“To Free Everything That Hides Behind the Simple Use of the Pronoun ‘I’”: Leo Bersani’s Truth of the Subject and Michel Foucault’s Subject of Truth

by

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Introduction:
Depth Surfaces
In ‘The Gay Outlaw’, the final chapter of his book *Homos*, queer theorist Leo Bersani uses Marcel Gide’s novel *The Immoralist* to consider what it might mean for identity to be pure surface. In *The Immoralist*, the novel’s main character Michel has become ill with tuberculosis and embarks on a journey east to rediscover his health. “The high point in this process of recovery” (Bersani, 119) is Michel’s discovery of the pleasures of nude sunbathing in the resort town of Ravello, Italy. There, Michel experiences “a delicious radiance enveloping me; my whole being brimmed to the surface of my skin” (Gide, 56). For Bersani, Michel’s rediscovery of his “whole being” is not the more familiar and storied rediscovery of an authentic, deeper self, choking beneath layers of culture. Instead, as Gide writes, what Michel recovers is “the naked flesh beneath, the authentic being hidden there” (Gide, 51). In a striking inversion of the more conventional and perhaps more intuitive model of identity, here Michel’s flesh is precisely his profundity. We are very much used to thinking of individuals as containing some kind of depth, a bedrock of character, something along the lines of a soul, which constitutes the truth of who they are and what they can be. Containing and maybe even hiding this authentic truth is the external appearance of the body. However, Bersani explains that for the sunbathing Michel, it is “the surface that is hidden; the authentic is the superficial” (Bersani, 120). What Michel
unveils is decidedly not his fundamental, deeper self, straining to be expressed in all its redemptive truth. Instead, Bersani continues, “now [Michel’s] body, uncovered, can touch everywhere. His authentic being— his naked flesh— extends itself into the world, abolishing the space between it and the soil, the grass, and the air. He is, briefly, the contact between himself and the world, and he has simultaneously become nothing but a bodily ego and has broken the boundaries of that ego. Outside himself, he has lost himself.” (Bersani, 120).

Michel’s authentic being has become his naked flesh—and in this, he has rediscovered the truth of himself, which is in fact not a self at all, but rather a fundamental selflessness, an experience of being nothing but expansive surface.

When Michel’s skin becomes his depth, he loses himself. This is because the very concept of a bounded and stable self is rendered untenable once depth becomes surface. An enclosing surface appearance and an enclosed deeper interiority mutually constitute a self which is distinct from everything and everyone in the outside world. Within this construction, our deeper interiority is understood as the primary substance from which all our actions flow; it is the ‘real us’ which exists within and which animates our bodies, independently of the rest of our environment. We are something like a ‘world-within-a-world’, sovereign and securely contained. However, if the direction of the construction
of selfhood is inverted and our deepest truth becomes flesh, there is nowhere left for interiority to hide. The body becomes interiority, because the body is all that is left—and in this, the boundaries of both body and interiority are lost. Now untethered from the anchor of depth, Michel (if we can still call him by his name) expands outwards, becoming part of the material world from which the self and its insistence on deep authenticity once separated it. As John Berger wrote of Renoir’s landscapes, “there is nobody […] because everything—from the silicate rocks to the hair falling on a woman’s shoulders—is homogeneous, and as a consequence, there is no identity, because there are no dualities.” (Berger, 167). Inverting Berger’s construction, we might say that there are now no longer any dualities because Michel no longer has any identity. Instead of being constitutively different from his surroundings, unique in his exclusive humanness, Michel’s surface has now expanded outwards in the recognition of its material similarity to the world around him.

Another point that might be important to note here is that in *The Immoralist*, Michel recovers his health by discovering his attraction to and fascination with the underage Arab boys he meets in Biskra, the final destination of his journey. On first read, this attraction might seem like a violent colonial relation to difference immediately recognizable as the white man’s drive towards *Jouissance*. Instead, however, now that Michel has lost his
depth, his desire “is, so to speak, homosexuality without sexuality, desire that is satisfied just by the proximity of the other, at the most by the other’s touch (analogous to the touch of the soil and the grass on Michel’s body).” (121). Michel’s homosexuality and pedophilia are not properly sexualities because there is no longer a self to which these desires can refer.

The stakes here are high. The undoing of this construction of selfhood—surface hiding a deeper desiring truth—is for Bersani the undoing of others as either constitutively the same or different to us, a binary integral to the violence of social relations. This point is more extensively elaborated in another of Bersani’s pieces, ‘The Power of Evil and the Power of Love’. To understand Bersani’s point here, one must first accept one of the tenants of psychoanalysis: that an ineradicable and fundamental evil forms the basis of all of our psychologies. However, this is not evil as we might normally understand it, but is more properly understood through the Lacanian concept of *Jouissance*, the french word for having an orgasm. The ego is first of all the agent of our self-preservation, and everything different from the ego is unknown to it and therefore threatening. This threatening difference sets in motion our ego’s drive to expand outside itself and annihilate this threatening difference in *Jouissance*: “the extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment that accompanies satisfied aggression.” (61). Our ego wants to
envelop and dominate the whole outside world, to annihilate all that is different from it, and *Jouissance* is the moment at which after having swollen to narcissistic bursting point in the ecstasy of successful destruction, it surpasses its own boundaries and shatters. The ecstasy of *Jouissance* is then the violent annihilation of both other and self, but the self-annihilation here is extremely pleasurable, just as the loss of self in orgasm might be. Yet even if the self-destructive end-point of *Jouissance* is never reached, this drive is still active and operative; it pushes us all towards the destruction of any threatening difference. For Bersani, the fact that we find an incredibly high degree of enjoyment in destruction—indeed, to the point of sexual ecstasy— is the locus of and impetus for all violence. It means that a fundamental condition of being human is *wanting* to expand our egos outside ourselves in the intensely pleasurable destruction of difference.

In proper psychoanalytic fashion, this is not an impulse found only in a few individuals, as a result of socialization or chance: it is universal, endemic to the ego and its “self-destructive will to master the world.” (69). Indeed, if we find what we call ‘evil’ to be totally unconscionable (and Bersani uses the example of Jeffrey Dahmer’s gruesome murders here), this is because recognizing Dahmer-esque impulses in ourselves would be so destabilizing that we self-protectively banish ‘evil’ to the realm of the psychopathic and the monstrous in
order to find it reassuringly lacking in ourselves. For Bersani and Lacan, the
demarcation of good and bad individuals—morality—is always a “self-
purifying move” (71) where the drive towards *Jouissance* is displaced onto an
other whose evilness we can then use to authorize the acting out of our own
*Jouissance*, leaving us relievingly pure and free to swell ourselves in ecstatic,
narcissistic destruction. Bersani makes the point that our pious Christian ethics
do not then force us to restrain our *Jouissance* in the name of good and moral
behavior; rather, they allow for our *Jouissance* to be directed towards a socially
sanctioned other. This is a picture of ethics as fundamentally permissive
(instead of restrictive; a check on our worst impulses): ‘good’ and ‘bad’ simply
exist to manage our *Jouissance*, to orient it towards what and who we are
allowed to destroy, while allowing us to retain our supposed moral integrity. If
an ineradicable drive to destroy the world-as-difference is integral to *all* of our
psychologies—and not only those of a psychopathic few—then the accusation
of evil and the destruction it allows can only be understood as an outlet for the
*Jouissance* we are at the very same time disavowing.

Evil is a stark example Bersani employs for the sake of conceptual clarity.
If *Jouissance* is both universal and has difference as its very precondition and
motivating force, it is also very much at play in our interactions with others,
who may not necessarily be labeled as evil, but instead as different. Indeed, if
*Jouissance* is as central to all of our psychologies as Bersani claims, it would even be at work in our most intimate relationships. Our friends, lovers and family, despite (or even because of) their emotional and physical proximity to us, are still separated and bounded by their own unique interiorities—which, along with making them constitutively different from our own selves, also endows them with their own destructive drives. If the self is the ego’s unit of known sameness, the whole rest of the world (everyone and everything else included) first of all appears in its totality as threatening difference to be annihilated; no one and nothing is spared. The social for Bersani is then constitutively violent, and this violence depends upon the existence of a deep interiority that encounters the outside world as threatening difference to be ecstatically annihilated. This is why Bersani sees an out in narcissistic surface similarity: the loss of a depth is also the renunciation of the fundamental difference of world from self, and therefore also of the ego and its drive towards *Jouissance*.

As Bersani argues, our own selves, the interior depth and desire which defines us, is not a neutral and unquestionable fact of existence; rather, it is the point from which an integral violence is enacted against others and indeed against the whole world-as-difference. Authenticity, depth, interiority, the soul—all of these concepts signal some kind of uniqueness of the subject,
something like an internal essence or ‘world-within-the-world’ fundamentally distinct from everything else. The words in this list hold a lot of normative weight: they are traditionally understood as highly positive and even moral qualities. In line with Bersani, I want to make the point that these concepts in fact work to maintain threatened and threatening selves reaching outside themselves in attempted destruction.

Nevertheless, I find Bersani’s psychoanalytic framework to be limiting on its own. Psychoanalysis’ locus of analysis is the individual psyche, and this necessarily inhibits it from being a systemic critique—even if collectivities can also be psychoanalyzed (although Freud does warn the reader about this in *Civilization and its Discontents*, as Bersani mentions in ‘The Power of Evil and the Power of Love’). Bersani does gesture towards colonialism, liberalism and the state in ‘The Gay Outlaw’— writing that “in his psychically and materially stripped-down state, Michel could be seen as a threat to the state” (127)— and devotes large sections of ‘The Power of Evil and the Power of Love’ to an analysis of the harnessing of *Jouissance* for projects of political mastery. Yet throughout Bersani’s work, these links to broader systems remain suggestions. Just as Bersani writes that “one of the strengths of *The Immoralist* […] is that it asks more questions than it claims to answer” (126-7), one of Bersani’s great
strengths as a theorist is that his writing opens up possibility instead of locking it down in the finality of truth.

One might also say that Bersani’s psychoanalytic framework brings him to generative places at the limits of this framework. However, no framework is neutral; each has a strategic way of seeing that poses its own problems, determining what answers are possible. Psychoanalysis is no exception—and its problems and answers are always problems and answers of desire. I will instead be posing the problems of depth and *Jouissance* differently so as to generate different possibilities, ones that do not take for granted a transhistorical psychology nor the essential truth of desire. In the following, I will be expanding Bersani’s account of subjectivity using other theorists—most notably Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser—so as to frame the problem of depth and the *Jouissance* it seems to contain as the historical effect and instrument of larger knowledge/power structures, or in Althusser’s sense, of material ideological subjectivation. This, in my opinion, allows for more generative modes of conceptualizing who we are and how we might try not to be. In making this argument, I demonstrate that psychoanalysis’s way of seeing (or, at least a strategic adoption of it) in facts works towards reinforcing the configuration of deep and desiring subjectivity Bersani is interested in leaving behind. However, as Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality*, “we must
make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can
be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling
block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing
strategy.” (101). I see psychoanalysis as one such possible starting point.

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The Subject:

“Fictitious Atom” and
“Fabricated Reality”
First, some terminological clarifications. Up until now, I have been using the words self, ego, subject, individual, interiority, and depth somewhat interchangeably. However, when I use these terms, I mean different things. To begin with, I understand the self as the reflexive ‘I’; the agent of our actions, the thinker of our thoughts, the feeler of our feelings. The ego for its part is psychoanalytic. While there are varying conceptions of the ego in psychoanalysis, I see it as one element in the psyche’s structure that functions to, among other things, impart us with a sense of personal identity.

Psychoanalysis is often referred to as a ‘depth psychology’: it maps a whole unconscious mind that lies ‘below’ the psyche’s other conscious functions. The concept of depth can therefore also be understood psychoanalytically as the dark hollow of repressed and unconscious desire. Yet Western people—even if they don’t ‘believe’ in psychoanalysis—nevertheless experience themselves as having something like an interior cavity, and usually, this cavity is understood to contain something true or important about who they really are. So the term depth can be employed psychoanalytically, but can also refer to the feeling of having some kind of authentic profundity. Depth is related to the concept of interiority, although interiority does not necessarily imply a measure of depth—just internal subjective space. I see interiority for its part like a bubble within
whose independent self-containment there exists a world unto itself, with its own happenings and processes: a world governed by the ‘I’.

The term individual on the other hand simply refers to one person as distinct from another. However, the individual has not always appeared as it does now: as one atom of society endowed with a deep and independent interiority. Because of this the term requires elaboration. How might individuals be constituted in their historical specificity? This is where the concept of the subject is useful. Subjects imply subjectivation— the way an individual socially and historically comes to mean or be certain things, broadly traceable along various sociological axes such as race, gender, or class. Subjects are neither transhistorical or essential. Instead of being fundamental essences who might either be allowed free expression or pressed down upon from the outside by an oppressive power, subjects only exist within larger social practices. To use the term subject is to acknowledge that who we are is historically and socially constructed; that we have been made ‘subject’ to various practices and ideas that pre-exist us.

Bersani’s account of Michel’s interiority—pre-sunbathing, of course—lays out how we often understand the subject to be constituted now, in modernity: as surface skin containing an authentic interior depth. However, a fuller account of the modern subject can be traced through René Descartes’s account
of the Cogito in his *Meditations*, which inaugurated an immaterial and irreducible essence of subjectivity. Descartes notoriously split the world into two substances: matter and mind. Matter is the inert, physical world, while the mind is a thinking essence defined by its ability to reason. Descartes’s point can be summed up by his famous phrase ‘I think therefore I am’. Even if everything else in the world is a deception or illusion, I am still thinking—therefore, I must exist, I am the first principle of reality and its only surety. Descartes’s splitting of mind from matter allows him to position the subject as an immaterial and irreducible whole prior to the rest of the world. Separated from the constraints of materiality (if not from God’s will), the subject is able to freely act upon its environment in a premeditated manner. This is the way we often understand ourselves today: as the cogitative and conscious subject at the center of all knowledge, the predicate of all thought and experience. We think in the independent privacy of our own minds and then intentionally act based on what we have decided. This understanding of the mind as predicate has in modernity been joined with the model Bersani lays out of an interior authentic depth (a point I will return to later). My aim in this section will be to deconstruct this now-naturalized conception of an irreducible, free, and intentional subject with a profound and authentic interior—a model somewhat similar to that of the self-contained psychoanalytic self, with its deep desire—
in order to show that the way we now understand ourselves is not inevitable, neutral, nor transhistorical.

In order to explain this point, I will be focusing on two models of subjectivation: first, the one put forwards by Michel Foucault, and then that of Louis Althusser. Foucault’s main preoccupation throughout all his work is sometimes assumed to be his concept of power—however, as he wrote in 1982, “my objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.” (Subject & Power, 777). Nevertheless, subjectivation for Foucault did occur through power. Foucault famously outlined two types of power which work to create subjects: disciplinary power, which emerged in full force in the 19th century, and biopower. Biopower evolved out of the 17th century shift from sovereign-juridical power to a more modern and ‘productive’ mode of governance. If the sovereign’s main right was the repressive or reductive right to take life or let live, biopower now works to “exert a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations.” (Will to Knowledge, 137). Biopower concerns itself primarily with productively and broadly managing the population in terms of its biological processes (hence the -bio). To do this, it gathers knowledge about the population through administrative systems like
social security, the census, or insurance policies. This allows for the calculation of a statistical average of disease, mortality, or death rates; this in turn lets the state know what is ‘normal’ for different population groups. Strategies of biopower then use and enforce this norm by managing the allocation of security and vulnerability that governs these groups’ life outcomes. Upper class white people, on average, are the beneficiaries of administrative policies that allow them to accumulate health and wealth, while poor people of color, on average, find it administratively impossible to live their lives. For Foucault, this was not an accident: the point was that biopower worked to construct a ‘healthy’, ‘deserving’ population whose capacities needed to be optimized in opposition to a ‘drain’ or ‘threat’ population.

Disciplinary power then works at the individual micro-level to train the subject to fit the normalized groups that Biopower has established. It makes bodies “docile” (Society Must Be Defended, 249) through institutions such as the military, the school, the hospital, or the prison, which partition space and time in such a way that the body is constantly subjected to regulation and surveillance. Through constant micro-corrections of ‘improper’ behavior—meaning behavior that falls outside the norm—disciplinary power differentially molds individuals into subjects conducive to the smooth functioning and reproduction of the disciplinary social order. A large part of its force is
achieved through confessional and surveillance practices, which produce in the subject an epistemological hunger to know themselves through their desires, which they believe refer to something deep and true within them. Biopower works by establishing a norm of what is healthy and acceptable; discipline then enforces it, making subjects constantly ask themselves: is what I want normal? This is especially true of sexual desire, as biopower is in the first instance concerned with the biological and therefore reproductive optimization of its population. So one of the most important questions is also: am I reproductively normal? The subject’s desires come to refer to the subject’s deeper truth: whether they really are normal, deserving, worthy—or not. As a result, biopower and disciplinary power work together to cover the space between population and individual. In the words of Foucault:

“To say that power took possession of life in the nineteenth century, or to say that power at least takes life under its care in the nineteenth century, is to say that it has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population. We are, then, in a power that has taken control of both the body and life or that has, if you like, taken control of life in general – with the body as one pole and the population as the other.” (Society, 252-3).
For Foucault, these two new types of power have saturated the entire fabric of the social such that the subject’s life has come to be managed, governed, optimized, and trained at both the populational and individual level.

So the deep and essential self filled with authentic desire is certainly not as transhistorical or fundamental as psychoanalysis might position it. Nor is the less psychoanalytic self which nonetheless also contains profound and revealing desire. Indeed, that we even experience ourselves as having desires deep in our depths which can tell us something important or true about ourselves is itself the product of a disciplinary technology of power. Further, Foucault’s account of subjectivation leaves no room for the Cartesian *Cogito* as free and essential predicate of existence untouched by the material. As Foucault outlines, who we are is constituted by technologies of power through-and-through. We are not a free essence repressed or denied expression by powerful people or restrictive laws; we are all productively or positively (instead of through negation, the sovereign right to deny, kill, or exclude) made into who we are by biopower and disciplinary power.

This, however, brings us to the question of interiority. If there is no self prior to subjectivation, what becomes of the interior of the subject, the space wherein the self lives, thinks, and feels in relative independence? Here is where Althusser can make the case of the historical subject even more compelling by
deconstructing interiority and by providing different (although similar) terms through which to understand subjectivation. For Althusser, interiority is an illusory effect of ideology at the very same time as it is wholly real. This of course begs the question: if interiority is illusory, how can it also be real? In this vein, Foucault writes that the subject is "the fictitious atom of an ideological representation of society” which is "a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called discipline” (Discipline and Punish, 194). Here, the same paradox emerges: how can the subject be both “a fictitious ideological representation” and “a reality”?

One of Althusser’s central aims in his 1970 essay ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ was to deconstruct the ideology of ideology, or, the ideology that ideology is some immaterial substance, something existing in the realm of ideas which inculcates false belief. This interpretation of ideology as false belief depends upon the existence of some prior free-thinking (Cartesian) subject who can be deluded by ideology’s lies. When ideology is understood as false belief, a linear causal sequence appears. False representations of reality are communicated to individuals who are then indoctrinated into believing that these deceptions are true; they then act on these internalized beliefs in a steady and reliable fashion. This positions the subject as a primary essence that ideology works upon from the outside and who makes rational decisions based
upon belief. Yet Althusser makes the claim that everything—including ideology and the interiority it constitutes—is wholly material. The implications of this are that there can be no separate and interior substance of self existing before the material world nor acting upon it in any independence. Interiority is ‘real’ in the sense that it is a material product of a material ideology, and is as consubstantial with the material world and its order as everything else. However, Althusser’s materialism means that there is no room left for some kind of transcendent essence of selfhood separate from the material and endowed with an internal and irreducible sovereignty. Interiority is an ideological concept that has a material reality. Or, to put it another way, interiority is exteriority folded in on itself.

For Althusser, the individual is “interpellated” (Ideology, 169) or ‘hailed’ as a subject by ideologies that “always exist in an apparatus” (166). Ideologies, like everything else, always have a material existence. Althusser argued that many powerful ideologies are embedded in state apparatuses like the school, the military, or the church, which teach the individual who they are and how to behave (for Althusser, a Marxist, this depended on class position). These he terms ideological state apparatuses, or simply ISAs. We are only one step away from discipline in Foucault’s sense here. Althusser characterizes ideology as the moment at which, through an obviousness to the point of reflex, a
seemingly natural and inevitable self-recognition is provoked: the subject cries out, “That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!” (172). His paradigmatic example of this is when the police calls out ‘hey you!’, and the subject recognizes themselves and turns around. Ideological hailing is when the individual recognizes who and what they are; it records the response ‘here I am!’. As a result, if the subject recognizes themselves as having an interiority, this is because they are being ideologically hailed as such (eg. the question, when addressed to an individual: ‘what’s going on in there?’ which provokes the self-recognition of interiority).

On Althusser’s terms, we can at least for now say that ideologies immanent or embedded in disciplinary and biopolitical apparatuses (the construction of a sexual norm, its enforcement through the surveilling and punishing of bodies) work to hail the individual as a subject with deep and defining interior desires. This means that the subject’s interiority as well as the deep and revealing desires which lie within it are not just a basic and irrefutable fact of existence but an ideological construct. Depth, interiority, and desire all make up a complicated construction of modern subjectivity that still needs to be unravelled. However, moving beyond psychoanalysis’s exclusive focus on the transhistorical drives of the psyche, what this now suggests is that the deep
(and as Bersani acknowledges, violent) subjectivity that Michel leaves behind is ideologically albeit materially constructed for a strategic purpose.

Indeed, for both Foucault and Althusser, ideologies or subjectifying power practices exist within larger systems (notably capitalism for Althusser) to create subjects positioned or optimized to perform certain roles; to be governable and manageable. This means that our subjectivities are not just constructed: they are constructed strategically to make us manageable. However, lest this start to sound too conspiratorial, Foucault makes clear that there is no one ‘behind’ the creation of subjectivity, nor behind power itself. As Foucault writes, “power relationships are both intentional and non-subjective. If in fact [power relations] are intelligible, this is not because they are the effect of another instance that "explains" them, but because they are imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims or objectives”. (*History of Sexuality*, 94-95). Power exercises a series of “aims or objectives”— it has a certain internal logic that creates certain regularized effects— even if there is no one person or even group of people dictating what these aims and intentions are. This is what Foucault means when he writes in *Subject & Power* that “power as such does not

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1 For Foucault, Capitalism was also a part of the story. He writes that “this biopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism”. This made possible “the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes”. (*D&P*, 140-141).
exist” (S&P, 786). Power isn’t some immaterial and essential substance (Althusser might term this the ideology of power) which one can possess, feel, or use. More appropriately, power is “an action upon the actions of others” (S&P, 786), an intricate material arrangement of people and things which does certain things or allows for certain things to happen.

Power is not wielded by anyone because subjects are not fully rational, free, and intentional Cartesian Cogitos able to enact their unimpeded will on the world. They do not exist prior to their subjectivation or hailing; it is instead power that makes individuals subjects. However, as Foucault argues, this does not mean that power has no strategy. Instead, its strategies are precisely those that make individuals subjects for some calculated aim or objective. Foucault’s notoriously ‘anti-subjective hypothesis’ means that, as Bersani himself argues, “intentionality is not eliminated in the Foucaultian hypothesis of power; it is displaced.” (‘Love & Evil’, 64). Foucault writes:

The "invention" of this new political anatomy [of discipline] must not be seen as a sudden discovery. It is rather a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprintof a general method .... On almost every occasion [, however,] they were adopted in response to particular needs. (My emphasis) (D&P, 138).
So power’s strategies are the results of heterogeneous and local processes. However, these processes resulted “in response to particular needs”. In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault goes on to give the examples of 18th century factory employers creating a new regime of surveillance in response to the need to more efficiently organize production "as the machinery of production became larger and more complex, [and] as the number of workers and the division of labor increased". (*D&P*, 174). Other examples include the more efficient means of social control developed by 18th century police and built into the organization of institutions, both in response to similar needs (*D&P*, 80), (*D&P*, 143). All of these solutions to local needs corresponded to shifts in the mode of production and governance and worked towards the development of modern subjectifying strategies of biopower and disciplinary power. At the individual level, subjects may certainly have recognized what implementing more surveillance and social control would do, if only imperfectly; yet even in addressing these needs, they were not ‘wielding’ power nor intentionally creating an entire system of subjectivation with some kind of unified goal. Or as Foucault put it, “People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.” (*Madness & Civilization*, 112). All these solutions at the local level
worked towards the development of the larger strategies of subjectifying power which then come to operate on a much larger and “intelligible” (HS, 95) scale.

What this means is that subjects are “not only [power’s] inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation.” (Two Lectures, 98). Power makes individuals subjects, but at the same times as it does this, it works through them towards a larger strategy. The solutions to local problems Foucault outlines in Discipline & Punish worked towards and corresponded to the development of strategies of disciplinary power and the modern biopolitical state—but this is because these solutions constituted subjects better adapted to further them. Through innovations at the local level, subjects began to be disciplined, for example, by the factory owners’ new regime of surveillance; this produced increasingly disciplined and disciplinary subjects. In other words, subjects are themselves the “strategic response to particular needs”. (D&P, 138). The subject is both constituted by power and is its point of enactment. They are the strategic end point of power strategies because power strategies are articulated through them. The subject is not just a passive target of power’s strategies; they are themselves its instrument as well as its effect.

The subject’s desire to know and confess their own deep and desiring interiority is one such strategic disciplinary effect and instrument. As Arnold Davidson writes in Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis, “[desire] was used as a
tool, a setting of intelligibility, a calibration in terms of normality: ‘tell me
what your desire is and I will tell you who you are, if you are normal or not, I
will therefore be able to admit or disqualify your desire.’ […] Desire is not an
event, but a permanence of the subject.” (46). In the normalizing disciplinary
society, desire comes to be grafted onto the soul. It refers to a normalcy which
dictates the subject’s most essential biological worth. Pathologies and
abnormalities of desire refer not to a passing feeling but to deeper pathologies
and abnormalities of the subject’s essential and immutable truth. The desire for
self-knowledge and confession then serves a double function: to bind these
desires to the subject’s deepest essence, while at the same time making the
subject visible to power in confession and thereby allowing for their
classification into categories of normal and abnormal, healthy or threatening.
This is turn allows for their legislation by the biopolitical state and discipline
by institutions and other subjects. This deep and desiring subject emerges from
disciplinary practices of norm-enforcement, where they are constantly policed
at the micro-level to fit into the norms biopower has constructed for them; they
then go inwards in search of their truth, to see whether or not they are the
normal thing they are supposed to be. And finally, having relievingly found
something which tells them who they really are underneath it all, they are
enticed to expel it in redemptive confession— and are then classified and
continuously disciplined. Disciplinary power works to produce the effect of subjects who desire self-knowledge, and the search, production, and confession of this knowledge is at the same time its instrument.

However, this particular configuration of disciplinary subjectivity illustrates something else that is essential to Foucault’s account of power: that wherever you look, it is always imbricated with knowledge. Indeed, for power strategies to be “imbued, through and through, with calculation”, (HS, 94) knowledge must be produced which allows for power to calculate its strategies. This concept, knowledge/power—“the deployment of force and the establishment of truth” (Ethics, 184)—is central to his work. For Foucault, there is no “knowledge that does not presuppose” power relations (D&P, 27). There is no such thing as innocent knowledge. Knowledge is not external to power, existing in some free space of uncontaminated or universal truth: rather, any enactment of power produces knowledge, and any knowledge is always strategically produced by power and works to entrench its strategies. This conception of knowledge as the ‘truth-narrative’ which arises from strategic material practices and which in turn imposes a truth of reality is similar to ideology in Althusser’s sense. For Foucault, it therefore makes more sense to speak of regimes of knowledge/power than of power alone. Subjects are constituted within the coils of knowledge/power, where social force, although
not necessarily explicit violence, trains individuals to occupy a specific and normalized identity. This establishes a normalized and disciplined truth of the subject, which is then ‘made knowledge of” by supporting knowledge-producing frameworks (forms of knowledge-production which exist because of and for power): techniques of surveillance, the social sciences, the biopolitical state’s population census, and the subject’s very own longing to know and confess their truth. This knowledge is then used for the continuous enactment of power and the refinement and fine-tuning of its strategy; the deep truth established by these knowledge-producing frameworks allows for the subject to be continuously disciplined and classified. Ideally, disciplinary knowledge/power results in subjects with an interiority anchored by ‘true’ desires which they believe refer, by comparison to the norm, to their essential worth. This defining and desiring depth makes them knowable, governable, manageable, normalizable: subjects of power.

Interiority for its part, where this depth resides, is just as much of a strategic construct. In “"The Soul is the Prison of the Body": Althusser and Foucault”, Warren Montag puts it damningly:

“What, then, is this factitious if not fictitious interiority with which we are endowed, which is added to us, a paradoxical interior that, having no place in us, is constructed around us, outside of us? Interiority and consciousness (and the internal acts that supposedly occur within these
unconditioned spaces) function as the supplement of servitude, its supplemental origin, the origin of the origin, the mark of a domination that folds back upon itself to add to its superior force the guarantee of its own legitimacy. […] Althusser says it brutally: we are interpellated as subjects so that we will freely choose our own subjection.” (69-70).

Interiority is what lends us the (material) appearance of choice; the semblance that who we are, what we feel, what we do, and what we think arises only from within and not from an ideological hailing which speaks through us. In endowing us with the appearance of a prior and independent interiority, the ideology of interiority hails its subjects as fundamentally free to act upon the inert world spread out before them. Yet this freedom is itself an ideological construction which works to make us see our subjection as freedom. We claim as our most precious and inalienable truth the ideological hailing that is for Montag “our servitude”.

Neither Althusser nor Foucault’s accounts of subjectivity leave any room for some kind of essential self. Indeed, the construction of a subject with a deep interior self defined by fixed desire is the realization of knowledge/power strategies. Here, subjectivation has successfully endowed the subject with a governable core, a core which fulfills strategic disciplinary and normalizing purposes. Subjects who understand themselves as having a deep truth of themselves are knowable and classifiable quantities who will not shape-shift
and multiply out of power’s purview. Further, when subjects believe
themselves to be defined of their own volition by essential and natural desires, the systemic forces which constitute these desires are obscured. Authenticity even becomes a moral good. Yet the authentic self is not neutral, random, or a deeper redemptive truth— the result of pure chance, genetics, or god-given traits— but a strategic construct, a calibrated effect of power. The deep and interior authentic self is precisely the thing that knowledge/power regimes aim to produce. It is through and because of the creation of this self that individuals are subjected. As Foucault writes,

“The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (DeP, 29-30).

The goal is therefore not to rescue the subject, to create a free and equal society where every identity group is allowed full expression of their unique and authentic truth: rather, for Foucault, politics start at the rejection of these truths. The soul is the prison of the body. What this means is that our deep interiority is not only problematic because it constructs us as constitutively different from the rest of the world, giving life to our drive towards Jouissance—as Bersani
would have it— but also, from a more systemic viewpoint, because it is the
effect and instrument of subjection, a strategic mechanism of knowledge/power
regimes.

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Reason’s Desire:
Psychoanalysis and the
Modern Subject
If one hears echoes of Bersani in Foucault’s assertion that ‘the soul is the prison of the body’, this is no coincidence. Bersani’s idea of expansive surface similarity is very much in line with Foucault’s political commitments. In fact, in ‘The Power of Evil and the Power of Love’, Bersani is aiming to amend Foucault’s account of subjectivation psychoanalytically (somewhat ironically, given Foucault’s rejection of individual psychology, and especially psychoanalysis). For Bersani, psychoanalysis’s “invaluable function has been to provide what seems to me a transhistorical account, at least for Western culture, of psychic mechanisms assumed and exploited by strategies of power.” (65). What Bersani is adding to Foucault’s account of subjection is the proposition that psychoanalysis is so powerful a descriptive theory that it can be taken as an anatomy of the subject, an anatomy which can be used to illuminate how we are governed. However, Bersani sees psychoanalysis as “transhistorical”, and this is where I think his universalizing psychoanalytic framework limits him. Instead, I will argue that these psychic mechanisms are not merely exploitable by strategies of power, but in line with Foucault and Althusser, are themselves constituted by and constituting of strategies of power. There would then not be independent selves whose pre-existing tendencies were merely harnessed by these strategies, but rather subjects whose psychic mechanisms are in the first place constituted by these strategies.
On this view, Foucaultian subjectivation results in the construction of a psychoanalytically mappable interiority—although, as I will be arguing, perhaps not in the way one might expect.

In order to make this point, I am going to outline how the deep and desiring interior of the subject came to be historically constituted in modernity. The beginnings of interiority as we conceptualize it today can first of all be traced through C.B. Macpherson’s *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, which argues that interiority was produced by the 17th century idea of the right to private ownership over one’s own body, which forms the foundations of Liberal philosophy:

“The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. The relation of ownership, having become for more and more men the critically important relation determining their actual freedom and actual prospect of realizing their full potentialities, was read back into the nature of the individual. The individual, it was thought, is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities. The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession. Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise.” (3).

In the liberal tradition, the individual becomes fully human and is free only in the fact of owning themselves, which ensures independence from the “wills of others”. To even be a subject at all, to be worthy of rights and able to own
property, the individual had to own their body in the first place. Because the body is the exclusive property of the subject, this subject is necessarily private. The point here is not that the subject was public in some pre-modern or pre-liberal period, but rather that modernity produced a mutually constitutive public and private sphere which constructed how individuals came to understand themselves as humans and citizens. Individuals became full subjects only in being private in this new sense, in having ownership over their own bodies, which then allowed them to enter into society. In this way, “freedom from the wills of others” is secured by possession of ones own body, analogous to control over it; the ability to manage and protect it as one sees fit.

The interiority of the subject now comes into relief. An effect of self-ownership is that it opens up a split in the subject. This split implies an owner separate from the thing that is owned, roughly similar to the split between Cartesian mind and body. The boundaries of self starkly traced by the private property of the body then contain its owner: the disembodied Cartesian agent behind the ‘freedom’ self-ownership allows for, the entity which has the essential right and ability to manage its own body and property.

As Robbie Duschinsky writes, “over the course of the eighteenth century, the body and the experiencing subject were joined in the ‘chimera of a substantial unity’, which symbolically transferred the boundaries of ‘the body
clean and true’ on to an individual identity and subjectivity.” (‘Truth, Purification and Power’, 435). This allowed the subject to be one cohesive whole; a fully unique individual made of two mutually constitutive parts which together gave them their essential personal identity. Dipesh Chakrabarty explains in Provincializing Europe that the ‘chimera of a substantial unity’ allowed “desires and emotions [to] be a part, not of anything general or universal as the biological human body or innate human nature, but of individual subjectivity itself” (129). Modernity constituted subjects as disembodied interior worlds-within-worlds who owned themselves—this made them the possessors and therefore primary and exclusive experiencers, feelers, and thinkers of what might previously have been thought of as widely-shared bodily human nature. These desires became theirs, because their body was theirs: all their experiences became expressions of their unique subjectivity, a testament to their individual essences. This is the Cartesian subject as essential and immaterial predicate of all thought and experience, yet now located within an interiority that contains personal thoughts and desires which refer to an essential truth.

Chakrabarty expands on Macpherson’s account by speculating that at first, it was not necessary that the private modern subject be the possessor of a deep interiority. “Indeed”, he writes, “the ‘private’ self of such a subject would have
been empty.” (120). However, from the late 18th century onwards, this privacy is eventually “filled up” (120) with what might now be recognized as a more familiar, ‘deep’ subjectivity—meaning, the construction of something along the lines of a psychoanalytic unconscious. The constitution of individuals with boundaries of private self-possession correspondingly created a separate and unique inner realm which could then be ‘filled’ by something, up until the end of the nineteenth century, at which point the subject emerges as “the more familiar figure whose private self, now regarded as constituted through a history of psychological repression, can be pried open only by the techniques of psychoanalysis.” (131). Chakrabarty’s argument for how this occurs is taken from William Connolly’s genealogy of the subject of European political thought, which in Connolly’s words is that “the modern theory of the stratified subject, with its levels of unconscious, preconscious, conscious, and self-conscious activity, and its convoluted relays among passions, interests, wishes, responsibility and guilt, locates within the self conflicts which Hobbes and Rousseau distributed across regimes” (Politics and ambiguity, 374). The conflicts of civil society, instead of being located at the level of the societal, slide into the very interiority of the subject and construct a deep psychoanalytic map of human consciousness with its various passionate internal divisions and repressed desires.
For Chakrabarty, this psychoanalytic model of a deep and internally conflicted subjectivity was so widely adopted in response to the central tension of modernity’s birth: that between the infinite individuality of its subject and the coherence of the democratic social fabric that supposedly bound these subjects together. Modernity created the individual in its constitutive difference, in its essential uniqueness from the world around it: “what would prevent the social realm, made up of such individuals (that is, people not simply subject to social practice, as they were supposed to be in primitive societies), from collapsing into the nightmare of anomie?” (131). His answer: the subject’s capacity to reason. Reason was understood in modernity as universal and therefore public—it was the voice of universally recognizable truth. Reason would allow the subject to mediate between its individual desire and the public realm. He writes:

“The birth of the modern subject in nineteenth-century European theory required a conflicted interiority where reason struggled to bring under its guidance and control something that distinguished one subject from another and that at the same time was different from reason. […] Without this move, it would have been difficult to develop in individuals their sense of being human but at the same time uniquely individual subjects. […] [Yet the relationship of passion and reason was] “one of struggle between the two because they are of opposed and contradictory character. This struggle is what marks the interiority of the subject.” (130-131).
As the body was private, it was filled with individual and irrational personal passion. Its owner, on the other hand, was the reasonable substance of mind. As psychoanalysis came to construct a deep interiority, the internal struggle between a divided reason and passion becomes modeled after the psychoanalytic conflict of internal subdivisions and opposing drives and desires, something like the super-ego struggling with the deeper desires of the id, ego and unconscious (although in this model, the modern subject is at least partially able to know their unconscious desire). The depth or unconscious of the subject functions as a supplement of boundless individuality. The subject's desires were presumably so intense and so personal that their conscious reason had no choice but to repress them—and how deeply the drama of these desires was buried only confirmed that the individual was fully, essentially themselves.

Chakrabarty argues that this psychoanalytic model of subjectivity then allows the modern subject to become “his or her own novelist and analysand at the same time.” (131). With the advent of psychoanalysis, the faculty of reason

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2 It is important to note here that psychoanalysis is not just one thing. Freud’s theory departs in significant ways from its adoption and from the many schools of psychoanalysis that have sprung from it. However, Foucault’s conception of knowledge/power strategies emerging from the local and particular responses of disparate individuals acting in response to certain needs provides a model for how psychoanalysis might have constructed the modern subject’s depth. As Chakrabarty argues, psychoanalytic depth is modernity’s solution to the central tension created by the particular and private individual and the public, universal reason it is supposed to participate in. The adoption of a version of the psychoanalytic mind—to the point of actual lived experience—can be seen as function of how well its depth-model provided an answer to this tension (and other tensions, as well).
is cast as the intelligent gaze of the analyst, which allows the subject to
discover deeper desires which refer to their unique and essential personality.
The desiring truth buried deep in their body can now be excavated by the
higher faculty of psychoanalytic self-knowledge and directed with self-control
towards the cohesive social realm. Or, as Foucault writes in *Hermeneutics of
the Self*, this is “the more or less Freudian schema—you know it—the schema
of interiorization of the law by the self.” (8).

The modern subject’s faculty of reason, its own psychoanalytic gaze, was
understood as a benevolent guiding hand that allowed it to reign in its personal
and irrational desires and enter into the public. Yet, as I have argued through
Foucault, reason is not as neutral of a guiding force as it may have seemed in
modernity (and certainly continues to seem). As Foucault argues, the claim that
“knowledge can only exist where power relations are suspended” is itself a
product of power. Power is, so to speak, always trying to rationalize itself.
Indeed, in his book *Postmodern Theory*, Douglas Kellner characterizes
modernity as the eighteenth century “discursive explosion whereby all human
behaviour has come under the ‘imperialism’ of modern discourse and regimes
of power/knowledge. The task of the Enlightenment, Foucault argues, was to
multiply ‘reason’s political power’ (1988d: p. 58) and disseminate it
throughout the social field, eventually saturating the spaces of everyday
life.” (112). Modernity, or more specifically the Enlightenment, is the period in which scientific reason is born and begins to take the whole world as its object; it then categorizes, dissects, and studies everything within its purview. For Foucault, this was not an innocent project of progress and discovery. Rather, the relentless production of scientific knowledge works strategically to brand power’s truth upon the world.

There is no disinterested way of looking—and science is no exception. For Foucault in *Discipline & Punish*, modern regimes of knowledge/power work “according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding […], and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution.” (199). Scientific knowledge production always works by producing a norm or a truth, a truth that always depends on the construction of its opposite. Reason can only see in terms of true and false, normal and abnormal. This “binary division” allows for the world to be made calculable and governable. Indeed, this is the logic of biopower—the creation of a normal population as opposed to a threatening or impure one—and for Foucault, scientific reason works to create biopower’s truth. As Colin Koopman explains in *Genealogy as Critique*, “the regime of discipline does not exclude the criminal, the mad, and the free romantic, but rather preserves them by dividing them off from the legal, the sane, the docile”. (150). This is what Kooperman terms Modernity’s logic of purification:
“separation that does not exclude […] but that rather keeps separate the necessary other” (146). Modernity was centrally concerned with producing knowledge about what was sexually and biologically normal, yet this normalcy necessarily also created the the insane and the sexually deviant, which were kept separate as “the necessary other”. The establishment of truth concomitantly produces a mutually constitutive false; the gaze of scientific reason generates truth or norms which can be known and studied only from their flip side.

Scientific reason then grasps the population and filters down to the level of the individual. It produces knowledge about what is mentally, physically, and reproductively true and false, normal or abnormal; it discovers new ways to discipline subjects into the norm; in doing so it makes them more and more manageable. Indeed, modernity is the era in which consciousness itself becomes the object (and subject) of reason’s biopolitical and disciplinary power— and psychoanalysis, modernity’s pre-eminent science of the mind, was one of its main instruments. As Nikolas Rose argues, psychoanalysis, like "all the sciences which have the prefix ‘psy-’ or ‘psycho-’ have their roots in this shift in the relationship between social power and the human body, in which regulatory systems have sought to codify, calculate, supervise, and maximize the level of functioning of individuals. The ‘psy sciences' were born
within a project of government of the human soul and the construction of the person as a manageable subject.” (‘the Study of Psychology’, 135).

Psychoanalysis is a mode of scientific knowledge-production which works to create disciplinary and biopolitical power’s strategic truth. And in similar fashion to other forms of scientific reason in the era of biopower, it can only understand its subject through the lens of normal or abnormal, pathological or healthy. Further, Psychoanalysis diagrams a deep interiority defined by repressed sexual desires which, once revealed to consciousness, tell the subject something important about who they really are. This is the exact disciplinary model of self that Foucault was critiquing, biopolitical reproductive truth and all. And finally, psychoanalysis requires confession. On the analyst’s couch, the subject spills their contents, revealing who they truly are so that they might be made normal. Undergoing analysis is probably the closest one can get to religious confession without being Catholic. Psychoanalysis was one element of a larger scientific and biopolitical apparatus which worked to produce the ideology, in Althusser’s terms, of deep and defining interior desire which needed to be known and confessed, re-adjusting the subject towards normalcy so as to redeem them.

Rose’s formulation might make it seem as though a “human soul” pre-exists the construction of the “manageable subject”—yet psychoanalysis does
not forcefully invade an innocent, prior interiority. Psychoanalysis, along with other ‘psy sciences’, worked to construct a subject with a depth defined by sexual desires, desires which could classify the subject along normal and abnormal lines. If the eye of our psychoanalytic self-examination reveals what looks like the truth of ourselves, this truth is not some discovery of an a-priori essence or of universal drives—it is a production of self always invested and shot-through with strategies of power. The psychoanalytic gaze is not impartial or uninvested. Its meaning-making eye looks for these deep desires, and in looking through its lens, can only know what it sees in comparison to the norm of desire that it has established. Here is where we can re-interpret Chakrabarty’s account of the modern subject’s internal psychoanalytic reason. Indeed, the internal separation of conscious reason and deep irrational desire within the subject is in the first place a precondition for a disciplinary project of self-knowledge. The separation of deep bodily desire from our capacity to reason means that we can in the first place search for these desires. There needs to be a faculty of reason that is first of all divided from desire for it to not ‘know’ desire and for it to then go looking for the truth of it. As Sakari Heikkinen writes through Gilles Deleuze,

“an integral part of subjectivation is defined by “techniques for constituting the self, both as a subject of knowledge and as a knowing subject. It is not possible to construct oneself as a
knowing subject without having a certain (practical and material) attitude to knowledge. This ties the subject ‘to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge’ through all the techniques of moral and human sciences that go to make up a knowledge of the subject.” (‘Technologies of Truth’, 146).

As Deleuze argues, the subject is both a subject of knowledge and a knowing subject. This is another way of saying that the subject is split internally between mind and body, owner and owned, analyst and analysand, effect and instrument of power.

We now have a stronger way of understanding Althusser’s point that interiority makes us “freely choose our own subjection”: we are both the subject and object of psychoanalytic self-knowledge, and that makes us self-governing. In the modern configuration of psychoanalytically-inflected subjectivity, our deep desires come to refer to the particular truths of our individual selves. Our emotions and passions are our own; they are the private truth of our essence. Our analytic gaze then allows us to know these desires so as to find out who we really are—but who we ‘really are’ is a product of this gaze. The faculty of psychoanalytic reason is programed to reveal if we are normal, allowing us to know who we are and how to act; basically, it lets us self-conform to the biopolitical norm. We turn this knowledge-generating eye on ourselves so as to produce power’s truth.
We can re-write Chakrabarty’s tension of modernity in this fashion: once the individual is endowed with an endlessly unique interiority, every subject becomes absolutely heterogeneous—what stops them from being absolutely ungovernable? On the most general level, modernity’s constitution of the individual as free (instead of under the command of a sovereign or of a lord or of a god) necessitated that these individuals be governed in a new way, and that new way was the production of docile and manageable bodies through the “multiplication of reason’s political power” (Kellner, 58). Yet subjects are both the aim and instruments of knowledge/power; its point of enactment and its effect—even within their own interiority. The reasoned analyst’s gaze is the turning of “reason’s political power” within, allowing the subject to produce, know, and therefore manage their desires through the lens of normalcy. In their internal objective and subjective split, in studying and dissecting their deep desire, they become the agent of their own subjectivation. The internal psychoanalytic eye autonomously produces power’s truth to allow for self-government, regulation, and management.

So a deep and desiring interiority mapped into the body ‘clean and true’ is a configuration particular to modernity. It emerges from liberal possessive individualism combined with the psychoanalytic theory of a stratified psyche, which hollows out a depth of true desire within the newly-traced boundaries of
self-possession. This deep desire comes to refer to something important and authentic about the subject: it is an expression of their own infinite individuality, of their real essence. For Chakrabarty, the psychoanalytic model of stratified consciousness has become so widely adopted—to the point of it being ‘real’ in Althusser’s ideological yet material sense—because it resolved one of the central tensions of modernity. Deep psychoanalytic desire allows for the subject to retain their exclusive emotional uniqueness, while the higher faculty of reasoned self-examination (something like the analyst’s gaze turned inwards) tames and guides this desire into the cohesion of society. The split struggle between these two faculties marks the interiority of the modern subject. However, from a Foucaultian perspective, psychoanalysis (and reason itself) is not a neutral or disinterested knowledge-generating framework; it worked alongside other disciplinary ‘psy’ sciences to generate a certain type of strategic knowledge. Like all modern knowledge-generating frameworks, psychoanalysis is one part of the ‘knowledge’ component of new modes of biopolitical knowledge/power governance, which work according to a mode “of binary division and branding” (D&P, 199)—organizing the world into true or false and normal and abnormal, branding power’s truth upon reality, making it increasingly calculable and manageable.
In this way, the self-examining gaze of psychoanalytic reason produces self-knowledge that can only fall into the categories of normal or abnormal, true or not true. The modern tension that psychoanalytic interiority resolves can also be understood as its production of governable and self-governing subjects: the internal analytic gaze is the individual’s self-subjectivation, the fixing of their own desire. This gaze ‘self-hails’ the individual as a subject of the ideological truth of normal or abnormal desire, letting them know who they are, manage themselves accordingly, and enter into normalized disciplinary society. This is another way to put Foucault’s claim that the “soul” is the “effect and instrument of a political anatomy”. \(D&P\, 30\). The true desiring self or soul is a normalized and disciplined object, the effect of a turning inwards accomplished by the instrument of the knowing subject. To return to Bersani and his claim that psychoanalysis’s “invaluable function has been to provide what seems to me a transhistorical account […] of psychic mechanisms assumed and exploited by strategies of power” (65), psychoanalysis is in fact part of a biopolitical and disciplinary knowledge/power regime which works to produce psychic mechanisms of power (and these mechanisms are certainly not transhistorical). The slant of the psychoanalytic gaze is itself an important component in the creation of
governable and self-normalizing subjects bound to the truth of their deep and revealing desire.

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“Truth Is a Thing of This World”:
Jouissance, Biopolitical Racism,
and Truth Games
Early in ‘The Power of Love and the Power of Evil’, Bersani writes:

“Foucault evaded [the necessity of specifying the content of desire], and made this evasion seem almost negligible, by his brilliant but limiting subordination of desire to an intentionalizing perspective on desire. […] But for subjects to be actively subjected (to collaborate with the agents of their subjection), it is necessary to produce more specific desires.” (65). In his own writing, Foucault avoided engaging in a disciplinary project of knowledge/power subjectivation—using scientific reason to brand the subject with a normalizing truth of desire, as psychoanalysis does—by asserting that all that was important was the subject’s desire to know their own desire. That they searched for these desires was their subjection, because this search, carried out through the lens of psychoanalytic reason, would inevitably produce desires corresponding to categories of normal or abnormal. However, I agree with Bersani when he writes that “more specific desires” need to be produced. Yet as I have argued, it is the psychoanalytic gaze of self-examination which in part works to produce these desires—although of course, always within larger ideologies (or knowledge/power regimes). In this section, I am therefore going to argue that the drive for *Jouissance* is a specific desire that is both constituted by and constituting of strategies of power, and it is in part strategically produced through the subject’s own psychoanalytic self-examination.
To this effect, Bersani argues that “the imperialist project of invading and appropriating foreign territories corresponds to what Freud calls nonsexual sadism in the 1915 essay ‘Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,’ which he defines as ‘the exercise of violence or power upon some other person or object,’ the attempted mastery over the external world. This is an ego-project, a defensive move (or perhaps a preemptively offensive move) against the world’s threatening difference from the self.” (66). “Invading and appropriating foreign territories” is *Jouissance* in action. For Bersani, this desire provides the crucial impetus and justification for projects like imperialism, war, and “mass hysteria deliberately cultivated by dictatorships.” (68). His point here is that *Jouissance* is not only what motivates our interpersonal but also our political projects of destruction. *Jouissance* is the fundamental force that lends a certain rationality and seeming coherence to violent political ventures, both for a country’s leaders and for its people. Our “brutal leaders” (69) hyperbolizing themselves in ecstatic *Jouissance* also mobilize *Jouissance* in their people in order to justify their large-scale programs of political destruction.

For Bersani, a people’s subjection is made possible through the government’s harnessing of their drive towards *Jouissance*. Using the example of the United State’s invasion of Iraq, Bersani illustrates how *Jouissance* is stoked to enforce and re-entrench national and cultural boundaries traced
around self vs other, producing the people’s complicity in the violent and destructive interests of their leaders. Bersani wants to make the point that the exploitation of our *Jouissance* is one of the key ways in which we are governed. Political leaders strategically encourage the direction of their people’s fundamental thirst for destruction towards the object they too wish to narcissistically destroy (in this case, Al-Qaeda, “the mirror image” of our “Christian fundamentalism”) (71). This is Bersani’s production of “more specific desires” that allows for “subjects to be actively subjected (to collaborate with the agents of their subjection)” (65). Our desire for *Jouissance* is specified by “the agents” of subjection when it is aimed towards strategic objects. The production of specific desires is here not production in the strong sense, but rather the comparatively weaker management and organization of pre-existing psychoanalytic drives.

In Bersani’s model, “brutal leaders” or “the agents” of subjection exercise direct power over their subjects by strategically guiding their *Jouissance*. Here, power works linearly: in their possession of power, rulers encourage the inflation of their subjects’s egos for political gain (and for the satisfaction of their own *Jouissance*). Yet if one rejects the idea of an independent interiority untouched by the ‘outside’, it is not that our “brutal leaders” simply direct a pre-existing Jouissance towards politically expedient objects— instead, a larger
non-subjective yet intentional power strategy is at work which strategically constructs and utilizes this *Jouissance*. Reformulating Bersani’s idea of a *Jouissance* harnessable for projects of political mastery, what this then suggests is that *Jouissance* might itself be a desire constitutive of all of our subjections (rulers included); a key mechanism of larger power strategies, and not just of whoever is in power’s strategy. I will argue that, in the stronger sense of power strategies working through the production of “more specific desires” which make subjects “actively collaborate with the agents of their subjection” (or strategies of subjection) (65), when we self-recognize *Jouissance* within our depths, we strategically self-subject ourselves to an ideology that justifies the destruction of otherness so central to “projects of political mastery”. What is at stake here is an understanding of *Jouissance* as a strategic element of subjectivation (and not just a psychoanalytic discovery of transhistorical psychic truth), an element which works towards some larger goal or aim, and which the subject also negotiates within themselves. Every theoretical framework has its own way of seeing; understanding *Jouissance* as a strategic mechanism of knowledge/power opens up different possibilities, different problems, and different solutions.

Within this framework, the drive for *Jouissance* is not put ‘into’ us in such a way that it inheres within our depths. In other words, it is not an unconscious
desire. If the subject has no essential desire—if these desires are always
produced at the moment of the inwards gaze, a gaze which produces strategic
self-knowledge—then desire can never pre-exist this gaze. Even if desire were
simply ‘put in’ to the subject from the outside by disciplinary technologies
(perhaps even through the ISAs Althusser delineates: the school, the family,
church) it would still be relatively fixed, and would inhere in the subject’s
interiority. This would simply re-instate desire’s truth, its supposed
correspondence to some important fact of ourselves that Foucault and
Althusser are in the first place trying to deconstruct. Instead, I am going to
argue that our desires, including *Jouissance*, are the result of ideologies which
in Althusser’s sense strategically hail us to be certain types of subjects.

Once again, Foucault’s writing offers a different way of interpreting
Bersani’s theory. Bersani’s account of *Jouissance* is in fact quite close to
Foucault’s concept of biopolitical state racism. Foucault argues that state
racism is not individual prejudice against race as appearance (although it still
retains a classically racial element), but is rather a structural logic which works
to construct a threatening othered population and, in times of need, to justify its
destruction by the state. The modern biopolitical state is constituted as a
cohesive if fragile whole that exists to foster the health of its national
population, or its ‘race’— as a result, racism takes on biological significance as
the fear of contaminating and misceginating difference. In Foucault’s analysis, racism works to justify the state’s continuous need to exercise its sovereign power to kill or exclude in the age of biopower. He writes: "we are dealing with a mechanism that allows biopower to work. So racism is bound up with the workings of a state that is obliged to use race, the elimination of races and the purification of the race, to exercise its sovereign power". (Society, 258).

Even as the biopolitical state is supposed to foster life, it retains the necessity of using its power to kill in order to regulate the economic and social forces available to it. The discourse of biological difference as the privileged manifestation of the will of the people then becomes one of the ways the state secures its legitimacy. As a result, in times of crisis—not that times of crisis are exceptional— the survival and health of the national population is understood to depend upon the “the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal).” (Society, 255).

Foucault never addresses racism on the subjective level, as his point was that biopolitical racism is not personal bias against naturalized race as appearance but rather a larger logic endemic to the modern biopolitical state.

3 This is in part what Giorgio Agamben argues in his book Homo Sacer: the state of exception is now permanent and the state can (and always could) exercise its sovereign power. The response to the ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe and newer immigration policies in the United States illustrates this.
Foucault’s writing scrupulously avoids an analysis of subjective perspective; his historical subject did not have a pre-existing psychology that could be revealed through investigative knowledge. Rather, as I have outlined, the slant of this investigative gaze is itself shot-through with power relations and works strategically to produce a normalized and disciplined truth of self. His work was above all focused on how the subject’s truth was produced within larger regimes of power/knowledge. However, here I return to Bersani’s point that “more specific desires need to be produced […] for subjects to collaborate with the agents of their subjection.” (65). The subject of the biopolitical nation, simply, needs to feel threatened by and sometimes desire the harm of the biopolitical other produced by their normalizing society. This is on a very basic level necessary for both strategies of biopower and sovereign power to justify themselves. Indeed, one could say that on the subjective level biopolitical power’s justification is these attitudes. This justification works through the subjectivation of its valorized population as racist: as fearing biopolitical difference, and in times of necessity, desiring its destruction.

Foucault would of course not have thought like Bersani that the desire to destroy biopolitical others is a result of drives fundamental to the psyche. Indeed, instead of the self’s difference from the world being a psychological given, Foucault’s point is that biopolitical difference is a material apparatus
which exists ‘outside’ in the structure of society. Biopower works to create and enforce difference in reality. It differentially distributes its population into groups of deserving and undeserving and normal and abnormal by gathering knowledge so as to produce a norm—a norm which it enforces through policies which govern how an individual is able to live their life. On an international level, countries are materially demarcated by borders which have their own crossing rituals (identity papers, security measures) that work to delineate who is a citizen, who is a welcome visitor, and who is an invasive outsider. At the level of the state, biopower materially constructs an othered population by administratively guiding some groups into poverty and wage-labor, others into psychiatric institutions, some into prisons (and some into ‘safe’ neighborhoods and good schools). Finally, at the individual disciplinary level, schools use these norms to partition people according to gender, race, class, and ability, as do families, churches, neighborhoods, and even bathrooms. Knowledge about these norms is also generated through the disciplines (psychology, biology, anthropology, sociology, to name a few), as well as through the media, which produce and reinforce the truth of these norms. Who is the valorized population as well as what is normal and abnormal for each social group is overwhelmingly evident in the material configuration of society. So if a subject
comes to see threatening biopolitical difference, this is because the world is materially set up to constantly produce it.

As Foucault would argue, the creation of this difference is strategic—it constitutes a whole biopolitical mode of government—and the knowledge produced about this difference works to justify the biopolitical strategy. Here is where we can use Althusser to bridge the gap between Foucault’s structural analysis and the individual biopolitical subject’s desire to destroy difference. Indeed, Foucault’s account of the knowledge component of knowledge/power is extremely close to Althusser’s definition of ideology. Althusser (somewhat convolutedly) wrote that “[a subject’s] ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of the subject.” (Ideology, 169). The subject’s “ideas”, in this case their feeling of disgust or hatred for biopolitical difference, are the result of their ‘real life’ participation in a biopolitical ordering of reality in which the difference of others is meaningful. These ideologies are, from Foucault’s perspective, produced strategically to justify biopolitical power’s strategies; if biopolitical others come to mean ‘contaminating’ or ‘threat’, this is an ideology which works to justify biopower’s strategies of making live and letting die (the differentially administrated management of every social group).
These ideologies then hail us as their subjects. As Zeus Leonardo writes, “race is a structure in which [racist] attitudes become meaningful, which otherwise are not meaningful in themselves; in other words, the racial structure gives them meaning. It is a process of marking, of hailing human subjects into the racial formation as subjects of its apparatuses, such as schools.” (‘Althusser, Ideology and Race Relations’, 7). Leonardo is using the term race in the more classical sense, but Foucault’s wider concept can be understood in the same way. The othering practices of biopolitics—of materially demarcating the worthy from the unworthy, the normal from the abnormal, the dangerous and impure from the healthy and clean—make up a material apparatus of difference-production within which the subject learns to recognize who they are in opposition to the others they are not. They are hailed by biopolitically racist ideologies, recognize themselves as part of a healthy and deserving national community, and feel threatened by the othered population. In this framework, our desire to destroy Dahmer for his evilness—which Bersani understands as our own displaced and socially-sanctioned drive towards Jouissance—is the individual’s hailing as a subject threatened by Dahmer’s position at the very edge of the psychologically normal bell curve. His difference comes to mean ‘threat to society that should be destroyed’ through a biopolitically racist ideology which hails us as a member of a
vulnerable community. These ideologies arise from the material ordering practices of biopolitics wherein ‘psychopathy’ or ‘pedophile’ come to have their distinctive biopolitical meanings of mental and sexual abnormalcy. If we are threatened by and want to destroy Dahmer’s difference, this is because our desire to do so is the ideological “effect and instrument” of a whole modern mode of biopolitical governmentality. In the same way, our desire to destroy Al-Qaeda’s difference is the subject’s ideological hailing as a member of a threatened national population whose survival depends upon the destruction of the religiously-deformed, invasive other.

The ideology of biopolitical racism (the fear of threatening others) is born out of material biopolitical practices with construct an othered population. Only within these material othering practices do some groups come to mean ‘threatening’, and this meaning or ideology works to justify biopower’s partitioning of the population. The drive towards Jouissance, for its part—the active desire to destroy this biopolitical difference—can then be understood as a desire which works to justify the state’s intermittent need to enact its sovereign power against these othered groups. Combining Foucault, Bersani and Althusser, our “brutal leaders” (69) (or rather, strategies which necessitate the employment of sovereign power) hail the drive for Jouissance in us when the state needs to justify its right to enact explicit violence. If we hear Marine
Le Pen describing refugees in Europe as a “barbarian invasion” (*N.Y Times*, 2015) and feel the safety and sanctity of our civilized nations to be threatened, this is because we are being hailed in opposition to the threatening other as the subject of these civilized nations. Yet we are only able to self-recognize as the subject of a civilized and jeopardized Europe because we have been marked as such through material ideological apparatuses which make Europe mean ‘civilized’ and refugee mean ‘barbarian’, ideologies which work to justify European economic and cultural supremacy along with the state’s ability to close its borders, deport refugees, or whatever else.

So our ability know what difference means is not a psychoanalytic given, but is in the first place produced by practices of norm-creation and disciplinary exercises of norm-enforcement within which certain types of differences come to signify ‘biologically threatening’ and others ‘national population to be protected’. Bersani would phrase this partitioning of society as the ego’s independent classification of the world in terms of same or different, which then allows the ego to know where to direct its *Jouissance*, a picture relatively close to the one I am outlining—however, understanding *Jouissance* as a structural and strategic mechanism opens up different possibilities and different modes of thought (as well as different problems). Bersani’s framework sees an out in terms of surface similarity, or in inverting the subject’s depth to make
their skin truth, allowing difference to become the “non-threatening supplement of sameness”. (Homos, 121). He is not the type of theorist to lay out programatic instructions on how to make his vision a reality. His illustrations of how we might achieve this surface similarity are taken from literature and myth. Indeed, psychoanalysis positions the drives he is trying to bypass as transhistorical—this makes it difficult to envision how we could ever evade their pull. However, if we understand the subject’s deep desiring depth and their drive to destroy difference as strategic ideological constructs born out of modern knowledge/power regimes, we have a start towards some sort of answer.

However, Althusser’s conception of ideological hailing leaves no room for the subject to negotiate the terms ideology sets out. Ideology dominates; it hails subjects whether they want to be hailed or not (not that individuals can even want anything prior to being hailed as subjects). In being hailed, the modern subject turns their guiding hand of analytic reason inwards and asks: what I am feeling (who am I), and what should I do? For Althusser, this ideological construction of the subject as a deep and essential interiority governed by the subject’s free faculty of self-examining reason would function as a supplement or reinforcement of ideological subjection. Human interiority that contains the truth of personal desire and the reasoned capacity to freely act
(or not act) on this desire is an ideological effect which works to entrench ideology’s subjectifying truth-value. If desire results from being hailed by ideology and yet we understand our desire as the truth of our essence, how we are hailed becomes our most fundamental truth. As a result, when we are hailed to feel something by a larger ideological apparatus, we find this to be the expression of our very soul. Our supposed essence binds the hailed desire to our core, and our ‘free’ capacity to reason lends the ideological illusion that we are able to decide how to act based on our desire. When individuals are hailed as the threatened subjects of a biologically pure race and then act to destroy the threatening other, for Althusser, they experience their desire to destroy difference as the truth of their deepest selves—a desire they have ‘chosen’ to act upon. This works to make us ‘freely choose’, in Althusser’s sense of illusory agency, the desire to destroy difference so central to strategies of biopolitical power.

Surprisingly, here is where Foucault gives the subject a little more leeway. In contrast to his earlier work, which many critics claim totally denies the subject any agency, the older Foucault wrote and spoke on the ‘games of
truth’ that subjects engage in. In an interview from 1984, Foucault claims: “when I say ‘game,’ I mean a set of rules by which truth is produced. It is not a game in the sense of an amusement; it is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid.” (‘The Ethic of Care for the Self’, 127). Games of truth are for Foucault something like ideology was for Althusser. Jeannette Stirling writes that “we can only become subjects by ‘subjecting’ ourselves to selected truth games because there is neither selfhood nor truth outside of these games” (‘Truth games/truth claims’, 1). Games of truth provide us with the rules and terms of procedure to which we are bound and in which we come to fashion who we are and what the world around us is. In Althusser’s sense, ideology hails an individual as its subject, and in Foucault’s sense, this ideology comes with certain parameters of what can or cannot be true. As a result, unlike ideology (to which the subject is totally beholden), “for Foucault, the subject’s power in this process is to decide on what terms to play the game.” (‘Truth games’, 4).

Truth is a game because it exists to be played—its rules strategically followed, subverted, bent, or resisted to generate knowledge that can position reality in different ways. And like everything else, the rules of truth operate within a larger network of power/knowledge regimes. Foucault writes:
“Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” (Power/Knowledge, 131).

All moves, even outright resistance or denial, are determined by the parameters of truth that have already been set. One can only deny something which already exists. This means that the subject’s ability to maneuver within truth games is already set by much larger power/knowledge regimes which determine what moves count as valid in the first place. Nevertheless, subjects can play within the game differently and construct themselves differently.

The ability to play truth games is, perhaps, the more positive flip-side of our self-governing subjectivities. When our self-examining gaze turns inwards, we construct a truth or a narrative about what we find. This analytic narrativizing function will understand the desire it produces as normal or abnormal, admissible or unacceptable—truth games always exist within set parameters which pre-exist us—however, as our own instruments and effects of power, we play truth games to strategically fashion ourselves and our realities. By weaving together various ideologies or truths, we ‘self-hail’. In
this way, Foucault’s concept of the truth game can help to explain how individuals tactically negotiate the ideologies into which they are hailed as subjects. The ideology of biopolitical racism arises out of biopolitical practices of differential populational demarcation and separation, and this ideology hails the individual as the subject of a cohesive threatened race when the state needs to use its sovereign power—however, what this looks like on the subjective level varies widely. Subjects hailed by this ideology might play the truth game by saying: ‘these ______ are taking the jobs that we as hard-working citizens are entitled to.’ This more obviously biopolitically racist move hails its speaker as a productive and therefore deserving member of a larger cohesive nation economically threatened by an outside other. Or the subject might say: ‘I don’t have any problem with ______, but I don’t want my kids around it.’ This hails the speaker as protective instead of aggressive. The truth of contaminable childhood purity and innocence is invoked here (indeed, children are the precious genetic future of the biopolitical state) to fashion the subject as beyond reproach and at the same time to justify the letting die, expulsion, or even active destruction of the contaminating other. In a different vein, the subject might say: ‘there’s no reason to fear ______. They’re just like us: family-oriented and hard-working’. The speaker is hailed as an open-minded subject belonging to a wider community with certain shared values that is
nevertheless generously willing to admit outsiders. However, the other being conjured here isn’t biopolitically threatening, because they aren’t different: they’re normal like ‘us’, and they will contribute to the health of society. The statement gains its validity from the truth that if these others were different, they would merit fear.

All of these moves operate on the terms of biopolitically racist ideology: difference is bad or contaminating, ‘we’ are part of a cohesive national population that needs to be protected. Nevertheless, each of these moves positions the subject, the biopolitical other, and the national population differently, and this mobilizes the truth in a way that is beneficial to the speaker. Indeed, on the individual level, each of these moves comes with its own micro-strategy. In self-fashioning themselves as productive, motherly, moral, or open-minded (among other examples), subjects appeal to the way they want to be seen and want to understand themselves. Their fashioning of the world is also invested with personal strategy; an economic migrant would probably not claim that only the citizens of their destination country are entitled to employment. Indeed, in all of these examples, subjects understand themselves as members of a community that receives biopolitical benefits, at least in some capacity. The moves they make as a result serve to justify biopolitical racism on a larger scale, even as they also fulfill smaller personal
strategies. To repeat a quote of Foucault’s, “People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.” (M&C, 112). Truth games are the subject’s self-fashioning in response to ideological hailing, and quite often, these forms of self-fashioning work within the larger ideology or power strategy to justify it. Even if subjects are not the masterminds of a larger strategy, they are complicit: in their self-governance, they “actively collaborate” with the strategies of their subjection, because there’s some benefit in it for them (economic or social power, a sense of belonging or safety). In this way, individuals strategically manage their subjectivation to an ideology of biopolitical racism for their own ends, even as these ends often work towards justifying the exercise of sovereign or biopolitical power.

However, subjects might also, if they’ve read a lot of Althusser and Foucault, say: ‘I’m being hailed by a biopolitically racist ideology which works to justify strategies of biopolitical and sovereign power’. This is a move in a truth game which gains its validity from the authority of two enshrined social theorists writing within the authenticated context of western academia—a context which is of course itself deeply intertwined with reason’s political power. This move eschews the ideology of biopolitical racism by positioning the speaker within a different ideology where new realities become thinkable.
These were the stakes for Foucault: knowledge always produces power, even power counter to entrenched knowledge/power regimes. The inwards self-governing eye of psychoanalytic examination also allows the subject, if they have access to counter-discourses, to refashion themselves and refashion their realities. Here is where Foucault’s historical framework might provide a way out that psychoanalysis cannot see: subjects can self-hail, even if only within the terms of pre-existing regimes of knowledge/power. Knowledge of counter-discourses might allow us to fashion ourselves and our realities differently. If we are wary of our depth and suspicious of authenticity, and if we conceptualize truth as a game and desire not as a reference to deeper truth but to ideologies which are articulating themselves through us, we might be able to remake ourselves in a way that doesn’t rely on these concepts quite so heavily. Nevertheless, ideologies gain their power from their material instantiation in the world. The concepts of ideological hailing or of truth games are obscure for a reason: they go against a strategic ordering of reality out of which biopolitical power’s truth arises. Even if one is thoroughly convinced of the existence of a racist biopolitical state, when the chorus chants: *So what Jeffrey Dahmer did was okay? We should leave him free to gruesomely murder little boys?*, it becomes very difficult to think outside these parameters. Ideology can make some things simply unthinkable (or makes some things necessarily
thinkable). It often has an irresistible gravity and does not give its subjects leeway of choice.\(^5\)

From the Foucaultian and Althusserian perspective I have laid out, the subject’s desire to destroy difference is the result of an ideological hailing which works to justify the necessity of exercising sovereign power in the era of biopolitics. The drive for *Jouissance* is then a strategic effect and instrument of biopolitical knowledge/power strategies which often require the enactment of explicit violence. This drive does not originate from deep within the individual’s psyche, even if the psychoanalytic-disciplinary model of mind makes it seem so. It is not a psychoanalytic truth fundamental to us all, because we have no truth—or, in less black and white terms, we don’t have a ‘true truth’. *Jouissance*, or the biopolitical destruction of an othered population, is a true desire hailed in us by the ideologies of biopolitical and sovereign power. However, as I have argued, our power lies in our ability to maneuver within the rules of truth that have already been set—even if only imperfectly, and always inconsistently. Our ability to self-fashion means that we are not bound to our

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\(^5\) Another example of an often irresistible ideology is science. Science’s unforgiving and rigid rules of truth-production work to invalidate every other ideology; it claims an absolute reality that only it can access. As I have argued, this is because scientific reason strategically positions things in terms of true or false or normal and abnormal, and this produces a knowable and manageable reality—it is as such biopower’s mode of knowledge production.
our depths; both the ideology of biopolitical racism and our own subjectivities are truth games, and there are multi-faceted styles of play available.

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Conclusion:

Inside Out From Within
Psychoanalysis is also an ideology and a truth game, and at least for a certain period of time, it was considered a science—meaning, its framework could legitimately generate knowledge. Even if psychoanalytic theory as a whole has been discredited as empirically inaccurate and therefore illegitimate (science invalidating science), the modern Western subject is well-nigh universally constructed as having an interior depth wherein their true desires lie. As I have argued, the construction of a deep and desiring subjectivity split from a higher faculty of reason is an adapted aspect of psychoanalytic theory that fulfills the strategic function of pinning subjects to normalized desire, making them governable and self-governing. However, psychoanalysis’s centrality in projects of subjectivation also means that the psychoanalytic truth game is uniquely positioned: precisely because some of its rules structure an almost-irrefutable truth of subjectivity, playing within these rules offers potentially powerful opposing moves of knowledge-generation and self-fashioning.

Indeed, because a psychoanalytic model of subjectivity functions at the heart of disciplinary subjectivation, it can at the very same time be used to effectively resist a normalizing intentionality. Or, as Bersani wrote (albeit to different effect): “if psychoanalysis has designed a mental map that can guide projects of political mastery, that very same map gives us the terms of a reverse
discourse (an aspect of power exercises that interested Foucault very much) that can be used to resist projects of subjection.” (65). If psychoanalysis has helped construct the rules of normalizing disciplinary subjectivation, those very same rules give us powerful terms on which to strategize opposing moves. In this way, the existence of the unconscious can be played on two sides. On the one hand, it allows for truth to be fixed in desires deep within us. Or, in another disciplinary yet slightly different move, even granting that ideologies hail us as certain types of subjects, these ideologies inhere deep within our interiority—we just don’t know it. However, as Arnold Davidson explains, “it was the psychoanalytic discovery of the unconscious that, as Foucault emphasizes in ‘The Death of Lacan’, allowed one to question the old theory of the subject.” (*Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, 43). Foucault like Lacan understood the unconscious as “a system of logico-linguistic structures” (43)—“the space of logic, of logical and linguistic structures, rules and operations.” (Davidson, 44). Indeed, for Foucault, the unconscious was not a ‘real’ feature of the human psyche, but was precisely the rules of truth by which one was able to determine correctness or incorrectness. If there is such a thing as the unconscious, it was for Foucault the logical operations which allowed truth to obtain: the logic built into language which allowed the subject to recognize the validity or invalidity of a statement. This meant that language,
wherein subjects articulate their ‘truths’, could not be understood as an intentional expression of some personal essence of the self. When the subject speaks their truth, they are speaking through a structure of logical operations which exist ‘outside’ of them in language. Foucault says in an interview on Lacan that his work helped him to realize that “one had to try to free everything that hides behind the simple use of the pronoun ‘I’” (“Lacan”, 205). Under the banner of ‘I’, the self’s truths are constantly multiplying.

Foucault and Lacan use the rules of the disciplinary adoption of the unconscious to undo the subject’s authentic depth from deep within. In claiming that the unconscious is a set of rules and operations by which truth can obtain, the intentionality of the essential and rational subject is displaced onto language structures. Language or ideology speaks, not the subject. So again, the subject’s power lies in playing by these rules and operations differently—which is precisely what Foucault is doing. This is also the project I see Bersani as engaged in throughout his work. Indeed, even as his framework is psychoanalytic, his point nevertheless always seems to be that there is something wrong with our depth, evil about our psychology, violent about our interiority: that the psychoanalytic truth of ourselves reveals that this truth must be resisted. Like Foucault, Bersani can be seen as strategically
playing by the rules of a disciplinary-psychoanalytic ideology to turn the
subject inside out from within.

Bersani, hailed by the ideology of biopolitical racism, uses the disciplinary
and psychoanalytic rules of deep sexual desire defining selfhood along normal
or abnormal, pure or impure, and sane or insane lines to hail us in turn, by
saying: we all find intense sexual pleasure in acts of destruction. The
psychoanalytic gaze of self-knowledge will reveal to you that the deepest, most
intractable, most fundamental force that motivates all of your actions is the
force of what you all call the ‘evil’ of others. Your sexual desires are just as
psychologically deformed and abnormal as Jeffrey Dahmer’s, who
dismembered young boys, had sex with their body parts, and ate them. And
further, when you want to destroy threatening others, that is only because you
are displacing your sexual desire to destroy the normal, healthy, sane, and
deserving national population onto them. The very population whose lives
must be protected and fostered—the deserving population you thought you
were a part of—is in reality who you want to kill. You and everyone you love
are all the contaminating threat to society of the ‘terrorist’ other. True and
important sexual desires can be found within depth, desires that will reveal to
you the truth of yourself. Except that what the truth of yourself reveals is that
you are what you want to destroy. Bersani uses the psychoanalytic gaze of self-
knowledge to tell us that the truth of all of our essential desires is that there is something deeply abnormal and monstrous about who we authentically are. We are all the impure, abnormal, and threatening biopolitical other that society must annihilate.

The powerful truth-generating gaze of the analyst can then be used to construct a counter-discourse. Playing from the heart of the disciplinary truth-game’s rules, Bersani works through depth and against it. He plays the game and tells us that, if the biopolitical other must be feared and destroyed, so must our very own subjectivity. If we reject their abnormal and contaminating difference then we must also reject ourselves. This move hails the individual through the rules of biopolitical racism and deep psychoanalytic subjectivity to undo both its subject and itself from within. The subject is hailed against itself; depth is forced out from the inside.

As strange as it may sound, perhaps we should all train our self-examining analytic gaze to self-hail an intractable *Jouissance* in our depths. When hailed by biopolitical racism, we might look within and try to find the inexcusably abnormal truth of our sexual desire to destroy innocent little children, everyone we love, and indeed, the whole world. This would not be a redeemable truth; no amount of confession or self-flagellation would make it acceptable. Our most authentic self would be irreparably biopolitically deformed. As a result,
the ego, as it were, itself becomes threatening difference and shatters in its implosion. Or to put it another way, when everything is threatening difference (and especially yourself), there is no more difference, because there are no more dualities.

Essentially, we might attempt to use our capacity for truth-generation, for knowing what our real and defining desires are, against ourselves so as to self-destruct. This would undoubtably be incredibly difficult—and indeed, ‘difficult’ makes this seem like a feat that can, with enough hard work and perseverance, nevertheless be accomplished. Perhaps not. Being hailed by ideology is not an intentional ‘choice’. However, as Foucault argues, "one of the main political problems would be nowadays […] the politics of ourselves,” and these politics start at a "critical ontology of ourselves.” For Foucault, this critical ontology is a recognition that the self is "nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology" (The Foucault Reader, 50) that produces it—but perhaps, from the perspective of a psychoanalytic counter-discourse, this critical ontology could also be an ontology critical of who we ‘truly’ are. In this, we might have no recourse but Bersani’s vision of expansive surface similarity.
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