FOUCAULT STUDIES

ARTICLE

Ungovernable Counter-Conduct: Ivan Illich's Critique of Governmentality

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ABSTRACT. Within Michel Foucault's own conceptualization of governmentality, there is little room for something like 'ungovernable life'. The latter seems to hint at a form of social conduct beyond power-relations, which would offend Foucault's basic philosophical postulates. I argue that this identification between governmentality and power as such demonstrates a one-sided focus on the history of Western power-relations. By opposing Foucault's genealogy of governmentality to Ivan Illich's critical history of government, I delineate indigenous struggles against governmentalization as a form of ungovernable counter-conduct. Throughout his books from the 1970s to 1990s, Illich wrote a critical history of government surprisingly similar to Foucault's, from the pastorate to modern political economy. However, rather than merely describing this history, Illich argued governmentalization alienated human beings from their autonomy. As a former missionary priest, he criticized the Church's and modern governments' attempts to subsume populations under a conduct of conducts. He advocated anticolonial resistance to subsumption under Western governmental regimes. In Illich's appreciation of decolonized life, an ungovernable form of life can be discovered, which I defend with the example of Zapatismo and indigenous self-government through *mandar obedeciendo*.

Keywords: Governmentality, Counter-conducts, Ivan Illich, Decolonization, Zapatismo

INTRODUCTION

The US way of life has become a religion which must be
accepted by all those who do not want to die by the sword–
or napalm.
  – Ivan Illich

The uptake of Michel Foucault's legacy in the post-colonial tradition has been somewhat mixed.[1] On the one hand, Foucault is one of the most-cited Western authors and has greatly influenced the methodology of post-colonial thought. On the other hand, Foucault's own work is remarkably silent about the intersections of power, knowledge, and subjectivity beyond Europe, and the philosopher has often overlooked the role of the colonies in shaping Western modernity.[2] One area of Foucault's philosophy where this omission of non-Western territories is eye-catching, though rarely acknowledged, is the treatment of governmentality. While Foucault develops the concept through a detailed study of European and American discourses about government, he presents governmentality, or the conduct of conducts, as the main prism for the study of power as such in his 1982 essay *Le sujet et le pouvoir*. From a post-colonial perspective, this rhetorical artifice represents 'the West' as a universal *telos* for the rest of the world. Foucault has extrapolated his analytics of power from a particularly Western genealogy that moves within the Judeo-Christian pastorate and the modern State apparatus. However, a sense for the 'plural history of power' beyond 'the West' is missing.[3] Other regions in the world have their own genealogies of power and knowledge which are more diverse than what fits into the framework of governmentality studies.[4] Is it then necessary to 'provincialize Foucault'?

In this paper, I focus on one particular area where Foucault's privileging of Western histories might lead him astray: resistance as counter-conduct. Foucault defines the motivating force behind counter-conducts as a will "not to be governed *like that*".[5] This description assumes that governmental power-relations are an ineluctable given, which has been true of most Western contexts, but it says little about the territories where the hold of governmentality might be less firm. How should we conceptualize counter-conducts that struggle against their subsumption under Western governmental regimes? Some of Foucault's followers, like Giorgio Agamben, have attempted to conceptualise an 'ungovernable' beyond governmental power.[6] However, since these attempts mostly lack grounding in concrete practices of resistance, they are often highly abstract and politically

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[1] For an overview of the post-colonial reception of Foucault, see Stephen Legg, "Beyond the European Province: Foucault and Postcolonialism," in *Space, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Stuart Elden and Jeremy Crampton (2007), 265–89; Ranabir Samaddar, "Michel Foucault and Our Postcolonial Time," in *The Biopolitics of Development: Reading Michel Foucault in the Postcolonial Present*, ed. Sandro Mezzadra, Julian Reid, and Ranabir Samaddar (2013), 25–44.

[2] Edward Said, "Michel Foucault, 1927-1984," *Raritan Quarterly* 4:2 (1984), 10; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), 51; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (2006), 288.

[3] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2007), 15. See also, Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 207.

[4] See, for example, Partha Chatterjee, "More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), 351–90.

[5] Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," [1978], in *Qu'est-ce que la critique? Suivie de La culture de soi* (2015), 37. Translation from Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?," [1978], in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (2007), 44.

[6] Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011), 65.

uninformative.[7] In Agamben's case, the quest for the ungovernable is pursued firmly within the Western Canon, and it comes eerily close to a messianism that would move humankind beyond *all* forms of power. Agamben deviates sharply from a Foucauldian approach to power-relations as ubiquitous and inevitable. He does not help in exploring how non-governmentalised forms of power operate beyond the borders of Western governmentality. In this paper, I approach the issue of 'ungovernable counter-conducts' via Ivan Illich's critique of modern governmental power and his advocacy for indigenous peoples to resist their subsumption under Western development programmes.

Illich might be a surprising vantage point for 'provincializing Foucault'. He was a Catholic missionary-turned-critic who read and admired Foucault's work and criticised some of the same institutions that were on Foucault's research agenda.[8] But he never wrote about 'governmentality' – he lived in Mexico during most of Foucault's career at the *Collège de France* – and he is generally not considered a post-colonial thinker. However, those who scan the footnotes of Latin-American post-colonial authors, like Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Arturo Escobar, find frequent references to Illich. Sousa Santos credits Illich as one of the main inspirations for the 'epistemologies of the South'-paradigm and Illich, in turn, credits a young Sousa Santos as a helpful collaborator in the acknowledgements to *Tools for Conviviality*.[9] Illich was also personally involved with major figures in liberation theology, like Paulo Freire and Helder Camara, even if his appreciation of liberation theology was ambiguous.[10] From a Latin-American perspective, Illich is one of the key inspirations of post-colonial thought. Moreover, his own genealogy of modern government runs surprisingly parallel to Foucault's. For both thinkers, modern government derives from Christian pastoral regimes and both view it as a series of rationalities forged to increase the economic productivity of populations with the help of statistics and political economy.

I will develop how Illich's critical history of governmentality leads him to a position that explicitly delimits the reach of governmentality and supports the claims of indigenous peoples to resist their governmentalisation. To that purpose, Illich uncovers a reality of 'ungovernable counter-conducts' underexplored by Foucault. I start, in section 1, by highlighting how Illich takes a different stance than Foucault in describing the medieval struggle between the pastorate and antipastoral counter-conducts. While Foucault merely describes these antagonisms, Illich actively sides with the antipastoral

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[7] Arne De Boever, *Plastic Sovereignties: Agamben and the Politics of Aesthetics* (2016), 189; Tim Christiaens, "Destituent Potential and Camus' Politics of Rebellion," in *Agamben and the Existentialists*, ed. Marcus Antonio Norris and Colby Dickinson (2021), 181.

[8] For a biographical overview of Illich's work, see Todd Hartch, *The Prophet of Cuernavaca: Ivan Illich and the Crisis of the West* (2015); David Cayley, *Ivan Illich: An Intellectual Journey* (2021).

[9] Boaventura De Sousa Santos and Steve Brett, "A Process of Learning and Unlearning: A Dialogue with Boaventura de Sousa Santos," 3rd Space. https://3rd-space.org/a-process-of-learning-and-unlearning-a-dialogue-with-boaventura-de-sousa-santos/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=a-process-of-learning-and-unlearning-a-dialogue-with-boaventura-de-sousa-santos (accessed March 28, 2023).

[10] Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 57.

movements and argues that the institutionalised pastorate constitutes a betrayal of Christianity's original ungovernable ethos of care for the other.[11] In section 2, I discuss how Illich's opposition to pastoral power informs his critique of modern governmentality and how that differs from Foucault's. Whereas Foucault seems not to imagine social life beyond the government/governed-divide, Illich explicitly attempts to differentiate between different regimes of power, of which governmentality is just one that can subsequently be negated in favour of other power regimes. With this theoretical manoeuvre, Illich carves out a space for post-colonial, anti-governmental practices.

As I continue in section 3, Illich deems modern governmentality alienating for human populations. By surreptitiously steering human conducts in a 'conduct of conducts', governmental elites pursue their own aims by manipulating the desires of the governed. Individual conducts become vehicles for superimposed governmental projects. People are thereby nominally free, but their free choices are always already inserted in government programmes beyond their control. In section 4, I argue that this critique of governmentality leads Illich to endorse indigenous counter-conducts that resist subsumption under governmental development programmes. From his experience as an educator for Catholic missionaries in Latin America, Illich observed the downsides of well-intentioned development programmes from the global North imposed on indigenous communities. Indigenous forms of resistance are 'ungovernable' in the sense that they reject Western governmentality in favour of more egalitarian forms of self-government where power flows more fluidly throughout the community. Rather than accepting the government/governed-divide and demanding to be governed differently, they strive for a withdrawal from governmental oversight.

1. PASTORAL POWER AS BETRAYAL

Before we move to the impact of the disagreement between Foucault and Illich on post-colonial conduct, it is best to closely study the source of this disagreement: their different stances toward the pastorate. According to Foucault, modern governmentality derives primarily from the Christian pastorate.[12] Pastoral power in the Church assumes a dividing line between clergy and laity explained as pastors leading their flock.[13] Pastors are benevolent guides helping sinful souls to find salvation in God. This task requires intricate knowledge about the inner conscience of all followers *omnes et singulatim* and extensive yet caring power to intervene in the economy of their desires. Christianity consequently establishes between clergy and laity "the shepherd-sheep relationship as one of individual

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[11] *Ivan Illich*, 29.

[12] See Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, and Morten S. Thaning, *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion* (2016), 258–65; Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (2016), 95–100.

[13] Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (2004), 128.

and complete dependence".[14] Believers are suspected of being too morally corrupted to adequately evaluate the moral worth of their own thoughts.[15] The pastorate subsequently necessitates rituals of veridiction, like the confession, to make believers speak the truth about themselves. Thusly, pastors can judge the conformity of believers' conducts to the will of God.[16] The pastor thereby ensures the alignment of the believer's will to the will of God. He guarantees the 'mortification of the will' as an independent force.[17] Foucault does not mean that pastors actually "kill off" the human will, but they attempt to denude it of its autonomy. God rather than the sinful individual should determine the will's impulses. Pastoral practices continually undermine the innate yet corrupt individual will so that the believer can openly receive the will of God. The goal is to make the will of God operative on Earth. God himself stays in the heavens, but His will can realize itself in world-history if believers voluntarily put aside their own petty desires in favour of enacting the will of God. People govern their personal conduct on God's behalf, thereby becoming the instruments through which God achieves the world's salvation.[18]

As Lorenzini highlights, this configuration of power, subjectivity, and truth grants a pivotal role to the human will: "the field of [the subject's] freedom is defined and structured by his/her acceptance or refusal to be conducted *by this particular mechanism,* to let him/herself be conducted *in this specific way"*.[19] The pastorate requires believers' wilful submission to rituals of veridiction and pastoral authority. In Lorenzini's reading, the will also lies at the source of pastoral counter-conducts.[20] When individuals choose to suspend their acceptance of pastoral authority, their conduct becomes recalcitrant and resistant.[21] Counter-conducts arise from a wilful refusal to submit to the pastorate, which is a form

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[14] Michel Foucault, "Omnes et singulatim: vers une critique de la raison politique" [1979], in *Dits et écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 291 (2001), 964. Translation from Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason" [1979], in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (1981), 237.

[15] Daniele Lorenzini, "The Emergence of Desire: Notes Toward a Political History of the Will," *Critical Inquiry* 45:2 (2019), 468.

[16] Michel Foucault, *Du gouvernement des vivants: cours au Collège de France 1979-1980* (2012), 298–99; Michel Foucault, *Les aveux de la chair* (2018), 138.

[17] Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 181; Foucault, *Les aveux de La chair*, 368.

[18] This instrumentalisation as part of God's government of the world is central to Agamben's genealogy of *oikonomia.* See Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty* [2012] (2013), 21–22..

[19] Daniele Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude: Michel Foucault and the Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 10. See also, Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 66.

[20] Lorenzini, "The Emergence of Desire," 468.

[21] For Foucault's theory of counter-conducts, see Carl Death, "Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest," *Social Movement Studies* 9:3 (2010), 235–51; Arnold Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," *History of the Human Sciences* 24:4 (2011), 25–41; Matthew Chrulew, "Pastoral Counter-Conducts: Religious Resistance in Foucault's Genealogy of Christianity," *Critical Research on Religion* 2:1 (2014), 55–65; Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude,"; Martina Tazzioli, "Revisiting the Omnes et Singulatim Bond: The Production of Irregular Conducts and the Biopolitics of the Governed," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 98–116.

of 'voluntary inservitude'.[22] This approach to resistance, which defines it primarily as a "will to be against",[23] still leaves ample room for diversity among counter-conducts. Foucault hence discusses multiple, mutually divergent anti-pastoral counter-conducts in *Sécurité Territoire Population*.[24] He deliberately leaves its scope broad to describe a wide array of practices from mysticism to millenarian popular movements. What these medieval counter-conducts have in common, for Foucault, is a wilful rejection of ecclesiastic dimorphism.[25] The power-relations between clergy and laity had, by the late Middle Ages, become so rigid that parts of the community suspended their wilful submission to the Church hierarchy. Agamben adds to Foucault's diagnosis of ecclesiastic government that the institutionalisation of the Church implied the eclipse of its messianic promises.[26] The early Church was founded on the belief that the end of times was imminent. The Church's duty to govern the Christian community would merely be a temporary regime for "the time that time takes to come to an end".[27] During the Middle Ages, however, the pastorate kept postponing the end of times to the indefinite future and shifted its focus toward a providential theology that authorised the priesthood as a quasi-permanent representative of God governing the community in His name. The antipastoral movements of counter-conducts were, from this perspective, varied attempts to disestablish the power of the clergy as the sole mediator between God and the community.

Illich's critical history of pastoral power resonates with these late-medieval insurgencies, which hints at a difference between his and Foucault's genealogical projects. For Foucault, the task of critical philosophy is to write the genealogy of particular configurations of knowledge, power, and subjectivity, in order to defamiliarize readers from today's status quo.[28] By showing the history of the present in all its complexity and contingency – with its struggles, discontinuities, and roads not taken – Foucault's approach shows that people could be governed differently. For every regime of power and knowledge, there are resistant counterpowers and counterknowledges.[29] Foucault himself, however, only delivers the instruments for upsetting the *status quo*.[30] The goal of

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[22] Saul Newman, "'Critique Will Be the Art of Voluntary Inservitude': Foucault, La Boétie and the Problem of Freedom," in *Foucault and the History of Our Present*, ed. Sophie Fuggle, Yari Lanci, and Martina Tazzioli (2015), 59.

[23] See also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (2000), 215.

[24] See Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 195–232.

[25] *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 206.

[26] See especially Giorgio Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom* [2010] (2018).

[27] Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* [2000] (2005), 67.

[28] Michel Foucault, "L'intellectuel et le pouvoir" [1981], in *Dits et écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 359 (2001), 1569. For more on Foucault's approach to critique, see Ben Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights* (2015), 33–37; Thomas Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality: A Critique of Political Reason* [2010] (2019), 363–88.

[29] Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (2010), 21.

[30] Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights*, 37. Admittedly, Foucault did take sides in, for instance, the struggles of some social movements, like the gay rights movement or the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons*. He was, however, careful to keep his political activism out of his academic research, even if they concerned the same topics.

genealogical research is to destabilise the present and allow subjects to develop an 'experimental attitude' toward the government of themselves.[31] If there is any direct denunciation of the Christian pastorate in Foucault's work, it is in *L'usage des plaisirs* in 1982, where Foucault specifies that Christianity tends to emphasise an ethics based on moral codes rather than an experimental care of the self.[32] It is an ethics built around conformity to pre-established laws and rules of conduct expounded and policed by the clergy. By writing the history of the Church's conduct of conducts, Foucault wants to empower his readers to let go of their morally encoded selves (*se déprendre de soi-même*) to elaborate new forms of life.[33] His concern is hence not with taking sides in struggles of conduct like those of the late Middle Ages but with showing the potential variability of conducts showcased in these struggles. Foucault remains agnostic about which side in the pastoral struggles represents 'true Christianity' because he merely wants to show the contingency and contestability of the pastorate.

Illich's interest in the antipastoral struggles is very different from Foucault's. He sides with the antipastoral movements and argues that the strict division between clergy and laity betrayed the founding ethos of Christianity, which is why he pleads for a full declericalisation of the Church.[34] Illich is not interested in destabilising the present or fostering experimental subjectivities. He claims a religious potential has been lost and needs to be re-activated.[35] Although Illich also opposes the Church's predilection for moral codes, his focus is not on an experimental ethics of the self but on a salvific ethics of the other. According to Illich, Christianity stands for an ethics of care and radical freedom rather than institutionalised submission to the priesthood or libertine self-stylisation. He illustrates this claim with the parable of the good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke.[36] A vulnerable Jew, left for dead by the side of the road, directly calls upon a Samaritan to come to his aid. This ethical encounter is a visceral experience that puts the Samaritan before a radically free choice.[37] The Samaritan does not act automatically through some form of abstract duty legislated by the Church as a moral code. Nor can the Jew force him to care. Nonetheless, the Samaritan feels the other's appeal in his 'gut' (*splagkhnon*). For Illich, "this 'ought' is not, and cannot be reduced to a norm. It has a *telos*. It aims at somebody, *some body*; but not according to a rule".[38] By affirming the encounter with the other, a visceral community, or mystical body, emerges

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[31] Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières," [1984], in *Dits et écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 339 (2001), 1393. For a recent discussion of the limits of Foucault's ethics of the self, see Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamora, *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of Revolution* (2021).

[32] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II: L'usage des plaisirs* (1982), 42. See also Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, 287.

[33] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, 15.

[34] Ivan Illich and David Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich* (2005), 84; Ivan Illich, *Powerless Church and Other Selected Writings, 1955-1985* (2018), 108.

[35] Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 272.

[36] Illich and Cayley, *Rivers North of the Future*, 50.

[37] Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 263.

[38] Illich and Cayley, *Rivers North of the Future*, 52.

between both individuals. Two porous and permeable beings let their guard down to establish a relation with each other. According to Illich, the Church is originally the community of everyone who has responded to the call for ethical freedom in the care for the vulnerable other. It is a community of care-relations, independent of ethnic bonds or moral laws.[39] The believers form a relational web of interdependencies and mutual care. This is a Church that has neither a strict hierarchy between governing priests and a governed flock nor a pre-established moral code to legislate the conduct of conducts.

Illich presents a 20th-century insider's critique of pastoral dimorphism more akin to the medieval critiques Foucault researched than to Foucault's own approach. They write about the same pastoral regimes but from a different standpoint with different aims. A hierarchical Church institutionalises care with pastoral professionals but destroys the Samaritan ethos at its own foundation, according to Illich.[40] It grants undue powers to pastoral elites. The clergy/laity-divide corrupts the priesthood by putting priests into positions of power that hinder their commitment to self-weakening. They acquire a monopoly on the allocation of divine grace insofar as all believers have to go through them to access God's salvation. Rather than aligning the flock's conducts to the will of God, Illich claims that the pastorate aligns conducts with the will of God *as interpreted by the clergy.* Ecclesiastic dimorphism thus also turns believers responsible for care-relations into passive recipients of sacramental services. One attains salvation not by committing oneself to the presence of God in the vulnerable other but by wilfully submitting oneself to the rules and guidelines of institutionally sanctioned clergymen. Instead of, for instance, providing shelter to a pilgrim at the door, one can refuse this embodied encounter and point the pilgrim to the nearest Church-managed hostel.[41]

Sin, in this perspective, is not a transgression of God's will laid down in Church dogma or expressed in pastoral moral codes but a failure to live up to one's commitment to the ethos of care.[42] For Illich, faith does not depend on the obedient submission to a pastor but on freely chosen loyalty to the human web of dependencies into which one is thrown. If the Christian mystical body is born out of care-relations, then a failure to commit to care-relations signals a breakdown of the mystical body. Belonging to this community depends not on sacramental rituals of veridiction but on persistently enacting a self-weakening that opens up the borders of the self for the call of vulnerable others. There is here a notion of equality missing in the pastorate: everyone is simultaneously a committed caretaker and vulnerable subject embedded in the same web of care-relations. As in Foucault's rendition of pastoral power, Christianity necessitates an ethics of self-renunciation but by submitting to vulnerable others rather than a pastor.[43] Rather than

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[39] *Rivers North of the Future*, 178.

[40] *Rivers North of the Future*, 47–48.

[41] *Rivers North of the Future*, 54–55.

[42] *Rivers North of the Future*, 82.

[43] Illich, *Powerless Church*, 160.

mortifying the will, this requires the activation of the will to actively choose to care for the other. No one but the individual can make this choice.

2. THE CRITIQUE OF MODERN GOVERNMENTALITY

The notion of modern governmentality plays an ambiguous role in Foucault's intellectual development.[44] In his governmentality lectures, Foucault clearly distinguishes governmentality, or security dispositifs, from other power regimes, such as disciplinary power or sovereign power. The genealogy is squarely focused on Western Europe and the United States. Governmentality constitutes just one among many different power regimes with each their own particular histories and scope. The concept of 'government', however, becomes broader as time progresses and starts to overtake Foucault's overall depiction of modern power. In *Le sujet et le pouvoir* from 1982, for instance, Foucault criticizes his own earlier war model of power by writing that "basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government".[45] Foucault here takes his description of governmentality as the paradigm for power as such, without any clear distinction.[46] Power and governmentality terminologically slide into each other with governmentality and the 'conduct of conducts' operating as a theoretical prism for power-relations as such.[47] This terminological shift also impact Foucault's understanding of counter-conducts. The focus turns to the emergence of the modern 'critical attitude', which is more than a mere will to be against.[48] The critical attitude is not just a refusal that leaves the scope of alternative conducts open. Foucault attributes to the critical attitude the search for alternative sources of truth to criticize governmental practices and propose new governmental rationalities. If governmentality is the horizon of power as such, then any form of resistance can only be resistance against *one* kind of governmentality in favour of *another*.

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[44] I leave aside the discussion about the historical affinities between pastoral and state government. Foucault himself argues for a strict break between medieval and modern government (see Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 238–42.). Governmental rationality becomes detached from its theological context, which locates the normative source of government in the nature of the universe and the goal of otherworldly salvation. The aims of modern governmentality are more secular, focusing on economic prosperity and the well-being of populations. However, there are grounds to doubt Foucault's plea for discontinuity. Foucault-inspired researchers in the field of economic theology in particular have suggested that there might be more continuity between theological and statist notions of government (see Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*; Mitchell Dean, *The Signature of Power: Sovereignty, Governmentality and Biopolitics* (2013); Stefan Schwarzkopf, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology* (2021); Tim Christiaens, "Agamben's Theories of the State of Exception: From Political to Economic Theology," *Cultural Critique* 110:1 (2021), 49–74.).

[45] Michel Foucault, "Le sujet et le pouvoir" [1982], in *Dits et écrits II. 1976-1988*, n. 306 (2001), 1056. Translation from Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" [1982], *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982), 789.

[46] Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, 323.

[47] Foucault, "Le sujet et le pouvoir," 1056. Foucault conflates governmentality and power as such also elsewhere. See, for instance, Foucault, "L'intellectuel et le pouvoir," 1570.

[48] Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 60; Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude," 8.

This approach works very well for European history but not necessarily for struggles to governmentalize non-European peoples. When Foucault, for instance, provides European liberalism as an example of the critical attitude, it does not oppose the hierarchical divide between government and governed but elaborates an alternative, critical governmental rationality.[49] There is no disagreement on whether the population should be governed at all (like there was in the colonies). The liberal attitude finds a space of veridiction in the free market from which it can produce knowledge to criticize governments' counterproductive economic interventionism *and* articulate a better governmental strategy.[50] Liberalism does not question the government/governed-hierarchy as such but the actions of *this or that* specific government. It does not reject governmentality as such.[51] Taking the 'critical attitude' as his vantage point, Foucault's attention thus shifts from resistance to government *per se* to quarrels within the governmental paradigm itself.[52] By the end of *Naissance de la biopolitique,* Foucault presents the political as an internal affair between rivalling governmental rationalities: "What is politics, in the end, if not both the interplay of these different arts of government with their different reference points and the debate to which these different arts of government give rise? It seems to me that it is here that politics is born".[53] Foucault's critical philosophy primarily shows this space of contestation and potentialities for new governmental rationalities.

Once governmentality defines modern power-relations and counter-conducts become a competition among opposing governmental rationalities, the notion of 'the ungovernable' or resistance to governmentality as such becomes difficult to imagine. At the end of his lecture on *Qu'est-ce que la critique?,* Foucault briefly acknowledges the possibility of resistance against governmentalisation as such, but he immediately breaks off the lecture after mentioning this option.[54] If these forms of resistance were to be interpreted as a revolt against governmentality in general, they could easily be misunderstood to oppose power itself. In this reading, counter-conducts would aim to organise a power-free society, which is absurd in Foucault's philosophy.[55] If 'ungovernability' means 'beyond power', then ungovernable counter-conducts are unimaginable. The hypothesis of anti-colonial resistance does not come up. It consequently would make more sense to view resistance as the will not to be governed *thusly;* the will for an alternative government:

[49] Mitchell Dean and Kaspar Villadsen, *State Phobia and Civil Society: The Political Legacy of Michel Foucault* (2016), 149; Daniele Lorenzini, "Governmentality, Subjectivity, and the Neoliberal Form of Life," *Journal for Cultural Research* 22:2 (2018), 6.

[50] Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979* (2004), 33–34.

[51] Death, "Counter-Conducts," 240.

[52] Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 65.

[53] Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 317. Translation from Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (2010), 313.

[54] Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 65.

[55] Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, 319.

> I do not think that the will not to be governed at all is something that one could consider an originary aspiration. I think that, in fact, the will not to be governed is always the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price. As for the expression of not being governed at all, I believe it is the philosophical and theoretical paroxysm of something that would be this will not to be relatively governed.[56]

Illich stays relatively closer to the will to be against of medieval counter-conducts and the aspiration of a society not subsumed under the governmental regime of a priesthood or its secular descendants.[57] This attitude reflects his divergent critical project. Illich wishes to uncover an ethics of care lost under institutionalised governmentality rather than facilitate a struggle between competing arts of government. Though Illich breaks with the Vatican by the end of the 1960s, his criticisms of modern governmental institutions mirror his anti-pastoral concerns. He argues that modern government is the secularised offspring of the sinful, institutionalised Church.[58] On the one hand, modern institutions move the focus from salvation to the provision of this-worldly goods. Illich's references to salvation hence disappear in his critique of modern government. On the other hand, the nefarious clergy/laity-dimorphism recurs in the division between governmental professionals and the governed population. Illich subsequently rephrases his concern for Christian freedom and community into a critique of the destruction of the 'vernacular domain', a term less laden with salvific baggage and more easily applicable to non-Christian or non-Western contexts.[59] The latter concept derives from the Latin '*vernaculus*', which means 'homebred' and 'produced for proper rather than market use'.[60] In everyday life, people produce use-values through directly embodied social cooperation. Individuals need the support and feedback of others to attain their own ends, but this does not necessarily require top-down service provision or governmental steering from official institutions. Workers can directly coordinate their labour with each other, households can manage their affairs largely without governmental interference, and friends can give each other advice without mediation by government experts. There are obviously power-relations present in all these scenarios, so Illich is not pleading for a messianic salvation from government like Agamben, but they are not *governmental* power-relations.[61] Government regulations do not exhaustively determine interpersonal conducts. People immanently calibrate their interactions, mediated by power-relations. But they affect each other's conducts without the mediations of external institutions. Co-workers might, for instance, exercise power

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[56] Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 65. Translation from Foucault, "What Is Critique?," 75.

[57] Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 65.

[58] Ivan Illich, *Gender* (1982), 151; Ivan Illich, *Disabling Professions* (1987), 15; Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (2002), 24.

[59] See, Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (1981), 9 & 29.

[60] Illich, *Gender*, 68.

[61] Admittedly, Illich himself tends to describe the vernacular domain without any mention of power-relations. This can, however, mean two things: he thinks it is genuinely power-free or he focuses on other dimensions of the vernacular domain while remaining agnostic about the non-governmental power-relations at play. I opt for the second reading.

over each other, but these actions are not necessarily part of some governmental programme. People form and readjust their conducts in constant negotiation with their peers. Through their embodied co-presence, they gradually learn to adapt to each other mimetically. Illich refers to the example of everyday language to illustrate this point:

> Language was drawn by each one from the cultural environment, learned from the encounter with people whom the learner could smell and touch, love or hate. The vernacular spread just as most things and services were shared, namely, by multiple forms of mutual reciprocity, rather than clientage [sic] to the appointed teacher or professional.[62]

Especially when people sustain their interactions for extended periods, they develop tailored tactics and procedures to expertly influence each other's conducts without recourse to professional mediators. Long-standing co-workers instantly know how to work together, old lovers instinctively know how to express their affection or annoyance – even without saying a word – and life-long friends know the thin boundary between funny and inappropriate teasing. Over time, people develop vernacular practices through which they understand how others encounter the world and how to influence their conduct.

Illich calls this skill to judge the appropriateness of conducts in immanent human relations 'probity'.[63] Social cooperation based on vernacular probity fosters communities that immanently and spontaneously coordinate their conducts through porous interpenetration. Probity is the skill to adapt one's conducts to a particular relation with its own unique quality and history without having recourse to a conduct of conducts. Rather than relying on expert guidance, people often develop their own intuitions about how to relate to others. One does not interact with everyone in the same way, and probity is the capacity to judge how to cultivate these human relationships. One optimises use-values for all participants in the relation by carefully probing what everyone wants to get out of the relationship. The 'vernacular' names the web of these localised and personal interdependencies, while 'probity' is the skill to navigate this web.

According to Illich, modern governmentality corrupts vernacular culture by subsuming vernacular interactions under governmental steering. An example Illich often mentions is the governmentalisation of everyday language in early modernity.[64] Until the 16th century, people commonly communicated in 'vernacular languages', i.e., languages that possessed no certified grammar nor even a clear demarcation between different tongues. In Columbus' times, there were no clear boundaries between Portuguese and Genovese as separate linguistic entities. People often spoke mixtures of multiple languages depending on the circumstances and their conversation partners. Speech and

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[62] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 66.
[63] Illich, *Gender*, 112.
[64] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 33–51; Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1989), 65–70.

writing were determined by probity not policy. They used languages as toolboxes to pursue their personal goals in whatever way worked within specific human relations. Languages were consequently created and recreated through the immanent interactions between different language users through an incessant play of words and phrases. People easily switched registers depending on circumstances. Language was a fluid repertoire of stock phrases and words that could be deployed and modified to fit the particular web of conducts in which they were used. Successful speech did not depend on obedience to State-sanctioned rules but to the probity of adequately judging which speech acts fitted best in particular settings.

Governmental agencies were, however, worried that 'wild, untaught vernacular reading' beyond the State's purview would lead to popular insubordination.[65] 'Ungoverned speech'[66] was allegedly speech conducive to anti-governmental sentiment. To tame the spread of ungoverned speech, intellectuals, like the Spaniard Antonio de Nebrija, developed official grammars that put language under government regulation. Nebrija proposed a grammar of Spanish to Queen Isabella in order to stop the dangerously ungoverned proliferation of language beyond the State's managing efforts. To make language governable and foster national unity, one had to impose a single State-sanctioned grammar that individuals had to learn and obey to 'speak properly'. The governmentalisation of language standardised speech across national territories with significant governmental advantages; not only in terms of economic productivity and efficiency but also of governability. It was a building block for the rise of the modern economic governmentality. The cost was, however, an introduction of governmentalised dimorphism in language learning. A class of State-sanctioned professional educators emerged that taught people to speak 'proper language'. Vernacular, ungoverned speech was, on the other hand, discredited. One no longer learned language by directly speaking to others but by submitting to the education programmes of language instructors. The human subject was redesigned as a speechless individual in need of professional service-provision to become a communicative (and governable) agent. One had to memorise and repeat programmatic rules of spelling and grammar to render one's speech efficacious. The immanent calibration of conducts among individuals was thusly subsumed under the top-down conduct of conducts where State-sanctioned professionals determine the scope and modalities within which individuals are allowed to speak freely.

3. GOVERNMENTALISATION AS ALIENATION

Though Illich does not deny the benefits of governmentalisation, he emphasises the concomitant collateral damage.[67] Not only language but also education, public medicine, technology, and the economy have purportedly been put under professional management

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[65] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 40.
[66] *Shadow Work*, 39.
[67] *Shadow Work*, 15–16.

over the last centuries. Especially in (post-)colonial territories, the outcome has been a dimorphic split between experts and laypeople that, according to Illich, is detrimental to both groups. He writes, for example, about Latin-American villages visited by North-American health professionals that

> In many a village in Mexico I have seen what happens when social security arrives. For a generation people continue in their traditional beliefs; they know how to deal with death, dying, and grief. The new nurse and the doctor, thinking they know better, teach them about an evil pantheon of clinical deaths each one of which can be banned, at a price. Instead of modernising people's skills for self-care, they preach the ideal of hospital death. By their ministration they urge the peasants to an unending search for the good death of international description, a search that will keep them consumers forever.[68]

The incoming professionals discredited vernacular health practices to then defectively impose governmentally standardised health services. Illich does not deny the benefits of public medicine but argues that these projected benefits often carry hidden side-effects that skew human relationality toward a dimorphic split between government and the governed.

Modern dimorphism grants governmental professionals a 'radical monopoly' over social goods, similarly to how the clergy monopolised access to divine grace. It puts professional elites in charge of securing goods essential to social life, leaving citizens no alternative but to submit to expert-run governmentality.[69] People subsequently lose the ability to acquire these social goods on their own through vernacular relations without professional mediation. Like the medieval clergy hoarded access to divine grace, the modern governmental class concentrates access to education, language, or public health. In the pastorate, this division led to undue gatekeeping competences for the clergy. The latter aligned the conducts of believers with the will of God *as they understood it*. Similarly, the professional class in modern governmentality imposes its own 'hidden curriculum' on the population under the guise of governmental care.[70] "Professionals tell you what you need and claim the power to prescribe. They not only recommend what is good, but actually ordain what is right".[71]

According to Illich, the education system, for example, provides access to social positions of status through its accreditation system. This makes the education system inevitable for individual citizens and grants educators a radical monopoly on the acquisition of diplomas and certificates. Educators use this monopoly to align pupils' conducts with governmental norms. Governments make projections about what knowledge and skills the population is supposed to acquire, while educators are the middlemen tasked with modifying the conducts of citizens to steer the latter toward the

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[68] Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (1982), 204–5.
[69] *Medical Nemesis*, 42.
[70] Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 11.
[71] Illich, *Disabling Professions*, 17.

fulfilment of these governmental aspirations. Just like the clergy ultimately imposed the will of God *as they understood it*, the schooling system implements the will of the government *as understood through the mediation of professional educators*. To that purpose, educators claim 'secret knowledge' to scrutinize students' minds *omnes et singulatim* to discriminate 'right' from 'wrong' thoughts and judge who has the 'proper attitude' to merit high grades or access to higher education.[72] "The teacher-as-therapist feels authorized to delve into the personal life of his pupil in order to help him grow as a person. […] He persuades the pupil to submit to a domestication of his vision of truth and his sense of what is right".[73] School thereby provides a secular rendition of the pastoral rituals of veridiction that submit student populations to procedures that reveal the truth about themselves. Educators enact a secular variant of the pastoral mortification of the will: pupils have to voluntarily submit to teachers to acquire the right kind of thoughts and attitudes such that their conduct becomes the vehicle for governmental education programmes. Only students that willingly align their conduct with the conduction of conducts mediated by professional educators are allowed to progress; the others fail and drop out. Social inequalities subsequently persist but are given governmental sanction. Governments decide what pupils are supposed to know, and educators modify the will of their students such that the latter come to spontaneously enact these governmental projections.

The same applies to other governmental institutions. Economic experts, for example, establish economic government by aligning people's conducts to economic governmental norms *as they understand these norms*. This entails a mortification of the will, i.e., an instrumentalization of individual conducts to fit governmental projects, and an implementation of governmental projects through professional middlemen who use their radical monopoly to impose their own hidden curriculum. Neoliberal governmentality, for instance, promotes economic growth by, first, rendering individuals 'eminently governable',[74] i.e., ensuring that their individual wills align to the will of the government to encourage growth through entrepreneurial free market competition. Neoliberal governmentality, secondly, empowers economic experts to implement governmental policies according to their own understanding of neoliberal governmentality.[75] The strenuous implementation of the Washington Consensus in non-Western territories showcases this issue.[76] Institutions like the IMF and the World Bank mobilise neoliberal economic experts to redraw the economic policies of impoverished post-colonial States. They rely on nations' dependency on foreign creditors to impose their own views on how to enhance the economic productivity of the population. By introducing measures to

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[72] *Disabling Professions*, 19.

[73] Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 31.

[74] Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 274.

[75] *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 249.

[76] On the contested history of the Washington Consensus, see Narcís Serra and Joseph Stiglitz, eds., *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered: Towards a New Global Governance* (2008); Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People* (2011); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2014).

promote international free trade, free market competition, and individual entrepreneurship, they re-align the conduct of people to their own governmental projections. Programmes issuing from the Washington Consensus are not meant to render post-colonial nations independent but to leverage this dependency in order to restructure their markets in a way more fitting to neoliberal governmentality.

Illich believes this governmentalisation of human conduct leads to the alienation of the governed.[77] This accusation entails a rejection of governmentality itself in favour of human conducts not conducted by governmental institutions. For Illich, the subsumption of conducts under governmental steering suppresses the potential of vernacular relations. He relies on Marx' argument that workers are alienated by losing control to capital over the labour process. By claiming ownership over the means and products of living labour, capital allegedly takes control over the conduction of the labour process. Illich generalises this schema to the conduct of life itself.[78] All members of a governed population are allegedly alienated insofar as governmental professionals take control over the conduction of people's everyday conducts. The secularised mortification of the will practiced under modern governmentality incites individuals to enact the will of an alien force. Even if they make free choices, the latter are always already embedded in governmental programmes that mobilise these free choices to enact governmental projects. Once modern governmentality claims authority over the conduct of conducts, an alien force coordinates the interaction of human conducts. Just like capital mediates between cooperating workers in the capitalist factory in the service of capital accumulation, modern governmentality has the professional class mediating between free individuals and the government in the service of promoting government projects. The immanent social collaboration characteristic of the vernacular domain is subsumed under government regulation.

Foucault might have objected that reintroducing the discourse of alienation obliges Illich to anthropological essentialism.[79] Marxist theories of alienation often postulate an ahistorical notion of human nature as *homo faber* to subsequently argue that capitalism hinders the actualisation of human nature.[80] But, for Foucault, human subjectivity is the contingent product of historically variable power-relations and discursive regimes. It cannot be fixed in a transhistorical metaphysical essence. Subjectivity is the outcome of laborious processes of subjectification. A closer reading of Illich's work, however, shows that he does not diagnose a perversion of human nature but of the human will. When

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[77] Ivan Illich, "An Expansion of the Concept of Alienation," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 4:1 (1973), 1; Ivan Illich, *Toward a History of Needs* (1978), 71; Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 46.

[78] Harry Cleaver, "The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxian Theory: From Valorisation to Self-Valorisation," in *Open Marxism, Volume 2; Theory and Practice*, ed. John Holloway, Werner Bonefeld, and Kosmas Psychopedis (1992), 119; Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 142.

[79] See Foucault's debate with Noam Chomsky: Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, *Human Nature: Justice vs Power; The Chomsky-Foucault Debate*, ed. Fons Elders (2011).

[80] David Cayley, Illich's principal biographer, also interprets Illich along essentialist lines (Cayley, *Ivan Illich*, 129).

Illich, for instance, praises Queen Isabella's rejection of Nebrija's proposal to govern the Spanish language, he links her decision not to respect for human nature but for human autonomy.[81] Some forms of conduct should be left ungoverned, according to the Spanish sovereign, not because human nature commands it so but because this carves out a space for individuals to determine their own conduct. Illich's theory of alienation questions the government of human conducts insofar as it displaces the moving force of conduct from the level of vernacular human relations to the level of government. This mortifies the will and subsumes it under governmental programmes, even if it is still notionally free. By conducting people's conducts, governmentality pursues its own goals *through* the wills of the subjects it governs. Individual wills are aligned to the governmental will through the mediation of governmental experts that steer popular conducts toward the enactment of government programmes.

> In the new era, the characteristic person […] is someone who has been gathered by one of the tentacles of the social system and swallowed. For him the possibility of sharing in the bringing about of something hoped for is gone. Having been swallowed by the system, he conceives himself as a subsystem.[82]

Individuals become absent in their own conduct as if steered by an alien power. They become passive conduits for the enactment of governmental projects. The governmental will expresses itself *through* the conduct of individuals' conducts, who are thereby reduced to the status of subsystem to an all-encompassing system.

4. RESISTING GOVERNMENTALISATION: THE DECOLONIAL OPTION

Despite his criticism of modern governmentality as a total subsumption of human conduct under governmental schemata, Illich does not deem the governmentalisation of life an inescapable fate. For that purpose, he highlights the arduous diffusion of governmentality in post-colonial territories, a topic on which Foucault remains silent.[83] While for Foucault the critical attitude advocates alternative governmental rationalities without questioning the governmental paradigm itself, Illich praises indigenous movements that resist governmentalisation as such.[84] Just like some medieval counter-conducts attacked the clergy/laity-hierarchy itself, Illich emphasises the indigenous struggles that question the expert/laypeople-divide without proposing new governmentalities with new classes of experts. Illich does not thereby reject experts' skills or competences but their radical monopoly on the conduct of conducts. He questions governmental experts' authority when they organise the conduct of conducts at the cost

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[81] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 50.

[82] Illich and Cayley, *Rivers North of the Future*, 162–63.

[83] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 2; Partha Chatterjee, "The Disciplines in Colonial Bengal," in *Texts of Power*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (1995), 8; Samaddar, "The Biopolitics of Development," 26.

[84] Ivan Illich, "Development as Planned Poverty," in *The Post-Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (1997), 96.

of vernacular human relations. This project leads Illich to support movements that render human conducts ungovernable. Illich does not claim society could ever be free from all power-relations but pleads for the cultivation of power-relations more fluid and horizontal than the hierarchical divide between government and the governed. As Illich writes, "while no men are completely free, some are freer than others".[85] The defence of vernacular practices in indigenous movements is one such example of protecting enclaves of non-governmentalised counter-conducts.

Illich stresses that modern governmentality has a Western history foreign to and incompatible with other parts of the globe. This makes non-Western communities ideally positioned to withhold the global diffusion of governmentality. However, just like the pastorate reduced the foreign other to pagans awaiting conversion to Christianity, modern governmentality reduces non-Western nations to the status of underdeveloped countries in need of Western development aid.[86] Though international organisations like the IMF or the World Bank claim to offer underdeveloped countries economic aid, they also purportedly act as governmental mediators to export Western governmentality to foreign nations. Illich argues that communities can and should resist their developmentalisation.[87] Illich thereby agrees with decolonial post-development theory.[88] For both, indigenous peoples cultivate their own vernacular subsistence practices that are unduly ignored or undermined by development experts. Colonisation and post-colonial development programmes undermine vernacular subsistence practices in favour of governmentally mediated economic activity that favours "development *as defined by the rich*".[89] The production of wealth through immanent self-coordination of local communities is undermined in favour of governmentally increasing economic productivity *as understood by development experts.* Communities that had previously ensured their own survival through self-organized activities are made dependent on global markets and governmental services.[90]

Illich and decolonial thinkers like Arturo Escobar question the alienating dimorphism of the development *dispositif*.[91] Indigenous peoples are dispossessed from the vernacular

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[85] Illich, "Development as Planned Poverty," 101.

[86] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 18–19. For an application to pastoral power, see Dotan Leshem, "Embedding Agamben's Critique of Foucault: The Theological and Pastoral Origins of Governmentality," *Theory, Culture & Society* 32:3 (2015), 93–113.

[87] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 9.

[88] This agreement is not surprising given Illich's direct influence on post-development's theory. See Serge Latouche, *La planète des naufragés* (1991); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (2012); Arturo Escobar, "Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions: A Preliminary Conversation," *Sustainability Science* 10:3 (2015), 451–62; Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (2019).

[89] Illich, "Development as Planned Poverty," 95. (My emphasis)

[90] David Scott, "Colonial Governmentality," *Social Text* 43 (1995), 193; Arturo Escobar, "Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements," in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (1995), 24; Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (2012), 77.

[91] See Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible* (2020), 70–72.

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customs they use to immanently determine their conducts in negotiation with each other. Local knowledges, or 'epistemologies of the South',[92] are silenced in favour of governmental rationalities from the global North.[93] Developmentalisation recruits the conducts of indigenous peoples into governmental projects that pursue their own aims and integrate populations as subordinate subsystems in the accomplishment of those aims. Human conduct becomes the conduit for fostering governmental projects imagined elsewhere. Subsistence practices and subjectivities are reconfigured to fit these governmental projects. Escobar quotes a critic of the World Bank saying,

> How narrow the World Bank's vision is, if it can be a radically new idea to understand what happens at the local level. Thus I learned something very important about the World Bank in Nepal. To work there you cannot set foot in the real Nepal. Literally. Being in the World Bank office assumes you live in a house with running water and that you have a driver to take you from door to door.[94]

Even with the best intentions, the governmental hierarchy of experts and laypeople produces counterproductive outcomes. Through their radical monopoly on government, development experts impose governmental norms inapt for local circumstances. They discredit and replace vernacular practices and probity that have emerged over centuries of close social coordination and with ill-fitting projects that make populations dependent on foreign influxes of money.[95]

To combat governmentalisation, decolonial thinkers call for 'the art of not being governed', 'becoming-indigenous', 'resurgence', or what I would like to call 'ungovernable counter-conducts'.[96] It names indigenous peoples' wilful refusal to align their conducts with a governmental will to reach its own goals through a conduct of conducts. By suspending one's will to be governed, one affirms vernacular traditions as an alternative form to coordinate popular conducts against the developmentalised conduct of conducts. I do not have the space here to fully explore all forms of indigenous resistance, but one illustration might show a glimpse of what the Illichian approach to alienation and disalienation depicts: the Zapatista principle of *mandar obedeciendo* among the indigenous peoples of Chiapas in Mexico.[97] In 1994, an alliance of Marxist *guerilleros* and indigenous communities revolted against the Mexican State and its attempt to subsume the local population under a neoliberal trade regime legislated under the new

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[92] Boaventura De Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2016).

[93] Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 67.

[94] Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 164.

[95] Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, 74.

[96] See James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009); Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Batalha Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World* (2017), 122; Glenn Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014), 157.

[97] For a history of Zapatismo, see Neil Harvey, "Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms and Popular Struggle," *Third World Quarterly* 16:1 (1995), 39–73; Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (1998); Alex Khasnabish, *Zapatistas: Rebellion from the Grassroots to the Global* (2013).

NAFTA agreement with the United States.[98] Vernacular subsistence practices would have to adapt to neoliberal incentives for competitiveness to assure the continued subsistence of these communities. If the latter would have failed to adapt, they would have been outcompeted by foreign industrial farming corporations. According to the Zapatistas, this reform was the outcome of centuries of indigenous peoples being discursively framed as underdeveloped yet obedient workforces.[99] With NAFTA, the not yet civilised would purportedly be introduced into global civilisation. The trade agreement concerned hence not only the acquisition of governmental economic growth targets but also the reconfiguration of subjectivity to fit into a neoliberal system of governability.

After the 1994 insurgency, the Chiapas communities cut ties to the government and affirmed their own capacity for self-government. The Zapatistas even rejected government aid.[100] They carved out a decolonial autonomous space where the State would be deprived of its authority to determine the conduct of conducts.[101] Zapatista self-government would be a form of direct democracy without a hierarchical divide between government and governed, experts and laypeople. Vernacular coordination of conducts would form the basis of government or '*kuxlejal* politics':

> *Kuxlejal* as a term is but a mere point of anchor granted meaning when used as part of term for the concept of expressing living as a collective, *stalel kuxlejaltik,* a way of being in the world as a people, and as part of the term for a daily aspiration to live in a dignified manner, *lekil kuxlejal*. The horizon of struggle for *lekil kuxlejal* […] as a good way of living refers not only to an individual being but to that being in relation to a communal connection to the earth, to the natural and supernatural world that envelops and nurtures social beings.[102]

These traditional practices are cultivated over centuries of close collaboration among each other and with the environment. Indigenous communities have thereby developed the probity to determine how to autonomously adjust their conduct to local circumstances without any need for governmental interference.

In opposition to governmental dimorphism, the Zapatistas plead for 'command through obedience' (*mandar obedeciendo*).[103] Rather than the population owing obedience to purportedly benevolent governing classes, Zapatismo institutes a social order where

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[98] See Neil Harvey, "Globalisation and Resistance in Post-Cold War Mexico: Difference, Citizenship and Biodiversity Conflicts in Chiapas," *Third World Quarterly* 22:6 (2001), 1045–61; Richard Stahler-Sholk, "Resisting Neoliberal Homogenization: The Zapatista Autonomy Movement," *Latin American Perspectives* 34:2 (2007), 48–63; Leandro Vergara-Camus, *Land and Freedom: The MST, the Zapatistas and Peasant Alternatives to Neoliberalism* (2014), 63–91.

[99] Zapatista National Liberation Army, *Voices of Fire* (1994), 53.

[100] Neil Harvey, "Practicing Autonomy: Zapatismo and Decolonial Liberation," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 11:1 (2015), 17.

[101] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011), 217.

[102] Mariana Mora Bayo, *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities* (2017), 19.

[103] Mora Bayo, *Kuxlejal Politics,* 189.

governing elites owe obedience to their constituents. Leaders would be elected on imperative mandate, which entails that the local community could, at any time, revoke leaders' mandates.[104] Rather than the population readjusting its conducts to fit governmental projects, the government is forced to enact the people's will. I am not saying that Zapatismo heralds a future of power-free utopianism but rather that it allows for a politics of disalienation in which power-relations are less hierarchically fixed.[105] *Mandar obedeciendo* facilitates the cultivation of power-relations in a more flexible arrangement in which individuals are not dispossessed from the ability to determine their own conduct. Every leadership decision is supposed to emanate from the vernacular coordination within the collective itself. Governing elites 'walk while asking' (*caminar preguntando*) in the sense that their political decisions are the ephemeral effects of asking the collective what should be decided.[106] This makes government a collective learning process in which horizontally calibrating conducts immanently produce government decisions that are then represented by governing leaders without the latter being able to conduct the conducts of their so-called subjects.[107] Politics is, for the Zapatistas, not a struggle among governmental rationalities that equally subject populations to the conduct of conducts but an immanent deliberative process that lets power circulate horizontally within the collective to determine the group's self-government.

Pre-programmed governmental projects to which popular conducts have to conform are actively discouraged through multiple tactics. Political representatives are often deliberately disempowered to ensure they do not stabilise their power-position vis-à-vis the collective. The aforementioned imperative mandate system, which enables communities to divest anyone whose governing decisions they believe misrepresents the community's deliberations, is one example. Most famously, however, is the Zapatista practice of obliging leaders to wear ski masks in public appearances.[108] Leaders have to remain anonymous to the general public so that they cannot claim sole ownership over the representation of the group. They are the merely temporary representative emanations of the collective's effort at self-government. Levelling practices like the wearing of ski masks ensures leaders are unable to transcend the community. Zapatismo thereby installs a non-alienating form of self-government: by divesting governing elites from their authority to determine political projects and impose these on the population, Zapatismo carves out a space for local communities to establish their own conducts through vernacular interaction.

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[104] Marta Duran de Huerta, "An Interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos," *International Affairs* 75:2 (1999), 269.

[105] John Holloway, *We Are the Crisis of Capital: A John Holloway Reader* (2017), 128.

[106] Khasnabish, *Zapatistas*, 84.

[107] Holloway, *We Are the Crisis of Capital*, 122.

[108] Zapatista National Liberation Army, *Voices of Fire*, 47.

5. CONCLUSION

Foucault's genealogy of governmentality and counter-conducts is firmly based in Western history, yet, around the year 1980, Foucault starts presenting it as the main framework for all power and resistance. Because he sometimes conflates governmentality with power as such, the scope of modern counter-conducts gets unduly restricted to a 'critical attitude' that undermines specific governmental rationalities in order to establish alternative governmentalities. What is missing is a clear view on struggles against the imposition of governmental power as such, which Foucault himself found in antipastoral struggles and we today observe in indigenous struggles. By the end of *Naissance de la biopolitique*, the realm of the political is identified with only a struggle among different governmentalities. To unravel a sphere of ungovernable counter-conducts helpful for the study of post-colonial politics, I have turned to Illich's critique of modern governmental institutions. Though Illich is engaged in a form of social critique that is very different from Foucault's, his perspective allows us to render the dynamics of governmentalisation and ungovernability visible that remain obscure in Foucault's project. As a sympathiser of medieval counter-conducts, Illich attacks pastoral power-relations directly as a sinful betrayal of the Christian ethics of self-renunciation and care for the vulnerable other. Illich tries to recover a form of human relationality antithetical to governmental steering – though still infused with its own unique power-relations. He mostly found it in non-Western forms of local self-government, but he expanded this idea into a defence of vernacular practices against governmental steering by professional classes. He argues that the latter alienate populations from control over their own conducts. By manipulating the choice architecture of individual subjects through governmental interventions, professional experts pursue their own goals *through* the steering of human wills. The latter are voided of their own force and moved, as it were, by an alien power. This wilful refusal to be governed is clear in Illich's rejection of international development and the resistance practices of indigenous communities against their developmentalisation. The Zapatista counter-conduct of *mandar obedeciendo*, in particular, provides a prism for thinking differently about power-relations and self-government. Rather than criticizing one form of governmentality in favour of another, the local communities of Chiapas rely on indigenous traditions to establish a form of self-government that rejects the government/governed-hierarchy. Government decisions are not projects imposed on populations and pushed through via a conduct of conducts. They are rather the emanations of communal deliberations to which governing elites are subjected. Through the imperative mandate and practices that hinder the stabilisation of their decision-making power, governing elites have to listen to their communities and enact nothing more than what was established through their vernacular deliberations.

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