Is the drift toward thanatos the only possibility for contemporary forms of technologized existence? With increased technologization and its contamination with apparatuses, is bios now pursuing a “decisive tack” in which “any residual hint of the anthropological is abandoned in the fact that techn-ology becomes properly speaking a thanat-ology?”1 And with greater thanatology, must our responses be measured only in terms of managed births, as Sloterdijk polemically suggests, guarded over by Platonic human zookeepers?

In this chapter, I want to think another possibility for techné and bios that will require repositioning techné as a practice able to configure different forms of life as forms of play. To set the scene, I want to return to that figure who both traced the thanatopolitics in biopolitics across a number of lectures from the 1970s but also attempted in the last years of his life to think through the aporia of techné and thanatos. I am speaking, of course, of Michel Foucault. My reasons for doing so will be obvious enough. More than any other thinker examined thus far, Foucault responds to the major questions that have characterized this study; indeed, in some sense, Foucault responds to himself across his later work—a thanatopolitical Foucault who is met by and, in my view, superseded by an affirmatively biopolitical Foucault. Bringing the two Foucaults together has the benefit of providing a launching pad for the heart of the chapter, namely, imagining an affirmative practice of attention and play in lieu of a thanatological techné—a different way of thinking techné not linked primarily to a defense of the self and its borders but rather as an opening toward the relational. I will conclude with a number of details about what a practice of bios might look like by introducing at various moments those thinkers who have attempted to do just that.
end by suggesting that a practice of bios might well move us toward what Nietzsche refers to as a “planetary movement.”

The Pertinent Lives of Population

I have had occasion to discuss elsewhere some of the issues surrounding contemporary appropriations of Michel Foucault’s term biopolitics as it appears in History of Sexuality Volume 1 as well as his 1970s seminars, particularly “Society Must Be Defended.” Recently, however, another fold of Foucault’s thinking of biopolitics and thanatopolitics has become clearer in the recently published seminar Foucault gave in 1978 titled Security, Territory, Population. Here Foucault, just as in History of Sexuality Volume 1, defines biopower as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy or...how...modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.”

Differently from that earlier text, however, Foucault extends his analysis of biopower from the end of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century, as human beings increasingly become an object of political strategies. He does so by leaning on Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s notion of milieu as a space in which populations are managed as species. Foucault’s first two lectures are of particular significance as he carefully maps how the biopower of populations is maintained and increased in a milieu, particularly in what he will call the passage from scarcity to scourge that occurs at the end of the eighteenth century. Out of his reading of milieu and population, the greater rationalization of governing populations comes into view, one linked to the science of statistics as well as advances in calculated management that make it possible for governments to manage scarcity. The primary intention of government, Foucault tells us, is to manage scarcity in such a way that it does not become a collective scourge. In the following passage concerning rationalization and scarcity, Foucault sets out the stakes of this decisive moment:

But we will have an absolutely fundamental caesura between a level that is pertinent for the government’s economic-political action, and this is the level of the population, and a different level, which will be that of the series, the multiplicity of individuals, who will not be pertinent, or rather who will only be pertinent to the extent that, properly managed, maintained, and encouraged, it will make possible what one wants to obtain at the level that

is pertinent... The population is pertinent as the objective, and individuals, the series of individuals, are no longer pertinent as the objective, but simply as the instrument, relay, or condition for obtaining something at the level of population.

One immediately hears echoes of the larger biopolitical horizon that Foucault had discussed in the previous year’s “Society Must be Defended,” in which life is both fostered and disallowed. Equally, though, one notes the descriptor pertinent and the deathly cast it takes on in the context of population: some lives will be more “pertinent” than others, based on whether they belong to a population or to a “multiplicity of individuals.” In the “fundamental caesura” enacted by governments, the beginnings of an implicit thanatopolitical drift of life toward death appear to the extent that for the population to become the object of scarcity management, another series of “no longer pertinent objects,” that is, individuals, will also be constructed as objects of (bio)power. Foucault’s announcement of a caesura implies that the concerns of the formerly pertinent are heard less and, equally, that an economy is created in which multiplicities of individuals are used to manage populations—all premised on the opposition to individual difference. This distinction between multiplicity and population will later become critical when, in the midst of a crisis, one must manage not only scarcity, food principally, but more acutely security. At this juncture, security comes into its own as the ultimate aim of government, when power moves away from simply managing populations to treating scarcity as an event in the larger horizon of security. Thus “the scarcity scourge disappears, but scarcity that causes the death of individuals not only does not disappear, it must not disappear.” Foucault assumes that as security comes to be a managed event, it is increasingly necessary to govern populations by never allowing the death of individuals to go unnoticed. This introduction of security around the withdrawing figure of scarcity interests Foucault and should interest us as well, since Foucault is suggesting that for the population to be secured, doing away with scarcity is precisely what is not required. Instead, scarcity, understood as managing the death of multiplicity, is crucial for the administration of the population. For Foucault, we must not lose sight of the fact that managing populations is not to be thought apart from strategies of managing death. A first drift toward the thanatopolitical in Foucault’s argument appears here, one that mirrors a number of prior moments in this study. The need for managing scarcity creates
an opening for the thanatopolitical when scarcity, as an event to be managed, is made homologous to the death of individuals. Although Foucault does not detail the features of managing scarcity in linking security to population, he suggests that the death of individuals provides an access road for thinking an originary thanatopolitics folded into the figure of population. Furthermore, the individual exists in Foucault's analysis as both the mode by which the population is secured and the mode by which population is explicitly linked to thanatos.

Much more remains to be said about the relation between the death of the individuals and the securing of the population, in particular, how such a management strategy vis-à-vis populations continued to be elaborated across the last two hundred years. I have in mind the advent of the society of the spectacle and the birth of visual culture in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century as well as the appearance of communication networks after World War I and their respective roles in making certain that scarcity never disappears.18 Taken together, they signal that managing events of scarcity through their spectacularization rehearses the fundamental caesura between population and individual that lies at the heart of the thanatopolitical in Foucault's thought.

Secure Circulation

Yet Foucault does not see the managed events of scarcity as the lone possibility for biopower and its object, the population, which is to say that the emergence of biopower and population together at the end of the eighteenth century is not a completely original context. In this regard, consider the return of the figure of the people in Foucault's analysis as a latent political possibility:

Here too, in this sketch that begins to outline the notion of population, we see a division being made in which the people are generally speaking those who resist the regulation of the population, who try to elude the apparatus by which the population exists, is preserved, subsists, and subsists at an optimal level. The people/population is very important.11

Foucault will say little about how a multiplicity of individuals is transformed into a people.12 More important will be how resistance by a people results from the productive caesura of populations and multiplicities in such a way that evading what he calls apparatuses that "preserve" populations becomes possible. Foucault has some specific ones in mind for obtaining "something that is considered to be pertinent in itself because situated at the level of population."13 Many of these elements will involve "production, psychology, behavior, the ways of doing things of producers, buyers, consumers, importers and exporters, and the world market." "Security," he will go on, "therefore involves organizing, or anyway allowing the development of ever-wider circuits."14 For Foucault, the security of the population does not reside only in the negative motor of individual death brought on and maintained by scarcity; rather, security is equally productive in the sense that in the development of circuits linked to capitalism—circuits of greater exchange between persons, primarily—security will come to be seen as profoundly connected to instances in which the "members" of a population are joined in circuits of exchange—these circuits substituting in some sense for the bonds (of language, of tradition) linking a people together. In other words, population and not people is to be thought as coterminal with the securing of exchange as a substitute for the ties among a people.15

In the conjunction of security with an apparatus that makes possible the development of circuits of exchange, we find a notion of techne returning exactly at a moment of nascent globalization. It occurs, in ways we should add, not so far removed from the readings that both Agamben and Sloterdijk will give of globalization. Aside from those affinities, let's simply note at this juncture the effects of this thinking of security and population together on the notion of freedom and, in particular, that of person because it is here that another fold in Foucault's understanding of the thanatopolitical will be found. Thus, in the same lecture, he will go on to note that "freedom is nothing else but the correlative of the deployment of apparatuses [dispositifs] of security," adding that freedom is "no longer the exemptions and privileges attached to a person, but the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things."16

Two points need to be made straightaway. First, understood in this conjunction of dispositifs and capitalist circuits of greater exchange is a moment in which the form of person changes to reflect the loss of privilege and exemption brought on by the "development of ever-wider circuits." In a movement of increased circulation of goods, the form of person will change, and although Foucault does not return to the question of what the form of person might resemble after the dispositifs of security deexempt and deprivilege them, he intimates that an inverse proportion exists between securing populations and deprivileging persons.
And though in the intensification of the dispositifs of security, changes in the makeup of the previous person are implicitly gestured toward, Foucault leaves unexamined the nature of these changes. Yet, if we look more closely, an opening in Foucault's thought toward the thanatopolitical appears, one that has characterized all the principal protagonists of the following study. In the wider circuits of exchange that move hand in hand with the emergence of populations, the form of person is altered. Indeed, Foucault implicitly introduces the spectral form of the person in Security, Territory, Population and joins it to a key moment in economic and political liberalism. Foucault's analysis of population, security, and freedom, therefore, offers a powerful way of inscribing contemporary forms of technology within a horizon of biopolitics by affiliating forms of technology—communication, biotechnology, and bioengineering—with an intensification of the circulation of goods and persons. In fact, in most of the hymns to neoliberal genetics, the freedom to decide the qualities of a future human life through biotechnological processes is often located within this "option of circulation." The result is to link such changes in the understanding of personhood with the widening network of circuits of exchange of genetic material. Securing populations from future disease and harm continues to remain the ultimate context for such considerations. This is the horizon in which Aihwa Ong speaks of Singapore's recent and successful attempts at creating laboratories dealing in genetic material and a new kind of "biosociality" that demands the domestic population "to turn against its own deeply held beliefs ... and yield up genetic tissues for transreligious commingling." The conclusion? Contemporary neoliberalism, under cover of greater circulation and freedom, brings in its wake a machinery whose job it is to secure the same circulation through a resort to a sort of sovereignty inscribed in biopower and political authoritarianism. Here, too, the threat of depersonalization as populations increasingly are seen as mere reserves of genetic tissue is real. What communication technologies and genetic engineering share, therefore, in a neoliberal, thanatopolitical regime of circulation and exchange is their capacity to ease circulation globally, while at the same time deploying an apparatus meant to make disposable these former persons as a means for securing the very same populations of which they are a part.

In this coterminus move toward population, security, and territory, not only does the category of person change such that exemptions and privileges are torn from her, but just as decisively, other collective political figures, in particular, the community, come under siege. Population in such a Foucauldian perspective comes increasingly to appear as the anamorphosis of community in ways that mimic the other figures I have examined here. Admittedly, Foucault never explicitly contrasts populations with community in Security, Territory, Population. Yet, by summing security and population together into territory, Foucault shows how forms of collective life give way to something else under the increasing domination of biopower and its dispositifs. As national or local communities recede and mobile populations gain ground, the former political space of community, with its awarding of protections and privileges, is weakened. The result is not just a "detachment of entitlements from political membership and national territory, as certain rights and benefits are distributed to marketable talents and denied to those who are judged to lack such capacity or potential," but something even more dramatic: the descent of community as a political and spatial category into mere territory. Massimo Cacciari recently mused on urban space and territory in this regard, positing that "we no longer live in cities but rather territories (territory from terre, to have fear, to experience terror)." As the reader knows by now, the shift to the terrifying spaces of noncommunity is at the heart of contemporary reflections on the thanatopolitical: the space of terror in territory occurs not only thanks to intensified security apparatuses of the kind Foucault noted in terms of scarcity but also because technology, according to the protagonists of this study, accelerates the move to territories of nonpersons or semipersons away from community. The resulting space will paradoxically be one in which a secured and free (free precisely because secure) population inhabits a territory—populations that consist in turn of varying degrees of personhood. In and out of this depersonalized, territorial space, events of scarcity will be managed and, with them, decisions taken with regard to those individuals who are deemed to be less than pertinent. That is the darker possibility Foucault suggests in Security, Territory, Population, in which security is practiced on territories inhabited by populations. In the increasing expanse of circuits of exchange, territories grow out of (or are grafted onto) former national and local communities. These territories comprise not only "full-fledged" members but also include within their ranks those nonpertinent individuals whose lives and deaths are increasingly managed and so made scarce.

Such a reading of technology, population, and biopolitics challenges those who continue to ignore the role of security in relation to
neoliberalism and globalization. Frequently, my impression is that a number of critics avoid a real grappling with Foucault's insight here into the relation of neoliberalism, freedom, and an implicit thanatopolitics. To the degree that technology operates in a fashion similar to those earlier instances of an intensification of biopower linked to greater circulation of goods, we continue to live in and under the sign of increasingly secured populations; in fact, given the intensification of ever-widening circuits of exchange, nothing seems to suggest that the biopower associated with populations has diminished. Indeed, biopower continues to grow exponentially. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault's follow-up to *Security, Territory, Population*, he uncovers the hidden assumption of the market's rationality and equilibrium in the notion of population itself, as that which contains within it a mechanism of scarcity by which individuals may not only be allowed to die but to be pushed over into death. Foucault's superimposition of the market on population allows us to see how neoliberalism, in its “defense” of freedom, depends on an intensification of security through widening circuits of exchange. Such an overlapping forms one of the principal ways in which Foucault's thinking of population and security may be inscribed in a thanatopolitical horizon. Such a reading of *Security, Territory, Population* has the advantage of making visible the fault lines of the intersection between the emergence of biopower and security with forms of *technē* that are developed for managing pertinence and so with some of the principal figures of this study thus far. One might even go so far as to suggest that a significant affinity can be found between Foucault's division between pertinent and impertinent and between proper and improper writing. At a minimum, it appears that Foucault draws our attention to the intensification of modes of securing populations as different forms of *technē* grow more pronounced.

**Biopolitical Ethics**

Is securing populations the only possibility for biopolitics in a technologized milieu, its increasing inscription as only biopower, with only a toxic mix of *dispositifs* and media to look forward to? As I pointed out in the introduction and suggested in those pages dedicated to Agamben's and Esposito's positing of an impersonal potentiality, I believe another possibility for biopolitics exists today, but it must be linked to another moment in Foucault's thought; not to the Foucault of "Society Must Be Defended" or History of Sexuality Volume 1 or Security, Territory, Population, but to a later Foucault, a "wounded Foucault," as Ida Dominijanni describes him, or more popularly, an ethical Foucault.

Unfortunately, many continue to use the ethical descriptor when discussing the readings of later Foucault to limit the organic links between a political Foucault of the clinic or the prison with a later Foucault principally interested in an ancient care of the self that would be fundamentally ethical in nature and hence removed from his earlier biopolitical perspective. Such a point of view has made it difficult to bring together biopower and these later interventions of Foucault, with biopolitics implicitly discounted when evaluating Foucault's later work. I prefer to see a key relation between Foucault's earlier reflections on biopolitics and these final considerations of his on the "care of the self"—to see Foucault's ethical perspective as a response to an earlier diagnosis of biopower. Thus, throughout the following pages, I will be suggesting that Foucault in these later works seeks to disclose a response to modernity's increasing biopower by introducing a form of technology, a *bios technē*, as a possible response to his earlier research on biopower and thanatos. I will be reading Foucault's reflections on techniques for life as a response to the zoologification of life that has emerged in all the readings of the thanatopolitical to this point as originating out of a disjunction between proper and improper forms of life, between *bios* and *zoe*.

In other words, I want to sunder the distinction between an ethical and a political Foucault in an always already biopolitical Foucault. To the degree that Foucault insists on a *technē* for *bios* in *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, I attempt to imagine another form of *technē* for *bios* that would be thought together with two other possibilities for *bios*: attention and play. Both, in my view, might offer us a response to *technē*’s inscription in thanatos, a relation that continually moves through incorporation and expulsion. I will be drawing on a number of Sigmund Freud's essays in these sections, Gilles Deleuze's notion of haecceitic space, Guattari's views on creation, D.W. Winnicott's understanding of play in a therapeutic setting, and finally, Walter Benjamin's philosophical lexicon of playing and toys to sketch a practice of *bios* that would avoid the problems of a care for the self that seemingly devolve into mastery in Foucault's reading. My project is to see in attention and play possibilities for weakening the borders of the self, which are continually reinforced by a *technē* that no longer has any relation to life. I hope to find in attention, therefore, a *technē* of *bios* that avoids any complicity in proper and improper forms.
of life—that resists the division between bios and zoe that a Heideggerian reading of techne seems inevitably to call forth.

To begin, what role does Foucault award biopower in the 1981–82 lectures collected in *Hermeneutics of the Subject*? The answer, which explains the initial critical reaction to the essays as part and parcel of a more ethical Foucault, is not very much. As far as I can make out, Foucault never once mentions biopower or biopolitics throughout the entire year; rather, his goal as set out in the first hour from January 6, 1982, is to write a history of a care for the self as a cultural phenomenon:

What I would like to show you, what I would like to speak about this year, is this history that made this general cultural phenomenon (this exhortation, this general acceptance of the principle that one should take care of oneself) both a general cultural phenomenon peculiar to Hellenistic and Roman society ... and at the same time an event in thought.25

Foucault will go on to associate a care of the self with a “critical ontology of ourselves” that will ultimately be joined to modern subjectivity.26

It seems to me that the stake, the challenge for any history of thought, is precisely that of grasping when a cultural phenomenon of a determinate scale actually constitutes within the history of thought a decisive moment that is still significant for our modern mode of being subjects.27

Although Foucault does not detail further this “modern mode of being subjects,” such a mode haunts the rest of the lectures, reaching a kind of denouement in the closing pages, when Foucault will associate it with a moment in thought in which techne moves out of the horizon of bios, leaving bios to be captured by the techne of the self. Thus not only is Foucault’s interest in care of the self as broad as the history of thought itself but such a care cannot be separated from an ontology of the present linked to a seminal event in thought, when techne no longer enjoys a primary relation to forms of life.

In *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault spectacularly recapitulates a history of care of the self across Greek and Roman antiquity, from Platonism to Stoicism, providing numerous examples of therapies offered as the means by which individuals care for their selves. I want to focus initially on the conditions under which a care for the self develops because there we will find another division of proper and improper life. After noting how “in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman culture, care of the self always took shape within quite distinct practices, institutions, and groups which were often closed to each other, and which usually involved exclusion from all others,” Foucault observes that care of the self always took shape “within definite and distinct networks or groups, with combinations of the cultic, the therapeutic ... and knowledge, theory, but [involving] relationships that vary according to the different groups, milieus, and cases.”

We note immediately that care is not available to individuals simply on the basis of being human. On this score, Foucault states,

If you like you cannot take care of the self in the realm and form of the universal. The care of the self cannot appear, and above all, cannot be practiced simply by virtue of being human as such, just by belonging to the human community, although this membership is very important. It can only be practiced within the group, and within the group in its distinctive character.28

I will return to this point later, when I turn to the notions of play and attention as well as the assumption such a view makes about what Leela Gandhi in a not-so-different context has called an “immature politics.” Instead, let’s note that Foucault does not simply register the affinities between a “technology of the self” in antiquity and Christianity, with their attending problems of revelation, faith, and grace, but also the tension that inheres in such a techne between being human as the essential condition in practicing a care of the self and the necessity of belonging to some larger group. A glance at the etymologies of belonging is helpful. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, belonging first meant “corresponding in length,” which, over time, took on the additional meaning of “going along with, accompanying as property or attribute.” The two etymologies come together to signify its final meaning of that which is “appropriate.”29 All these meanings circulate in the preceding passage. On Foucault’s read, the care for the self depends on that form of life that had as one of its properties the quality of belonging. More noteworthy in my view is that Foucault never sees the mere fact of living in antiquity as a sufficient condition for a care for the self, leading him in the closing sections of his lecture of January 20, 1982, to discuss salvation and the problem of “what is it to be in good health, to escape from illnesses, both to be led to death and in a way to be saved from death”? Foucault finds in the tension between being led to death and being saved from it an implicit dialectic between a form of life in which care is possible to
the degree one belongs to a group (or network, if we want to pick up the technological flavor of his argument) and a life linked to a mortality that is caused by the mere fact of being alive.

Foucault sees this movement between the universal and the particular, a nonbelonging of the merely human and a belonging appropriate to a group or collective, at the heart of the question of salvation. Certainly it is one a number of readers of the later Foucault have stressed. We, too, can see that Foucault in these lectures refuses a simple choice between them, which is to say, he does not opt for a quality of belonging, a proper life as opposed to an improper one, as Agamben does, whereby the improper one would be lined up with potential. Though the remainder of the lectures range widely across the various manifestations of askesis in Greek and Roman antiquity and the construction of a “complete relation of oneself to oneself,” the tension between the universal and the particular, between belonging and being merely human, is maintained.

What does Foucault make of the relation between proper life and care of the self? Foucault moves in two directions simultaneously: on one hand, toward those dispositifs crucial for a care for the self and, on the other hand, toward those techne of bios not completely homologous to such apparatuses of the self. Speaking across a number of important pages about the significance of the term meditatio in Latin (meletan in Greek) as associated with belonging to a particular group, he writes,

First meletan is to perform an exercise of appropriation, the appropriation of a thought. . . . The meditatio involves, rather, appropriating [a thought] and being so profoundly convinced of it that we both believe it to be true and can also repeat it constantly and immediately whenever the need or opportunity to do so requires.

Foucault describes this assistance as a prokheiron in Greek or in Latin as ad manum (ready to hand), an apparatus of truth that will serve “as an exercise for the day he suffers a misfortune, so he will have prokheiron (ad manum: ready to hand), the apparatus of truth which will allow him to struggle against this or that misfortune, when it arrives.”

Foucault thinks modes of appropriating a thought through the notion of dispositif but does not link them to strategic relations of force primarily; rather, he joins them to a proper mode of care for the self.

Such a “ready at hand” echoes Heidegger’s notion of improper writing and of not having at hand. The reader will recall, in particular, those pages in which Heidegger, in Parmenides, argues that a different kind of writing, an improper one linked to the typewriter, led to all sorts of disastrous results, in particular, to a thanatopolitics associated with the birth of the Communist technical man. Foucault, too, focuses on the notion of the hand in antiquity for a practice of the care for the self that is a part of another apparatus of truth. Foucault relates this having ready at hand to a practice of “listening, reading, and writing” that will allow the subject to say the truth about oneself, what he names in Fearless Speech as parrhesia. The practice of a care for the self cannot be thought in Foucault’s view apart from the apparatus of the letter that is ready at hand, which can be reread and thus incorporated or memorized for future moments of misfortune. We can sum up Foucault’s view on care of the self this way: the sense of belonging to a group as what gives proper form to life results from an apparatus of the letter that is ready at hand only to the degree that it originates in and from a collective form of being across time.

One further point: having these letters or writings as a dispositif ready at hand produces a kind of subjectivity for the philosopher, one that is intimately related to freedom. These are not monks of the Christian sort who are asked to follow rules but those in antiquity who put into practice the art of living as care of the self. In fact, Foucault will make a distinction between a Christian framework of a rule of life as opposed to antiquity’s techne tou biou (an art of living). He writes, “Making one’s life the object of a techne, making one’s life a work—a beautiful and good work (as everything produced by a good and reasonable techne should be)—necessarily entails the freedom and choice of the person employing this techne.”

Foucault will see a certain form of techne as being indispensable for the art of living. Yet a distinction between rules for life, on one hand, and art and living, on the other, appears here, and it is the techne that functions as the operator of difference between them.

A Techné of Bios

What is the nature of the techne that is capable of making life its object? Foucault will devote many pages to this question in Hermeneutics of the Subject, but he comes closest to joining forms of life to techne in the lecture from March 17, 1982. Reading Seneca on abstinence, Foucault spells out the relation of forms of life to techne:

In other words, what Seneca is aiming for in this kind of exercise is not the great conversion to the general life of abstinence, which was the rule
for some Cynics and will of course be the rule in Christian monasticism. Rather than converting oneself to abstinence, what is involved is the integration of abstinence as a sort of recurrent, regular exercise to which one returns from time to time and which enables a forma (a form) to be given to life, that is to say, which enables the individual to have the appropriate attitude [towards] himself and the events of his life; sufficiently detached to be able to bear misfortune when it arises; but already sufficiently detached to be able to treat the wealth and goods around us with the necessary indifference and with correct and wise nonchalance.33

Foucault goes on to note how these exercises of abstinence have the express purpose of “forming a style of life” and are not “exercises of abstinence for regulating one’s life in accordance with precise interdictions and prohibitions.” The notion of style merits our attention, but for now, it is enough to note that Foucault relates abstinence and renunciation to giving form to life, as if the not fulfilling of desire effectively gave form to life. Indeed, something about practicing abstinence as part of a techne of bios permits the individual to develop the proper attitude toward herself; a homology arises between the proper perspective on oneself and the organic link of giving form to one’s own life. Indeed, we can see this in Foucault’s later gloss of Seneca in the movement between the proper, the form of life given, and the mode of being subject, in which a sense of detachment from the events of one’s own life, in particular, misfortune, is constructed. Abstinence as techne affirms a living to the degree one develops a proper relation to one’s own life. For that to happen, it would seem that a distance from desire makes life ready at hand and hence proper to the individual.

A point requires clarification: throughout these pages, Foucault does not draw a clear-cut distinction between care of the self and techne of bios, which is to say that though the latter is associated with a care of the self, it is not completely captured by the self. The self emerges, instead, as one among a number of possible forms of living or forms of life. In other words, Foucault does not make forms of life conditional on a mere care for the self. Some of the reason will become clear shortly, but for now, Foucault does not characterize the features of the care of the self by a mastery of the self by the self,34 rather, he chooses to highlight freedom.35 Of great interest, therefore, is that over time, the distinction between the two, abstinence and meditatio, as techne will decrease in importance, and instead, the test of the self will grow in Foucault’s account. In subsequent sections of the lectures dedicated to the Hellenistic period, a distinction grows between techne tou bios and care for the self such that the care for the self that results from abstinence and other practices will be linked to the praemeditatio malorum, whereas a later care for the self will be thought primarily through the test.

This test, or what Foucault will call on occasion “self-questioning,” creates difficulties for a techne of bios. The techne concerns developing “a general attitude towards reality” such that the whole of life “must become a test.”36 Foucault writes, “What,” he continues, “is the meaning and objective of life with its formative and discriminating value, of life in its entirety, seen as a test”?37 The answer?

It is precisely to form a self. One must live one’s life in such a way that one cares for the self at every moment and that at the enigmatic end of life . . . what one finds, what anyway must be obtained through the techne one installs in one’s life, is precisely a certain relation to the self, which is the crown, realization, and reward of a life lived as a test.39

Foucault links bios to existence as the object of plural techne and obliquely suggests that the notion of bios ultimately changes across antiquity to become less a techne and more “the form of a test of the self.”40 Many questions come to mind, but most important may well be whether there is a mirroring of the difference between techne of bios and techne of the test in the difference between techne and dispositif (apparatus)? How might such a difference be productive for an affirmative biopolitics? Before turning to these questions, let’s first mark the moments that together spell the development of bios in Foucault’s account. The first consists of the prior moment in which bios results from making living the object of techne and whose practices include frank speech, meditatio, and abstinence. The second moment, which Foucault will contextualize on very nearly the last page of the year’s lectures, occurs when bios is no longer merely the object of techne but is now invaded by a care for the self that cannot be thought apart from mastery. Foucault describes
the decisive moment of bios moving out of the realm of a more ecumenical technē in the following way:

Now if we accept... the idea that if we want to understand the form of objectivity peculiar to Western thought since the Greeks we should maybe take into consideration that a certain moment, in certain circumstances typical of classical Greek thought, the world became the correlate of a *tekhnē*—I mean that at a certain moment it ceased being thought and became known, measured, and mastered thanks to a number of instruments and objectives which characterized the *tekhnē*, or different techniques—well, if the form of objectivity peculiar to Western thought was therefore constituted when, at the dusk of thought, the world was considered and manipulated by *tekhnē*, then I can think we can say this: that the form of subjectivity peculiar to Western thought... was constituted by a movement that was the reverse of this. It was constituted when the bios ceased what it had been for so long in Greek thought, namely the correlate of a *tekhnē*; when the bios (life) ceased being the correlate of a *tekhnē* to become instead the form of a test of the self.⁴¹

A change in the fortunes of bios occurs when the test becomes the dominant mode by which care for the self is practiced in a framework that Foucault will call “autonomized.” Perhaps technē is not the proper term here either because what results from it is a mastery over the self. My impression is that for Foucault, such a dominating role for the test is something to bemoan because the test, so integral to a later and limited care for the self, shifts the ground out from under bios such that bios now merely stands in as homologous to the self. At the same time, another change takes place in the relation between technē and the world. In a kind of mobile overlapping, technē moves outside the domain of life to the world such that technē as a subject of bios now becomes the subject of the world. A possible conclusion is that introducing technē outside any link to forms of life that reside outside the self leads to mastery over the world and, at the same time, to the distancing of technē from forms of life. Furthermore, it appears that more than one form of life prior to technē’s independence was available when technē was associated with constructing different forms of life not linked solely to the self. What cannot be doubted, however, is that at the moment when care for the self as test is born, bios’s relation with technē changes. The assumption is that the test is either categorically different from technē or is technē’s degraded form.⁴²

Foucault’s disavowal of technē for bios has a number of consequences. First, it encourages us to disagree with those, such as Agamben, who continually collapse all technē into dispositifs, whose sole purpose is to capture subjectivity so as to envelop it (and by extension, humanity) in a ruined and impolitical process of desubjectivization. On Foucault’s read, however, technē is not simply a dispositif, given that technē wasn’t historically always interested in capturing bios as merely the self, as a mode to master care; rather, technē formerly was the impetus for the construction of forms of life.⁴³ It may sound strange to our ears, but the withdrawal of technē from life opens a space for greater mastery of the self and, so doing, closes off other possibilities for bios as well as the self. Second, the distinction between a technē of bios and a testing of the self is not mirrored in the biopolitical distinction between bios and zoe because those who care for themselves through testing do not in anyway resemble a life unqualified by any attribute, political or otherwise. When seen against the background of some of Foucault’s later comments offered in interviews as well as the general overview he gives of the lectures, the passage suggests that mere care for the self as a test both accounts in some way for our “modern mode of being subjects” and yet fails to live up to the demands of that mode. Perhaps in the unavailability of technē for life outside the self, we have something like a hidden genealogy of biopower. What itineraries can we imagine that allow us to elaborate a technē up to the demands for rejoining technē with bios? What technē are available that would allow us to break the hold that the self as test continues to have over bios? In different words, can we imagine technē today as a practice of bios that might lead to forms of life that are not specifically limited to the self and mastery over it? What would they look like, and why would we even hold out hope that they might be able in some way to measure up to the stunning thanatopolitics of technē over life itself that has been the theme of this study to this point?

Let’s recall just how deeply involved Foucault was near the end of his life in thinking the relation of self to bios. In Fearless Speech as well as a series of interviews at the time, Foucault looked forward to breaking out of an equivalency between life and self. Foucault confirms such a reading in an interview given at the same time as these lectures at the Collège de France:

What I want to show is that the general Greek problem was not the *tekhnē* of the self, it was the *tekhnē* of life, the *tekhnē tou bios*, how to live. It’s quite
clear from Socrates to Seneca or Pliny, for instance, that they didn't worry about the afterlife, what happened after death, or whether God exists or not. That was not really a great problem for them: the problem was: Which tekhnē do I have to use in order to live as well as I ought to live? And I think that one of the main evolutions in ancient culture has been that this tekhnē tou biou became more and more a tekhnē of the self. A Greek citizen of the fifth or fourth century would have felt that his tekhnē for life was to take care of the city, of his companions.... With Plato's Alcibiades, it's very clear: you have to take care of yourself because you have to rule the city. But taking care of yourself for its own sake starts with the Epicureans—it becomes something very general with Seneca, Pliny, and so on: everybody has to take care of himself. Greek ethics is centered on a problem of personal choice, of the aesthetics of existence.

Such a move to bios's relation to art runs parallel with an earlier moment in Hermeneutics of the Subject, in which Foucault discusses the difference between rules of life and the art of living, the techne tou biou. There he writes, "Making one's life the object of a tekhnē, making one's life a work—a beautiful and good work—as everything produced by a good and reasonable tekhnē should be) necessarily entails the freedom and choice of the person employing this tekhnē.45 When juxtaposed to the interview, we see that Foucault literalizes a techne of bios as an art of the living. Thus "a beautiful work is one that conforms to the idea of a certain forma (a certain style, a certain form of life)."46 We note, too, that the turn toward the Greeks for a techne of life also implicitly meant for Foucault a genealogy of biopower. When asked in the same interview whether it wasn't logical "that you should be writing a genealogy of bio-power," Foucault responds ruefully, "I have no time for that now, but it could be done. In fact, I have to do it."47

What emerges in such a reading of Foucault is therefore, on one hand, a possible genealogy of biopower linked to self's enmeshment in mastery and, on the other, aesthetics as offering bios a mode for responding to biopower. In this regard, consider Foucault's enigmatic suggestion, offered in one of his final interviews, of positing bios as a material for aesthetics: "The idea of bios as a material for an aesthetic piece of art is something that fascinates me."48 Indeed, he will speak of "bios as a material for an aesthetic piece of art." Certainly one of the mainstays of modern Western thought and literature is the idea that one's life can be turned into a work of art; fin-de-siècle, art for art's sake later gave birth to a vital life for life's sake, which characterizes so many of the early-twentieth-century avant-garde from Hugo Ball to R. T. Marinetti to André Breton. Foucault surely recognized these modern precursors in his thought. Yet how would a conjunction of aesthetics and bios function as an alternative to a techne of the self as test? Equally, what kind of material is bios such that it can be transformed into a vital aesthetic piece of art (or an aesthetically vital piece of art)? Apparently, aesthetics' more direct manipulation of bios (and not the self) differs from the mastery of the self that characterizes heroic modernism and the avant-garde in particular (because presumably, there the self remains primarily the object of aesthetic techne).49 A techne of bios thought through aesthetics for Foucault might be one better equipped to disconnect life from the intensification of power relations that takes place increasingly under biopower.50 To gloss the end of Foucault's Fearless Speech, an aesthetics of bios would involve taking up the role of "a technician, of a craftsman, of artist" toward bios itself and not the self.51

The Self and Biopower

Some of this technician of bios appears in two seminal readings of the self and biopolitics that appeared after Foucault's death. Both Donna Haraway and Judith Butler emphasize the self's complicity with the intensification of power relations. Haraway forcefully places such an entanglement of the self with biopower front and center in war discourse when she asks, "When is a self enough of a self that its boundaries become central to entire institutionalized discourses in medicine, war and business. Immunity and invulnerability are intersecting concepts." Her conclusion? "Life is a window of vulnerability."52 So, too, Judith Butler. In her reading of recognition protocols for the self that move through the Other, she notes as well that the self and, with it, self-preservation cannot be the highest goal and that the "narcissistic point of view" is not the most urgent need.53 She winds up where Haraway does: with the explicit recognition that any process that reinforces a certain form of the self will continue to posit an ontological difference between self and Other, or in her terms, judge and judged.54

Yet neither Haraway nor Butler ultimately faces the question that Foucault's discussion of the self raises: are all modern attempts at a care for the self complicit in techne's mastery of the world (and implicitly mastery of bios as well)? Butler and Haraway come right up to the question...
of the self and preservation but fail to highlight sufficiently the role that \textit{techn\^e} plays there. In Butler's case, this means that her emphasis on the ethical Foucault read through Levinas fails to inscribe the later Foucault in questions of biopower and hence fails to ask a fundamental question: are there forms of life that do not primarily move through the self that are better equipped to resist such a mastery of the world? Haraway's larger point about the cyborg and a space of hybridity deals better with the self's enmeshment in discourses of war as she attempts to slacken the relation between power and cyborg. But here, too, the question of \textit{techn\^e}'s relation to \textit{bios} remains open.

Why the hesitancy? Surely some of the reason concerns the failure to think the self and its \textit{techn\^e} of the test as in any way different from previous \textit{techn\^e} of \textit{bios}. What is at issue is how the mastery of the self and the mastery of the world have as their result an intensification of the borders of the self, premised on a limitation of \textit{techn\^e} of \textit{bios}. How, we might well ask, does an intensification of the self's borders work? For a possible answer, I want to introduce Freud's reading of the self and what he calls the "self-preservation" drive or instinct. To do so offers us a preliminary step to where I ultimately am heading, namely, imagining possible practices of \textit{bios} in lieu of self \textit{techn\^e}. That we should introduce Freud in a context of \textit{techn\^e} and biopower will surprise no one, given the role Freud awards negation in terms of self-preservation. Let's consider a number of passages from Freud, all coming from two seminal essays.\footnote{The first is taken from "Drives and Their Fates." Here Freud, in an attempt to set out the difference between "ego or self-preservation drives" and "sexual drives," sketches the process whereby the original ego comes into being.}

The ego does not need the outside world, but, as a result of experiences undergone by the self-preservation drives, it does acquire objects from it.\ldots So under the rule of the pleasure principle another development now takes place. The ego takes the objects it encounters, in so far as they are sources of pleasure, into itself, it introjects them \ldots while, on the other hand, expelling whatever within itself causes displeasure.\ldots The original reality-ego, which distinguished an inside from an outside by means of a sound objective criterion, thus turns into a purified pleasure ego, which puts the factor of pleasure above all else. The outside world is divided up into a pleasurable part, which it incorporates into itself, and the rest, which is alien to it. It also separates off a part of its own self, which it projects into the outside world and perceives as hostile.\footnote{The "sound objective criterion" for Freud is protection from stimuli arriving from the outside and the ego's instinctual move away from them. Implicit in his analysis is that attachment to pleasure already introjected cannot be separated from the stimuli arriving from outside. This leads Freud to the following stunning conclusion:}

\begin{quote}
If the object is a source of unpleasurable sensations, there is an impulse to increase the distance between it and the ego, repeating the original attempt at flight from the stimuli of the outside world. We feel "repulsion" at such an object and hate it; this hate can then escalate into an aggressive inclination towards the object, an intent to destroy it.\footnote{The conclusion? "As an object relation, hate is older than love, its source being the narcissistic ego's primal rejection of the stimuli of the outside world. \ldots It [hate] remains forever closely related to the self-preservation drives." In Freudian terms, the "problem with the self" cannot be thought except as part of a systematic process of incorporation and expulsion; it is for this reason that love for Freud at its preliminary stages is scarcely distinguishable from hate. In each instance, the self-preservation drives dominate over what Freud will call the sexual drives.}
\end{quote}

Freud examines the division of inside and outside on which the self's preservation is based in another seminal essay, "Negation." Here Freud superimposes judgment over the original reality ego's relation to the outside and spells out the relation between stimuli and preservation more fully:

\begin{quote}
The function of judgment is concerned in the main with two sorts of decisions. It affirms or disaffirms the possession by a thing of a particular attribute; and it asserts or disputes that a presentation has an existence in reality. The attribute to be decided about may originally have been good or bad, useful or harmful. Expressing the language of the oldest—the oral—instinctual impulses, the judgment is: "I should like to eat this," or "I should like to spit this out"; and, put more generally: "I should like to take this into myself and to keep that out." That is to say: "It shall be inside me" or "it shall be outside me." As I have shown elsewhere, the original pleasure-ego wants to introject everything into itself that is good and to eject itself everything that is bad. What is bad, what is alien to the ego and what is external are, to begin with, identical.\footnote{If we were to follow out the process of introjection and expulsion, the self's attachment to objects seemingly begins with an originary division}
in which what is incorporated cannot be separated from what has been expelled: to be on the outside is already to have been expelled and hence to be alien to the ego. In this sense, the self’s relation to objects as stimuli cannot be thought apart from the defense of the inside, that is, introjection and a moving outside (projection).60 Interestingly, Freud will go on to relate the process of introjection and expulsion that was central to the self-preservation drive of “Drives and Their Fates” to the “instinct for destruction.” “The polarity of judgment,” he notes, “appears to correspond to the opposition of the two groups of instincts [drives] which we have supposed to exist. Affirmation—as a substitute for uniting—belongs to Eros; negation—the successor to expulsion—belongs to the instinct [drive] of destruction.”61 As many have noted, some similarity, or even perhaps an anxiety of influence, is visible in such a perspective, which evokes Hobbes and the state of nature, given the emphasis Freud places on the “ego’s struggle to preserve and assert itself.”62 I prefer to focus alternately on the polarity of judgment that is inscribed in the self-preservation drive and, with it, the drive for destruction because here we find an opening to the negative of judgment, or better, the negative of a negation.63 How do we want to speak of the negative of judgment? One way, though by no means the only one, is as a form of standing in place, a state that does not immediately move toward expulsion or incorporation, something in line with the final pages of Fearless Speech, in which Foucault speaks of avoiding taking up the “role towards oneself as that of a judge pronouncing a value.”64

Something else deserves mention. Implicit in the reading of techne and dispositif across the previous chapters was something like a negative inscription of techne that is always already located in the drive of destruction. We sense it in Heidegger’s technologized man, who is prepared for (and prepares) destruction, and we see it in Sloterdijk’s raging political parties. One of the merits of Freud’s reading of the drive for destruction will be located in having unearthed a vector of thanatos in techne’s reinforcement of the self by providing the self with extensions as a way of moving outside and of incorporating.65 The result is one that the Invisible Committee recently analyzed:

“I am what I am.” My body belongs to me. I am me, you are you and something’s wrong. Mass personalization. Individualization of all conditions—life, work and misery. Diffuse schizophrenia. Rampant depression. Atomization into fine paranoid particles. Hysteronization of contact. The more I want to be me, the more I feel an emptiness. The more I express myself, the more I am drained. The more I run after myself, the more tired I get. We treat our Self like a boring box office. We’ve become our own representatives in a strange commerce, guarantors of a personalization that feels, in the end, a lot more like an amputation. . . . Meanwhile, I manage. The quest for a self, my blog, my apartment, the latest fashionable crap, relationship dramas, who’s fucking who . . . whatever prosthesis it takes to hold on to an “I.”66

In this interaction between prosthesis and techne, we continue to hold on to the self—a self that is strangely empty and one that continues to be the object of loss or amputation. Such a diagnosis would have prosthesis and judgment dovetail; judgments provide a way of holding on to a self and thereby reinforce a series of personalizing technologies that guarantee a self, while continually being at risk of replacement in a seemingly never-ending dance. Yet, to the degree the Invisible Committee suggest a return to some notion of a fortified self by removing prosthesis, they miss a series of steps. The problem cannot be simply prosthesis but rather the way interactions with the outside are intensified because the instinct for destruction is linked to this moment of expulsion. The simple negation of prosthesis or of techne fails to hit the mark. We require alternately a moment that does not move to incorporation or expulsion—not management but something like a reaching out to objects that would avoid both identification and aversion to them.

In other words, the Invisible Committee continue to assume a discourse of mastery of the self over the self and not just the self’s management of its various prostheses. As the reading of Foucault and Freud together suggests, it is mastery of the world by techne and the self by the test that fundamentally involves a relation to the negative; mastery as well as management are not affirmative in a way that might be able to block the move to incorporation, be it of the weak or strong variety. This raises the question of those other forms of relation to mastery that might forgo an intensification of biopower via mastery of the self. Perhaps we are speaking about apprenticeship as a form of nonmastery—to a self that is not driven solely by self-protection. Foucault recognizes such a perspective when he links governing, be it of the self or the polis, to a group as always enjoying a relation to power and mastery. This might well be the point at which governmentality fails to respond to biopower; indeed, it cannot, given the role that the negative plays therein.
Practicing B
cia

On the problem of the negative and responses to biopower, the question we need to ask ourselves is this: are there techné whose effects cannot be measured solely in mastery? To prepare the ground for an answer, we first need to acknowledge a problem with our lexicon while imagining other ways of referring to techné that would not evoke the negative or mastery. In limited fashion, I want to propose the notion of practice for reasons that have to do with the connections running between practice and the other key terms of this chapter, namely, attention and play. On this score, Pierre Bourdieu's insight into the relation of genealogy to practice precedes us. Speaking of maps and navigating abstract spaces, he writes,

The gulf between this potential, abstract space, devoid of landmarks or any privileged centre—like genealogies, in which the ego is as unreal as the starting-point in a Cartesian space—and the practical space of journeys actually made, can be seen from the difficulty we have in recognizing familiar routes on a map or town-plan.67

To speak of a practice of bios is to speak of the potential, abstract space of a genealogy whose origin is impossible to mark, given that where a self requires borders (so as to have coordinates and hence to navigate), bios does not: in this sense, bios and not the self is the privileged object of genealogy.68 The task will be to locate the elements of a practice of bios that do not fall headfirst into mastery, that do not immediately limit the potential of such a genealogical space of practice—in other words, an impolitical space that does not depend on representation since representation limits the possibilities precisely of attention as an impolitical practice. As such, a practice of bios runs parallel with Foucault's view of critique as genealogical in that it "will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think."69 Bios and genealogy would therefore be inscribed within the horizon of practices by which one moves away from the self and its techne. To the degree that a practice of bios (and not a techne of the self) would be one that does not move to reinforce the self and its extensions, it is "disconnected from the intensification of power relations," which Foucault saw at the heart of the notion of critique.70

Here I want to propose that we consider attention as the practice that will inform bios. Let's immediately admit that not everyone agrees with such a perspective on attention as a practice worth practicing precisely because it appears unable to maintain any distance from intensifying power relations. In his seminal discussion of optical devices of the nineteenth century in Techniques of the Observer, Jonathan Crary, for instance, notes the thanthropological weight of these apparatuses because they "involved the arrangements of bodies in space, regulations of activity, and the deployment of individual bodies." "They were," he goes on, "techniques for the management of attention, for imposing, homogeneity, anti-nomadic procedures that fixed and isolated the observer using partitioning and cellularity... in which the individual is reduced as a political force."71 In a reading that will show how applied knowledge to the body increases attention "in the pure objectivity of perception," Crary will find mankind deeply enmeshed in the same web of techne of the self understood as mastery of the world that was the subject of the last pages of Foucault's critique in Hermeneutics of the Subject. In his 2002 follow-up, Suspensions of Perception, Crary draws a number of compelling conclusions from the earlier work to see attention as fundamentally problematic for modernity. "It is possible," he writes, "to see one crucial aspect of modernity as an ongoing crisis of attentiveness, in which the changing configurations of capitalism continually push attention and distraction to new limits and thresholds, with an endless sequence of new products, sources of stimulation, and regulating perception."72 For Crary, attention masks strategies of control and offers much less resistance to it (indeed, he will speak of attention as a phenomenon that drifts). Perhaps for this reason, Crary often inscribes attention in disciplinary horizons and, so doing, discounts the potential power of attention. But what if we inscribe attention in another horizon, of practice or play that attention provides? Might a reinforced attention offer more resistance to an intensification of power relations than what Crary suggests?

Others, however, have noted the stunning power of attention. Merleau-Ponty, for instance, in his beautiful essay "Attention and Judgment," remarks that "attention creates nothing, and it is a natural miracle... which strikes up like sparks those perceptions or ideas capable of providing an answer to questions that I was asking."73 He suggests that "attention is therefore a general and unconditioned power in the sense that at any moment it can be applied indifferently to any content of consciousness. Being everywhere barren, nowhere can it have its own purposes to fill."74 The power of attention for Merleau-Ponty differs from
those powers that have “purposes to fill”—attention is less expedient than those other powers to the degree one can employ it whenever and wherever one wants.75 For Merleau-Ponty, attention attends, which is to say not only that attention waits but also that it stretches toward objects while not taking possession of them (we can hear echoes of Freud’s own perspective on judgment in the earlier passage in which he notes how judgment “affirms or disaffirms the possession by a thing of a particular attribute”). Key is the sense of stretching toward without taking hold of, of coming up to the object and waiting. Attention in this attending to runs counter to judgment. Writing of the nexus of intellectualism and judgment, he argues that “ordinary experience draws a clear distinction between sense experience and judgment. It sees judgment as the taking of a stand, as an effort to know something which shall be valid for myself every moment of my life, and equally for other actual or potential minds; sense experience, on the contrary, is taking appearance at face value…. This distinction disappears in intellectualism, because judgment is everywhere where pure sensation is not.” For Merleau-Ponty, attention moves toward possessing, which is to say, draws up to and simultaneously withdraws from judgment. On his read, attention offers a mode of approaching the object without incorporating or expelling.

What forms of life may be said to emerge from a practice of attention?77 On one level, it is a form of life that avoids being captured by the self’s acquisitive power, and here Merleau-Ponty’s division of attention into two registers is helpful: secondary attention for him “would be limited to recalling knowledge already gained.” It is homologous to “acquisition”—to the process of memory linked to an identification with the subject of memory,79 an acquisition that signals the process of incorporation and expulsion described earlier. Primary attention, however, does not merely “elucidate pre-existing data.” It brings about “a new articulation… by taking them [data] as figures against a horizon. It is precisely the original structure which they introduce that brings out the identity of the object before and after the act of attention.”80 Obviously, we must not overlook the difficulties of Merleau-Ponty’s reading of attention as bringing out the identity of the object both before and after, given such a perspective’s dependence on the notion of horizon as providing an ultimate transcendence to the object/figure: the appearance of the figure against the horizon guarantees identity. And so we require ways of speaking about attention that would allow us to continue to hold open a space between figure and horizon, that do not merely postpone a decision about identity until after attention has run out. We require a practice that prolongs the time of attention so as to hold open the spatial interval between figure and horizon.

**Haecceitic Attention**

On this score, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s discussions of haecceity move to the center. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they introduce the term *haecceity* to describe the kinds of possible spaces that call to mind the kind of space constructed by the attention I want to think here. They argue that we must think of haecceity as consisting not “simply of a decor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground”; instead, haecceitic space encompasses “the entire assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subject which belong to another plane.”81 In lieu of figure and horizon, they prefer to speak of composition. Thus “the street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into composition with the air, and the beast and the full moon enter into composition with each other.” In their analysis, the composition between figures and between the former horizon and the figure does not lead immediately to a before and after in which attention has fixed the horizon and the figure but rather points to “the potentialities of becoming within each assemblage.” For Deleuze and Guattari, “a haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination: it is always in the middle.”82 Deleuze and Guattari’s reading brings us closer to a form of attention that resides between form and horizon, form and world. So much so that a practice of attention able to meet the demands of biopower today is one that holds open a space in which potentialities for becoming are allowed to emerge. We note as well a not-so-subterranean connection in their discussion of the haecceitic space. A space of becoming is also a space in which elements move into composition with each other.

Deleuze details more features of such a compositional space in his reading of couples and triptychs in his study of Francis Bacon:

The triptych is undoubtedly the form in which the following demand is posed most precisely: there must be a relationship between the separated
parts, but this relationship must be neither narrative nor logical. The triptych does not imply a progression, and it does not tell a story. Thus it too, in turn, has to incarnate a common fact for diverse figures. It has to produce a "matters of fact."83

In Deleuze's formulation, art intersects with a "matters of factness" that relates different figures to each other, though not immediately to any kind of horizon. This matter of factness provides us with another way of thinking about art—a practice of attention would be one that allows a form of life to register the matter of factness of perception—that attends to sense perceptions in the same way that a triptych incarnates a common fact with no progression and with no move to bordering. The emphasis on incarnation in the passage, the flesching out that takes place in haecceity as a "common" fact, is one we ought to take seriously as it also suggests a commonality between figures not joined to a defense of borders.

Consider too that attention and haecceity share a horizon with composition. Composition, as the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, comes from com (together or with) and posere (to place or to put down)—thus its meaning, "to make by putting together elements."84 Composition strongly connotes a kind of relativity, with the emphasis not falling on the subject existing behind or before the act of picking up and putting down but on a kind of innerness that resides in the elements themselves. At the same time, we note a creative component to composition, which Deleuze discusses in Cinema 1 in the context of the philosophy of montage. There he describes montages as a power that "is able to start fresh every instant, of starting afresh itself, and in this way confirming itself for itself, by putting the whole stake back into play each time."85 The work of montage is the "work of a hand that touches, not of a hand that seizes," he will say.86 This mode of nonseizing as a technique of modern art implies a model for attention as it, too, avoids seizing or judging.

A practice of attention equal to the demands of biopower would be one that mirrors such a perspective on montage. It is a part of what Félix Guattari refers to as a "new aesthetic processual paradigm."87 For Guattari, the new aesthetic paradigm concerns an "aesthetic power of feeling" that "is equal in principle with the other powers of thinking philosophically."88 What sets aesthetic power apart is not the reference to institutional art, or even its "dimension of creation in a nascent state, perpetually in advance of itself"; rather its privileged status involves a relation to "spheres of exteriority" that are not "radically separated from the interior. . . . There isn't really any exteriority."89 The new paradigm's decisive feature is creation:

The incessant clash of the movement of art against established boundaries . . . its propensity to renew its materials of expression and the ontological texture of the precepts and affects it promotes brings about if not a direct contamination of other domains then at least a highlighting and a re-evaluation of the creative dimensions that traverse all of them. Patently, art does not have a monopoly on creation, but it takes its capacity to invent mutant coordinates to extremes; it engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being.90

For Guattari, the aesthetic paradigm implies a whole series of techniques that emphasize a "creative instance" rather than simply the thing created. In short, "one does not situate qualities or attributes as secondary in relation to being or substance; nor does one commence with being as a pure empty container (and a priori) of all the possible modalities of existing. . . . The emphasis is no longer placed on Being . . . it is placed on the manner of being."91 Guattari intimates that a helpful contamination of attention with such an ontological view of art might help attention acquire some of the power of the creative—might move it toward a creative dimension and hence change its ontological registers.

What would a practice of creative attention look like? By moving toward the creative, such a practice would emphasize Being less and more modes of being, the manner of being of the objects of perception that appear in the relation that they share with other objects of attention—in the compositional and haecceitic space that attention shares with art.92 Equally, such a practice of attention would not jump to marking the attributes of being or substance. We saw Heidegger enacting exactly this in the first chapter and Agamben in the second, when writing on the quality attributed to each.

But why call such a practice affirmative? Because it affirms what emerges out of the autopoietic instances of the aesthetic paradigm. In this regard, Guattari writes that "the decisive threshold constituting this new aesthetic paradigm lies in the aptitude of these processes of creation to auto-affirm themselves as existential nuclei."93 In other words, in the move toward attention as creation as
ontology, the basic elements of existence are themselves affirmed. Following Guattari's reading of the aesthetic paradigm, attention as a practice might be seen as giving birth to immanent forms of life.

Our question must be how to potentialize attention because to do so would be a way of auto-affirming creation and, with it, an affirmative biopolitics. Surely one of the first ways will involve changing our conceptions of attention by bringing it closer to the realm of aesthetics. To do so, we need to emphasize attention's creative, compositional side—to see it as a practice of placing elements together from which forms of *bios* may emerge not thought entirely or solely in terms of the self. Key in such a perspective on attention is the nonseizing that is at the heart of a compositional space. To compose, one must not seize; the act of putting together in fact precludes seizing the object—a grasping or clutching of one perception over another. Here I am reminded of Walter Benjamin's notion of immanent critique sketched in "The Concept of Art Criticism," in which he distinguishes between relationality and judging. This "completely different kind of criticism" is "not concerned with judging. "Its centre of gravity," he goes on, "lies not in the estimation of a single work but in demonstrating its relations to all other works, and ultimately to the idea of art." A practice of attention as immanent critique would not seize by judging, incorporating, or expelling but would allow one to uncover the relationality inherent in the elements that make up the haecceitic space. A capacity is required to hold a perspective on the figures to which one is attending and, so doing, to shift the center of gravity to the relational side of the series of objects of perception. By holding open the interval between figure and horizon, object and meaning, a space emerges in which to attend to relationality.

The Metaphysics of Play

This holding apart of figure and horizon has another name, and that is "play." That we should consider play as a practice of attention, as a practice of *bios*, is slightly unexpected when we remember how a number of twentieth-century philosophers looked to play for its antime- 

physical properties while ultimately discounting its potential. On this score, George Bataille comes to mind. In the essay "Unknowning and Rebellion," he responds to a young medical intern who tells him that everything "comes down to the instinct of self-preservation." Bataille's response?

My conception is surely less out of date.... It consists in saying that all is play, that being is play, that the idea of God is unwelcome and, furthermore, intolerable, in that God, being situated outside time, can be only play, but is harnessed by human thought to creation and to all the implications of creation, which go contrary to play (to the game). Bataille's task in the essay is to think "the possibility of a philosophy of play," which will lead him ultimately to substitute play with game, that is, "to think and be the game, make of the world and ourselves a game on condition that we look suffering and death in the face." He concludes soon after that "my thought has but one object, play, in which my thinking, the working of my thought dissolves." Bataille's philosophy of play as involving the unknown and a rebellion against his own thought separates play from creation and hence surprisingly (for Bataille) is one that fails to take up the possibility of contaminating play with creation or, for that matter, attention with aesthetics. Equally, it fails because Bataille sees play as part of a dialectic of the master and the slave: he who plays a game, the slave, so as to vanquish the master masters himself. The antinomy that Bataille recognizes but from which he cannot free himself is the negative place awarded death vis-à-vis the game. "The philosophy of play appears, in a manner that is fundamental, to be truth itself: common and indisputable: it is, nevertheless, out of kilter in that we suffer and die." Essentially, then, Bataille thinks a form of play that would force the player to "look suffering and death in the face." The advantage that attention as a creative form of play would have is that it does not attach a predicate to its objects. One does not play at something, namely, a game, but *with* something. In the case of attention as an affirmative practice, we might well say that one plays with the notion of self.

Jacques Derrida, of course, is the other philosopher who, more than any other, takes up the philosophical merits of play. In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida, writing with Lévi-Strauss in mind, places play "in tension" with history and then goes on to link play to presence:

Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the
alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around.  

For Derrida, play precedes the oscillation between presence and absence. In the ultimate space of the play of difference, of difference as play, one can make out the effects of the contrary of play that will go by the name of Lévi-Strauss's ethic of innocence and the absent origin:

If Lévi-Strauss, better than any other, has brought to light the play of repetition and the repetition of play, one no less perceives in his work a sort of ethic of presence, an ethic of nostalgia for origins, an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech—an ethic, nostalgia, and even remorse, which he often presents as the motivation of the ethnological project when he moves toward the archaic societies which are exemplary societies in his eyes.

Lévi-Strauss's fractured present results in a negative thinking of play that continues to traffic in nostalgia and sadness. At the same time, Derrida adds, another form of play will be found that affirms the world, which is "the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin." Such an affirmative form of play is problematic, however, for Derrida because it is still concerned with security and presence: "There is a sure play: that which is limited to the substitution of given, and existing, present pieces." Ultimately, affirmation as an attribute of play is doomed because no such thing as presence can be said to exist without absence, and hence no ultimately secure mode of play is available. In other words, affirmation continues to be held hostage to knowing what is to come. Rather than affirmation, Derrida prefers the "seminal adventure of the trace," which is what arises when affirmation surrenders "to genetic indetermination." Clearly affirmation for Derrida is problematic because as it turns away from the origin, affirmation "tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, throughout his entire history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play." Presence kills off play.

Much remains to be said in this admittedly brief encapsulation of Derrida's perspective on play. Yet what stands out in a chapter on attention as play is the negative tone that characterizes Derrida's assertion of the trace's adventure, in particular, the weight he awards determination. The Nietzschean joyful affirmation of man gives way to "genetic indetermination." Derrida refuses, in my view mistakenly, to countenance something like the possibility of an affirmation not caught by sure forms of play. In this regard, it is helpful to compare Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's theory of negation with Derrida's. For Deleuze, that theory is based on "the difference between distinction, always positive, and negative determination: all determination is negative." In Derrida's move to indetermination, one might well register a kind of remainder in the seminal adventure of the trace, something perhaps like a negative tonality. Deleuze, quoting Spinoza, notes,

"Corresponding to positivity as infinite essence there is affirmation as necessary existence" (Ethics, 1, 7 and 8). That is why all the attributes, which are really distinct precisely by virtue of their distinction without opposition, are at the same time affirmed of one and the same substance, whose essence and existence they express (I, 10, schol. 1 and 19).

Deleuze's gloss of Spinoza offers a way forward from the negative tonality of indeterminacy by seeing play as a process of distinguishing without bringing in its wake oppositions and possessions of attributes—not presence as opposed to absence but instead an ontological force expressed by these attributes. To bring the discussion back, then, to practices, attention would name the practice that does not move to determining the objects of perception by calling forth their opposite—by judging them in Freud and Merleau-Ponty's perspective—but one that marks their distinctive attributes, that names them and, in so doing, distinguishes and affirms them. One does not find anything like the substituting of present pieces one for another but rather in a holding together of the elements of the compositional space, a possibility that other itineraries might become available. In other words, it might well be that attention itself is a form of unsure play.

Aesthetics, Play, Creation

The conjunction of play and attention returns us to the notion of the creative that was central to my earlier gloss of Guattari's reading of the "aesthetic paradigm" and Derrida's notion of play. Play, lest we forget, is not simply about adventure—playing with something—but also includes a notion of creativity. To play often evokes something like a creative living...
element. And so, what elements do attention and play share, that is, what would attention as play and play as attention look like? The answer will be found in a notion of immanent play that resembles a reaching out. To see what I mean, I want to introduce the notion of play within a context of writings about children at play. In particular, a number of pages from D.W. Winnicott’s Playing and Reality come to mind, especially those in which he notes the importance of the interaction of a resting state and creation. Winnicott thinks play not only in the handling of the object but also more broadly as emerging out of the interaction between a resting state, which he will gloss as a therapeutic setting, and what he calls “a [creative] reaching-out.” His meaning on this score is not always clear, but he appears to recall the earlier discussion of a practice of attention, and hence the move from resting to reaching out seemingly entails a creative attribute. Such a reaching out does not for Winnicott (as it does not for Deleuze in the earlier quote on montage or for Merleau-Ponty on judging) involve the moment of holding or grasping but appears as the mode by which a reaching out in play takes place for the child. He calls this between space “a space of relief” from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, “an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged,” which he will then note as being “in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is ‘lost’ in play.” The intermediate area, he tells us, “constitutes the greater part of an infant’s experience” and throughout life is retained in the “intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work.” Winnicott’s child “lost” in play deserves a much longer discussion, what some call the “absorption model of play” thought in relation to those later moments of “imaginative living” that he calls “intense experiencing.” What they share is not the feature of being lost or absorbed in play, however, but a shared origin in the mode of handling or reaching out. They also share another feature, one often overlooked, namely, that play is precarious as well as creative, that it is “always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived,” which may come to an end at any instant. Indeed, for Winnicott, the precariousness of play precisely makes it a “creative experience.” Thus he will call play an “experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living.” It is for this reason that playing as a creative reaching out for Winnicott is itself “a therapy.”

It bears repeating that Winnicott’s view of play as premised on a creative reaching out in opposition to a noncreative seizing echoes the roots of the word attention as “a sense of tension, of being stretched, and also of waiting.” In the reaching out of attention, we have a form of play that begins to enjoy a relation to a basic form of living, an imaginative living that is able to provide some relief from “the strain of inner and outer reality”—in other words, from the continual move to introject or expel that lies at the heart of the instinct for self-preservation and for destruction. Yet we can go further in linking creative attention and bios through the notion of play. Play and attention also share how they withdraw from possessing, a mode that does not immediately make the object of perception or the toy one’s own. Play may become the ground for other forms of life or modes of being to arise, in which the supposed content of bios as self will determine how it is that one plays at life. Here it may useful to turn to those wonderful pages from Walter Benjamin’s The Cultural History of Toys, in which Benjamin gives a philosophical classification of toys:

As long as the realm of toys was dominated by a dour naturalism, there were no prospects of drawing attention to the true face of a child at play. Today we may perhaps hope that it will be possible to overcome the basic error—namely, the assumption that the imaginative content of a child’s toys is what determines his playing; whereas in reality the opposite is true. A child wants to pull something, and so he becomes a horse . . . he wants to hide, and so he turns himself into a robber or a policeman . . . Because the more appealing toys are . . . the further they are from genuine playthings; the more they are based on imitation, the further away they lead us from real, living play.

Benjamin opposes a “real, living play” to a dour, naturalistic play thought in terms of the greater appeal of toys. Real living play emerges, instead, in relation to how the child is able to transform herself, to become the plaything. The plaything, we will want to say, leads to becoming, to being absorbed, to borrow the language with which play is often described (the other being slipping). For Benjamin, real play is premised on the presence of playthings that allow the player to be transformed. In different words, behind the genuine plaything lies the self’s shadow, and one does not play thanks to the features of the toys but rather on account of their lack of imaginative content. Benjamin’s perspective allows us to see the shared capacity of attention and play to forgo imitation, which is yet another term for describing a particularly insidious form of incorporation and expulsion.

How might we extend this notion of play into the realm of biopolitics
as a form of resistance to biopower? Can we play at forms of life not captured by the self? Can one modify the sense of self as one modifies a toy in the act of playing so as to create a broader perspective on bios, on those modes of being so unartfully captured by the self? On this score, let's consider another passage from Benjamin: “But we must not forget that the most enduring modifications in toys are never the work of adults, whether they be educators, manufacturers, or writers, but are the result of children at play.” 120 Looking to children at play, perhaps we can make out the horizon of a living art in play that would allow us to see how the self, by withdrawing to play as bios, might be able, if not to block, then to slow down the speed with which borders and defenses and, with them, the instinct for destruction are made manifest. A techné of bios thought through play might be one yet unexplored way to forgo “the dour naturalism” of biopolitics today, in which the object of politics would be merely biological life or that would have the object of life be thinkable only as part of a negative politics.

Creatures, Contradictory and Virtuous

After tracing the links between techné and thanatos, what are we left with finally? Framing the question in this way is already helpful: the question is less what is to be done and more what kind of self remains for a practice of bios. Writing near the end of the twentieth century, William Connolly speaks of slackening in a context of discipline that may be useful:

Since the self is not “designed” to fit perfectly into any way of life, we must anticipate that every good way of life will both realize something in the self and encounter elements in the self resistant to its form; and we should endorse the idea of slack as part of our conception of the good life. An order with slack can sustain itself well without the need to organize the self so completely into a creature of virtue. For the more an order needs virtue the more it eventually authorizes the extension of disciplinary strategies to secure it. 121

For Connolly, slackening the self will reinscribe it in horizons different from mere virtue. Yet the stakes, in my view, move well beyond discipline and virtue to the overarching reading that a number of contemporary philosophers have given of biopower at the crossroads of technology and death. Another way of putting it might be, rather than speaking of the good life, we ought instead to focus on forms of bios able to loosen the self’s relation to a mastery of the world. The creature of virtue produced by the test gives way to a being capable of playing with the notion of the self in different contexts and situations. Doing so, the self becomes less available to the interpellations of institutions by performing less masterfully. The move from the bordered self to the slackened subject of the practices of bios minimizes the contact that borders inevitably share with thanatos. Let’s also note that the object of a practice of bios would not necessarily be virtuous either. If there is a question of virtue, it concerns the virtue of the nonvirtue of bios—a virtue in seeing the self as too limited and limiting.

One surely could respond that a practice of bios thought through attention and play seems too abstract—that it fails to provide a decent wage or allow one to spend more time with one’s children. In other words, what does a practice of bios offer the subject materially right now? My own impression is that we ought to avoid any rushes to judgment about practices as opposed to resistance—about improper political practices as opposed to proper political techniques of rebellion, which would simply reenact some of the same difficulties I have sketched here around proper and improper forms of life and techné. On this score, consider those pages from Nietzsche in which he puts forward the case for a relaxing of borders around perspectives linked merely to the self:

A point of view: in all valuations there is a definite purpose: the preservation of an individual, a community, a race, a state, a church, a belief, or a culture.—Thanks to the fact that people forget that all valuing has a purpose, one and the same man may swarm with a host of contradictory valuations, and therefore with a host of contradictory impulses. This is the expression of disease in man as opposed to the health of animals, in which all the instincts answer certain definite purposes. This creature full of contradictions [dies widerspruchsvolle Geschöpf], however, has in his being a grand method of acquiring knowledge: he feels the pros and cons, he elevates himself to justice—that is to say, to the ascertaining of principles beyond the valuations of good and evil. The wisest man would thus be gifted with mental antennae [der gleichsam Tastorgane] wherewith he could understand all kinds of men, and with it he would have his great moments, when all the chords of his being would ring in splendid unison... A sort of planetary movement [eine Art planetarischer Bewegung]. 122

Perspectives police borders. They preserve and protect. The cost of such a valuing and evaluating, however, is to set up borders around a self
that will then continue to require defending. Nietzsche's solution is not, we should note, to point a way to a return to the health of animals but rather to embrace the contradictions of the diseased human being.\textsuperscript{123} We should also be clear that this is not Connelly's creature of virtue either, but a different one, a creature of contradictions, "dies widerspruchsvolle Geschöpf," and one aware of these contradictions. Perhaps we might find a space here for inserting the practices of attention and play as modes of registering the contradictory features of Nietzsche's creature, not as a return to the animal but rather to the being who receives the gift that makes him wise to the degree other creatures—other forms of \textit{bios}—come into view. In this sense, we might see the practices of \textit{bios} through attention and play as serving definite purposes, namely, moving the self toward greater openness and relationality as opposed to defense. Here a convergence appears between these practices I have discussed and the result of the contradictions, namely, a mode of living in which the wisest "feels the pros and cons" yet does not know them in a traditional sense. Acknowledging the different perspectives of the contradictory creature, the subject of attention and play moves beyond good and evil, beyond true and false in Foucault's terms, indeed beyond mastery of the self by the self. Holding open the space for attention creates conditions in which an "understanding of all men" results—what we should not hesitate to inscribe in a political register as "a planetary movement." Note, too, that Nietzsche suggests another possibility for resisting the complicity of the self with biopower through mastery, those moments when "biopower takes over the activity of care of the self."\textsuperscript{124} These will include modes of ascertaining, elevating, and feeling that do not necessarily or immediately involve "a care of the self."\textsuperscript{125} Admittedly, the task of resisting care and, with it, mastery of the self is not an easy one, but that is where the value added of a practice of \textit{bios} through attention and play might be felt most: in helping us create a breach between care and mastery, between a care for the self felt first in terms of forms of \textit{bios} and known only after in terms of mastery.\textsuperscript{126}

\section*{NOTES}

\begin{itemize}
\item Preface
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1. Following the work of Heidegger and Foucault, \textit{technē} refers to craft or art and has decisively fewer negative connotations than does \textit{technology}. For Greek usage, see Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, chapter 6, as well as Book VI of Plato's \textit{Republic}.


See his discussion of Dessauer and the affirmation of technology, which takes on particular importance in this context: "The fighting subject made of heroism and steel has to be blind to its own destructiveness. The more it threatens to break under the massive suffering of the technical, dominated world, the more optimistically it simulates the heroic pose. At the heart of this theory stands a subject who can no longer suffer because it has become wholly prosthesis." Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason, 457.

See Mario Perniola, Miracoli e traumi della comunicazione (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 2009), for another Heideggerian-inflected reading of communication in the Italian context.


It might be helpful to read in this defense of bioengineered humans something like Sloterdijk’s earlier reading of Dionysian learning, what he calls alternately "therapeutics," "psychonautics," or "psychodrama,"—yes even "politics." Thus "a therapeutic drama at the level of universal civilization, which would be carried out without anyone authorizing or ordering it, would be a learning process that could bring to an end the assault of active nihilism, with its assignments of value, constructive measures, establishment of levels, and eliminations." Peter Sloterdijk, Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche’s Materialism, trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 89.

4. Practicing Bios


2 "One might say that the ancient right to take life and let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death." Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 138. See as well my introduction to Roberto Esposito, Bios. I also take up these issues with Adam Sitze in our introduction to Biopolitics: A Reader (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

3 It is true that Foucault will also make biopolitics the object of his following talk from 1979 titled The Birth of Biopolitics, and there, too, he will observe how "the central core of all the problems that I am trying to identify is what is called the population" and that "this is the basis on which something like biopolitics could be formed." Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 21. For the most part, however, he dedicates his analysis to the similarities between ordoliberalism in Germany and neoliberalism in the United States and forgoes an analysis of the role technology plays in both.

4 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 1.


6 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42.

7 Foucault had introduced the question of security and biopower earlier in "Society Must Be Defended." Speaking of the emergence of biopower, Foucault writes, "In a word, security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life." Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 246. Compare, on this score, the role of fear in the current war on terror as well as the financial derivatives trade: "Terror evinces a politics of fear as well as vulgarity, but we should not cede to the state the affective monotone that would be most conducive to its effective rule. . . . The move from uncertainty to risk is a shift from the fear of the unknown to the thrill of the unexpected." Randy Martin, An Empire of Indifference (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 142.

8 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42. Warren Montag registers this even more forcefully than Foucault in his "Necro-Economics: Adam Smith and Death in the Life of the Universal," Radical Philosophy 134 (November–December 2005): 7–17: "If societies, by virtue of the economy of nature, must exercise, and not merely possess, the right to kill, the market, understood as the very form of human universality as life, must necessarily, at certain precise moments, 'let die'" (13).

9 The strengthening of individual national identities is one response to a scarcity of security. However, "once the problem of invisible contagion is admitted, it is immediately answered by a further specification of the collapse between national and physical borders: invisibility is made visible through signifiers of national and ethnic identity." Kirsten Ostherr, Cinematic Propylaxis: Globalization and Contagion in the Discourse of World Health (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 73.


11 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 44. See in this regard Nico Pouliot’s gloss of resistance and law in State, Power, Socialism, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 2000), 76–92, 149–50. "Hence Foucault’s problem: how is it possible to avoid falling into the conceptual trap of a domination that cannot be escaped; of a power that is absolutely privileged in relation to resistances; of resistances that are always ensnared by power? There can only be one answer: it is necessary to break loose from this hypostatized power and rediscover at any cost something other than these resistances inscribed in power" (150).

12 Nor does Agamben in those pages dedicated to people/People in Means without End, in which he elides the passage from multiplicity to people in Foucault. See esp. part I, "What Is a People?", 29–36.

13 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 45.


15 And hence linked to biopower: "The history of biopower teaches us that the paradigm of security on which contemporary dispositifs of control are based functions
by projecting a specter consisting of diverse fears: to govern means to manage desires by animating fears; to separate therefore the phantasmsorgia of a desirable existence from our lives, or, and which amounts to the same, of an existence to be feared. And thus 'every security is conquered by an insecurity and generates in turn a new insecurity' (Helmut Plessner, Macht und menschliche Natur, 1951)." Quoted in Andrea Cavalletti, Classe (Torto, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009), 90–91.

16 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 49.


18 Aihwa Ong, Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 185. Continuing, Ong adds, "The ethical questions are of what it means to be cultural beings are now framed within the transnational artificial environments dominated by the interests of global pharmaceutical firms."


20 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 16.


22 "Our point of departure is our recognition that the production of subjectivity and the production of the common can together form a spirial, symbiotic relationship... . Perhaps in this process of metamorphosis and constitution we should recognize the formation of the body of the multitude, a fundamentally new kind of body, a common body, a democratic body." Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire (New York: Penguin, 2003), 189–90. Compare Warren Montag on the figure of the multitude: "Spinoza, in his search for stability and political equilibrium, turns a juridical formalism against the power of the multitude... . The alternative... . is daunting indeed; it is we might say a politics of permanent revolution, a politics utterly without guarantees of any kind, in which social stability must always be re-created through a constant reorganization of corporeal life, by means of a perpetual mass mobilization." Warren Montag, Bodies, Mascul, Power: Spinoza and His Contemporaries (New York: Verso, 1999), 84–95.

23 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics. Warren Montag also points to this mechanism in his introduction of the term necro-economics as homonymous with the market and the process whereby some are slowly killed so as to make the market work. "Smith's economics is a necro-economics. The market reduces and rations life; it not only allows death, it demands that death be allowed by the sovereign power, as well as by those who suffer it." Montag, "Necro-economics," 16.

24 Or more simply, populations of individuals make the market work, populations that may be allowed to die. Again, Montag's perspective comes into view: "The subsistence of a population may, and does in specific circumstances, require the death of a significant number of individuals, to be precise it requires that they be allowed to die so that others may live." Montag, "Necro-economics," 14. According to this reading, as in Foucault's reading of ordoliberalism and neoliberalism, the guarantee of competition, which is what govern for the market means, presumes that some are not competitive and hence will not be "governed."

25 Foucault, Hermeneutics of the Subject, 9.

26 "The critical ontology of ourselves must be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them." Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 319.

27 Ibid.

28 Foucault, Hermeneutics of the Subject, 117.

29 OED Online, s.v. "belonging."

30 Foucault, Hermeneutics of the Subject, 357.

31 Ibid., 361.

32 Ibid., 424.

33 Ibid., 429.

34 One ought to keep in mind Derrida's critique of Foucault's History of Sexuality Volume 1, especially with regard to mastery and thanatos: "The same strategy, a strategy profoundly without defense, a strategy that carries with it its own principle of ruin—here is that which also problematizes, in its greatest radicality, the instance of power in its mastery. In a short and difficult passage, Freud comes fully to nominate when not to identify a drive for power and a drive for mastery." Jacques Derrida, "Al di là del principio di potere," in Essere giusti con Freud: La storia della follia nell'età della psicoanalisi (Milan, Italy: Rafffello Cortina, 1994), 110. My thanks to Lorenzo Feltrin for drawing my attention to this text.

35 Foucault, Hermeneutics of the Subject, 448.

36 Ibid., 431.

37 Ibid., 448.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Foucault picks up this definition in the earlier seminar on subjectivity and truth from the lectures of 1980–81. See the important note to Hermeneutics of the Subject, 499n28: "It is the second lecture of the 1981 Collège de France course that Foucault distinguishes between zoe (life as the property of organisms) and bios (existence as the object of techniques)."

41 Ibid., 486.

42 Such a reading of technè as not limited to the test recalls a recent reading of Wittgenstein: "Our practices are thus not exhausted by the idea of a rule. On the
contrary, one thing that Wittgenstein is aimed to show... is that one hasn’t said particularly much about a practice (such as, for instance, language) when one has simply said that it is governed by rules. In reality, discussion of rules is distorted by the (philosophical) idea of an explanatory or justificatory power in the concept of a rule—an idea that leads to conformity.” Sandra Laugier, “Wittgenstein and Cavell: Anthropology, Skepticism, and Politics,” in Claim to Community: Essays on Stanley Cavell and Political Philosophy, ed. Andrew Norris (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 36–37. By adopting practice and not test, we begin to move away from the care for the self that begins with the withdrawal of techne to the degree that practice cannot be limited to mere rules or the homology between rules and tests.

43 In another note contained in Hermeneutics of the Subject, the editor observes that “the 1981 courses continue to focus exclusively on the status of the aphorisma in pagan ethics of the first two centuries A.D., while maintaining that we cannot speak of subjectivity in the Greek world, the ethical element being determined as bios (mode of life)” (20). Foucault appears to suggest that bios is to be thought apart in Greek thought not only from subjectivity but equally from a care for the self. Such a reading will likely be born out by the forthcoming publication of the 1981 course, “Subjectivité et vérité.”

45 Foucault, Hermeneutics of the Subject, 424.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 We must also note that Foucault does not deny an aesthetic component with regard to the Stoics such that both the techné of the self and a techné of bios share a lack of normalizing thought: “I don’t think one can find any normalization in, for instance, the Stoic ethics. The reason is, I think, that the principal aim, the principal target of this kind of ethics, was an aesthetic one.” Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” 254. Compare Foucault’s broadside against modern ethics in The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (London: Routledge, 2001), 327–28.
50 Equally, such a perspective of bios as material for aesthetic production puts some distance between Foucault’s understanding of bios and Agamben’s distinction between bios and zoe because Foucault, who was well aware of the distinction between bios and zoe, does not make zoe the object of aesthetics but rather of bios.
51 Michel Foucault, Fearless Speech (New York: Semiotext(e), 2001), 166.
54 Clearly both Butler and Haraway have Foucault’s critique of modernity’s missing ethics in mind: “Superficially, one might say that knowledge of man, unlike the sciences of nature, is always linked, even in its vaguest form, to ethics or politics; more fundamentally, modern thought is advancing towards that region where man’s Other must become the Same as himself.” Foucault, Order of Things, 328. Agamben, for his part, is less interested in marking such a complicity than he is in capturing the self in his scheme of desubjectification and hence in refusing to disconnect the self’s capabilities from biopower.
55 I am indebted to the attention that both Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips pay to these two essays in their recent work Intimacies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). My own reading, though indebted to theirs, departs in the emphasis I place on attention and play.
57 In this regard, see the entry for “negation” in Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974).
60 See on this note the life and death instincts in Sigmund Freud’s An Outline of Psychoanalysis, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), 20: “After long doubts and vacillations we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, eros and the destructive instinct... The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus—in short to bind them together; the aim of the second, on the contrary, is to undo connections and so to destroy things. We may suppose that the final aim of the destructive instinct is to reduce living things to an inorganic state.”
61 Freud, “Negation,” 239.
63 Useful in this regard is Paolo Virno’s recent discussion of the negation of a negation that empowers the force of the katechon. Virno, Multitude between Innovation and Negation, trans. Isabell Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), 56–65.
64 Foucault, Fearless Speech, 166.
67 Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). 2. Compare Foucault’s understanding of practices “In this piece of research on the prisons... the target of analysis wasn’t ‘institutions,’ ‘theories,’ or ‘ideology,’ but practices—with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practices are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances... but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence, and reason.” Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method,” in The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 75.
68 Bourdieu will also remind us of the impact of different objects on the notion of practice: “Knowledge does not merely depend, as an elementary relativism teaches, on the particular standpoint an observer ‘situated in space and time’
takes up on the object. The 'knowing subject' as the idealist tradition rightly calls him, inflicts on practice a much more fundamental and pernicious alteration which... is bound to pass unnoticed: in taking up a point of view on the action, withdrawing from it in order to observe it from above and from a distance he constitutes practical activity as an object of observation and analysis, a representation." Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, 2.

69 Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", 314-15.
67 Ibid., 317. "What is at stake, then, is this: how can the growth of capabilities [capacités] be disconnected from the intensification of power relations."
71 Cray, Techniques of the Observer, 18.
70 Ibid., 13-14.
74 Ibid., 31.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 34.
77 Compare Francis Bacon's perspective on clichés: "It would be much better to abandon oneself to clichés, to collect them, accumulate them, multiply them, as so many preproticial givens: 'the will to lose the will' comes first." David Sylvester, The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon, 1962–1979, 3rd ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 13; quoted in Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 76.
78 Merleau-Ponty, "Attention and Judgment," 35.
79 Deleuze's reading of art in general is apropos here: "Art is defined, then, as an interpersonal in which the work is composed somewhat like a cairn... Only a conception such as this can tear art away from the personal process of memory and the collective ideal of commemoration." Gilles Deleuze, "What Children Say," in Essays Critical and Clinical, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 66.
82 Ibid., 263.
83 Deleuze, Francis Bacon, 58.
84 OED Online, s.v. "attention."
88 Ibid., 101.
89 Ibid., 102.
90 Ibid., 106.
91 Ibid., 109.
92 Compare the following: "The cut of the present refers to an emptiness that opens a distance between the present and me, between my question about the present and me. It is this distance that allows one to interrogate, for example, the meaning of feminine experience." Chiara Zamboni, "L'inaudito," in Diotima: Mettere al mondo (Milan, Italy: La Tartaruga, 1990), 2.
93 Guattari, Chaosmosis, 106.
95 A useful place to start in any archaeology of play will be found in Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Crossroad, 1985), esp. the chapter titled "Play as the Gue to Ontological Explanation." See, in particular, his reading of Kant and Schiller with regard to the former's critique of taste (90–119).
97 Ibid., 327.
100 Ibid.
101 "He rehabilitates the tangible and human activity of the self but only in order to denounce the illusions it fosters. He insists upon the unity of the human spirit, but in order to rediscover the sacrifice therein and the 'self—for death.' He proclaims love and fusion, but for their relatedness to death." Julia Kristeva, "Bataille, Experience, and Practice," in Bölt-Irons, On Bataille Critical Essays, 239.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 292.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
110 In a much later text, Derrida comes closer to what I have in mind with an unsure form of play. When speaking about giving the other "equal time to speak," Derrida writes, "It is not only a matter of letting the other speak, but of letting time speak, its time, what its time, the time of the other, has as its most proper... In letting arrive what arrives (of the other), this letting 'neutralizes' nothing, it is not a simple passivity, even if some passivity is required here... What I would make happen..."

111 Gadamer knows this well: “The subject of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself. This is the point at which the mode of being of play becomes significant. For play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play. Play also exists—indeed exists properly—when the thematic horizon is not limited by any being-for-itself of subjectivity, and where there are no subjects who are behaving ‘playfully.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 92. Compare, on this note, Agamben's reading of play in terms of the sacred and profanation: “just as the religio that is played with but no longer observed opens the gate to use, so the power [potenza] of economics, law, and politics deactivated in play, can become the gateways to a new happiness.” Giorgio Agamben, *In Praise of Profanation*, in *Fort*, *Profanations*, 76. See as well Agamben's *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993).


114 Ibid., 13.

115 Ibid., 14.

116 Ibid., 50. Compare Eric L. Santner's reading of trauma and knowledge: “The recovery of traumatic disruption cannot be conceived as a form of memory (of a scene or event). It involves, rather, the opening to a certain meaningless or non-sense—an irrationality—at the heart of the repetition compulsions informing one's way of being in the world and therewith the possibility of changing direction in life. We might say that the mode of verification of a trauma is not some form of recovered memory—some form of historical knowledge—but rather a way of acknowledging a distinctive automaticity at the core of one's being.” Santner, *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 40. If we were to think in Winnicott's terms with Santner's, we might find that play would share with a mode of acknowledging a reaching out.

117 *OED Online*, s.v. “attention.”


119 My thanks to Kevin Attell for drawing my attention to these forms of play, especially in the thought of Agamben and Gadamer.


123 Cf. Bataille's notion of *ipse*: “The ipse, the Bataillian self, if we can call it that, is not a high point, not a closed entity embodying a definitive consciousness, but instead a momentary conjunction of coordinated and competing forces, an intersection point, a contingent space of energetic communication.” Allan Stoekl, *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Sustainability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 81.

124 Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askésis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evaston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 238. McGushin's larger reading echoes many of the themes of this chapter: “In fact, the main function of bio-politics is to institute this mode of care of the self: it is through this definition of care of the self that individuals are able to be produced and controlled; it is within this system of actuality that they will be confined” (239). The point would be to move toward singularity but with the following proviso: “that singularity, beyond all the thesis constructed around its potential for liberty and liberation, can take on meaning related to the forms of opening and vitality only if it is not translated into monadism; only if it refuses to put itself in relation by activating proprietary mechanisms with respect to its own proper self” (298).

125 Such self-knowledge is deeply impolitical, as Sloterdijk suggests. Writing with regard to Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, he notes, "I call this remarkably negative structure of self-knowledge the psychoaautical circle. Nietzsche's theatrical adventure into the theory of knowledge is intrinsically implicated in it. His personal and philosophical fate depends to a great extent, I believe, on whether he can complete the tasks of burning away images and whether his search for self can be successfully completed within the context of a beneficial negativity and lack of representation." Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*, trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 34.

126 Compare Kristeva's reading of the self in Bataille: "He rehabilitates the tangible and human activity of the self but only in order to denounce the illusions it fosters." Kristeva, "Bataille, Experience, and Practice," 239. Compare also to Bataille's *Theory of Religion*: "It is the most necessary renunciation in one sense: insofar as man ties himself entirely to the real order, insofar as he limits himself to planning operations. But it is not a question of showing the powerlessness of the man of works: it is a question of tearing man away from the order of works." George Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 89.