

The Ethics of Resistance: Sovereignty and Territory in Foucault's College de France lectures (1970-1984)

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Abstract *The issues of sovereignty and territory can be discussed through ethics. Foucault's College de France lectures (1970-1984) cover such concepts as governmentality and biopolitics that influenced sovereign states, especially in regards to modernity of the eighteenth century. Foucault performs analyses of how discourses through power-knowledge form structures that define an 'Other' in terms of madness, reason and sexuality. This paper shall argue that these 'molar' questions of states are underpinned by a 'molecular' question of ethics, in which Foucault attempts to practice a new form of ethics, thereby subverting the sovereignty in the lecture hall in which he lectured in, and the scholars writing years later. Foucault argues that modernity has changed the nature of sovereignty and territory. Therefore, these questions are not only a question of ethics, but one bound up by the question of modernity and how it has transformed the eighteenth-century conception. The idea that Foucault uses is the definition of ethics, and thus he uses this as an analogy to describe how sovereignties and territories interact. In conclusion, Foucault views sovereignty and territory as philosophical spaces instead of physical or geographical ones, and that a new ethics of resistance is needed to combat neo-liberal bureaucracy.*

Keywords: sovereignty; territory; Foucault; biopolitics

Only by deciphering the truth of self in this world, deciphering one-self with mistrust of oneself and the world, and in fear and trembling before God, will enable us to have access to the true life. [...] There you are, listen, I had things to say to you about the general framework of these analyses. But, well, it is too late. So, thank you. (Foucault, et al., 2011: 1)

Sovereignty and Territory

Foucault's last statement above concluded the last hour of his lectures that Foucault would give at the College de France lecture series, because he would die three months later on 25th June of that same year never to speak again, or perhaps to speak eternally to us. In death, Foucault rests but lives on in his writings and his speech in echoes. Within this exegesis many ideas can be expressed about what Foucault has said. A number of readings, interpretations and disciplines have been influenced, manipulated and employed through and by Foucault, and thus Foucault is useful for his work on sovereignty and territory. And perhaps, one is enacting an enculage or bugging of Foucault, or attempting to make Foucault who one wants, but perhaps not, because Foucault in the lectures quite explicitly analyses sovereignty and territory in the advent of modernity. Foucault pinpoints the changing of sovereignty and territory in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. However, a careful selection of material from the lectures is needed in order to understand what Foucault means by territory and the death of sovereignty in order to flesh out contemporary interpretations of the lectures. One shall attempt to outline in this paper Foucault's position on sovereignty and territory in the lectures in order to better illustrate how his later analyses in his last decade move towards biopolitics, or the new stage of sovereignty and territory he sees operating in modernity, and a return to an ancient form of ethics as the solution. Whilst one shall refer to Foucault's corpus such as *Discipline and Punish* (1975), my focus in this paper are the lectures because of their shift to sovereignty and territory. However, given their three hundred to four hundred pages of the thirteen lectures, one shall have to scathe over some material by focusing on these two key concepts. In conclusion, Foucault sees sovereignty and territory as philosophical spaces instead of physical or geographical phenomena, this difference in argument lends itself to historicise differing conceptions of both these concepts in order to recognise the differences in modernity. Elden (2016), Koopman (2013), Fuggle (2015) are examples of literature examining these lectures.

This paper shall illustrate two fundamental positions of Foucault in regards to sovereignty and territory, firstly that sovereignty is a conceptual, metaphysical and philosophical space for Foucault, and that territory is not a strictly physical or geographical space, but a metaphysical terrain in knowledge and that Foucault is de-constructing sovereignty in the lectures. The two key lectures used for analysis are *On The Will to Know* (1970-1971) and *Psychiatric Power* (1973-1974), which serve as the foundations for analysing the interactions between truth, knowledge, sovereignty, power and territory. Whilst one might argue that *Security, Territory, Population* (1977-78) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-

1979) might be the strongest claim to analysing the death of sovereignty and territory because of the explicit titles, this paper shall argue that Foucault's claims regarding these two notions cannot be understood without the groundwork laid in the earlier lectures. Additionally, Foucault's deconstruction of sovereignty and territory is operating not only discursively, but phenomenologically, in that Foucault is aware of the sovereignty and territory present when he is giving the lectures themselves.

Sovereignty

To summarise, Foucault's insight is that we can understand the present conditions of phenomena once we investigate a past so far remote from our own, and only then can we begin 'thinking' to solve the problems of today. They are no way similar to the problems of the past, but the passage to emancipation is illuminated by this perpetual return to the past whilst in the present to produce a future. One must study the past in order to understand the present and the future to come. To begin, *On The Will to Know (1970-1971)* lecture opens with an analysis of the structures of Greek logos which attempt to present reason as synonymous with being, (Foucault, 2013) , or how our understanding of the world must correlate to reality in order to make sense of things and construct arguments about the nature of things. These analyses are fundamental to Foucault's understanding of sovereignty because in this lecture he is re-examining his earlier works concerning power-knowledge, and drawing out how knowledge is made, and therefore who makes this 'judgement' of knowledge and then who is the 'master' of these knowledges. The master is she who can use reason to present a case whether through myth, poetry or philosophy to describe the world 'as it is', and that will bestow one with sovereignty through the establishment of truth. The definition of sovereignty through truth by Foucault runs against orthodox conceptions of sovereignty in politics and philosophy traditions, thus justifying not only Foucault's novelty in relation to the question of sovereignty, but also that by understanding the concept at a nation level one misses a vital insight and an abundance of conceptual depth which Foucault reveals in his views.

Evidently, these analyses possess a historical dimension in how sovereignty and territory have been transformed throughout time, and furthermore by investigating past forms of a similar phenomenon it helps Foucault to address a contemporary issue. However, unlike his previous analyses concerning 'whoever has power has knowledge', Foucault is attempting to deconstruct the Western metaphysical tradition in examining the presuppositions behind Greek thought in relation to knowledge and its metaphysical construction. In this regard Heidegger's

influence can be seen most clearly in the understanding of how Greek thought not only founded Western thought about being but has continued to determine how we think and operate in the world as human beings (**Scott, 1990**). It is now evident why such arguments as the death of sovereignty and biopolitics are grounded in these earlier lectures precisely because not only truth has become multiple, void, null and even become post-truth, but that as a consequence knowledge and the sovereign are displaced as a result. Therefore, it is apparent that in modernity in the eighteenth century, this triadic relation between truth, knowledge and sovereignty has become broken and torn asunder which then produces a death of sovereignty in the classical tradition and a new production of truths and knowledges that are multiple, pluralistic and at times void in absence of a sovereign to govern them. Foucault argues that because of modernity more truths are produced as society becomes more equalised, as a consequence sovereignty is pluralised because not one sovereign can control the knowledge that is produced, and therefore the classical definition of sovereignty is destroyed, between an emperor and his slaves, between a king and his subjects. In the scholarship of the lectures in the recent decade there has been major debates in whether one should take these lectures as separate to Foucault's published writings, and what if any, are the relations between the two new bodies of work (**Elden, 2016**). In the argument, it is apparent that the question exposes a deeper engrained belief in intellectual history which needs to be questioned itself. Therefore, the lectures pose a problematic relationship to an author's 'command' of his ideas in writing, and a 'free' speech which flies free. The lectures further problematise how best to not only understand such ideas as sovereignty and territory within a given set of texts, but how one is to understand the lectures in regards to the rest of Foucault and his work. Should one regard these texts as a coherent continuation of his work? Foucault as a thinker prevents both types of reasoning in attempting to make a unity of his work between genealogy and archaeology. To conclude on this methodological point, one should use Foucault's own methodologies to analyse his own work, and that will produce a reading pertinent to the lectures.

However, within the first lecture from analysing the roots of Western knowledge apart from the evident usage of Foucault's examinations, it is my argument that whilst Foucault presents a new logos to understand sovereignty and territory, the ultimate praxis or mode of being which Foucault wishes to enact does not only concern the material itself, but himself. If we examine the fundamental investigative techniques Foucault himself is using in these lectures, it is a going over or revisiting of his previous forms of thought, to address his past self in the present, by doing so he therefore attempts to construct an 'aesthetic experience' of

sovereignty itself. The meaning of this practice of philosophy on the self is not only Foucault's analyses of the gap between ancient philosophy and modern philosophy becoming detached from life, but that in the lectures and prior to that in his inaugural address Foucault demonstrates that he is fully aware of the discursive apparatus 'always-already' at work and play in the lecture recording itself.

Therefore, by announcing about the 'voices' that are apparent who will 'speak behind him' he is practising a new form of 'resistance' against the new 'death of sovereignty' which modernity has made, and this is the limit of knowledge by bringing it back into life itself, the lecture. Foucault in his inaugural lecture wishes to render visible the apparatus already acting upon his authorial self in allowing him to speak at his lectures and furthermore their coming interpretation which he seeks to also disrupt to keep authentic his aesthetic resistance in the hall which allows the space of the thinker, the philosopher to voice his own knowledge and authority. Furthermore, given that the lectures were recorded by the attendees and later published by Foucault's family against his death wish because the family deemed they were already public material, therefore they gave permission for their publication. My argument about the lectures is contra to the work of Stuart Elden for example who proposes a classical intellectual history position in attempting to maintain a cohesive and coherent narrative from Foucault's earlier works to the lectures. Whereas it has been said there are ideas which are similar and being re-visited it is not clear whether an intellectual history method can perhaps be employed to understand a figure such as Foucault. Additionally, whether one can possibly trace interlocutors, ideas and themes to their contexts and their employments in Foucault becomes ever murkier still in attempting to understand a lecture which is spoken, playing on the difference between speech and writing which Foucault himself is deliberately employing anticipating the very methods and the like by putting voices 'behind' him before he has spoken, and even when he is speaking, not just after he spoke his last words (Elden, 2016).

The example being here that as we speak of Foucault in relation to sovereignty and territory one acknowledges the limit of representation and the methods in which one seeks to find its roots of truth in the lectures, knowing that Foucault did not just talk about those spheres of inquiry in the lectures, and should not perhaps be configured in that manner. However, it is the argument of this paper that Foucault is practising what is here called a new 'ethics of resistance' against this new form of sovereignty which modernity has brought with it which means to make philosophy related to life once more, in order to resist the technology and bureaucracy that is neo-liberalism which dominates our world and makes life inorganic, inauthentic. The final point of Foucault's

deconstruction of sovereignty itself is that it is attempting to shake off the chains of orthodox history which attempts to exist in a 'frozen time' where the present is neglected. However, by playing with the speech-writing distinction in the lecture, Foucault leads us to reconsider how history is always present, even in the lecture theatre in which Foucault is speaking, and cascades forever into a spiralling eternity which seeks to capture those very moments of speech in the loss of presence which is writing itself. My argument that to understand the lectures and sovereignty as one theme within them, is to take Foucault's lesson to understand thinkers from 'outside', or to understand Foucault through Foucault himself.

To continue, in lecture five 27 January 1971, Foucault analyses the 'Sovereignty of the judge and wild sovereignty' in conjunction with the Homeric judgement, or the famous scene of 'Achilles' shield', (**Foucault, 2013**). The analysis details the previous examination in 9 December 1970 of the 'desire to know from the sovereignty of knowledge itself' which shows Foucault's assertion that the sovereign is the one who possesses the 'knowledge' (*connaissance*). The focus on the subject of knowledge is key to Foucault's analysis because he wishes to understand that subjectivity is not only consolidated through formations of knowledge and power, but that there are figures within literature, discourse and reality that are the 'founders' of knowledge. Thus, it is Foucault's task to uncover within Homer the 'subjects' of knowledge who create these 'myths' of knowledge, or differing forms of knowledge, between myth and reality, the gods and mortals, poetry and philosophy. The sovereignty of the signifier-signified relationship in which the attainment of knowledge through the 'appearance of truth' is what Western philosophy 'possesses' in their 'historical development' according to Foucault.

Once more, the influence of Heidegger is apparent in Foucault's fleshing out of how these knowledge formations work in Ancient texts, and therefore Foucault sees how the logos or reason of human beings is made to create a 'semblance' with the being of the world, or the nature of things. In this regard, it is clear that Foucault here is attempting to say that the subjects which possessed the knowledge were the ones who could therefore depict reality through means of poetry, philosophy and other modes of reason, and whoever could construct the 'more fitting' interpretation between reason and the world, would therefore not only become the sovereign of knowledge, but enact a mode of knowledge which would then in turn become a form of sovereignty in itself.

Knowledge-Power

The example which aids Foucault is Heidegger's argument that Western thought has forgotten the 'question of being' and therefore by re-examining the whole tradition and its roots can we therefore then 'begin to think' once more, precisely because in Foucault's argument in the first lecture these forms of knowledge have become sovereignties in and of themselves because they have become forgotten and not been questioned for millennia (**Rajchman, 1991**). Essentially, in the lectures **(1970-1971)** Foucault's objective in defining sovereignty is not in terms of the nation, or physical sovereignty such as a king, or in terms of territory of a geographical kingdom, but the metaphysical and philosophical nature of sovereignty, such that, knowledge itself possesses a sovereignty in how we construct knowledge from Plato and Aristotle onwards. It is also in relation as to how and who possesses that construction of knowledge as an agency 'in' sovereignty, (imagine Foucault himself speaking in the lecture here). He acknowledges that by himself speaking in the famous lecture hall that he is, he has been chosen to become sovereign for the time there by an 'outside' sovereignty that permits his speech. Now, it is not that if Foucault questions some institution or political structure of the present historical context that he will be punished through torture or even killed. History teaches us as Foucault tells us in his previous *Discipline and Punish* **(1975)** that these practices have changed into a form of sovereignty that still exists, albeit invisible and silent.

Therefore, in the lecture setting, in order for the very phenomenon to exist, an exercise of sovereign and those who are ruled is required. Outside the walls of the lecture theatre, a sovereignty exists even for Foucault to be invited to give lectures at the premises. To continue, Foucault then outlines the relation between truth, knowledge and sovereignty in 27th January 1971 detailing sovereignty's classical roots in Homer, such that: *the truth is linked to an exercise of sovereignty; for it is insofar as he exercises authority that the judge demands the truth and imposes the sentence and its execution accordingly.* (**Foucault, 2013: 98**)

Here, one can see here, the seeds of Foucault's later analysis of biopolitics, in claiming that classical sovereignty is dead, meaning that the power-relations which kept king, state and government in check between classes and all types of people have now become null, a new form of sovereignty has taken place: biopolitics. One must pay attention to the manner in which Foucault describes these modes of subjectivities, in which the 'judge' is not at the centre of the structure which he is employing. The judge is a product of the truth which is related to sovereignty, he demands the truth and the execution of the sentence however he does not make the truth or the sentence, it is already

presupposed. It is Foucault's claim that the death of sovereignty, such that power and governmental control does not control through violence, or indirectly through voting anymore, but through a more biologically based extrapolation of bodily resources, libido, drives and desires are what neo-liberalism uses to control populations. The new current form of sovereignty and its 'global' territory permits narcissism in all forms to expunge people of their destructive libido, so that they use their desires and drives for self-creation rather than action against the all-pervasive political order. The implication of asserting 'truth' into the knowledge-power paradigm is again a moment of influence from Heidegger in its overtones of the importance of truth in the 'unconcealing' of being. Therefore, Foucault concretely links truth with sovereignty precisely as before in his previous analysis whilst analysing Aristotle that the semblance between the logos of reason and the world is 'truth'.

Territory

Now to governmentality, whereas sovereignty and its spatial territory could be seen in the polis or in the presence of a king and a political culture embodied in an aristocratic elite, the presence of democracy, liberal economy and other methods of equality have killed the king. But not 'beheaded' him in Foucault's terms; sovereignty has merely shifted from the sword, to the pen, to the hearts and bodies of its citizens. Thus, sovereignty and territory has not been eliminated but manifested in differing forms, which arguably are more violent. It can be seen in Foucault's earlier work and now in the lectures, that the subject is not a transcendental structure which exists in each historical moment of sovereignty, but one that operates precisely because of its function in discourse and sovereignty itself. Within this analysis, this is where Foucault derives his notion of 'governmentality' and the 'government of the self' which exists in modernity as a result of the death of sovereignty. In terms of a definition of these difficult concepts, it is conceived by Foucault that because there is no longer a historical 'need' for public executions and mass killings to keep people subdued, it is not that this violence simply vanishes from human society, it is merely transformed. Instead of killing outright individuals who are wrong, unjust and evil which is now deemed 'barbaric' because of moral and ethical reasons, mass incarceration and 'government of the mind' instead is employed. The presence of authority as the symptom of sovereignty is not initially required, the sovereignty of modernity is put into the minds of the people in ideas, notions and events so that they come to justify, believe and defend the political order without even knowing they are doing so or acting falsely. Foucault calls this phenomenon very poignantly, 'voluntary inservitude'. Therefore, even at the heart of Western civilization in the Greek polis, sovereignty is truth, as Foucault concludes: 'In pre-law,

between the two adversaries who accept neither the sovereignty of one in relation to the other nor a sovereignty exercised over both, the test of truth appeals to an unlimited and wild sovereignty'. Foucault M., 2011; 78) Foucault then extends this to the space of sovereignty, where the one who speaks is made the sovereign temporarily, (just like this article, being read at this time, one who writes is the supposed sovereign, or keeper to the gates of knowledge around Foucault).

Concerning territory at this critical impasse in the lecture, Foucault attempts to bridge sovereignty to territory through the concept of metaphysical and philosophical space. The notion of parrhesia which is a major theme in the late lectures is the performance of truth-telling, in which the Platonic dialogue is allegorised so that truth is produced as sovereign in the course of the dialectic of the dialogue. Foucault's argument builds on the ancient democracy of Athens in which truth-telling was a fundamental practice of the aristocratic elite to govern themselves and others, and therefore the parallels of how controlling of the body in sexuality and other modes of being regulated the populace and mimicked the state and its laws a result. Foucault suggests that as time has progressed, the practice of truth-telling moved from the ancient democracy, to the tyrants, to the self in Christian confession and then now academic philosophers. Therefore, the crisis of today in our neo-liberal world is that because philosophy has become separated from life and everyday practice, it has become an ivory tower which can no longer provide a critique or even given insight into a solution.

To conclude on this aspect, Foucault in the lecture is practising this new style of existence to combat the new mode of sovereignty, by re-visiting his past self and deconstructing previous thoughts, expanding on old ideas and pushing them in new directions thereby disrupting scholarship and his professor status. Foucault's method in the beginning of his career was a Nietzschean genealogy, he then moved onto his method of archaeology, then in the last decade of his life, 'resistance' was the methodological concept for his analyses however in the lecture all of these methods are being critiqued and employed simultaneously, thereby possessing a new supplementary aesthetic experience of the self in the lectures by Foucault. In the Western tradition he concludes, that there are three elements which make up sovereignty or *krinein*, to sift or decide: 'memory of the identical and of its measure, (reason), disclosure of the truth, and exercise of sovereignty itself' within the *nomos* custom, rule or space of the polis or state. Territory in this first lecture is built into the 'territory of knowledge' which his ancient historical contexts offer, territory in Foucault's topography is purely conceptual, it has no physical nor geographical location except in regards to the place of Greece where *logos* was theorised. The only two examples of territory are in regards to

goods and money in: 'Called upon to give a ruling on the goods and territory of Apollo, as far as possible I will judge the whole affair as according to truth', and 'If I take power in Corinth, I will give you its territory. [...] Once in power, he taxed the landowners at the rate of a tenth of their wealth,' such that Foucault sees territory not only bound up with goods, but with the knowledge which founds them within sovereignty. (Foucault, 2013: 90)

This ancient ethical practice of the relation of self to its self, like Foucault himself talking about his work in the lectures themselves is this example of a new kind of ethics of resistance. In the lectures *On the Government of the Living* (1979-1980), *Subjectivity and Truth* (1980-1981), *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1981-1982), *The Government of Self and Others I & II* (1982-1984) it is true that ethics is against biopolitics, to transform a new self through truth to resist and understand power. The next lecture is *Psychiatric Power* (1973-1974) in which Foucault attempts to analyse how the Greek origins of the sovereignty of knowledge then becomes manifest in power-knowledge relations, or how sovereignty is made corporeal in bodies. Additionally, it also builds into the problem Foucault had on the notion of sovereignty as one of reason, and whether self-consciousness is not only possible and fully cognoscente of itself, but if self-consciousness demonstrates a stable sovereignty of self.

On 14 November 1973 he outlines the 'macrophysics of sovereignty' and how sovereignty is disseminated in a territory of knowledge, rather than physical space. Psychiatry and his studies on madness here are the examples which Foucault has in mind, when supposed certain knowledges of illnesses held by those in power prove not actually to be truthful in relation to the world, but merely a ruse by which knowledge-power is maintained by a sovereign. For example, one of the many phenomena Foucault examines is female hysteria in the nineteenth century, which proves to be psychiatric falsity, but used by male psychiatrists as a domination of the female body and their precarious position in society as single, family-less women. Evidently, Foucault here being influenced by Heidegger sees language as the method of orientation, or the primary locus of how sovereignty and territory operate therefore it is obvious how Foucault's analysis does not correspond to the common discourse about territory and sovereignty. In this lecture, he attempts to analyse how sovereignty is a metaphysical structure that with or without a king present, still exists, as a sort of mould which the person can fill, but the mould remains if the person is removed. However, the key shift occurs here from the death of sovereignty to a new kind of power called 'disciplinary power', where the centrality of power is disseminated and lost, this is found:

One type of power, that of sovereignty, is replaced by what could be called disciplinary power, and the effect of which is not at all to consecrate someone's power, to concentrate power in a visible and named individual. (Foucault, 2006: 22)

The shift in how sovereignty is managed and takes place, changes in the pre-modern era, to where power changes its territory in which it takes place, from the king and its punishment of the peasant in his death, to how the peasant will be 'disciplined' not killed. To understand the changed nature of sovereignty and territory of knowledge, Foucault puts it much more clearly:

But here as well there is inversion and displacement: whereas the person who violates sovereignty, who throws stones and excrement over the king, would have been killed, hung and quartered according to English law, here instead, discipline, making its entrance in the form of the page. (Foucault, 2006: 25)

Sovereignty is related to the possession and truth-telling of truth, in which the person who founds truth becomes the sovereign and enables certain knowledges to maintain her sovereignty. In the next lecture, 'Abnormal' (1974-1975), he outlines how the modern form of sovereignty demarcates a grotesque territory, such as lepers outside the city wall, and various other forms of controlling space from a sovereign by placing limits of space. Therefore, the person who is deemed 'abnormal' is the limit of representation and is placed on the outside of the normal society, Foucault uses various groups of minorities to demonstrate this thesis. In the lecture 'Security, Territory, Population' (1977-78) Foucault explains how 'sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory (Foucault, 2009: 25) as we have discovered previously. This lecture also ties together the notion of population, which is Foucault's examination of how populations were maintained, which leads to his analysis of bio-politics. The next lecture 'The Birth of Biopolitics' (1978-1979) outlines the death of sovereignty in the form of population-control as one has said earlier in relation to the 'governmental regime called liberalism' as Foucault states. It is the 'problem of life' who decides who lives, and who decides who dies? This is the essence of Foucault's analysis of sovereignty and territory. It is a new form of governmental practice in liberalism, the control of populations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what now can one make of Foucault's last statement at the end of the last lecture? Trembling before God, will enable us to have access to the true life, is he invoking Heidegger's statement of 'only the gods will save us' in the sense that new thinking will aid us in our moment of crisis? Or by questioning his 'oneself' is he preparing himself for his death which he knew was coming soon? Perhaps these questions are best left unanswered, just as the lectures which are best left to the authenticity of the moment in which Foucault gave them. However, just as Foucault's death wish was betrayed, in such violence we have simultaneously gained a blessing in form of a vital insight into Foucault's wider work and his final thoughts on the world and himself. Nonetheless, Foucault has departed us with a final gift denoting the re-conceptualisation of sovereignty and territory as metaphysical and conceptual spaces as opposed to physical and geographical ones. This insight leading to the foundation of Foucault's argument of governmentality and biopolitics in which by historicising of sovereignty and territory we can see in the advent of the eighteenth century represented by Foucault as modernity, has in fact radically changed these definitions creating a pluralist, neo-liberal democracy where power and knowledge is widely disseminated and de-centralised. In order to combat this neo-liberal bureaucracy that occupies our time Foucault proposes a radical return to ancient ethics in a relation of self to self to breakdown the wider structures of post-sovereignty and global territory today.

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