, Thomas Lemke offers the very first systematic overview of the history of the notion of biopolitics, exploring its relevance in contemporary theoretical debates and providing a much needed primer on the topic. Lemke explains that life has become an independent, objective and measurable factor as well as a collective reality that can be separated from concrete living beings and the singularity of individual experience. He shows how our understanding of the processes of life, the organizing of populations and the need to "govern" individuals and collectives lead to practices of correction, exclusion, normalization, and disciplining. In this lucidly written book, Lemke outlines the stakes and the debates surrounding biopolitics, providing a systematic overview of the history of the notion and making clear its relevance for sociological and contemporary theoretical debates.

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biopower foucault: *Biopower, Racism, State Racism and The Modern/Post Modern North Atlantic State: Michel Foucault's Genealogy of the Historico-Political Discourse of Race War Deconstructed* Daurius Figueira, 2018-09-02 The wave of white supremacist discourse impacting North Atlantic politics in the 21st century is yet to be effectively explained by linking this political reality to the power relations of these North Atlantic States. This book presents this analysis by deconstructing a genealogy of the historico-political discourse of race war. Michel Foucault presented in his 1976 public lecture at the College de France where the key discursive concepts of Biopower, Racism and State Racism formulated by Michel Foucault expose the nexus between racism and the nature of the North Atlantic State. This book insists that in the 21st century, North Atlantic hegemonic austere, neo-liberal financial market capitalism is now utilising a discourse of paranoid, extremist, militarist white supremacist discourse with a siege mentality to maintain its hegemony over its world empire potentially reflected in the politics of the North Atlantic.

biopower foucault: Biopolitics of Security Michael Dillon, 2015-02-11 Taking its inspiration from Michel Foucault, this volume of essays integrates the analysis of security into the study of modern political and cultural theory. Explaining how both politics and security are differently problematised by changing accounts of time, the work shows how, during the course of the 17th century, the problematisation of government and rule became newly enframed by a novel account of time and human finitude, which it calls 'factual finitude'. The correlate of factual finitude is the infinite, and the book explains how the problematisation of politics and security became that of securing the infinite government of finite things. It then explains how concrete political form was given to factual finitude by a combination of geopolitics and biopolitics. Modern sovereignty required the services of biopolitics from the very beginning. The essays explain how these politics of security arose at the same time, changed together, and have remained closely allied ever since. In particular, the book explains how biopolitics of security changed in response to the molecularisation and digitalisation of Life, and demonstrates how this has given rise to the dangers and contradictions of 21st century security politics. This book will be of much interest to students of political and cultural theory, critical security studies and International Relations.

biopower foucault: The Government of Life Vanessa Lemm, Miguel Vatter, 2014-04-05 Foucault's late work on biopolitics and governmentality has established him as the fundamental thinker of contemporary continental political thought and as a privileged source for our current understanding of neoliberalism and its technologies of power. In this volume, an international and interdisciplinary group of Foucault scholars examines his ideas of biopower and biopolitics and their relation to his project of a history of governmentality and to a theory of the subject found in his last courses at the College de France. Many of the chapters engage critically with the Italian theoretical reception of Foucault. At the same time, the originality of this collection consists in the variety of perspectives and traditions of reception brought to bear upon the problematic connections between biopolitics and governmentality established by Foucault's last works.

biopower foucault: *Romanticism and the Biopolitics of Modern War Writing* Neil Ramsey, 2023-02-23 This book illuminates the genesis and development of modern war writing in relation to Romanticism, biopolitics and disciplinary theory.

biopower foucault: Law, Relationality and the Ethical Life Tom Frost, 2021-08-30 This first book-length study into the influence of Emmanuel Levinas on the thought and philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, *Law, Relationality and the Ethical Life*, demonstrates how Agamben's immanent thought can be read as presenting a compelling, albeit flawed, alternative to Levinas's ethics of the Other. The publication of the English translation of *The Use of Bodies* in 2016 ended Giorgio Agamben's 20-year multi-volume *Homo Sacer* study. Over this time, Agamben's thought has greatly influenced scholarship in law, the wider humanities and social sciences. This book places Agamben's figure of form-of-life in relation to Levinasian understandings of alterity, relationality and the law. Considering how Agamben and Levinas craft their respective forms of embodied existence – that is, a fully-formed human that can live an ethical life – the book considers Agamben's attempt to move beyond Levinasian ethics through the liminal figures of the foetus and the patient in a persistent vegetative state. These figures, which Agamben uses as examples of bare life, call into question the limits of Agamben's non-relational use and form of existence. As such, it is argued, they reveal the limitations of Agamben's own ethics, whilst suggesting that his 'abandoned' project can and must be taken further. This book will be of interest to scholars, researchers, graduate students and anyone with an interest in the thought of Giorgio Agamben and Emmanuel Levinas in the fields of law, philosophy, the humanities and the social sciences.

biopower foucault: The Routledge Handbook of Biopolitics Sergei Prozorov, Simona Rentea, 2016-08-05 The problematic of biopolitics has become increasingly important in the social sciences. Inaugurated by Michel Foucault's genealogical research on the governance of sexuality, crime and mental illness in modern Europe, the research on biopolitics has developed into a broader interdisciplinary orientation, addressing the rationalities of power over living beings in diverse spatial and temporal contexts. The development of the research on biopolitics in recent years has

been characterized by two tendencies: the increasingly sophisticated theoretical engagement with the idea of power over and the government of life that both elaborated and challenged the Foucauldian canon (e.g. the work of Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, Roberto Esposito and Paolo Virno) and the detailed and empirically rich investigation of the concrete aspects of the government of life in contemporary societies. Unfortunately, the two tendencies have often developed in isolation from each other, resulting in the presence of at least two debates on biopolitics: the historico-philosophical and the empirical one. This Handbook brings these two debates together, combining theoretical sophistication and empirical rigour. The volume is divided into five sections. While the first two deal with the history of the concept and contemporary theoretical debates on it, the remaining three comprise the prime sites of contemporary interdisciplinary research on biopolitics: economy, security and technology. Featuring previously unpublished articles by the leading scholars in the field, this wide-ranging and accessible companion will both serve as an introduction to the diverse research on biopolitics for undergraduate students and appeal to more advanced audiences interested in the current state of the art in biopolitics studies.

biopower foucault: *Biopolitics and Healing in a Mass Milieu* K. V. Cybil, 2023-08-25 Several of the key concepts of biopolitics have come under scrutiny since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. This volume brings into discussion how biopolitics can be conceptualized critically within a milieu of mass healing, such as in India. Contributors to this volume discuss crucial themes like geropolitics and pandemic reflections on the question of old age, borders and logistics in a world emerging from the pandemic, immunization of humans and humanization of immunity, thus defining the Indian contexts of the biopolitical problematic. Extending its analysis into a retrospective vision of thought traditions and socio-political underpinnings that shaped modernity and post-coloniality in India, it also explores the medico-therapeutical discourse embedded in philosophy of medicine and philosophical modernity tracing its interstitial positioning as therapeutic-assemblages in a milieu of mass healing. This book will be useful for scholars and researchers of biopolitics, philosophy, political philosophy, sociology, science and technology studies, medical sociology, health and well-being, and cultural studies.

biopower foucault: *Animals as Biotechnology* Richard Twine, 2010 In *Animals as Biotechnology* sociologist Richard Twine places the question of human/animal relations at the heart of sustainability and climate change debates. The book is shaped by the emergence of two contradictory trends within our approach to nonhuman animals: the biotechnological turn in animal sciences, which aims to increase the efficiency and profitability of meat and dairy production; and the emerging field of critical animal studies - mostly in the humanities and social sciences - which works to question the nature of our relations with other animals. The first part of the book focuses on ethics, examining critically the dominant paradigms of bioethics and power relations between human and non-human. The second part considers animal biotechnology and political economy, examining commercialisation and regulation. The final part of the book centres on discussions of sustainability, limits and an examination of the prospects for animal ethics if biotechnology becomes part of the dominant agricultural paradigm. Twine concludes by considering whether growing calls to reduce our consumption of meat/dairy products in the face of climate change threats are in fact complicit with an anthropocentric understanding of sustainability and that what is needed is a more fundamental ethical and political questioning of relations and distinctions between humans, animals and nature.

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by leading experts in the field, the book's chapters investigate resistance across a wide range of areas: politics and biophilosophy, technology and vitalism, creativity and bioethics, and performance. *Resisting Biopolitics* is an important intervention in contemporary biopolitical theory, looking towards the future of this interdisciplinary field.

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biopower foucault: *The 'Ecosystem Approach' in International Environmental Law* Vito De Lucia, 2019-03-28 The ecosystem approach, broadly understood as a legal and governance strategy for integrated environmental and biodiversity management, has been adopted within a wide variety of international environmental legal regimes and provides a narrative, a policy approach and in some cases legally binding obligations for States to implement what has been called a 'new paradigm' of environmental management. In this last respect, the ecosystem approach is also often considered to offer an opportunity to move beyond the outdated anthropocentric framework underpinning much of international environmental law, thus helping re-think law in the Anthropocene. Against this background, this book addresses the question of whether the ecosystem approach represents a paradigm shift in international environmental law and governance, or whether it is in conceptual and operative continuity with legal modernity. This central question is explored through a combined genealogical and biopolitical framework, which reveals how the ecosystem approach is the result of multiple contingencies and contestations, and of the interplay of divergent and sometimes irreconcilable ideological projects. The ecosystem approach, this book shows, does not have a univocal identity, and must be understood as both signalling the potential for a decisive shift in the philosophical orientation of law and the operationalisation of a biopolitical framework of control that is in continuity with, and even intensifies, the eco-destructive tendencies of legal modernity. It is, however, in revealing this disjunction that the book opens up the possibility of moving beyond the already tired assessment of environmental law through the binary of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

biopower foucault: *A Foucault for the 21st Century* Sam Binkley, Jorge Capetillo-Ponce, 2009-01-23 How relevant is Foucault's social thought to the world we inhabit today? This collection comprises several essays considering the contemporary relevance of the work of Michel Foucault. While Foucault is best remembered for his historical inquiries into the origins of "disciplinary" society in a period extending from the 16th to the 19th centuries, it seems that today, under the conditions of global modernity, the relevance of his ideas are called into question. With the increasing ubiquity of markets, the break up of centralized states and the dissolution of national boundaries, together with new scientific and political discourses on biological life, the world of today

seems far removed from the bounded, disciplinary societies Foucault described in his most famous books. Yet in recent years, it has become apparent that Foucault's thoughts on modern society have not been exhausted, and, indeed, that much remains to be explored. Within this volume, novel interpretations and thematic developments of key Foucauldian concepts are presented in the works of 24 authors. Prominent among them are new forms of neoliberal economic conduct framed by distinct governmentalities; new critical concepts of biological life reflected in Foucault's analysis of biopower, and new theoretical treatments of the effects of subjectivation. Moreover, included among these theoretical departures are empirical studies of contemporary formations of religion and spiritual practice, consumerism, race and racism, the discourse of genetics and the life sciences, surveillance and incarceration, and new social movements. Drawn from a conference held at the University of Massachusetts, Boston bearing the same title, *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium* both expands our understanding of Foucault's central theoretical legacy, and applies his ideas to a range of contemporary empirical phenomena.

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