

FOUCAULT LECTURES

vol. III

GOVERNMENTALITY
LIBERALISM
BIOPOWER
THE MODERN SUBJECT



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Foucault Lectures

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EDITORIAL

Sverre Raffnsøe, Alain Beaulieu, Barbara Cruikshank, Knut Ove Eliassen, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, Thomas Götselius, Daniele Lorenzini, Hernan Camilo Pulido Martinez, Johanna Oksala, Clare O'Farrell, Rodrigo Castro Orellana, Eva Bendix Petersen, Alan Rosenberg, Dianna Taylor, Signe Macholm Müller & Asker Bryld Staunæs.

The editors of Foucault Studies are pleased to publish this issue of *Foucault Studies* containing three articles, each devoted to discussing one of Foucault's yearly series of lectures at the *Collège de France*.

In "The Beginning of a Study of Biopower," Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson (Syracuse University) centers the attention on Foucault's 1978 lecture course at the *Collège de France* entitled *Security, Territory, Population*. The article "The Appearance of an Interminable Natural History and its Ends" by Sverre Raffnsøe (Copenhagen Business School) and Knut Ove Eliassen (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) examines Foucault's Lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* at the *Collège de France* in 1979. Written by Daniele Lorenzini (Warwick University), "Anarcheology and the Emergence of the Alethurgic Subject" discusses Foucault's 1980 lecture course entitled *On the Government of the Living*.

A NOVELTY

Rather than just a new publication continuing the row of previous issues of Foucault Studies, the present issue is to be regarded as a novelty in a more radical sense. It is a new kind of publication that broadens the scope or the range of Foucault Studies; and it is a new kind of publication that initiates a new series of publications in addition to Foucault Studies' already existing programme.

Since the quite recently accomplished full publication of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, completed in French in 2015 and in English in 2019, the editors of Foucault Studies have considered it timely to publish a series of articles introducing each year's lectures in the context of and as a contribution to Foucault's work while also highlighting crucial problems still of relevance in the discussed sequence of lectures. The present issue is the first volume to appear in the context

of this series. The series is intended to be of value to the reader wanting to make her- or himself acquainted with the lecture series as well as to the more experienced scholar.

Provisionally, the series is envisaged to consist of six volumes. The first volume will be devoted to Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France* from 1970 to 1973 entitled *Leçons sur la volonté de savoir/Lectures on the Will to Know, Théories et institutions pénales/ Penal Theories and Institutions*. The second volume will focus on Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France* from 1974 to 1976 under the headings *La société punitive,/ The Punitive Society, Le Pouvoir psychiatrique/ Psychiatric Power, Les Anormaux/ Abnormal, "Il faut défendre la société"/ "Society must be defended."* The third volume is published with this issue. It follows Foucault's lectures from the moment he picks up again after a one year break in 1977, and it ends with his lectures in 1980. The fifth volume will investigate Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France* from 1981 to 1984 published under the headings *Subjectivité et vérité/ Subjectivity and Truth, L'Herméneutique du sujet/ The Hermeneutics of the Subject, Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres I/ On The Government of the Living, Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres II, Le Courage de la vérité, The Courage of Truth*.

Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the series will not stop at this point, but that more volumes are still to come. Such an envisaged volume would discuss crucial lectures given by Foucault elsewhere. Among these talks are *Mal faire, dire vrai. Fonction de l'aveu en justice/ Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling. The Function of Avowal in Justice*, a course given in Leuven in 1981, *Discours et vérité/ Discourse and Truth*, a conference at Berkley in 1983, *Parrhesia*, a conference given in 1982 at the *University of Grenoble*, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," a conference given in 1978 before la *Société française de philosophie*, *L'origine de l'herméneutique de soi/ About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, and conferences given at *Dartmouth College* in 1980.

The series *Hautes études*, currently being issued in unison by *Éditions de l'EHESS, du Seuil* and *Gallimard*, may equally call for future introductions insofar as it is devoted to publishing Michel Foucault's "cours et travaux" before the *Collège de France*, thus making public a part of Foucault's work that was still in the making. A contribution to this still forthcoming series is the volume *Michel Foucault, La sexualité, suivi de Le discours sur la sexualité*, published in 2018 and making public Foucault's notes to his lectures given at the *University of Clermont-Ferrand* in 1964 and at the *University of Vincennes* in 1969. Insofar as it equally introduces and provides the setting for understanding a recently published part of Foucault's oeuvre that was left unfinished from his pen, the review essay "Michel Foucault's Confessions of the Flesh. The fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality*," published in *Foucault Studies* in 2018 by Sverre Raffnsøe (<https://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/view/5593/6234>), could be regarded as a contribution *avant la lettre* to the series.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The journal is most grateful to managing editors Signe Macholm Müller, Asker Bryld Staunæs and Niklas Birksted not only for their most reliable and highly competent assistance in running the journal, but also for making this issue possible. We would also like to thank Stuart Pethick for copyediting this issue of *Foucault Studies* with great care and meticulousness.

The journal is sponsored by *The Danish Council for Independent Research | Social Sciences* and *The Danish Council for Independent Research | Humanities* as well as by *The Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences*. The editorial team is most grateful that these bodies have awarded funding for *Foucault Studies*. The continuous funding is an essential prerequisite for running the journal and makes it possible for the editorial team to look and plan ahead.

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INTRODUCTION

Biopower, Governmentality, Liberalism and the Genealogy of the Modern Subject

Michel Foucault's Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1980:

***Security, Territory, Population; The Birth of Biopolitics;
On the Government of the Living***

Volume III of the Foucault Lectures series

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We are very pleased to guest edit and publish this special edition of *Foucault Studies* entitled *Michel Foucault's Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1980. Security, Territory, Population; The Birth of Biopolitics; On the Government of the Living*. As pronounced in the editorial, this special edition contains three articles, each devoted to discussing one yearly series of Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France* in the period ranging from 1977 to 1980.

SECURITY, TERRITORY, POPULATION

"The Beginning of a Study of Biopower," written by Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson (Syracuse University) centers the attention on Foucault's 1978 lecture sequence entitled *Security, Territory, Population*. Here Foucault resumes lecturing at the *Collège de France* after a sabbatical year and an almost two-year long absence from his teaching responsibilities. While beginning the lecture series by proclaiming that this year he "would like to begin studying something that I have called, somewhat vaguely, bio-power," three weeks later Foucault indicates that what he would really like to undertake is "something that I would call a history of governmentality."

In prolongation of the latter indication, the reception of the lectures has widely regarded them as a new departure that initiates Foucault's ensuing studies of governmentality and the genealogy of (neo-)liberalism. By contrast, Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson argues that this important reception not only risks downplaying or disguising other important aspects of the lecture course, such as its role in elaborating the later notions of conduct, the conduct of conduct, and technologies of the self; she also aims to show that the conceptual innovations and changes in direction in *Security, Territory, Population* ought to be understood as a reworking and clarification of earlier material and as a refraction of earlier studies of power.

As a consequence, Erlenbusch-Anderson situates the lectures in the broader context of an analytics of power, already under development in Foucault's *oeuvre*, that would permit an understanding of how a specific form of power, i.e., biopower, has functioned since at least the end of the eighteenth century. According to Erlenbusch-Anderson, *Security, Territory, Population* is best understood not as a radical change in direction but rather as a continuation-with-modification of his analytics of power. In this manner, the lecture course illustrates the dynamic and generative character of Foucault's intellectual practice in which the results of genealogical inquiry are cast back on the empirical material out of which they emerge.

The genealogy of biopolitics traced in the lecture course may seem convincing even today. It forms an empirically informed investigation of the gradual emergence of a new technology of power that takes the form of a government of the population, intervenes in its milieu, works within reality by letting it run its course, and has as its effect the modern state that is so descriptively rich that it can provide us with orientation and the tools to engage in a critique of the present. Nevertheless, Foucault's analysis may also lead us astray if we content ourselves with applying his analysis today and fail to realize the present at stake is ours, not Foucault's.

THE BIRTH OF BIOPOLITICS

The article "The Appearance of an Interminable Natural History and its Ends" by Sverre Raffnsøe (Copenhagen Business School) and Knut Ove Eliassen (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) examines Foucault's Lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* at the Collège de France in 1979.

While the subject of liberalism appears to occupy most of the space in *The Birth of Biopolitics* and has been given particular attention in the ensuing reception and debate of the lectures, here Foucault is actually establishing a diagnosis of a dynamic equivocal and still somewhat enigmatic contemporary condition where welfare governance, biopolitics and neo-liberalism inter-sect, challenge and struggle with one another. To establish this complex diagnosis, he examines how this ambiguous state came to be within a wider long-ranging historical context, including the constitution of the reason of state and the birth of biopolitics as they are described in the lectures of the previous year and in *The History*

of *Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. To prove these points, the article, like the previous article, thus examines *The Birth of Biopolitics* as a prolongation and a modification of Foucault's lectures the previous years.

The article describes how governmentality is established with the first specific secular rationalization of the art of government in the reason of state, in contradistinction to previously established pastoral power, and gives rise to the appearance of a conception of indefinite history that has already begun and seems never-ending.

While the open-ended history in which governmentality and the reason of state find themselves is externally an undecided and precarious European balance of power between competing states, governmental rationality internally leads to the establishment of a developed policing that collects a detailed knowledge of the object of government to face external competition. Insofar as the logic of the population as a collection of living beings saturated with the dynamic of life here comes to the fore as a primary target of intervention of government, on which it also depends, this gives rise to the birth of biopolitics and the politics of health.

When governing comes to be perceived as a form of power that targets the social biology of human beings, politics acquires an essential importance for human subsistence hitherto unheard of. This rationalization of government is still with us and exerts a decisive influence today. It may be seen in the insistent care of bio-politics for the population not only as it comes to the fore in the totalitarianism and welfare politics of the 20th and 21st centuries but also in recent political responses to terrorism and the Covid pandemic.

According to Foucault, liberalism is to be understood as a rationalization of government that internally addresses and refines governmentality as it has been established previously in the tradition from the reason of state. Instead of breaking with the fundamental assumptions of governmentality, liberalism reminds the former of its basic criteria for good government. Liberal criticism points out that government needs to acknowledge that it must take account of and incorporate the self-regulation of the population it governs.

With liberalism perceived as a new rationality of government, a new kind of naturalness is embraced as a basic principle for governmentality. It is a naturalness that is intrinsic to the population in constant development and that appears as a result of the interaction and the social antagonism between human beings focusing on their own self-interest. The natural history that appears here without beginning or end is not only a history driven by social antagonism but also a mode of history or historicity in which the motor driving historical development constantly calls itself and its own exercise into question. It is a secular and merciless, tragic natural history in which freedom can never be taken for granted insofar as its participants constantly constitute a danger for one another. It is also a mode of history in which the art of government is constantly called upon and forced to organize and secure the conditions for the exercise and development of freedom.

For Foucault, thus, the liberal art of government is not a position to be affirmed or denied, as is often taken for granted in the reception and discussion of *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

Rather, the liberal art of government draws the outline of an experience of historicity that is an experience of an ongoing and unsettling, but also unending, crisis.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LIVING

Written by Daniele Lorenzini (Warwick University), "Anarcheology and the Emergence of the Alethurgic Subject" discusses Foucault's 1980 lecture course entitled *On the Government of the Living*.

The article sets off the pivotal role of the lecture sequence in the development of Foucault's thought. Foucault's 1980 lecture course forms a laboratory in which he forges the methodological and conceptual tools necessary to carry on his study of governmentality independently from his *History of Sexuality* project. Central among these tools are the notions of "anarcheology," "alethurgy" and the "alethurgic subject."

While linked to the genealogy of the subject of desire, Foucault's projection of an anarcheology of the government of human beings through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity is also conceptually independent from the former. Even though both are related to one another as essential complementary contributions to a genealogy of the modern subject, it is essential to treat them as autonomous examinations and to avoid conflating them in order to be able to perceive how the lecture sequence in 1980 is fraught with consequences.

In particular, it is the anarcheology of the government of human beings through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity, conceptually and methodologically forged in the laboratory *On the Government of the Living*, that provides us with the key to understanding Foucault's developing interest in *parrhesia* and the care of the self.

Equally, the project of an anarcho-genealogical investigation of the government of self and others through truth not only connects *The Government of the Living* to the last three lecture courses at the *Collège de France* and other main lecture cycles in the 1980s but also permits us to see how this investigation is foreshadowed in and forms an integral part of Foucault's analyses of governmentality and his critical attitude towards the end of the 1970s. The anarcho-genealogical investigation even formed the backdrop for an envisaged monograph, *The Government of Self and Others*, which Foucault planned to publish independently from the *History of Sexuality* series.

Happy reading!

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ARTICLE

The Beginning of a Study of Biopower: Foucault's 1978 Lectures at the Collège de France

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ABSTRACT. While Foucault introduced the 1978 lecture course *Security, Territory, Population* as a study of biopower, the reception of the lectures has largely focused on other concepts, such as governmentality, security, liberalism, and counter-conduct. This paper situates the lecture course within the larger context of Foucault's development of an analytics of power to explore in what sense *Security, Territory, Population* can be said to constitute a study of biopower. I argue that the 1978 course is best understood as a continuation-through-transformation of Foucault's earlier work. It revisits familiar material to supplement Foucault's microphysics of power, which he traced in institutions like prisons or asylums and with regard to its effects on the bodies of individuals, with a genealogy of practices of power that target the biological life of the population and give rise to the modern state.

Keywords: Foucault, biopower, governmentality, (neo)liberalism, genealogy

INTRODUCTION

On January 11, 1978, after a sabbatical year and an almost two-year long absence from his responsibilities to present ongoing research at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault returned to the lectern on January 11, 1978, to deliver his course *Security, Territory, Population*. He announced that "this year I would like to begin studying something that I have called, somewhat vaguely, bio-power."¹ But three weeks later, on February 1, he suggested that what he "would really like to undertake is something that I would call a history of governmentality."²

Indeed, the *Security, Territory, Population* lectures have been widely received as the "first of the governmentality lectures."³ Their publication, alongside the 1979 course *The*

¹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (2007), 1.

² Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108.

³ Thomas Biebricher, "Disciplining Europe—The Production of Economic Delinquency," *Foucault Studies* 23 (2017), 66; Marit Rosol, "On Resistance in the Post-Political City: Conduct and Counter-Conduct in

Birth of Biopolitics, spawned an ever growing and immensely productive research program on governmentality.⁴ But this reception has obscured other important aspects of the lecture course, such as its role in understanding Foucault's subsequent work on technologies of the self. As Arnold Davidson argues, "the fact that the main legacy of this course has been to give rise to so-called 'governmentality studies'" obfuscates its "essential moment," namely the elaboration of the notion of conduct as a "conceptual hinge ... that allows us to link together the political and ethical axes of Foucault's thought."⁵ Others, by contrast, have emphasized the contemporary relevance of the lectures as part of a genealogy of (neo)liberalism or as an effort to excavate practices of resistance immanent in (neo)liberalism's historical emergence.⁶

Whatever one takes to be the central theme and function of the lectures, their reception is marked by a general consensus that despite Foucault's opening remarks, they are not

Vancouver," *Space and Polity* 18:1 (2014), 81n5. On *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* as Foucault's "governmentality lectures" see also Thomas Biebricher, "Genealogy and Governmentality," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 2:3 (2008), 363–96; Thomas Biebricher and Frieder Vogelman, "Governmentality and State Theory: Reinventing the Reinvented Wheel?," *Theory & Event* 15:3 (2012); Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann, and Thomas Lemke, eds., *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges* (2011); Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (2016); Stephen Legg, "Subject to Truth: Before and after Governmentality in Foucault's 1970s," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34:5 (2016), 858–76; Thomas Lemke, "Canalizing and Coding: The Notion of 'Milieu' in Foucault's Lectures On Governmentality," *Социологически Проблеми* 48:3-4 (2016), 26–42; Mark Usher, "Veins of Concrete, Cities of Flow: Reasserting the Centrality of Circulation in Foucault's Analytics of Government," *Mobilities* 9:4 (2014): 550–69; Jonathan Joseph, "Governmentality of What? Populations, States and International Organisations," *Global Society* 23:4 (2009), 413–27.

⁴ For some key contributions see Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (1991); Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power And Rule In Modern Society* (1999); Stephen Legg and Deana Heath, eds., *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Post-colonial Orderings*, South Asia in the Social Sciences (2018); Thomas Lemke, "Governmentality Studies," in *Foucault-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Clemens Kammler et al. (2014), 380–85; Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique* (2016); Sylvain Meyet, "Les trajectoires d'un texte: 'La gouvernementalité' de Michel Foucault," in *Travailler avec Foucault. Retours sur le politique*, ed. Sylvain Meyet, Marie-Cécile Naves, and Thomas Ribemont (2005), 13–36; Ramón Reichert, ed., *Governmentality Studies. Analysen liberal-demokratischer Gesellschaften im Anschluss an Michel Foucault* (2004); David Scott, "Colonial Governmentality," *Social Text* 43 (1995), 191–220.

⁵ Arnold I. Davidson, "Introduction," in *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, by Michel Foucault, ed. Michel Senellart et al. (2007), xviii. See also Arnold I. Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," *History of the Human Sciences* 24:4 (2011), 25–41.

⁶ See Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas S. Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government* (1996); Thomas Biebricher, "The Biopolitics of Ordoliberalism," *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011), 171–91; Thomas Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (2019); Louisa Cadman, "How (Not) to Be Governed: Foucault, Critique, and the Political," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28:3 (2010), 539–56; Trent H. Hamann, "Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethics," *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009), 37–59; Vanessa Lemm and Miguel Vatter, eds., *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism* (2014); David T. Mitchell, *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (2015); David Newheiser, "Foucault, Gary Becker and the Critique of Neoliberalism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 33:5 (2016), 3–21; Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, and Morten S. Thaning, "The (Neo)Liberal Art of Governing," in *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion*, ed. Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, and Morten S. Thaning (2016), 280–332; Shannon Winnubst, "The Queer Thing about Neoliberal Pleasure: A Foucauldian Warning," *Foucault Studies* 14 (2012), 79–97; Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent, eds., *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (2016).

about biopower.⁷ Thus, it might seem misguided to take at face value Foucault's claim that the lectures are the beginning of a study of biopower and, more specifically, of "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species."⁸ And yet, I am interested, here, in situating the 1978 lecture course within the larger context of Foucault's development of an analytics of power that allows us to understand how a specific form of power has functioned in the world "in which we have been living for a considerable length of time, that is, since at least the end of the eighteenth century."⁹

My aim is not to cast doubt on Foucault's ostensible reorientation from an interest in biopower to a concern with governmentality, nor do I want to downplay the relevance of the research programs of governmentality studies and Foucauldian analyses of (neo)liberalism. Instead, I hope to show that the conceptual innovations and changes in direction in *Security, Territory, Population* can plausibly be understood as a reworking and clarification of earlier material, refracted through insights yielded by those previous studies.

On this view, Foucault's famous distinction between an anatomo-politics of the human body and a biopolitics of the population is not only a summary statement of his view of power but also a relay for further genealogical inquiry. Only when his patient empirical analysis yields the insight that biopower operates within "two series: the body-organism-discipline-institutions series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State," can the "biological and Statist set, or bioregulation by the State" become the object of genealogical inquiry in its own right.¹⁰ Therefore, the 1978 lecture course can usefully be read as a continuation-through-transformation of Foucault's analytics of power.

In what follows, I offer a brief discussion of Foucault's conceptual framework for studying power and show how his increasingly nuanced conceptualizations are made possible by, at the same time as they reorient and advance, his genealogical practice. I then show how Foucault's claim *that* a nondisciplinary form of biopower over the population emerged in the eighteenth century in the apparatuses of the state is supplemented, in *Security, Territory, Population*, with a genealogical account of *how* this power was made possible by contingent historical events. I conclude with a brief consideration of the key insights and continued relevance of Foucault's lectures.

POWER AND METHOD

As Foucault notes in the opening lecture of *Security, Territory, Population*, the notion of biopower is rather vague in his work. One key difficulty is that Foucault at times appears

⁷ For a notable exception see Michel Senellart, "Course Context," in *Security, Territory, Population*, 369–401.

⁸ *Security, Territory, Population*, 1.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* (2004), 50.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (2004), 249–250.

to use the terms “biopower” and “biopolitics” interchangeably, while on other occasions he seems to suggest that biopolitics is one particular form of biopower, the other one being disciplinary power. Consequently, there is some conceptual ambivalence both in Foucault’s work and in secondary literature on biopolitics and biopower.¹¹ Foucault’s perhaps clearest articulation of the notion of biopower can be found in the last lecture of his 1976 Collège de France course, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” where he diagnoses the emergence of a power over the biological life of human beings. Foucault argues that in this period, the classical right of sovereignty to “either have people put to death or let them live” was complemented by “the right to make live and to let die.”¹² He further insists that this new power over life was not articulated in political thought and theory but rather exercised in the mechanisms and techniques of power. Specifically, Foucault argues that it took shape in the disciplinary control of individual bodies at the end of the seventeenth century and, in the eighteenth, in a “nondisciplinary power [that] is applied not to man-as-body but to ... man-as-species.”¹³

Foucault describes this nondisciplinary form of power over life as a “biopolitics of the human species” and explains that “this biopolitics, this biopower that is beginning to establish itself” has as its field of intervention the biological processes intrinsic to the population (fertility, morbidity, mortality, etc.), on the one hand, and, on the other, the environment, or milieu, in which the population lives. He further suggests that biopolitics deploys medicine as a technology of public health and relies on mechanisms of insurance, savings, and safety.¹⁴ Biopolitics, in other words, comes into view as that “technology of biopower” that takes hold not of individuals but of the population and is exercised over human beings “insofar as they are living beings.”¹⁵ Reiterating this account in the final chapter of *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault thus offers the following summary statement of his account of biopower:

[S]tarting in the seventeenth century, this power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however; they constituted rather two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their

¹¹ See Paul Patton, “Life, Legitimation and Government,” *Constellations* 18:1 (2011), 35–45; for a helpful discussion of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics see Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, “Biopower Today,” *BioSocieties* 1:2 (2006), 195–217.

¹² Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 240–241.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*. The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology — anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life — characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through.¹⁶

This succinct formulation distills the central insights of a research program Foucault began in the early 1970s. His inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1970 is a pivotal moment in this process, since it marks the introduction of a productive notion of power that constitutes domains of objects of knowledge.¹⁷ In subsequent years, Foucault refined this idea and elaborated an “analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code”¹⁸ but instead grasps power in its “productive effectiveness, its strategic resourcefulness, its positivity.”¹⁹

Foucault himself described the year 1970 as a “moment of transition” and suggested that up until that point he had “accepted the traditional conception of power ... as that which lays down the law, which prohibits, which refuses, and which has a whole range of negative effects.” However, his “concrete experience ... with prisons, starting in 1971–72” revealed this view to be inadequate.²⁰ In a 1976 interview, Foucault describes the challenge of articulating a more adequate understanding of power. While he argues that the positivity of power had already been a central concern of his early work, Foucault admits that he “had not yet properly isolated” the “central problem of power”²¹ and recounts being “struck by the difficulty I had in formulating it.”

When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilisation* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power? Yet I’m perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and never had such a field of analyses at my disposal.²²

Foucault attributes this difficulty to the political situation of the time, which confined the analysis of power to the juridical theory of sovereignty, on the one hand, and state apparatuses, on the other. The task of studying “the way power was exercised — concretely and in detail — with its specificity, its techniques and tactics,” only became conceivable after 1968 — “that is to say on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1990), 139.

¹⁷ See Foucault’s insistence on the “affirmative power” of discourse, which has the power to “constitute domains of objects, in respect of which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions” in “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (1981), 73.

¹⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 90.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, “The History of Sexuality,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980), 183-184.

²¹ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980), 113.

²² Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 115.

fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power.”²³ The political struggles of the late 1960s, in other words, provided Foucault both with a new model of power and a way of studying it in terms of “technology, of tactics and strategy” in order to grasp power in its productive dimension and at the levels at which it is exercised.²⁴

As Colin Koopman shows, this “methodological expansion”²⁵ is clearly underway in Foucault’s 1970/71 lecture course, *Lectures on the Will to Know*, even though he uses the term “morphology” rather than “genealogy” to describe his new approach.²⁶ But, by 1973, he characterized this method as a “dynastic, genealogical type of analysis,” which supplements his earlier archaeological studies of the rules of discourse that determine the limits of the sayable and knowable with an analysis of a larger set of practices and power relations with which discourses and knowledges are entangled.²⁷ Genealogy serves to examine how power is exercised in strategic confrontations at capillary levels throughout the social field and linked to the production of knowledge “in an absolutely specific fashion and according to a complex interplay.”²⁸ As Stuart Elden compellingly shows in his study of Foucault’s work on power, it is Foucault’s expansion of method in the early 1970s that allows him to come “closer and closer to his mature view of power” and enables him to “[begin] to sketch the broad contrast between sovereign power and a type of power he alternatively calls disciplinary power, punitive power, or the power of normalization.”²⁹

In a lecture on social medicine delivered in Rio de Janeiro in 1974, Foucault adds to this array of concepts the notions of “biopolitics,” “bio-history,” and “somatopolitics”³⁰ in order to describe a new political “regime that sees the care of the body, corporal health, the relation between illness and health, etc. as appropriate areas of State intervention.” The particular feature of this regime, Foucault argues, is that medicine functions, first, as a social practice in the sense that it intervenes at the level of the species as well as the individual, and, second, as a “biopolitical strategy” whose target is “the somatic, the corporeal.”³¹ While Foucault does not systematically develop these concepts in the Rio lectures

²³ Ibid., 115–116.

²⁴ Foucault, “The History of Sexuality,” 183–184.

²⁵ Colin Koopman, “Conduct and Power: Foucault’s Methodological Expansions in 1971,” in *Active Intolerance: Michel Foucault, the Prisons Information Group, and the Future of Abolition*, ed. Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts (2016), 59–74.

²⁶ See in particular the first lecture in Michel Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971 and Oedipal Knowledge*, ed. Daniel Defert (2013).

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972-1973*, ed. Bernard E. Harcourt, (2015), 84.

²⁸ Foucault, *The Punitive Society*, 233.

²⁹ Stuart Elden, *Foucault: The Birth of Power* (2017), 102.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Antimedicine?,” trans. Edgar C. Knowlton, William J. King, and Clare O’Farrell, *Foucault Studies* 1 (2004), 7. The three Rio lectures are Foucault, “The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Antimedicine?”; Michel Foucault, “The Birth of Social Medicine,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (1994), 134–156; Michel Foucault, “The Incorporation of the Hospital into Modern Technology,” in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, ed. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (2007), 141–151.

³¹ Foucault, “The Birth of Social Medicine,” 137.

and largely abandons the terms “bio-history” and “somatocracy,”³² the notion of biopolitics nevertheless opens up a new register of analysis and a new set of discourses and practices relevant for genealogical inquiry. Specifically, the concept of biopolitics stakes out a new field of investigation in a power over life that operates in the apparatuses of the state and targets the biological life of populations.

Therefore, Foucault’s introduction of the notion of biopolitics in 1974 anticipates his later distinction between an anatomico-politics of the human body articulated in “the body-organism-discipline-institutions series” and a biopolitics of the population invested in a “biological and Statist set, or bioregulation by the State.” With this distinction in place, Foucault can train his genealogical method on the series “population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State” as the grid of intelligibility for biopower.³³ As I suggest in the following section, this is the program for *Security, Territory, Population*.

THE 1978 LECTURES: A STUDY OF BIOPOWER

Foucault delivered the lecture course *Security, Territory, Population* between January and March 1978, after a sabbatical year had freed him from his obligation to report on ongoing research for a period of nearly two years. Foucault had completed his previous lecture course, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” in March 1976. Later that year, he lectured on alternatives to the prison in Montreal and completed the manuscript for *La Volonté de savoir*, which was published in December 1976. 1977 saw the publication of “The Lives of Infamous Men” and the collaborative project *Politiques de l’habitat*.³⁴ Foucault also wrote about the church fathers, gave interviews and talks on dissidence, madness, and psychiatry, and participated in political protests, for instance against the extradition to France of Klaus Croissant, a lawyer of the German Red Army Faction.³⁵ When Foucault returned to the Collège de France in January 1978 to deliver the *Security, Territory, Population* lectures, his attention had seemingly shifted from prisons and sexuality to new ideas: security, population, pastoral power, conduct, and, above all, governmentality.

But in many ways, the lecture course returns to and develops central themes Foucault had explored earlier. As Michel Senellart points out, for instance, the lectures appear to be “in absolute continuity with the conclusions of the 1976 lectures,” given Foucault’s appeal to biopower as the unifying theme of the 1978 lectures and the subsequent lecture course, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Yet Senellart insists that even though “it would seem that the two courses do nothing else but retrace the genesis of this ‘power over life,’” Foucault’s “detours” lead him away from his “initial objective and reorient the lectures in a

³² Foucault uses the term “bio-history” and “bio-politics” in his short review of Jacques Ruffié’s book, *De la biologie à la culture: “Bio-Histoire et Bio-Politique,”* in *Dits et Écrits III, 1976-1979*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (1994), 95–97.

³³ *Society Must Be Defended*, 249–250.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, “Lives of Infamous Men,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (1994), 157–175; Michel Foucault, *Politiques de l’habitat: 1800-1850* (1977).

³⁵ Daniel Defert, “Chronologie,” in *Dits et Écrits I, 1954-1969*, by Michel Foucault, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (1994), 13–64; Elden, *Foucault’s Last Decade*.

new direction."³⁶ What I want to suggest is that this reorientation is not so much a departure from earlier themes but an expansion and enrichment of Foucault's analytics of power through a reworking of familiar material on a different level and through a different set of discourses and practices. On this view, the 1978 lecture course can be read as a careful explication of the final lecture of "*Society Must Be Defended*" by means of a genealogy of biopower on the register of the series population-regulatory mechanisms-state. This is not a denial of the central role of other concepts, such as security, probability, or normalization, but a shift of emphasis intended to draw attention to the specific ways in which *Security, Territory, Population* continues, supplements, and extends Foucault's earlier work.

Foucault begins the lecture course by revisiting the problem of infectious disease—a recurring point of reference throughout his work³⁷—to bring into focus this new biopolitical form of biopower. In the 1973 lecture course, *Abnormal*, Foucault identifies in different responses to infectious disease "two major models for the control of individuals in the West: one is the exclusion of lepers and the other is the model of the inclusion of plague victims."³⁸ While the response to leprosy illustrates the sovereign model of exclusion, the plague model exemplifies a disciplinary technology of power that emerged in the eighteenth century and that exercises control not by excluding and banishing the sick but by taking hold of, managing, and correcting their bodies. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault adds a third model, which he finds in practices of variolization and inoculation against smallpox. He argues that the "medical campaigns that try to halt epidemic or endemic phenomena" are absolutely specific in their function and irreducible to the mechanisms of law and discipline. Insofar as they are "mechanisms with the function of modifying something in the biological destiny of the species,"³⁹ they are emblematic of a biopolitical technology that manages populations and operates through a dispositif of security.

The first three lectures serve to isolate and explicate a number of elements that characterize this technology of power: the milieu, the aleatory, and normalization. While Foucault mentions these elements without much further discussion at the end of the 1976 lecture course,⁴⁰ he now develops them in detail by contrasting how dispositifs of discipline and security deal with space, the event, and normalization.

With regard to space, Foucault considers changes in the spatial organization of the town from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The transformation of urban space

³⁶ Senellart, "Course Context," 369.

³⁷ See in particular Foucault, *Abnormal*; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1994); Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalifa (2006); "The Birth of Social Medicine"; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995). For a helpful discussion of infectious disease in Foucault's work see Philipp Sarasin, "Vapors, Viruses, Resistance(s): The Trace of Infection in the Work of Michel Foucault," in *Networked Disease*, ed. S. Harris Ali and Roger Keil (2008), 267–80.

³⁸ *Abnormal*, 44; see also "The Birth of Social Medicine," 145; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 198.

³⁹ *Security, Territory, Population*, 10.

⁴⁰ The final lecture of the "*Society Must Be Defended*" course also links biopolitics to the population, the town, insurance and safety, epidemics, statistics, and the economy. All of these notions play a central role in the 1978 lecture course.

shows that whereas “sovereignty capitalizes a territory” and “discipline structures a space and addresses the essential problem of a hierarchical and functional distribution of elements, security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework.”⁴¹ By milieu, Foucault understands a “field of intervention in which, instead of affecting individuals as a set of legal subjects capable of voluntary actions ... and instead of affecting them as a multiplicity of organisms, of bodies capable of performances ... one tries to affect, precisely, a population.”⁴² The space of security, in other words, is a space of natural and artificial givens in which the population lives and in which one must intervene to govern the population. Accordingly, biopolitics comes into view as a mode of exercising power over the population through government of the milieu.

The second feature of the dispositif of security lies in its particular relationship to the event, which Foucault illustrates through a discussion of scarcity of grain. In the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, the response to scarcity was essentially one of prevention. For mercantilists, shortage of grain was something to be avoided through active intervention and regulation. Over the course of the eighteenth century, however, struggles over freedom of grain led to changes in governmental techniques that established the free circulation of grain as a political practice and an economic doctrine. Foucault identifies this new approach in the physiocratic answer to scarcity, but he cautions against the idea that the free circulation of grain was an application of physiocratic principles. Instead, he shows that physiocracy was itself an effect of changes in practices of government as well as of a larger transformation of governmental reason that works with the natural processes of phenomena and “respond[s] to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds—nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it.”⁴³ In contrast to sovereignty, which imagines and then prohibits what could happen, and in distinction from discipline, which complements reality with artificial measures of control and regulation, biopolitics thus operates within reality by letting it run its natural course.

The third feature of the dispositif of security comes into view in the form of normalization specific to it.⁴⁴ Foucault argues that whereas law codifies a norm, disciplinary normalization works by first positing an optimal model as a prescriptive norm and then distinguishing between the normal and the abnormal in reference to this norm. Foucault introduces the term “normation” to describe this particular mode of disciplinary normalization and to distinguish it from biopolitical normalization. Returning to the example of smallpox, he charts a brief genealogy of variolization and vaccination to show how these practices, which were “unthinkable in the terms of medical rationality of this time,” became acceptable.⁴⁵ He identifies these conditions of acceptability in the emergence of

⁴¹ *Security, Territory, Population*, 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 21. On the notion of the milieu see Lemke, “Canalizing and Coding.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁴ For a detailed study of the norm and normalization in Foucault’s account of (bio)power see Mary Beth Mader, “Foucault and Social Measure,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 17:1 (2007), 1–25.

⁴⁵ *Security, Territory, Population*, 58.

statistics and the calculus of probability—what he describes as the “rationalization of chance”⁴⁶—and in their integration with other mechanisms of security that sought to govern chance by working with reality itself. Just like the physiocratic response to scarcity arranged the circulation of grain so as to cancel out the phenomenon of scarcity, variolization provoked smallpox “but under conditions such that nullification of the disease could take place.”⁴⁷ Variolization is, then, indicative of an apparatus of security that determines the normal distribution of infection, morbidity, and mortality in healthy and sick populations in order to then “reduce the most unfavorable, deviant normalities in relation to the normal, general curve.”⁴⁸ This, for Foucault, is “normalization in the strict sense:” a deduction of the norm from the play (*jeu*) of different normal distributions.⁴⁹ Biopolitics, therefore, operates through regulatory controls whose purpose is to “bring in line” the most disadvantageous normalities with the more favorable.⁵⁰

Foucault’s opening discussion of the town, scarcity, and contagion is intended to bring into relief a series of elements that characterize the dispositif of security through which biopolitics operates. But it also draws attention to the emergence of the population as the “pertinent level of government action.”⁵¹ In particular, Foucault argues that the phenomena of the town, scarcity, and contagion presuppose a particular notion of collectivity as the relevant level of governmental intervention. This collectivity is the population.

Importantly, the population is not only a new political reality but also a normative category that prescribes behaviors and modes of being a subject. In an instructive yet underdeveloped discussion of the physiocrat Louis-Paul Abeille, Foucault introduces a critical distinction between those who “really act as members of the population” and those who “throw themselves on the supplies” or “hold back grain” and, in so doing, “conduct themselves in relation to the management of the population, at the level of the population, as if they were not part of the population as a collective subject-object, as if they put themselves outside of it.” Abeille identifies the latter as “the people” who, “refusing to be the population, disrupt the system.”⁵²

Foucault emphasizes the importance of “this people/population opposition,”⁵³ but he does not, in the 1978 lecture course, relate this internal division within the population to earlier discussions of racism, by which he understands a “principle of exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, ... a way of normalizing society” that serves to defend the population and, indeed, the human race against abnormal elements within itself.⁵⁴ Indeed, the question of racism as a central mechanism in the “life and death game” that accompanies the entrance of life into the political calculations of the state is curiously absent in *Security*,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59; see also Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (1990).

⁴⁷ *Security, Territory, Population*, 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 43–44.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁴ *Society Must Be Defended*, 61.

Territory, Population. Foucault explores these connections elsewhere, however, suggesting that liberalism, the rule of law, and the modern state all revolve around “one of the central antinomies of our political reason,” namely the “coexistence in political structures of large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented toward the care of individual life.”⁵⁵ This antinomy has its roots at least in part in the birth of the population as an internally divided entity whose government, consequently, not only requires techniques for fostering the life of the population but also needs mechanisms for excluding, rejecting, and eliminating “the people.” As Foucault argues, the state “exercises its power over living beings as living beings, and its politics is, therefore, necessarily a biopolitics.”

Since the population is never more than that of which the state takes care in its own interest, of course, the state can, if necessary, massacre it. So thanatopolitics is the other side of biopolitics.⁵⁶

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault is focused on the side of biopolitics and on the entry into political calculation and practice of the population as a new problematic for government. Because the population depends on variables such as the climate, environment, or social customs, and because it is a totality that is, nevertheless, constituted by individuals with their own desires, it cannot simply be directed by sovereign decree. Instead, it can only be governed indirectly through actions on seemingly distant elements. Moreover, while government must pursue the well-being of the population as a whole, this can only be accomplished through the free play of individual desire. The emergence of the population in the eighteenth century, therefore, requires a new technology of power and a new governmental rationality that allow for governing this peculiar collective subject.

Readers will note, as Foucault does, that the term “government” plays a central role in his discussion of the population: “The more I have spoken about population, the more I have stopped saying ‘sovereign.’” This, he suggests, is not an entirely deliberate terminological intervention that indicates the emergence of a “new technique” which exceeds the scope of sovereignty and discipline but is, instead, tied to the problematics of the population and of bioregulation of the population by the state.⁵⁷ Foucault’s study for the remainder of the lecture course of the historical emergence and transformation of the problem of government is, thus, a genealogy of this technique that operates at the level of the state and takes as its object the population and its biological processes. This is why Foucault’s study of biopolitics is simultaneously a genealogy of government and a “genealogy of the modern state and its apparatuses that is not based on, as they say, a circular ontology of the state asserting itself and growing like a huge monster or automatic machine” but a “genealogy of the modern state and its different apparatuses on the basis of a history of governmental reason.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, “The Political Technology of Individuals,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (2001), 405.

⁵⁶ Foucault, “The Political Technology of Individuals,” 416; translation modified.

⁵⁷ *Security, Territory, Population*, 76.

⁵⁸ *Security, Territory, Population*, 354.

Foucault had introduced the notion of government five years earlier. In *Abnormal*, he argues that “the Classical Age invented techniques of power that can be transferred to very different institutional supports, to State apparatuses, institutions, the family, and so forth” and that “the Classical Age developed therefore what could be called an ‘art of governing,’ in the sense in which ‘government’ was then understood as precisely the ‘government’ of children, the ‘government’ of the mad, the ‘government’ of the poor, and before long, the ‘government’ of workers.”⁵⁹ Foucault does not develop this notion of government in any more detail, but his claim suggests that techniques of government are relays for power at the different levels of institutions and the state. He reiterates this point in the final lecture of “*Society Must Be Defended*,” where he emphasizes that the series of “organo-discipline of the institution” and “bioregulation by the State” “do not exist at the same level” and, for this very reason, “can be articulated with each other.”⁶⁰ Foucault again returns to this idea at the very end of *Security, Territory, Population*, where he suggests that the lectures demonstrate that “there is not a sort of break between the level of micro-power and the level of macro-power” and that “an analysis in terms of micro-powers comes back without any difficulty to the analysis of problems like those of government and the state.”⁶¹ These comments not only suggest that the lecture course is indeed a continuation and expansion of earlier work but also identify the notion of government as the key for understanding the complex interplay of practices of power at the micro-level of the institution and the macro-level of the state.

Foucault’s account of government in the 1978 lecture course is a wide-ranging and detailed study and, in its proliferation of discourses and practices that give rise to the modern state, an exemplar of genealogical inquiry. Among the conditions of possibility of the techniques of exercising power over the population that have as their correlate the modern state, Foucault names the generalization of the problematic of government in the sixteenth century as well as the crisis of the Christian pastorate and the formation of the Classical episteme in the same period.

According to his genealogy, the problem of government can be found in treatises of antiquity and the Middle Ages that offered advice to the princes, but he traces the formation of a specifically political problematic of government to an explosion, in the sixteenth century, of questions of the government of the self, of souls, of children, and of the state by the prince. In particular, the literature on government developed in distinction from Machiavelli’s effort to articulate the relationship of the prince to their principality. What emerged in the sixteenth century, by contrast, was an art of government that situated political government within a plurality of forms of government and defined it as the exercise of power in the form of the economy. That is, government was conceived as the right disposition of things in pursuit of an end specific to the things being governed.

This art of government was not only elaborated by political theorists and philosophers; it was also linked to the development of the administrative apparatus of the state and its

⁵⁹ *Abnormal*, 49.

⁶⁰ *Society Must Be Defended*, 250.

⁶¹ *Security, Territory, Population*, 358.

attendant forms of knowledge, namely statistics and mercantilism. For Foucault, in other words, the process of state centralization and the transition from feudalism to “the great territorial, administrative, and colonial states” is one of the key conditions of possibility for the formation of an art of government, even though its full elaboration was blocked by the institutional forms of administrative monarchy, historical events like wars and other crises, and a focus on sovereignty as the theoretical model and practical principle of political organization.⁶² It was not until the emergence of the population in the eighteenth century that the art of government could be extricated from the structures of sovereignty and transformed into a political science concerned with techniques of government that have the population as their object and political economy as their form of knowledge.

Foucault gives the name “governmentality” to these techniques and defines this term as “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument.” But “governmentality” also means “the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power—sovereignty, discipline, and so on—of the type of power that we can call ‘government’ and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, and, on the other to the development of a series of knowledge.” Finally, “governmentality” describes “the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually ‘governmentalized.’”⁶³ The notion of governmentality, therefore, allows Foucault to recast his analysis of power by orienting it around the contingent historical emergence of a set of practices for governing populations, which produce knowledge in the form of political economy and have as their correlate the modern state. Accordingly, his genealogy of governmentality identifies its conditions of possibility in the twin crises of the Christian pastorate and the break-up of the cosmological-theological continuum in the sixteenth century.

The pastorate is a particular type of power whose origins Foucault locates in the pre-Christian East and which was introduced to the West through the constitution of Christianity as a church as well as through practices of spiritual direction. The model of pastoral power is the shepherd’s power over their flock: an individualizing power exercised over a multiplicity in movement, aimed at the salvation of the flock, invested in an office that is a burden and duty. With its uptake in Christianity, pastoral power began to circulate in an economy of faults and merits, within a generalized field of obedience, and in practices of spiritual direction and the direction of conduct that serve to produce hidden truths about the subject.⁶⁴ But from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, the Christian

⁶² *Security, Territory, Population*, 89.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁴ Foucault fills out the genealogy of the subject announced here in Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (2005); Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others:*

pastorate was gradually opened up by external and internal resistances, such as active resistance to Christianization, heresies and witchcraft, and revolts of conduct which searched for different ways of conducting oneself and being conducted. These counter-conducts led to a crisis of the Christian pastorate and disseminated the question of the conduct of men outside of the authority of the church.⁶⁵

At the same time, in a rather distant field, the foundation of the classical episteme in the sixteenth century gave rise to new scientific practices and knowledges that did away with the great theological-cosmological continuum, which had offered both justification and model for political rule: a good sovereign ruled in continuity with God's rule over creation and fathers' rule over their families. With new scientific discoveries and the loss of an omnipotent and benevolent God as the model for political rule, however, a new model for governing human beings was needed. This model was found in the pastorate, which served as a relay for sovereign power in the context of the development of a new art of government.

Foucault provides an intricate account of this new governmental rationality from its first articulation in *raison d'État* and its subsequent transformation into *raison économique*.⁶⁶ Examining the writings of Botero, Chemnitz, and Palazzo, he describes how, with the formation of *raison d'État*, the state entered into reflected practice. According to *raison d'État*, government serves the exclusive purpose of preserving the state. As such, it refers to nothing other than the state and specifies the necessary and sufficient means for its preservation. Thus, *raison d'État* also constitutes the knowledge that is necessary for preserving the state. The focus on preservation makes *raison d'État* a distinctly conservative governmental rationality that negates questions of the state's origin, foundation, legitimacy, or telos.

Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983, ed. Arnold I. I. Davidson (2011); Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II)*. *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, ed. François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Arnold I. Davidson, (2011).

⁶⁵ For discussion of the importance of the notion of counter-conduct for Foucault's later work on practices of the self and an ethics of resistance see Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct." On conduct and counter-conduct more generally see Mark Bevir, "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency Against Autonomy," *Political Theory* 27 (1999), 65-84; Carl Death, "Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest," *Social Movement Studies* 9:3 (2010), 235-51; Olga Demetriou, "Counter-Conduct and the Everyday: Anthropological Engagements with Philosophy," *Global Society* 30:2 (2016), 218-37; James F. Depew, "Foucault Among the Stoics: Oikeiosis and Counter-Conduct," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 22-51; Daniele Lorenzini, "From Counter-Conduct to Critical Attitude: Michel Foucault and the Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 7-21; Corey McCall, "Rituals of Conduct and Counter-Conduct," *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016), 52-79; Louiza Odysseos, Carl Death, and Helle Malmvig, "Interrogating Michel Foucault's Counter-Conduct: Theorising the Subjects and Practices of Resistance in Global Politics," *Global Society* 30:2 (2016), 151-56; Miikka Pyykkönen, "Liberalism, Governmentality and Counter-Conduct: An Introduction to Foucauldian Analytics of Liberal Civil Society Notions," *Foucault Studies* 20 (2015), 8-35; Rosol, "On Resistance in the Post-Political City."

⁶⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Foucault's account of this transformation see my "From Race War to Socialist Racism: Foucault's Second Transcription," *Foucault Studies* 22 (2017), 134-52 and *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Terror, Empire* (2018), 28-31. A further transformation is the focus of Foucault's subsequent lecture course, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, which examines neoliberalism as another governmental rationality. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (2010); see also Daniele Lorenzini, "Governmentality, Subjectivity, and the Neoliberal Form of Life," *Journal for Cultural Research* 22:2 (2018), 154-66.

Instead, “one is within government, one is already within *raison d’État*, one is already within the state,” whose salvation must be assured by any means necessary.⁶⁷

Foucault shows that *raison d’État* was made to function at the level of political practice through the police and a military-diplomatic apparatus, which gave rise to a gradual transformation of *raison d’État* through the emergence of the population as a reflected element of governmental action. Their task was to increase the state’s forces and maintain peace. The pursuit of these tasks required activities such as the organization of commerce and competition between states, the circulation of goods within states, the regulation of people’s activity, the maximization of the number of citizens, the guarantee of necessities of life and health. These activities, however, were contested at the level of political practice, where the interventionism of the police and the military-diplomatic apparatus ultimately gave way to the spontaneous adjustment of the optimal number of citizens, the free circulation of grains, free trade between countries, and the realization of the common good through the free play of individual interests.

These new practices allowed for the articulation of a new governmental reason, *raison économique* or liberal reason, which no longer subordinates the law to the state but, instead, makes government subservient to the laws of economic processes and the population. For liberal reason, the prosperity of the state is not a matter of intervention but of leaving things alone (*laissez faire*) so they can run their natural course.

Liberal reason, therefore, constitutes a new governmental rationality that differs in key respects from the mercantilist and police state of *raison d’État*. Where *raison d’État* carved out the domain of the state when the problem of government was posed by the break-up of the theological-cosmological continuum, liberal reason pursued the question of government by carving out the domain of the economy. Further, the naturalness of the theological-cosmological continuum according to which sovereign rule was modeled after God’s rule over nature and creation was, first, supplanted by the artificiality of *raison d’État*. Second, it reappeared in liberal reason, where it was, however, displaced onto society and the economy. From now on, the task of government was the management and arrangement of natural processes through mechanisms of security. The transition from *raison d’État* to liberal reason thus also introduced a new notion of freedom, understood not simply as an individual right against the government but as a “condition of governing well.” Violations of freedom, on this view, are not primarily an “abuse of rights with regard to the law” but “above all ignorance of how to govern properly.”⁶⁸ Foucault’s historical study of the exercise of power in the form of government is, thus, also a genealogy of “liberalism as the general framework of biopolitics.”⁶⁹

Starting with the observation of a new type of power over life whose level of application is the population and which deploys mechanisms of security, the lecture course performs Foucault’s signature methodological move—what Thomas Flynn calls “nominalist

⁶⁷ *Security, Territory, Population*, 259; translation modified.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁶⁹ Unread pages of the manuscript for the lecture of 10 January 1979. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 22.

reversal"⁷⁰—to reveal that the state is not the cause of particular ways of governing but a function of those governmental techniques and practices of power that are presumed to be its historical effect. As Foucault points out, “the state is not that kind of cold monster in history that has continually grown and developed as a sort of threatening organism above civil society” but “an episode in government.”⁷¹ By tracing the historically specific techniques and practices of governing the population, which have as their effect the modern state, Foucault shows that, and how, biopolitics is made possible by a multiplicity of contingent events that he seeks to grasp “in their proper dispersion.”⁷² He thereby constructs around the ostensibly unitary phenomenon of the modern state a “‘polyhedron’ of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite.”⁷³

Security, Territory, Population describes some of the faces of this polyhedron. Chief among them is the emergence of the population, in the eighteenth century, as a new political subject that is “absolutely foreign to the juridical and political thought of earlier centuries.”⁷⁴ Because the population is inaccessible to the mechanisms of sovereignty and discipline, a new and specific mode of exercising power is needed and found in government. That government was available as a model for political rule at the time was itself the result of chance events, including the crisis of the Christian pastorate, the formation of the Classical episteme, and a generalization of questions of government in the sixteenth century. But these older forms of thought and ways of doing things were themselves transformed in light of the specific problematics on which they were brought to bear. It is in the history of these transformations that Foucault finds the conditions of possibility of liberalism as an art of government that is “opposed to *raison d’État*” and knowledge of which will allow us “to grasp what biopolitics is.”⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

Three important insights can be gleaned from the foregoing discussion. First, I have argued that the 1978 course at the Collège de France, *Security, Territory, Population*, is best understood not as a radical change in direction of Foucault’s intellectual project but as a continuation-with-modification of his analytics of power. The lecture course revisits familiar material to supplement Foucault’s microphysics of power that he traced in institutions like prisons or asylums and with regard to its effects on the bodies of individuals, with a genealogy of those practices of power over the population and its biological processes that give expression to the modern state.

⁷⁰ Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason, Volume Two: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (2010), 43.

⁷¹ *Security, Territory, Population*, 248.

⁷² Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1991), 81.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (1991), 77.

⁷⁴ *Security, Territory, Population*, 42.

⁷⁵ *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 22.

Second, this reworking of Foucault's account of power is made possible by the articulation of concepts and the identification of elements that are the result of prior genealogical work but come to serve as orienting devices for further inquiry. The lecture course, therefore, illustrates the dynamic and generative character of Foucault's intellectual practice, in which the results of genealogical inquiry are cast back on the empirical material out of which they emerge. Historical specificity is thereby embedded at the very core of Foucauldian inquiry.

Finally, this historical specificity is what makes the genealogy of biopolitics Foucault traces in the 1978 lecture course both compelling and treacherous. It is compelling because of its empirically informed and descriptively rich excavation of the gradual emergence of a new technology of power that takes the form of a government of the population, intervenes in its milieu, works within reality by letting it run its course, operates through the play of different normalities, and has as its effect the modern state. But the temptation to use this account to analyze our own political conditions is a dangerous one. For even through Foucault certainly provides us with orientation and the tools to engage in a critique of the present, the present at stake is ours, not his. To theorize our present means to conduct our own genealogical studies of specific practices of power that give rise to states that may or may not resemble the particular kind of twentieth-century European, (neo)liberal, governmental state whose genealogy Foucault sought to trace. Foucault announced *Security, Territory, Population* as the beginning of a study of biopolitics, and like him, we must be willing to continuously begin anew in our attempts to make sense of our own present.

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ARTICLE

The Appearance of an Interminable Natural History and its Ends

Foucault's Lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* at the Collège de France 1979

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ABSTRACT. While the analysis of liberalism fills much of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the focus of Foucault's discussion is on the dynamic, equivocal and enigmatic contemporary condition at the intersection of welfare governance, biopolitics and neo-liberalism of the late seventies. This article examines *The Birth of Biopolitics* as a prolongation of *Security, Territoriality and Population* by analyzing how Foucault frames liberalism in the wider historical context of governmentality.

In Foucault's view, governmentality should be understood as a secular rationalization of the art of government. While the pastoral power of the Catholic Church was wielded against the backdrop of eschatology and the imminence of the end of worldly power, the early modern concept of reason of state brought with it the idea of an interminable history. Governmentality and reason of state spring from an undecided and precarious European balance of power between competing states. In order to measure up to external competition, individual states are required to develop a system of policing that collects detailed knowledge of the body politic. Insofar as the logic of the population as a collection of living beings comes to the fore as a primary target of government intervention, the imperatives of biopolitics and the politics of health arise.

Liberalism forms an important modification of the double heritage of reason of state and biopolitics. This is a rationalization of government that, rather than breaking with the fundamental assumptions of governmentality, critically addresses the basic criteria for good government. Stressing the necessity for good government to acknowledge and incorporate the self-regulation of the population it governs, liberalism thus articulates a new kind of naturalness intrinsic to the population springing from the interaction between individuals motivated by self-interest. As a basic principle for its understanding of governing, liberalism embraces a natural history without any transcendental horizons, a secular and tragic natural history in which freedom can never be

taken for granted insofar as its participants constantly constitute a danger for one another. It is also a mode of history in which the art of government is constantly called upon and forced to organize and secure the conditions for the exercise and development of freedom. For Foucault, thus, the liberal art of government is not a position to be affirmed or denied. Rather, the liberal art of government draws the outline of an experience of historicity that is an experience of an ongoing and unsettling, but also unending, crisis.

Keywords: Biopolitics, governmentality, liberalism, neoliberalism, totalitarianism, welfare, security, reason of state, freedom, natural history, population, crisis

INTRODUCTION

Naissance de la biopolitique, Foucault's twelve-lesson lecture course at the Collège de France in the spring of 1979, covered a broad range of historical and contemporary topics, including the art of government, population, liberalism and neoliberalism, the state, civil society, political economy, sovereignty, liberty and security. Foucault was sketching in remarkable detail the pathologies of an imminent future.¹ Certainly, his undertaking is not based on a phenomenological experience of society without calendar or geography, nor is it a theoretical reconstruction of political philosophy; its focus is on the critical experience of a society that has become a privileged site for "the government of men insofar as it appears as the exercise of political sovereignty."² The lectures address a situation where the primary field of intervention for the arts of government materializes as a civil society inhabited by a spontaneously self-regulating population juxtaposed to both the super-institution of the state and the global environment of the market. This is the context of Foucault's attempt to measure and analyze the "rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty"³ worked out by different variants of liberalism.

Even if the theme of liberalism occupies most of the space in *Naissance de la biopolitique*, it should be noted that the societal experience in question is not reducible to the 'lack' of society typically associated with neoliberalism – summed up in Margaret Thatcher's famous quip: "There is no such thing as society."⁴ Foucault interprets liberalism within the

¹ Of course, there were many features of current neoliberalism Foucault could not anticipate. In her book *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution. Near Futures* (2015), Wendy Brown analyzes the main features of neoliberal reason in continuance with and also beyond Foucault's historical landscape. Among these are the exponential rise of finance capital, the generalization of economic growth as a goal and as imperative both for the state and the economy, the global effects of financial crises, the implementation of austerity programs, the marketization of the state, the rise of "governance" and its consequences in the task of reshaping of socioeconomic relationships, new techniques of subjection through human capital and embodied responsibility, the "too big to fail" and its reverse "too small to protect" as a new grid distributing insurances and risks, and the entanglement between neoliberalism and securitization in the period post-9/11.

² Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au Collège de France, 1977-79*, 4/Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, 2.

³ Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 4; Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 2.

⁴ Cf., e.g., Margaret Thatcher: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" ("Interview," *Women's Own* 1987, October: 8-10). Less known is that Thatcher echoes almost ad verbatim Friedrich Hayek, see F.A. Hayek. *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1967, 237.

much wider framework of governmental rationalities. Thus, his investigation of neoliberalism in *The Birth of Biopolitics* should be read as a continuation of Foucault's analysis of governmentality, reason of state and biopolitics as developed in the lectures from the previous year *Sécurité, territoire, population*. By losing sight of his continuously open-ended historical investigation,⁵ commentaries often end up reproaching Foucault for adopting a too undifferentiated attitude pro or con neo-liberalism, or even for endorsing the present phenomenon of neo-liberalism,⁶ rather than understanding his attempt to articulate these issues as part of a continuous *Denkweg* (*path of thought*) and an ongoing diagnostic activity.⁷

Upon closer inspection, the idea and the expectation that Foucault was aiming to take a stand with regard to a hegemony of neo-liberal thought and practice, which may seem reasonable if *The Birth of Biopolitics* is read in isolation, is inappropriate. It is out-of-place for the simple conjectural or circumstantial reason that neoliberalist domination had not even fully arrived yet, not to say burst into full bloom, when Foucault began examining neoliberalism in the spring of 1979. Foucault cannot be read as addressing a 'neoliberal condition' for the simple reason that he did not live and work in a context where neoliberalism could be said to prevail. Moreover, it is also erroneous for the more general and 'methodical' reason that it tends to misinterpret Foucault's diagnostical approach plainly laid out in all his previously published major works. In the lectures 1978-1979, Foucault is not primarily interested in examining neoliberalism and taking a stand with regard to it as a fully realized state of affairs; rather, Foucault here takes an interest in examining a decisive transitional state that is still arriving and under development in order to explore where it might lead by scrutinizing its historical genesis. This ambition is also voiced in Foucault's own words from *Security, Territory, Population*: "We now find ourselves in a perspective in which historical time is indefinite (*indéfini*), in a perspective of indefinite governmentality with no foreseeable term or final aim. We are in an open historicity due to the indefinite character of the political art."⁸

The first main section of this article sets out to describe the establishment of governmentality in the proper sense and with it the constitution of an indefinite history that has already begun and seems never-ending. The section starts out by examining the constitu-

⁵ This point is equally highlighted in Erlenbusch-Anderson's contribution to this special issue "The Beginning of a Study of Biopower: Foucault's 1978 Lectures at the Collège de France."

⁶ Cf., e.g., various contributions to Behrent and Zamora (eds.), *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (2016). Cf. also Behrent, "Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Marked Creed, 1976-1979." In a famous exchange on Foucault's work at the University of Chicago in 2012, François Ewald implicitly asserts Foucault's endorsement of liberalism, as he asks: "How was it possible that an intellectual, a French philosopher – someone perhaps known as a Left French philosopher, a radical – would deliver, at the end of the 1970s, a lecture at the Collège de France where he would make the apology of neoliberalism (...)" (Becker et al., "Becker on Ewald on Foucault on Becker: American Neoliberalism and Michel Foucault's 'Birth of Biopolitics' Lectures (September 5, 2012)," 4.). By contrast, a more well-considered assessment is voiced by Ewald's interlocutor in the exchange, Bernard Harcourt.

⁷ Sverre Raffnsøe et al., *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion* (2016), xi-xii, 38-97.

⁸ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 266/*Security, Territory, Population*, 260.

tion of governmentality in the modern sense as it distinguishes itself from previously established pastoral power. Whereas the art of government in pastoral power is still to be understood as a protective shepherding within a larger pre-existing cosmo-theological framework and in continuation of God's command on Earth, *a first, specific secular rationalization of the art of government* appears with the appearance of the reason of state. With the reason of state, the art of government not only binds itself to taking care of the state as a specific and relative reality that must be created and maintained but also comes to be guided by the logic of its privileged object of intervention over which it must assert its power. With this transition, the governmentality finds itself committed to the necessity of taking part in a history that has always already begun and never ends.

The second main section deals with the particular predicaments faced by the emerging reason of state, the open-ended nature of history and the post-Westphalian European balance of power. Internally, this requires the establishment of a developed police order collecting as much knowledge about the object to be governed as possible in order to face external competition. Insofar as the logic of the population as a collection of *living* beings here comes to the fore as a primary target of intervention of government, this development gives rise to the birth of biopolitics and the politics of health. When government is perceived as a form of power that targets social biology as its chief object, politics acquires an unprecedented generalized and essential importance for human subsistence.

The third section articulates the modification of this kind of governmentality as described by Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Following Foucault, liberalism is to be understood as a rationalization of government that internally addresses and refines governmentality as it had been established in the tradition from the reason of state by reminding it of its basic criteria for good government. Rather than breaking with its fundamental assumptions, liberal critique emphasizes the principle that government must take into account any given population's self-regulation by imposing on itself a work of self-limitation. This makes a new kind of social naturalness appear intrinsic to the population, and one that must be respected by government. As a result of the interaction between human biological beings driven by their self-interest, social antagonisms arise that make up the motor of a natural history that has always already begun and that seems interminable.

The fourth section discusses the development of modes of perceiving history as discussed in *The Birth of Biopolitics* and in the previous years' lectures. By looking back on and providing an overview of the different phases of governmentality, as well as emphasizing the relative continuity in the development described, the section articulates Foucault's analysis of the various notions of historicity appearing in and through these phases. A secular natural history without transcendence appears as the motor driving historical development, together with a governmentality constantly calling itself and its own exercise into question. It entails a tragic conception of history in which the exercise of freedom can never be taken for granted. Not only do the participants constantly oppose one another, thus impeding the exercise of their own freedom, they also permanently constitute a danger for one another. For this reason, the natural history of liberalism is a historicity in which the art of government relentlessly strives to organize the conditions for

the exercise of freedom, and the nature of the subjects and the objects that should be considered normal or abnormal, valuable or dangerous, in the game of legitimate freedom. Liberal governance is thus not a position to be affirmed, instead, it draws the outline of an experience of historicity that is an experience of an ongoing, unsettling, and unending crisis of governmentality.

1. THE APPEARANCE OF GOVERNMENTALITY AND ITS UNYIELDING HISTORICITY

At the beginning of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault underscores that the lectures pursue the themes from the previous year.⁹ Concomitantly, Foucault voices his intentions with the lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics*: “I would like to continue with what I began to talk about last year, that is to say, to retrace the history of what could be called the art of government” and carry on studying “the government of men insofar as it appears as the exercise of political sovereignty” and “the study of the rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty.”¹⁰ He further stipulates the theme as an inflection of rationalization of governmental reason in the exercise of political sovereignty. It is noteworthy that Foucault stresses how “it is only when we understand what is at stake in this regime of liberalism opposed to *raison d’État* – or rather, fundamentally modifying (it) without, perhaps questioning its bases – only when we know what this governmental regime called liberalism was, will we be able to grasp what biopolitics is.”¹¹

1.1. The pre-history of governmentality: Pastoral power and eschatology

Foucault’s studies on pastoral power can be read as a “prehistory of governmental rationality.”¹² *Pastoral power* is a power/knowledge relation that rests on the idea that the shepherd is in possession of a truth that will allow him to lead each and every sheep in the flock to Salvation. With the pastorate a process is instituted that should be seen as absolutely unique: the process by which a religion, a religious community, constitutes itself as a Church, as an institution that claims the right to govern men in their daily life on the grounds of leading them to eternal life. Moreover, the object of this practice is not limited to a definite group, a city or a state, but comprises the whole of humanity.¹³

Initiated around the time of the Church Fathers,¹⁴ the Christian pastoral system continued to exist throughout the 12 catholic centuries following the creation of the Church.

⁹ “A more exact title” of this lecture series, Foucault suggests, would have been “a history of ‘governmentality’” (Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 111/Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108).

¹⁰ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 3-4/*Security, Territory, Population*, 2-3.

¹¹ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 24/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 22.

¹² Raffnsøe et al., *Michel Foucault. Research Companion*, 258-265.

¹³ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 151/*Security, Territory, Population*, 148.

¹⁴ Sverre Raffnsøe, “Michel Foucault’s Confessions of the Flesh. The fourth volume of the History of Sexuality”, *Foucault Studies* 25:2 (2018).

During this time, the pastoral structure of governmental rationality was revitalized several times through a number of reform-movements, including the monastic way of life.¹⁵ With the appearance of beggar-monks, pastoral governmentality from the 13th century was increasingly transplanted to the surrounding population. This development was strengthened in the 16th century with the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Pastoral leadership would – from this time on – increasingly intervene in everyday life, where it also became the subject of increasing criticism.

The pastoral formula *omnes et singulatim* (“everyone and each”) synthesizes the main feature of a relationship that is simultaneously collective and individual, treating everyone as a part of a whole and the whole as composed by individuals.¹⁶ The plight of the shepherd is to risk his life for the salvation of each and every individual sheep. It is a logic of thought that unifies the *whole* of humanity under the scope of a unified temporality, thus politics becomes the continuation of God’s command on Earth. Governing, and politics in general, is transformed into protective shepherding, which eventually gave rise to the agitation and aggressiveness of servility that has become a feature of Western European political rationality. This involves a propensity toward aggression or even violence in the exercise of government toward both internal as well as external threats – in the name of the common good and even individual care-taking.

1.2. The history of governmentality: The appearance of *raison d’état*

The traditional conception of sovereignty and dominance was for most of the Medieval period characterized by there being no distinction between exerting sovereignty and rule. As long as every member of society sought the individual and common good within the framework of an over-arching cosmo-theological continuum, there was no fixed boundary between sovereignty and rule. The monarch or prince could therefore not easily be distinguished from the religious leader or pastor. The head of the family, the monarch, and God ruled in similar ways within that continuum. The dissemination of governmentality was therefore limited to the Christian, pastoral tradition.

However, the cosmo-theological continuum came under significant pressure during the 1500s and 1600s, when a de-pastoralization of government and world took place. New kinds of knowledge, such as Johannes Kepler’s (1571–1630) astronomy, Galileo Galilei’s (1564–1642) and Isaac Newton’s (1642–1727) natural philosophy, as well as John Ray’s (1628–1705) natural history suggested that God only affected the world through universal, eternal, and simple laws that man could know.¹⁷ The world was no longer viewed as influenced by divine miracles that revealed God’s existence as a pastor that intervened in individual cases. God governed the totality of the universe and ruled over it in general.

¹⁵ Foucault, “‘Omnes et singulatim:’ vers un critique”, 144-147/Foucault, “‘Omnes et singulatim:’ Towards a Criticism”, 308-311.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, “‘Omnes et singulatim:’ vers un critique de la raison politique” [1979] (1994)/Michel Foucault, “‘Omnes et singulatim:’ Towards a Criticism of Political Reason” [1979] (2000).

¹⁷ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 240/*Security, Territory, Population*, 311.

In extension, the pastoral government of people no longer seemed so extensive or definitive. The government people exerted over each other had to be something other and more than the total and general dominance that God exerted upon nature. The art of government could no longer rely on some paradigm but rather had to have its own particular logic that could be sought out and explored. Human governmentality had to seek out its principles within human society – in the object it sought to govern. This resulted in a *ratio etatus*, or a limited mode of reasoning, which could be applied insofar as one was concerned with issues of state. When it appeared, it marked a difference from *principia natura* or the general and universal principles of nature.

This secularization of governmentality became manifest from the middle of the 1600s with the appearance of a genre of literature that explored the rationality of secular governance. In fact, the genre originated already in the 16th century with Guillaume de la Perrière's (1499–1565) *Le miroir politique* from 1555 and Giovanni Botero's (1540–1617) *Della ragion di Stato* from 1589, but it had its golden age in the 17th century with Federico Bonaventura's (1555–1602) *Delle ragion di stato* published posthumously from 1623, Naudé's (1600–1653) *Considerations politiques sur le coup d'État* from 1639, and Bogislaw Phillipp von Chemnitz's (1605–1678) *De Ratione Status* from 1674. It continued from there into the subsequent century. In literature concerning *raison d'état*, the aim was no longer to advise the king about rule but to preserve and extend the state. In extension, it became possible to emphasize limitations to the power held by the head of state by noting that the king dominated and ruled but did not govern. Already in an early lecture in 1978, Foucault quotes the sentence as an outstandingly clear statement of the differentiation between governmentality and rule: "while I have been speaking about population a word has constantly recurred – you will say that this was deliberate, but it may not be entirely so – and this is the word 'government.' The more I have spoken about population, the more I have stopped saying 'sovereign.' Or was led to designate or aim at something that again I think is relatively new, not in the word, and not at a certain level of reality, but as a new technique. Or rather, the modern political problem, the privilege that government begins to exercise in relation to rules, to the extent that, to limit the king's power, it will be possible one day to say 'the king reigns, but he does not govern', this inversion of government and the reign or rule and the fact that government is basically much more than sovereignty, much more than reigning and ruling, much more than the *imperium*, is, I think, absolutely linked to the population."¹⁸

It would appear that reasons of state always rejected notions of justice and reasonableness in order to promote the interest of the state. However, in the literature, the term 'state' was viewed as positive and poignant. 'State' was understood as reliable government of a

¹⁸ Cf. *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 78/*Security, Territory, Population*, 76. Foucault quotes a famous phrase in a February 4, 1830, article in *The National*, published by French historian and politician Marie Joseph Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877). The phrase "*rex regnat et non gubernat*" was voiced 200 years earlier by the Polish-Lithuanian nobleman and Great Crown Chancellor Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605). In both cases the maxim advocates the need to limit monarchy within the confines of constitutional sovereignty. For Foucault, however, the antinomy between two forms of power stated in the aphorism presupposes that a regime of government different from rule, sovereignty, and imperium has been developed.

people. The state was able to establish security and order. In the reason of state, one sought to understand what had to be done to establish, maintain, and extend such a dominion. Botero's *Della ragion di stato* provides the following definitions of 'state' and reason of state: "State is a stable rule over people and Reason of State is the knowledge of the means by which such a dominion may be founded, preserved and extended".¹⁹ According to Botero, there was a special and positive commitment to govern. The truth of governmental rationality could be explored and known, such that stability and development could be combined. The art of governing was a *separate and independent activity* that sought out the approaches involved when people were to be governed, while viewing these as having motivations distinct from the state.

1.3. The open-ended secular historicity of the reason of state

From the perspective of the *raison d'état*, the state is not a given entity but a process of permanent reconstitution and, as such, an *artificial* reality. As a highly human reality, the state was not merely an ideal to steer by; the principles of good government were correctives that had to be taken into account and adapted to.²⁰ Accordingly, the *raison d'état* was, therefore, not the pure expression of despotic arbitrariness but a singular approach to the world committed to its own specific rationality. A specific and immediately accessible truth had replaced a transcendent and universal truth in the beyond, which previous modes of rule had hitherto aimed for and endeavored to realize.

At the end of the Middle Ages, 'state' no longer referred to a 'state of peace' but rather – in Thomas Hobbes' terms – to a sovereign "actor" that ensured the peace and stability of "the body politic" by installing a hierarchy. The principle of a *raison d'état* entails the notion of a state created and maintained through governmentality. It therefore became possible for subjects of the state to collaborate on constructing, preserving, and reconstituting a new state within the state, as organized around the new approaches to governmentality. This change was decisive for the conglomerate of different political institutions to become possible. In prolongation hereof, Louis XIV's (1638–1715) government can be seen to introduce the specificity of the *raison d'état* into the general forms of sovereignty and in this manner be able to also articulate sovereign grandeur in terms of governmentality. This development is expressed most emphatically and emblematically in the famous dictum attributed to the Sun King: "L'État, c'est moi."²¹

The new political reality of the early modern state set new limitations on government, namely the *necessity* of a logic to be followed if governmental action were to be successful. Ultimately, this logic only respected the *body politic* to the extent that it was advantageous for the sovereign. In a coup d'état, where the existing order is suspended, we find a situation in which the *raison d'état* could be viewed in its purest format. In a coup, which follows its own artificial and political justice, the state appears in such a manner that it

¹⁹ Botero, *The Reason of State* [1589] (1856), 3.

²⁰ According to Foucault, the state must be created through intervention and thus becomes a regulative principle for governmental reason (cf. *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 294–314; *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 163–185).

²¹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 252/*Security, Territory, Population*, 324.

can dispose of the existing institutions and order to replace one state with another. The obligation towards the principles of good government, the *raison d'état*, makes it possible to distinguish violence from brutality. Sheer brutality is arbitrary and therefore also irrational and contemptible. However, there is no contradiction between violence and rationality. Violence is rational insofar as it is a necessity required by specific situations. In violence, the necessity of *raison d'état* thus appears in its purest form.

For the first time, a truly historical mode of being appeared – historicity as such. Both the Christian pastoral approach and traditional modalities of rule had pointed toward the end of history. Since peace remained precarious and stability fragile, the demand could, in principle, never be completely met. Such a mode of existence was tragic in a different way than the Ancient tragedies as it was not concerned with the tragic predicament of the human condition within a larger cosmos as such. The tragedy appeared because human beings were now inscribed in their own history where they sought to remove the sources of insecurity and create an acceptable existence but were forced to do this by competing with each other through risky strategies and mutual attacks. Insecurity was therefore certain to reappear only to be tackled at an ever-higher level, such that any stability or continuity of existence became a pipe dream. The tragedy was that there could be no respite from such a secular history since it was endless.²²

2. THE BIRTH OF BIOPOLITICS: A TURNING-POINT

With *raison d'état* and the reconceptualization of peace as a state of stability that appeared in force of a dynamic balance between various forces, a new form of political thinking and practice that conceived of itself as fundamentally dynamic became possible.

2.1. The open-ended European balance of power and its internal police

Through the *Peace of Westphalia*, in the wake of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), a new European order, built upon the evolutionary peace of diplomacy, was given paradigmatic expression. It implied a reorganization of the European system of states in early modernity. The idea of Europe as a hierarchy that could be gathered in one ultimate form, the empire, was relinquished. Instead, the continent was perceived as an aristocracy of states between which there was a sort of parity, meaning that a certain balance had to be struck to avoid disparities of power between the states. Over time, there arose a diplomatic-military complex in order to regulate the relative strength between states, such that a multi-lateral balance could be maintained.

Raison d'état leads to the development of a new governmental technology directed at the internal organization of states that went by the name of 'police.'²³ This was not yet understood as a delimited state authority that was given the task to ensure the public's

²² The paradigm representative of the form of tragedy in Antiquity is Sophocles (ca. 495–406 BC). The modern form of tragedy connected to the *raison d'état* includes Shakespeare's (1564–1616) *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and Racine's (1639–1699) *Britannicus* and *Andromaque*.

²³ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 375/Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 365.

safety and security.²⁴ Instead, the name refers to the technologies for individual and collective governing in order to maintain internal peace and stability; in short, to uphold the social order. The European balance of states was therefore dependent on each country having an efficient police force in order to prevent revolutions and popular uprisings that could unhinge this carefully constructed system of diplomacy.

The middle of the century saw the first initiatives toward an independent program for an organized police state. France had developed an extensive police force already in the previous century. Germany made this issue the object of academic and practical studies when the first professorships of police and cameral sciences were established in 1727. Notably, this program was developed by Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771) in instructive dissertations such as *Grundsätze der Polizey-Wissenschaft (Principles of Police Science)* from 1757 and *Staatswirtschaft oder systematische Abhandlung aller ökonomischen und Cameralwissenschaften (State Economy or Systematic Treatise on All Economic and Cameralist Sciences)*, published in 1755. Here, von Justi sought to answer the basic question of *raison d'état*: How should one govern in the face of many contingent and unpredictable events? The answer was to collect as much knowledge about the object to be governed as possible, namely the state. If the police ensured the internal order and improved the state's abilities, it had to ensure not only the survival of citizens but also the improvement of their competencies and abilities. Only with such measures could citizen satisfaction, order and progress be secured. With von Justi, police technology therefore initiated a permanent intervention into people's lives, the purpose of which was not only to avoid the detrimental features of life but also actively to improve the quality of life. The task was therefore not mainly to repress but to ensure the secular development of *welfare*.

2.2. The biopolitics of the population

In the wake of the police sciences' focus on the importance of citizen welfare and security, a new political object crystallizes as the primary target for political leadership, the *population*. Foucault claims that it was not until the appearance of the police and its technologies that there was a consideration of the population's particular nature and character. Prior to this, the population had been viewed as a resource alongside other resources in developing the sovereign's political strength.²⁵ It appeared as a condition for exercising government, whose quality and nature was taken more or less for granted. With the appearance of mercantilism and Colbertism in the 1600s, this changed.²⁶ The population became

²⁴ "The notion of police, even in France today, is frequently misunderstood. When one speaks to a Frenchman about police, he can only think of people in uniform or in the secret service. In the 17th and 18th centuries, 'police' signified a program of government rationality. This can be characterized as a project to create a system of regulation of the general conduct of individuals whereby everything would be controlled to the point of self-sustenance, without the need of intervention" (Foucault, "Espace, savoir, pouvoir" [1982] (1994), 272/Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," [1982] (2000), 351).

²⁵ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 56-81/*Security, Territory, Population*, 55-79.

²⁶ Mercantilism concerns a number of ideas about balancing trade, which influenced European policies in the 17th and most of the 18th century. Thomas Mun's (1571–1641) *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (1664) was an important contribution to this tradition. Louis XIV's finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683)

a resource to be developed by the government, and citizens the decisive factor upon which all other variables depended.²⁷ A plentiful and productive population was the precondition for a country's subsistence (and for low prices in agricultural products, since it was here labor was replenished). Indeed, this also applied to manufacture. A large and industrious population resulted in low prices for the final products and allowed for exports rather than imports. In return, this made it possible for the state to accumulate wealth, thus bolstering the state's position in its competition with other states.

The tendencies found there were intensified in the police sciences and related technologies since it conceptualized 'population' as the true and privileged object of police interference. It became, in so many words, the primary object of attention for political governmentality. The population became a decisive and unifying factor in a developmental dynamic that the government was dependent on and included in.

In the police sciences, these tendencies reached their highest peak for that age when the population was conceptualized as the true and privileged object of police interference, whereby it also became the overall issue for political governance. The subjects of a country, understood and treated as a population, were the primary task for the state and government. This resulted in a specific issue of population: Since the king's subjects appeared in unison as a population, it was no longer possible to view them solely as a group of legal subjects – instead they were perceived and treated as a mass of *living beings*.

When population became the crux of the matter, however, there was an effort to develop a kind of leadership that could not be reduced to regimentation of the body politics through law and discipline. When a population of living beings was to be governed, they could not primarily be managed as merely belonging to some substantial universality, in this case humankind, which would be viewed as equipped with natural legal rights and a basic inalterable human nature, as would seem rational to presuppose within the relative order that natural history laid bare. Rather, one began to govern an assembly of individuals that belonged together in force of their being members of the same species, *homo sapiens*, wherefore they were saturated with the *dynamic of life*.²⁸ A random group of people does not constitute a population. A population must be sizeable enough to have birth and mortality rates and a state of health that it must be able to develop or degenerate.

Mortality caused by fever and suicide could be the same from year to year despite changes made for individual members of the population. However, it became possible to ascertain that infant mortality was higher than mortality for adults and that urban areas had a higher mortality rate than rural areas. In other words, the population could be viewed as a collection of living beings that exhibited seemingly random behavior but that

implemented policies based on mercantilist ideas. Foucault views mercantilism and Colbertism as novel approaches to solving the problem of governmentality, rather than economical doctrines that anticipated the science of economics per se.

²⁷ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 69-77/*Security, Territory, Population*, 67-75.

²⁸ Life appeared as a dynamic perspective within governance around the same time as the transition occurred from natural history to biology.

was in fact imbued with regularity. This was possible because the population was saturated with life processes, that is, the population began to exhibit a natural character.²⁹ The population was, therefore, not merely a collection of legal subjects or random people living in one area. A population exhibited fertility, mortality, health rates, and pathology.

Statistical data about the population was initially collected in Germany during the 1700s. This was used to determine the political and economic strength of a country. Furthermore, similar efforts were taken up in England and France to develop the idea of statistical laws and regularities. This resulted in the idea of *normal* or averages at the beginning of the 18th century. Despite individual differences, populations exhibited regularity.

As a part of the effort to improve control, France, England, and Austria began to use data-collection aimed at improving the state of the population in specified areas but also to collect taxes, recruit soldiers, and assess the strength of the state. There was a growing interest for the health of the population. Initially, this interest in the health of the population and its regularity did not lead to any subsequent intervention.³⁰ In the longer run, however, the growing interest that political leadership and sciences took in the health of the population led to the discovery that its naturalness was not permanent and unalterable. The natural, biological processes that moved through a population depended on the environment. Changes in the environment altered the basis for how biological entities function. The natural regularities identified by the state and government therefore gave rise to careful intervention, which sought to control these changes in a desired way.³¹ There were many kinds of intervention, but they all had to take the logic of the living, human population into account.

2.3. An open-ended bio-political governance of welfare and security

The discovery that the population was an entity the government had to take care of and ensure the well-being of, resulted in – and was further perpetuated through – the creation of public health and hygiene. In this new gestation of the population, humankind began to figure as a biological species characterized by a certain lawfulness, which government could study and affect. In this way, government came to be perceived as a form of power, the exercise of which had the human being's social biology as its chief object. In this manner, thus, a new kind of biopolitics took shape that Foucault had begun to articulate in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality, The Will to Knowledge*, insofar as it “brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.”³² With the establishment of this kind of biopolitics, the life of the human species would enter into the field of politics and “the order of

²⁹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 69-77/*Security, Territory, Population*, 67-75.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, “La politique de la santé au XVIII^e siècle, 1978/1994: 166.

³¹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 375-376/*Security, Territory, Population*, 366.

³² Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir*, 1977-78, 188/Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 143.

knowledge and power," where it would become an important object of knowledge as well as for political techniques and political interventions.³³

As it became subject to a more systematic gathering of a wealth of knowledge and the target of interventions, human life would become visible, enter into history and acquire a historicity in a new existential sense. Insofar as historical processes and motions of human life would blend, interact and intra-act, human life would acquire a bio-history, and at the horizon of epistemology the experience would appear of what it "meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, and individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner."³⁴

3. THE FRUGALITY OF GOVERNMENT IN CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

In *Naissance de la biopolitique*, Foucault analyzes liberalism as an art of government that intensifies and refines the tradition of *raison d'état* rather than breaking with its fundamental assumptions.³⁵ In the reflective practice of *raison d'état*, governing rationally means to enable "a given state to arrive at its maximum of being in a considered, reasoned and calculated way.³⁶ This means that any self-limitation on the part of governmentality is drawn to attain the immanent goal of maximizing its own strength. Governmental rationality will, in other words, impose limits to the extent "that it can calculate them on its own account in terms of its objectives and [the] best means of achieving them."³⁷ In Foucault's reading, the birth of liberalism is inseparable from the notion of "frugal government," by which the question of "the too much and too little" develops into the central criterion around which the art of government will revolve.³⁸ And, according to Foucault, "starting from the end of the eighteenth century, throughout the nineteenth century, and obviously more than ever today, the fundamental problem [of liberalism] is not the constitution of states, but without a doubt the question of the frugality of government."³⁹

The overruling principle of *raison d'état* being the maximizing of the state's strength, Foucault primarily sees mercantilism less as proto-economic doctrine than as a particular strategy for organizing commercial production and circulation, the aim of which was the

³³ Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, 186/Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 139-40. In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault further characterized the threshold in this manner: "For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself" (*La volonté de savoir*, 187/Foucault 1978: 142-43).

³⁴ *La volonté de savoir*, 187/*The Will to Knowledge*, 142.

³⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 29; cf. 15-16/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 28; cf. 14.

³⁶ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 6/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 4.

³⁷ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 13/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 11.

³⁸ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 70/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 28.

³⁹ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 30-31/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 29.

accumulation of bullion, thus strengthening its position vis-à-vis other states.⁴⁰ The permanent objective of improving the military-diplomatic power of the state notwithstanding, in Foucault's analysis mercantilism is intimately linked to the administrative techniques and statistical forms of knowledge of policing. Concerned with maximizing the volume, productivity and health of the inhabitants, policing was principally exercised by means "of permanent, continually renewed, and increasingly detailed regulation."

An incessant and indefinite government of such a self-sufficient type, the liberal critique objected, would never be able to give any comprehensive account as to why it was governing in the first place, nor of how it was to govern in the best possible way. Such "over-regulatory policing" was unable to deal with the contingency that is the "spontaneous regulation of the course of things."⁴¹ Thus, contrary to the principle of maximizing government, the liberal critique pointed to the principle that government should recognize and take account of the self-regulation of the governed, which also implied that not just any type of government would be an appropriate government. The regulation of government should take hold of this self-regulation of the governed by imposing on itself what Foucault describes as a work of "auto-limitation."⁴² Classical liberalism championed an art of government that intervened in the affairs of its subjects according to a quantitative scale but prioritizing the minimum necessary degree of intervention *as* the optimum, as long as this was appropriate with regard to the self-regulation of the population.

Foucault suggests that the late 18th century liberal art of governing is describable as the emergence of a new principle of "frugal government" within the governmentality of *raison d'état*. It was the entry into the art of government of the problematics pertaining to the question of the prudent or sparing exercise of government that took care to confine governmental intervention to the extent necessary. A good government considers, reflects upon and fine-tunes its operations according to its overall goals and the nature of what it governs. As such, good government confirms the answer that a group of merchants, in Marquis d'Argenson's (1694–1757) famous account, should have given to a mercantilist minister asking them what he could do for commerce: *Laissez-nous faire*.⁴³

The issue of the frugality of government is addressed in both French and British political thought around 1800, where a number of prominent writers rejected the idea that natural social developments must necessarily be managed or governed. These writers did not, therefore, seek to create a design for the best society but rather concentrated on existing governmentality in order to address and exert an influence on it. This was a radical and provocative development for the time insofar as it was not only a critique pointing to the faults of the practice of government but also a statement that pointed out that governments ignored the important guidelines for government and simply governed too much

⁴⁰ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 7/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 5; *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 285-310/*Security, Territory, Population*, 293-318.

⁴¹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 348, 362, 352/*Security, Territory, Population*, 340, 354, 344.

⁴² *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 12/*Security, Territory, Population*, 10.

⁴³ D'Argenson, "Lettre à l'auteur du *Journal économique* au sujet de la *Dissertation sur le commerce* de M. le Marquis Belloni," *Journal économique* (April 1751), 107–117; quoted in *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 28, n. 16–17/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 25 n. 16–17.

or in an excessive manner. Such a line of reasoning, which can be found in thinkers such as François Quesnay (1694–1774), Adam Smith (1723–1799), and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), was radical but was also presented as containing a number of practical ideas for concrete reforms, before they became unified into a coherent theory.

In his *Tableau économique* from 1758, which developed the core ideas of Physiocratic economic theory, Quesnay emphasized that the best kind of police did not interfere in everything. The best way for ensuring the good of the nation and society was to have a solid constitution, rather than interfering in trade. The aim was to leave society to its own devices and to the effects of mutual competition. As Quesnay succinctly stated in his famous maxim XXV of his *Maximes générales du gouvernement économique d'un royaume agricole* (General Maxims for the Economic Government of an Agricultural Kingdom): “Let there be complete liberty in commerce; for the surest, most exact, and most profitable policy for interior and exterior commerce of the state and nation consists in the greatest possible freedom in competition”.⁴⁴

3.1. The truth of the market and the use of government

Foucault identifies two interrelated problematics of primary importance for the formation of governmentality. The first of these is the installation of the market as a place and instrument for the formation of *truth*.⁴⁵ From the Middle Ages to the 18th century, the market had essentially been “a site of justice” that was tightly organized in order to prevent fraud and theft. Exchange was characterized by an extreme and thorough regulation pertaining to what products were to be sold, their origin and manufacture, and not least their price. Market prices had to reflect “the just price, that is to say, a price that was to have a certain relationship with work performed, with the needs of the merchants, and, of course, with the consumers’ needs and possibilities.” Overall, the market was “a site of jurisdiction” in the sense that it functioned as “a place where what had to appear in exchange and be formulated in the price was justice.”⁴⁶

A fundamental transformation of significant importance occurred in the 18th century that enabled the formulation of a liberal art of government. By way of 18th-century political economy, the market was reconfigured as a place with a certain naturalness that one had to be knowledgeable about. From being an *ordre artificiel*, established and regulated through mercantilist policies, the market had become an *ordre naturel*. From being a site of jurisdiction, the market had become a site for the formation of a “normal,” “good,” “natural,” or “true price,” that is, a price that “fluctuates around the value of the product” and is determined by the interplay between the costs of production and the concrete demand rather than notions of justness.⁴⁷ To the extent that prices were formed through “the natural mechanisms of the market they constitute a standard of truth which enables us to

⁴⁴ François Quesnay, “Maximes générales du gouvernement économique d’un royaume agricole” [1778], in *Œuvres Économiques complètes et autres textes. Vol. I.* (2005), 571; my translation.

⁴⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 31/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 29.

⁴⁶ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 32–33/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 30–31.

⁴⁷ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 33/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 31.

discern which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous."⁴⁸ In this sense, the market had become a "regime of veridiction" as to the governmental practice – not because political economy as such tells the truth to government but because political economy points to the site where a government needs to look "to find the principle of truth of its own governmental practice."⁴⁹

Foucault associates the second problematic of importance for the formation of the new art of government with 19th-century English radicalism and utilitarianism. Here a new critique of the proper *limitation* of government is established based on an estimation of the utility versus the non-utility of governmental actions and interventions.⁵⁰ With reference to the general utility of governmental practice, the critique is to confront cases in which regulation would be unreasonable, counterproductive, or simply futile, and for that reason it seeks to define the limits of governmental competence on the basis of what it will be useful or useless for government to do or not to do. It is from this position the radical limitation-critique can persistently raise the question to all governmental actions: Is this useful and for what? Within what limits is it useful? And when does it become harmful?

These questions come very close to what Jeremy Bentham, at a relatively late point, sought to distinguish as the *agenda* and the *non-agenda* when he designated that the rule of conduct for economic actions and similar initiatives of government should form the criterion for whether or not governmental interference could be expected to increase general happiness according to the utilitarian principle of maximizing happiness and minimizing pain.⁵¹ Utilitarianism should be regarded as more than a philosophy or science since it is first and foremost a technological attempt to define the competences of the *art* of government with a more or less direct reference to what Foucault regards as "the fundamental question of liberalism": "What is the utility value of government and all actions of government in a society where exchange determines the true value of things?"⁵²

These two central elements – the market as a site of veridiction operating through the principle of exchange, and the limitation calculus through which the utility of government is measured – Foucault understands as unified by the notion of *interest*. The new art of government is less organized around self-referring states that aim to maximize military might, manpower, and wealth than with the complexities of interests as they manifest themselves in the delicate "interplay between individual and collective interests, between social utility and economic profit, between the equilibrium of the market and the regime of public authorities, between basic rights and the independence of the governed."⁵³ From directly intervening in and regulating things, men and wealth with the aim of maximizing

⁴⁸ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 34/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 32.

⁴⁹ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 34/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 32.

⁵⁰ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 53/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 51; cf also *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 76/*Security, Territory, Population*, 74.

⁵¹ Jeremy Bentham, *Method and Leading Features of an Institute of Political Economy (including finance) considered not only as a Science but also as an Art* [1800-1804]; quoted in *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 26-27, n9/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 24, n9.

⁵² *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 48/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 46.

⁵³ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 46/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 44.

the state's strength, government should only deal with these insofar as they are of interest to somebody. Hence, as Foucault states, government "is only interested in interest."⁵⁴ Still, and notably, government "must not obstruct the interplay of individual interest," not only because of respect for freedom of circulation and self-regulation of the population but also because it is impossible for government to have full knowledge of the logic of this multiplicity of interests it seeks to encourage.⁵⁵

The correlation between the multiplicity of mutual individual interests can only be established in the form of a mutual benefit and enrichment established and maintained over time in the long term. Even though the benefits of competition may not be divided equally between the buyer and the seller, the beneficial effects of economic exchange and competition will, according to the physiocrats, as well as to early liberal thinkers such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, be profitable in the long run for the participants in general, provided that the process of exchange is permitted to follow its free course to constantly establish the natural, right and just price for the exchange. For Foucault, this "new *raison d'État*" or this "reason of the least state" which "finds the core of its veridiction in the market and its de facto jurisdiction in utility" draws the outline of an open-ended conception of history: "We enter an age of an economic historicity governed by, if not unlimited enrichment, then at least reciprocal enrichment through the game of competition."⁵⁶

When the idea of an unending progress in wealth central to liberalism begins to push over the theme of a European equilibrium established through diplomacy, by contrast, one begins to make out the outline of an unconfined and never-ending competition to the general benefit of all, even though it might be detrimental to some. A Europe now beginning to regard itself as being in a state of unending, permanent and collective enrichment through its own competition with itself can no longer be regarded as a closed and confined unity. Instead, Europe becomes an unending and open-ended competitive game in which the rest of the world is also at stake. Whereas the consequences of an economic game that was still conceived as "finite"⁵⁷ were blocked in the calculation of a European diplomatic balance, the outline of a "new type of global calculation in European governmental practice" begins to appear.⁵⁸ In this new planetary rationality, the scale of the world and the entire globe is at stake in an open-ended historicity.

3.2. The birth of natural politics in the liberal art of government

Foucault makes it a crucial point that it is misleading to confine liberalism to a pure and simple economic or political doctrine. Instead, liberalism is to be perceived as a far more general phenomenon, a new decisive turn within the art of government, insofar as it is characterized by the three salient features articulated by him: an art of government pledg-

⁵⁴ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 47/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 45.

⁵⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 282/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 280.

⁵⁶ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 55-56/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 54.

⁵⁷ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 57/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 55; English translation corrected.

⁵⁸ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 57/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 56.

ing its faith to the veridiction of the market, limiting itself by the calculation of governmental utility and positioning Europe as a region within an unlimited and never-ending exchange and competition. Moreover, rather than liberalism understood as a politico-economic doctrine simply asserting the freedom of the individual per se or recognizing the essential, basic natural rights of individuals, this liberal art of government distinguishes itself by another fundamental feature: Instead of being perceived as an orthodox doctrine proclaiming specific rights or the juridical freedom of the individual, the liberal art of government should be viewed as characterized by *naturalism*.

Towards the end of *Security, Territory, Population*, it is made clear that what appears with liberalism is a new notion of “naturalness intrinsic to population.”⁵⁹ As a result of the relationships between the members of the population, and the dynamics that arises from the interaction between their particular interests, the population appears as a composition that is endowed with a “naturalness,” an impenetrable density and a “thickness, with internal mechanisms of regulation;”⁶⁰ and the “absolute value of the population as a natural and living reality”⁶¹ will be the reality that the state will have to take into account and be responsible for.

The naturalness that appears is a “social naturalness” or a “naturalness of society, “a naturalness specific to man’s life in common,”⁶² or a transactional reality that arises as living human beings with different inclinations, preferences and interests live together and begin to interact. For this reason, the naturalness described is equally a transformable historical reality. The naturalness of human population is historical simply because it is social and because it, as a result of continuous antagonistic social interaction, is a dynamic historic reality under continuous development. As it is said towards the end of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, “the nature of human nature is to be historical, because the nature of human nature is to be social. There is no human nature which is separable from the very fact of society.”⁶³ More importantly, the naturalness of the human population is historical in the radical sense that its social antagonism is the very “motor of history.” According to Foucault, we have a specifically “economic mechanism which shows how, starting from civil society and from the economic game which it harbors within itself, so to speak, we move on to a whole series of historical transformation. The principle of dissociative association is also a principle of historical transformation. That which produces the unity of the social fabric is at the same time that which produces the principle of historical transformation.”⁶⁴

As a consequence, the naturalness specific to man’s life in common is not a pre-given or primitive nature; a primordial constitution. Rather, it is an artificial naturalness since it is the result of human interaction; and it is thus also a historical naturalness under constant development.

⁵⁹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 359/*Security, Territory, Population*, 352.

⁶⁰ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 359/*Security, Territory, Population*, 352.

⁶¹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 363/*Security, Territory, Population*, 355.

⁶² *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 357, 358/*Security, Territory, Population*, 448, 449.

⁶³ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 303/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 299.

⁶⁴ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 310/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 306.

4. FORMS OF HISTORICITY

With the conception of a naturalness intrinsic to the population that government has to study and respect, put forward by liberal governmentality, the rationality of government takes a new decisive turn. Nevertheless, as Foucault repeatedly makes clear, this turn should not be perceived and conceived as an all-decisive break or rupture but rather as a decisive modification. Despite its twists and turns, the history of governmentality is also characterized by a relative continuity. In many respects, the breach and the rupture between the history of governmentality and the prehistory of governmentality is considered more significant by Foucault than the distance or the differences between the later phases in the history governmentality.⁶⁵

4.1 The appearance of an open-ended natural history

For a very long time in Western societies, the guidelines for regulating the potentially indefinite exercise of power was, according to Foucault, sought in the development of the wisdom of those in power. Wisdom implied the knowledge and the ability to govern in accordance with the basic order of things. It was the insight and the temperance that allowed the ruler to govern in accordance with what “the general human and divine order may prescribe.”⁶⁶ Basically, this meant modelling and regulating government in terms of the truth,⁶⁷ as it was revealed in religious texts or in the order of the world, even though ascertaining the unvarnished truth might require education and interpretation since the truth often appeared somewhat enigmatically.

During the pre-history of governmentality as it came to the fore in pastoral power, the exercise of power and rule when understood as a protective shepherding continued to be perceived within a cosmo-theological continuum; and until the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modernity, the exercise of power thus continued to be regulated by the obligation to serve and render a more basic fundamental truth.⁶⁸ Here, human beings and the ruler had to take stock of and measure up to a world governed by final causes. The world governed in a pastoral fashion was a world governed to a system of salvation

⁶⁵ In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault underlines how “the state rationality, this *raison d’État*, which continues in fact, to dominate the économistes’ thought, will” only “be modified,” and that he seeks to highlight some of these “essential modifications.” By contrast, the *raison d’État* “carves out a new division, or even introduces a radical break” with the “natural order” of an earlier “cosmological-theological framework” (*Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 356-357/*Security, Territory, Population*, 348-49). At the beginning of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault highlights that the “regime of liberalism,” as opposed to *raison d’État*, is “fundamentally modifying (it) without, perhaps, questioning its basis” (*Naissance de la biopolitique*, 198/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 22). And he goes on to point out that we “will only be able to grasp what biopolitics is” “when we know what this governmental regime called liberalism was” and are able to clarify how it constitutes a new turn modifying the bio-politics of the reason of state. Towards the end of the lectures of 1979, Foucault speaks of a “re-centering/de-centering of the governmental reason” (*Naissance de la biopolitique*, 314/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311).

⁶⁶ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 310/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311.

⁶⁷ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 310/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311.

⁶⁸ Cf. also Sverre Raffnsøe & Dorthe Staunæs, “Learning to Stay Ahead of Time: Moving Leadership Experiences Experimentally,” *Management & Organizational History* 9:2 (2014).

that culminated in man, but where men had to live in this world above all with the aim of passing on to another world.⁶⁹

With the appearance of the new kinds of knowledge from around 1580-1660 described at the beginning of this article, this cosmological-theological framework not only began to dissolve but was also disputed as the primary justification for the exercise of power and the ruler's dominion over men.⁷⁰ As the appearance of new kinds of natural science unveiling the general principles of nature made it manifest that God did not intervene directly in the world to govern the world in individual instances but only ruled over the world through general laws, it became impossible for the sovereigns and leaders of this world to mold their exercise of power on Godly rule and to legitimize their art of governance as a governing in accordance with and reflected by the divine order of things.

As a consequence, the art of government, or the activity in which human beings exercised power over other human beings, was forced to not only work out its own explicit secular formula and develop its specific technologies; concomitantly, the conduct of human conduct needed to develop a new specific rationality and justification.⁷¹ From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the exercise of power was no longer adjusted in accordance with wisdom and molded on the representation of basic truths reflecting a general order. Instead of general *wisdom*, the art of government begins to become adjusted to a specific *rationality* and its *calculation*.⁷² The art of government becomes attuned to and regulated by the studied care in analyzing, calculating and affecting specific fields of forces and relations that play out within the specific field that the art of government seeks to govern. Instead of general *truth*, the indefinite art of government thus begins to become attuned to, regulated by and measured by, but also limited by⁷³ an indispensable *knowledge* of its privileged object: the state, the people and the population. It was the attunement to and the limitation with reference to a knowledge of a *specific and relative, artificial reality* under development over which the art of government not only had to assert its power but remained dependent upon.⁷⁴

When the art of secular governance in the modern sense, or governmentality in the proper sense, was constituted in and through this major transformation, the first kind of governmentality to appear – constructing and articulating itself as a specific rationality by adjusting and attuning itself to an indispensable knowledge of the specific artificial reality over which it had to assert its power – was the *raison d'État*.

This first rationalization of the art of government in the form of “the rationality of the sovereign state”⁷⁵ committed governmentality to follow guidelines that were not simply internal to government itself. Rather, the rationalization of government admonished government to adjust itself to the guiding principles that its privileged object of intervention,

⁶⁹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 240/*Security, Territory, Population*, 234.

⁷⁰ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 240-245/*Security, Territory, Population*, 234-238.

⁷¹ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 242/*Security, Territory, Population*, 237.

⁷² *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 315/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311-12.

⁷³ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 315/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311-12.

⁷⁴ *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, 358-359/*Security, Territory, Population*, 351.

⁷⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 316/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 313.

the state and the augmentation of its artificial reality under the auspices of sovereignty, provided. Nevertheless, this initial stage of governmentality raised the question of a proper acquaintance with the forces and the specific logic of this relative artificial reality under development.

As it was instigated by the French economists and carried more fully into effect by the English political economists, the second rationalization of the art of government argued that it was only possible to exercise the art of government if it was modelled on and regulated by not so much the rationality of the individual, the agency or the authority who is able to say "I am the state," but rather on the rationality of those who were governed; and the liberal economist went on to develop further and articulate the collective rationality that the art of government was to be indexed upon: a collective rationality that came into being as the individual subjects to be governed followed their own specific rationality as agents employing the means they possessed in order to satisfy their own interests.⁷⁶ With liberalism, the principle of rationalization of the art of government was found in the knowledge of the rational behavior of those who were governed.⁷⁷ In this manner, the second decisive stage in the rationalization of the art of government made it clear that ultimately it proved impossible for the art of government to retain the bird's eye view of the sovereign and the ruler as well as the first person perspective of the one who governs and its unitary form. For its own good, the art of government needed to incorporate and respect the view of those governed: the collective rationality and naturalness resulting from a number of agents each adopting their own first person point of view. The art of government and the reason of state ought to begin to submit to the first person plural of those that it aimed to govern.

Already with the first stage in the rationalization of government, the reason of state opened a new kind of historicity. The obliging perspective of government having to govern and cope with an open-ended and merciless secular history challenged the idea of finding one's bearings and leading the flock ahead within the existing framework of a cosmo-theological world order. In the second stage of the rationalization of government, liberalism made it plain that a guiding principle for the series of forms of this never-ending history would be the logic that appears when the participants in this history each follow their individual interests blind to the over-all pattern and perspective of this history still coming into being. This idea of a global historicity arising in and through a motor that would be "the perfectly logical, decipherable, and identifiable form or series of forms arising from blind initiatives, egoistic interests, and calculations which individuals only ever see in terms of themselves," would become the "history of humanity in its globalizing effects," a globalizing history of humanity that would spread on a global scale.⁷⁸ At the end of the day, the idea of an ongoing, never-ending globalizing natural-history generated by an interaction rending and re-weaving the social tissue (and demanding new forms of government) replaces the idea of a fall from the original transparency of a state of nature,

⁷⁶ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 316/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 312.

⁷⁷ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 316/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 312.

⁷⁸ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 310/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 306; English translation corrected.

and the corresponding demand for the restoration of original nature, in the establishment of a just empire and at the end of time.

4.2. Freedom, dangerousity and security

Even though there was neither beginning nor end to this natural history constantly being generated and re-generated, it was nevertheless characterized by certain recurrent traits and dispositions. It was a natural history developing as a result of the complex interaction among its participants as they conducted themselves freely; and it was a natural history that would come into existence as a result of the interaction between people who were able to conduct themselves freely. As a consequence, the art of government, as it was carried into effect in a governmentality rationalized on the joint rationality of those governed, would not only – and not so much need to – become “the management of freedom” by contenting itself with presupposing the freedom of individuals and with calling upon and respecting individual rights in order to find its own bearings within the interplay resulting. More radically, governmental rationality, as it was rationalized in liberal thought, would need to become the management of freedom in the sense that it would have to continuously re-organize and manage “the conditions on which one can be free.”⁷⁹ Rather than just being able to rest upon the presupposition of the existence of freedom and of the right and the obligation to be free, the art of government would have to seek to produce, manage and take advantage of the exercise of freedom over and over again. As Foucault puts it:

Broadly speaking, in the liberal art of government, freedom of behavior is entailed, called for, needed and serves as a regulator, but it also has to be produced and organized. So freedom in the regime of liberalism is not a given, it is not a ready-made region which has to be respected, or if it is, it is so only partially, regionally in this or that case, etcetera. Freedom is something which is constantly produced. Liberalism is not acceptance of freedom; it proposes to manufacture it constantly, to arouse it and produce it, with, of course [the system of] constraints and the problems of cost raised by this production.⁸⁰

When having to produce, organize and manage freedom, however, the art of management will, according to Foucault, continuously and equally also have to consider, calculate and manage the cost of manufacturing freedom. *The cost of freedom is dangerousity, and the principle of calculation of this cost is what Foucault calls security.*⁸¹ The liberal art of government is constantly forced to determine:

The precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all. The problem of security is the protection of the collective interest against individual interests. Conversely, individual interests have to

⁷⁹ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 65/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 64.

⁸⁰ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 66/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 65.

⁸¹ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 66/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 65.

be protected against everything that could be seen as an encroachment of the collective interest.⁸²

In response to this challenge, the liberal art of government must develop strategies of security that ensure that the economic game is possible. Insofar as the development of the natural history that forms the necessary prerequisite for the liberal art of government rests on a widespread individualized ability in the population to take risks and live dangerously, the liberal art of government faces the task of facilitating and enhancing this ability. To solve this problem, “an entire education and culture of danger appears in the nineteenth century which is very different from those great apocalyptic threats of plague, death, and war which fed the political and cosmological imagination of the Middle Ages and even of the seventeenth century. The horsemen of the Apocalypse disappear; and in their place everyday danger appear, emerge, and spread everywhere, perpetually being brought to life, reactualized, and circulated by what would be called the political culture of danger in the nineteenth century.”⁸³ According to Foucault, early instances of this “stimulation of the fear of danger” and correlative attempts to soothe it can be found in campaigns for saving banks as a remedy to soothe the poverty of the lower classes at the start of the nineteenth century, as well as in the campaigns around disease and hygiene, but also in the campaigns against crime and concerning sexuality. He also stresses that “there is no liberalism without a culture of danger.”⁸⁴

Thus, an art of government concluding in a rationality of government based on the joint rationality of those who were governed had to face and come to terms with a natural history that was an antagonistic evolutionary history marked not only by freedom but also by security.

With liberalism, rationality of government not only becomes embedded in and committed to the necessity of a never-ending secular and merciless tragic history as it came to the fore with the reason of state; indeed, with liberal thought, the history of governmentality concludes in an unending historicity that is even one of an ongoing and still accentuated crisis. This experience of an ongoing crisis is closely related to the experience that the historicity that is generated as the participants each follow their own rationality, blind to the overall pattern, constantly upsets and undermines what seems to be the very conditions of possibility for this exchange, wherefore it constantly generates its own dangerosity that necessitates amendment and strategies of security. In this, the governmentality of liberalism takes the modern form of relentless tragic history, appearing in connection with the reason of state, to the next level. With liberalism, thus, a crisis takes a specific accentuated form that is not limited to the liberal art of government but has marked the modern form of government since it began to become perceptible with the reason of state, its police and management of the welfare of the population. Consequently,

⁸² *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 66/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 65.

⁸³ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 68/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 66.

⁸⁴ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 68/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 67.

this crisis should in retrospect be understood as “a crisis of the general apparatus of government.”⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 71/*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 70.

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ARTICLE

Anarcheology and the Emergence of the Alethurgic Subject in Foucault's *On the Government of the Living*

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ABSTRACT. *On the Government of the Living* plays a pivotal role in the evolution of Foucault's thought because it constitutes a "laboratory" in which he forges the methodological and conceptual tools—such as the notions of anarcheology and alethurgy (or, better, what I call here the "alethurgic subject")—necessary to carry on his study of governmentality independently from his *History of Sexuality* project. In this paper, I argue that Foucault's projects of an anarcheology of the government of human beings through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity and of a genealogy of the subject of desire, albeit essentially linked to one another, are conceptually autonomous. These projects are both part of a genealogy of the modern subject but should be treated independently insofar as it is the former, elaborated in *On the Government of the Living*, that provides us with the key to understanding Foucault's interest in the care of the self and *parrhesia* as an integral part of his analyses of governmentality and the critical attitude from the late 1970s.

Keywords: Avowal, Governmentality, History of Sexuality, Subjectivity, Truth

INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 2012, Michel Foucault's 1980 lecture course at the Collège de France, *On the Government of the Living*,¹ has attracted quite a lot of attention, mostly due to the widespread acknowledgement of the pivotal role it plays in the evolution of Foucault's thought.² Many scholars see in these lectures the beginning of the so-called "final

¹ Michel Foucault, *Du gouvernement des vivants: Cours au Collège de France (1979-1980)* (2012), hereafter abbreviated GV / *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980* (2014), hereafter abbreviated GL.

² As a consequence, the interest in these lectures has so far been largely limited to Foucauldian scholarship, with the exception of Foucault's analysis of the notion of "regimes of truth," which has attracted wider attention. See, e.g., Leonardo Rinaldi, "On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980 [Book Review]," *Social and Environmental Accountability Journal* 36:1 (2016). On this topic, see Daniele Lorenzini, "What is a 'Regime of Truth'?", *Le Foucauldien* 1:1 (2015).

Foucault,” as they contain the first, fully developed elaboration of “the third key dimension to Foucault’s work: namely, the dimension of subjectivity.”³

There is, however, an important interpretive question that has so far passed virtually unnoticed. As Michel Senellart rightly observed when editing these lectures,⁴ *GL* presents an extensive discussion of a series of early Christian authors (from Tertullian to Cassian) and of topics (from baptism and canonical penance to self-examination and exhaustive avowal) which, as we now know for certain, also constitute the backbone of Foucault’s arguments in the first chapter of the fourth volume of his *History of Sexuality, Les aveux de la chair*.⁵ Yet, sexuality or, better, the emergence of the “flesh” in early Christianity are virtually absent from *GL*, whose general framework is rather defined by the notion of the “government of human beings through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity” (*GV*, 79/*GL*, 80). The project of offering a genealogical—or “anarcheological” (*GV*, 77-78/*GL*, 79)—analysis of this notion, although connected to the main aim of the second, third, and fourth volumes of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, that is, retracing a genealogy of the “subject of desire,”⁶ is nevertheless clearly broader than the latter. How can we account for both the analogies and the differences between these two projects? Should we say that they are correlative, such that one can only be understood in light of the other, and vice versa? Or should we grant each of them a relative independence?

In this paper, I argue that these two projects, albeit essentially linked to one another in Foucault’s work, are—and should be treated as—conceptually autonomous. They are strictly connected because they both consist in exploring different ways in which the relations between subjectivity and truth have been conceived of in our society, and can therefore both be situated in the general framework of a “genealogy of the modern subject.”⁷ However, they should also each be treated independently insofar as it is the “anarcheological” study of the government of human beings through truth that provides us with the key to understanding Foucault’s interest in the care of the self and *parrhesia* as an integral part of (and not a rupture with) his analyses of “governmentality” and the “critical attitude” from the late 1970s.⁸ It is only by emphasizing this fundamental continuity that we can make sense of Foucault’s last three lecture courses at the Collège de France, as well as his project to publish, after *Les aveux de la chair*, a book on *The Government of Self and Others*, which was not part of the *History of Sexuality* series. Thus, if *GL* does play a pivotal role in the evolution of Foucault’s thought, I argue it is because it constitutes a “laboratory” in which Foucault elaborates the methodological and conceptual tools—such

³ Bernard E. Harcourt, “Introducing *On the Government of the Living*,” *Foucault 13/13*, 7 February 2016. See also Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, “On the Government of the Living [Book Review],” *The Review of Politics* 77:4 (2015), 683.

⁴ Michel Senellart, “Situation du cours,” in *GV*, 343-349 / “Course Context,” in *GL*, 342-345.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Les aveux de la chair: Histoire de la sexualité* 4 (2018).

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality* [1984] (1985), 5-6.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1980* (2015), 21.

⁸ On the continuity between Foucault’s definition of the critical attitude and his study of ancient *parrhesia*, see Sverre Raffnsøe, Morten S. Thaning, and Marius Gudmand-Høyer, “Philosophical Practice as Self-Modification: An Essay on Michel Foucault’s Critical Engagement with Philosophy,” *Foucault Studies* 25 (2018).

as the notions of anarcholeology and alethurgy (or, better, what I call the “alethurgic subject”)—necessary to carry on and develop, albeit in a modified form, his study of governmentality and the critical attitude *independently* from his *History of Sexuality* project.

TWO METHODOLOGICAL SHIFTS

One of the most commonly held views about *GL* is that it marks the beginning of the last “phase” (the “ethical phase”) of Foucault’s intellectual career insofar as it introduces the third, crucial dimension of his work: in addition to knowledge and power, Foucault is now also interested in the subject. Yet, as Bernard Harcourt rightly argues, this does not mean that the problematic of the subject was absent from Foucault’s previous work. The suggestion is rather that this problematic now takes “central stage” as “a way to elaborate a three-dimensional theory of knowledge-power-subjectivity in furtherance of an overall ‘history of truth.’”⁹ This claim still stands in need of some clarification, however, because the emergence of the subject as a fundamental dimension of Foucault’s work is presented, in *GL*, as a consequence of two major methodological shifts: from the notion of power to the notion of government, and from the notion of knowledge (*savoir*) to the problem of truth.¹⁰

On the one hand, Foucault argues that he already accomplished the first of these shifts at the end of the 1970s in *Security, Territory, Population*¹¹ and *The Birth of Biopolitics*,¹² where he elaborated the notion of power in the direction of government understood “in the broad sense [...] of mechanisms and procedures intended to conduct human beings, to direct their conduct, to conduct their conduct” (*GV*, 14/*GL*, 12).¹³ It is important to emphasize here that, far from marking a radical rupture with his previous analyses of disciplinary and biopolitical power,¹⁴ the notion of government constitutes for Foucault a way to clarify and develop them. It also allows him to implicitly respond to a well-known objection: in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault famously claims that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”¹⁵ If this is true, however—so the objection goes—is resistance not ultimately pointless, insofar as we are always “trapped” in a net of power relations? It is precisely in order to answer this objection that Foucault elaborates the notion of “governmentality,”¹⁶ thus inaugurating the project of a genealogy of the

⁹ Harcourt, “Introducing *On the Government of the Living*.”

¹⁰ For a critical discussion of these two shifts, see Jean L. Cohen, “Reflections by Jean L. Cohen,” *Foucault* 13/13, 7 February 2016.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (2007).

¹² Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (2008).

¹³ On this point, see also the two previous articles in this special issue on *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

¹⁴ The topic of the government of human beings and the notion of an “art of governing” had already been introduced by Foucault in 1975, precisely in the context of an analysis of disciplinary power and its normalizing function. See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* (2003), 48-49.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* [1976] (1978), 95.

¹⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108-110.

government of human beings which will lead him, from the study of the *raison d'État* and the liberal and neoliberal arts of government between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries, to go back not only to Medieval “pastoral power” and “counter-conducts”¹⁷ but also to early Christianity and Greco-Roman antiquity. But how exactly does the notion of governmentality allow Foucault to respond to the aforementioned objection?

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault addresses the threefold meaning of the concept of “conduct,” which he takes to be coextensive with that of government: (1) one conducts or governs someone else; conversely, (2) one is conducted or governed by someone else; but (3) one also conducts or governs *oneself*.¹⁸ The domain of “ethics,” as Foucault defines it (that is, as the elaboration of a certain relationship to oneself), is inaugurated in this moment.¹⁹ Two years later, in his lectures at Dartmouth College, Foucault argues:

The contact point, where the way individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think, government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.²⁰

The analytic of power relations developed in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, among others, now appears to Foucault to be too narrowly focused on (disciplinary and biopolitical) “techniques of domination,” as if government could be *reduced* to the operations of conducting the conduct of *others*. This risks suggesting that power is nothing but “pure violence or strict coercion,” whereas Foucault thinks that it consists in “complex relations,” and that “these relations involve a set of rational techniques” whose efficiency “is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies.”²¹ Thus, the problem that Foucault was facing in 1976—how can resistance be possible if it is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power?—now appears to be misplaced. The dimension of “government” encompasses *both* techniques of domination and techniques of the self, emphasizing their contact point and the specific ways in which techniques aimed at conducting others and techniques aimed at conducting oneself *interact*. The issue is therefore no longer “how to resist power” but “how to be governed *otherwise*,” that is, how to *transform* the interplay between—and the respective strategic importance of—techniques of coercion and techniques of the self in any given situation, in order to counteract the effects of domination as much as possible.²²

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 163-226.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁹ On this topic, see Arnold I. Davidson, “In Praise of Counter-Conduct,” *History of the Human Sciences* 24:4 (2011).

²⁰ Foucault, *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, 25-26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²² See Foucault’s definition of critique as “the art of not being governed quite so much” in Michel Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que la critique?” [1978], in *Qu’est-ce que la critique? suivi de La culture de soi*, ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (2015), 37. On this topic, see also Daniele Lorenzini, “From Counter-

On the other hand, however, this shift from power to government is not enough. In *GL*, Foucault claims that it has to be complemented with a second shift—from the notion of knowledge (*savoir*) to the problem of truth (*GV*, 14/*GL*, 12). What does he mean by this? Even though it is not immediately clear, I think that Foucault wants to emphasize that the procedures through which truth is obtained and manifested—what he calls “alethurgy,” that is, “the manifestation of truth as the set of possible verbal or non-verbal procedures by which one brings to light what is laid down as true as opposed to false, hidden, inexpressible, unforeseeable, or forgotten” (*GV*, 8/*GL*, 7)—are far more numerous and multifaceted than we usually concede. This is a point that Foucault already makes in his lectures at the Collège de France on *Psychiatric Power*, where he traces a “little history of truth in general” aiming to show that “truth-demonstration,” that is, scientific or “objective” knowledge, is just one of the many ways in which truth can be obtained and manifested.²³ Truth-demonstration is but one of the possible forms taken by truth, provided that we define truth as an “event”:

I would like [...], on the one hand, to show how this truth-demonstration, broadly identified in its technology with scientific practice, the present day extent, force and power of which there is absolutely no point in denying, derives in reality from the truth-ritual, truth-event, truth-strategy, and how truth-knowledge is basically only a region and an aspect, albeit one that has become superabundant and assumed gigantic dimensions, but still an aspect or a modality of truth as event and of the technology of this truth-event.²⁴

Utilizing the notion of alethurgy instead of that of truth-event, Foucault makes exactly the same point at the beginning of *GL*: “What we call knowledge (*connaissance*), that is to say, the production of truth in the consciousness of individuals by logico-experimental procedures, is only one of the possible forms of alethurgy” (*GV*, 8-9/*GL*, 7). The manifestation of truth “is much more than making known (*donner à connaître*)” (*GV*, 73/*GL*, 75). Thus, even though Foucault does not explicitly acknowledge it, it is clear that, as in the case of the shift from power to government, the shift from knowledge to truth is a way to clarify and widen the scope of his previous analyses rather than to mark a radical break with them. The crucial methodological principle that Foucault formulates in *GL*—one that underpins most of his work in the 1980s—is that human beings cannot be governed “without carrying out operations in the domain of truth, and operations that are always in excess of what is useful and necessary to govern in an effective way” (*GV*, 18/*GL*, 17). The relations between government and truth are therefore much older, and much deeper, than the focus on the modern link between “an art of government and, let’s say, political, economic, and social rationality” may lead us to think (*GV*, 18/*GL*, 17). Foucault’s genealogy of the government of human beings relies precisely on the postulate that *no* government—*no* “hegemony”—is possible without alethurgy, that is, without a manifestation of truth

Conduct to Critical Attitude: Michel Foucault and the Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much,” *Foucault Studies* 21 (2016).

²³ Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974* (2006), 235-236.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 238.

that cannot be reduced to a series of rational or objective instances of knowledge (GV, 8-9/GL, 7). Thus, if it is true that, in *GL*, the subject emerges as a third, fundamental dimension of Foucault's work, it does so within a transformed framework that should more precisely be described as a *three-dimensional genealogical exploration of truth-government-subjectivity*.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ALETHURGIC SUBJECT

The dimension of subjectivity is introduced in *GL* by way of Foucault's claim that the form of government of human beings which has historically characterized our society relies on a specific form of alethurgy: "the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity" (GV, 79/GL, 80). Thus, as Foucault clearly argues, "it is this whole history of the relations between *autos* [the first person, the 'I' —DL] and alethurgy, between the myself and truth-telling that interests me in the history of the truth in the West" (GV, 49/GL, 50). "Government" requires "a truth that manifests itself, at least in certain of its points, but absolutely indispensably, in the form of subjectivity" (GV, 73/GL, 74-75). Therefore, it is *as a consequence* of the two aforementioned methodological shifts, and more specifically of the second one, that the theme of subjectivity takes central stage in the work of the "final Foucault," and not vice versa.

This is particularly evident in the way in which Foucault (re)defines the notion of "regime of truth" in *GL*. When he first introduces this notion in the mid-1970s, he justifies it on the basis of the essential link he establishes between power and knowledge: truth, he argues, is connected "by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it."²⁵ A regime of truth is the strategic field within which truth is produced and becomes a tactical element for the functioning of power relations in any given society. However, since Foucault moves away from the power-knowledge framework in *GL*, he also modifies his definition of a regime of truth. Given that he now wants to focus on the relations between government and alethurgy, and notably alethurgy in the form of subjectivity, Foucault redefines a regime of truth as "that which determines the obligations of individuals with regard to the procedures of manifestation of truth" (GV, 91/GL, 93). This new definition, unsurprisingly, revolves around the role of individuals in the alethurgic procedures, thus situating the subject at the very core of the governmental mechanisms that Foucault wants to study.

In the concluding remarks of the last lecture of *GL*, Foucault claims that his analysis of the Christian practices of baptism, penance, and spiritual direction (*direction de conscience*) provides us with a genealogy of the techniques utilized in our society in order to establish "a relationship between subjectivity and truth," that is, to link "the obligation of truth and subjectivity" in increasingly complex and tight ways (GV, 305/GL, 311). In particular, the obligation to avow, to tell the truth about oneself, which defines Christian *exagoreusis*, constitutes an injunction that, according to Foucault, has never ceased to characterize our society as a whole: "We are obliged to speak of ourselves in order to tell the truth of

²⁵ Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual" [1976], *Radical Philosophy* 17 (1977), 14.

ourselves" (GV, 305/GL, 311). In other words, one of the main alethurgic forms that characterizes the "Western" regime of truth requires the subject to perpetually put herself—her thoughts, her desires, her fears, etc.—into discourse, and the establishment of this linkage between subjectivity and truth turns out to be essential for the existence and functioning of a specific kind of government of human beings. It is, Foucault concludes, "one of the basic forms of our obedience" (GV, 307/GL, 313).

The crucial role that avowal plays in the history of our society, as well as in the development of their power-knowledge apparatuses, is of course already a major theme of Foucault's work in the 1970s.²⁶ Two moments deserve to be emphasized here. First, avowal and the transformation of the "Western" subject into a "confessing animal" are central to Foucault's project of tracing a history of sexuality from the very beginning.²⁷ As he argues in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, it is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, "demands" only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weights it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation. Confession frees, power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy, which a "political history of truth" would have to overturn by showing that truth is not by nature free—nor error servile—but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this.²⁸

Here, Foucault is mostly concerned with rejecting the "repressive hypothesis" by showing that sexuality is not something that has been reduced to silence but something that we have never ceased to talk about.²⁹ However, in the series of lectures on the history of sexuality that he gave at the University of São Paulo in the fall of 1975, Foucault more intriguingly claims that his interest in the techniques of "sexual avowal" derives from the fact

²⁶ Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (2016), 71-78, 112-133.

²⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 59. See also Foucault, *Abnormal*, 167-194, as well as the lecture course delivered at the University of São Paulo in the fall of 1975: Michel Foucault, "Cours de São Paulo" [1975], Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Michel Foucault (NAF 28730), box no. 56; to be published in *La généalogie du savoir moderne sur la sexualité* [working title], ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (in preparation). In São Paulo, Foucault claims that his aim is to trace the "genealogy of *scientia sexualis*, that is to say, the analysis of the Western discourse on sexual pleasure based on the obligation to avow it"—a project that he also refers to in terms of an "archeology of avowal."

²⁸ *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 60.

²⁹ In an unpublished manuscript, most likely from 1976, Foucault argues that, in order to get rid of the "repressive schema," we must be at the same time a bit of a sophist (since "the sophists are those who, against Plato and Socrates, asserted the entanglement of power and knowledge relations"), a bit of a Machiavelli (since "Machiavelli, against the emerging juridism, analyzed power as an exercise and calculation of force relations"), and a bit of a Nietzsche (since "Nietzsche traced the twin and reciprocal genealogies of the will to truth and the will to power"). See Michel Foucault, "La notion de repression," Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Michel Foucault (NAF 28730), box "Cours 1975-1976, 'Il faut défendre la société'"; to be published in *La généalogie du savoir moderne sur la sexualité*.

that they entail a form of “individualization” that is different from the disciplinary one. While the latter takes the form of an “inspection” (“a power which is mute, external, classifying, and operating on multiplicities”), the individualization put in the service of the “control of sexuality” is “exegetical, interpretative, discursive,” and it gives rise to what Foucault calls “hermeneutic individuality” — whose emergence he still traces to the modern period, that is, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁰ One could therefore legitimately argue that Foucault’s interest in the genealogy of avowal originates in his project of a history of sexuality and is thus linked to the power-knowledge framework that also characterizes his 1976 definition of a regime of truth.³¹

Yet, with the redefinition of this conceptual framework in terms of a study of the government of human beings through truth, Foucault’s genealogical analysis of the practice of avowal takes on a new and broader meaning — as it is already clear in *Security, Territory, Population*. This is the second moment that I would like to emphasize. When analyzing the Christian pastorate in *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault discusses the Christian practice of spiritual direction, opposing it to the Greco-Roman one: while the latter aims to create an autonomous subject who no longer needs to be directed by someone else, the Christian practice of spiritual direction relies on a form of absolute obedience to the other and entails “a mode of individualization that not only does not take place by way of affirmation of the self, but one that entails destruction of the self.”³² Such mode of individualization thus creates a subjugated subject (*sujet assujetti*), and does so precisely through “the production of an internal, secret, and hidden truth” that the individual must verbalize permanently as it constitutes “the element through which the pastor’s power is exercised.”³³

As these ideas will be taken up again and elaborated in more detail in *GL*,³⁴ there is an undeniable continuity between Foucault’s reflections on the avowal-individualization link in the 1970s and his analyses of the alethurgy-government-subjectivity link in the 1980s.³⁵ In his texts and lectures from the 1970s, however, Foucault’s attention is still focused *exclusively* on the production of a truth about oneself as a means that allows for a certain kind of power to be exercised — as a tool utilized in order to control the subject and make her more obedient. By contrast, the methodological and conceptual shifts that take place in *GL* open up to Foucault the possibility of conceiving of *different* kinds of relation between truth-telling about oneself and the government of human beings — as his study of the Greco-Roman care of the self and ancient *parrhesia* clearly shows. Foucault’s aim is now to draw an outline for a history of truth

³⁰ Foucault, “Cours de São Paulo.”

³¹ See, e.g., Sophie Fuggle, “Review of Michel Foucault’s *On the Government of the Living*,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 August 2015.

³² *Security, Territory, Population*, 180.

³³ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

³⁴ See, e.g., *GV*, 156-158, 224-241, 264-269, 283-284, 298-303/*GL*, 159-161, 229-246, 270-275, 288-289, 304-309.

³⁵ On the important role that avowal plays in Foucault’s genealogy of liberal and neoliberal governmentality, see Gordon Hull, “Confessing Preferences: What Foucault’s *Government of the Living* Can Tell Us about Neoliberalism and Big Data,” *SSRN*, 19 December 2016.

from the point of view of acts of subjectivity, or of the subject's relationship to himself, understood not only as a relationship of self-knowledge, but as a relationship of exercise of self on self, elaboration of self by self, transformation of self by self, that is to say, the relations between the truth and what we call spirituality, or again: truth act and ascesis, truth act and experience in the full and strong sense of the term, that is to say, experience as that which qualifies the subject, enlightens it about itself and about the world and, at the same time, transforms it. (*GV*, 111-112/*GL*, 115)

Thus, whereas the power-knowledge framework only allowed Foucault to interpret the production of a "true" discourse about oneself as a coercive mechanism aiming to obtain obedience and submission, the new methodological and conceptual framework he inaugurates in *GL* allows him to realize that some practices of truth-telling, far from producing subjection, can be interpreted as instances of the "critical attitude" — a notion that, already in 1978, Foucault defines in relation to the three dimensions of truth, power, and the subject.³⁶ Indeed, it is this same framework that Foucault utilizes at the beginning of his 1982 lecture course at the Collège de France, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, when he distinguishes "philosophy" from "spirituality," and links his analysis of the Greco-Roman care of the self to the latter.³⁷ Analogously, in 1983, Foucault claims *both* that what is at stake in his study of the evolution of *parrhesia* from its "democratic" form to the emergence of "the theme of the prince's advisor" is "the genealogy of the art of governing,"³⁸ *and* that his overarching aim in exploring the ancient notion of *parrhesia* is "to outline the genealogy of what we could call the critical attitude in our society."³⁹ Of course, we can only make sense of these claims in light of the methodological shifts that took place in *GL*, opening up to Foucault the possibility of simultaneously addressing the government of others and the government of oneself. At the same time, the critical attitude is here no longer defined in purely negative or "reactive" terms — that is, as a *counter-conduct* or the art of *not* being governed *like that* — but acquires a positive, "active" meaning. The *parrhesiast*, for instance, is someone who actively governs herself in a certain way, shaping her *bios* so that she is capable of telling uncomfortable truths to others, thus exerting a critical function — in short, someone for whom critique really becomes a "virtue."⁴⁰

Consequently, the dimension of subjectivity is not just "added" by Foucault to the previous power-knowledge pair. To be exact, the subject *already* constitutes a fundamental dimension of Foucault's work in the 1970s, defining a three-dimensional approach of knowledge-power-subjectivity which, however, turned out to be not entirely satisfactory. What emerges in *GL* through the double methodological shift from the notion of knowledge to the problem of truth, and from the issue of power to the question of government, is thus — I argue — not simply *the* dimension of subjectivity but a *specific form* of

³⁶ Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 37, 39.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982* (2005), 15-16.

³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983* (2010), 197, footnote *.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth* [1983] (2019), 63.

⁴⁰ "Qu'est-ce que la critique?," 35. On this topic, see Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih and Judith Butler (2004).

subjectivity. The subject, in the work of the “final Foucault,” is no longer just an *effect* of the interplay between power mechanisms and knowledge procedures but the support (and the “battlefield”) that *makes possible* the operations of “government through truth” in all of its dimensions: to govern someone else, to be governed by someone else, and to govern oneself. Therefore, it is only starting from *GL* that the subject acquires the *conceptual autonomy* it never had in Foucault’s previous works. At the same time, the subject does not emerge in *GL* as a general or universal concept but as a very *specific* entity: an entity who is capable of governing itself and being governed by others through specific alethurgic strategies.

What is the relationship between the fact of being subject in a relation of power and a subject through which, for which, and regarding which the truth is manifested? What is this double sense of the word “subject,” subject in a relation of power, subject in a manifestation of truth? (*GV*, 79/*GL*, 81)

The subject that lies at the heart of the work of the “final Foucault,” from his analysis of the early Christian practice of avowal to his study of the Greco-Roman techniques of the self, is thus what I would call an “alethurgic subject.” This alethurgic subject is the correlate of the problem of the government (of self and others) through truth as Foucault first formulates it in *GL*.

THE ANARCHEOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

The guiding hypothesis that underpins most of Foucault’s work from 1980 to 1984 can be summarized in the claim that our society, in the course of its millennial history, has organized a complex system of relations between the government of human beings, the manifestation of the truth in the form of subjectivity, and the promise of “salvation” for each and all. But why is it that “power cannot be exercised without truth having to manifest itself [...] in the form of subjectivity,” and without “an expectation of effects of this manifestation of the truth in the form of subjectivity that go beyond the realm of knowledge, effects that belong to the realm of the salvation and deliverance of each and all” (*GV*, 73-74/*GL*, 75)?

To respond to this question, unsurprisingly, Foucault refuses to develop an analysis in terms of ideology. Thus, instead of addressing Christianity—and the elaboration, by the Church Fathers, of a series of “truth obligations”—from the point of view of ideology, Foucault claims that he wants to study Christianity as a “regime of truth” (*GV*, 91/*GL*, 93). This means that he does not want to argue that “inasmuch as human beings worry more about salvation in the other world than about what happens down here, inasmuch as they want to be saved, they remain quiet and peaceful and it is easier to govern them” (*GV*, 74/*GL*, 75). By contrast, Foucault’s aim is to develop what he calls an “(an)archeology of knowledge,” focusing on “the types of relations that link together manifestations of truth with their procedures and the subjects who are their operators, witnesses, or possibly objects”—a type of analysis, in other words, which refuses to establish a clear-cut division

between “scientific” knowledge and “ideologies” (GV, 97-98/GL, 100). Science, Foucault argues, is but a regime of truth among many others.

Is Foucault suggesting that science and religion are at bottom the same thing, that it does not matter whether we base our beliefs on one or the other? This is not exactly Foucault’s point. The point is rather that an analysis in terms of regimes of truth allows us to emphasize that *both* Christianity and modern science are characterized by specific ways “of linking the manifestation of truth and the subject who carries it out” (GV, 98/GL, 100), and that in *both* cases, albeit of course in different forms, this link functions as a fundamental support for operations in the domain of the government of human beings. In short, Foucault wants us to take *seriously* the early Christian texts that he discusses and not to dismiss them as “ideology” by opposing them to “true” (scientific) knowledge. Foucault’s anarcheological investigation aims precisely to study the multiple ways in which people have been and still are governed through truth, that is, the different ways in which they have accepted and still accept that a given set of truths—religious, cultural, scientific, medical, etc.—exert on them a certain “force” capable of conducting their conduct:

This type of history will not therefore be devoted to the way in which truth succeeds in tearing itself from the false and breaking all the ties in which it is held, but will be devoted [...] to the force of truth and to the ties by which human beings have gradually bound themselves in and through the manifestation of truth. Basically, what I would like to do [...] is write a history of the force of truth, a history of the power of the truth, a history, therefore, to take the same idea from a different angle, of the will to know. (GV, 98-99/GL, 101)

It seems to me that scholars have generally failed to notice that this methodological perspective builds on the ideas that Foucault already developed in “What is Critique?": the anarcheology of knowledge is not a theory but the instantiation of an “attitude”⁴¹ relying on the claim that “no power, of whatever kind, is obvious or inevitable,” that no power has any “intrinsic legitimacy” (GV, 76/GL, 77-78). Foucault’s methodological standpoint here is thus not merely descriptive but is predicated upon a *critical attitude* defined by “the movement of freeing oneself from power,” of wanting to be governed otherwise, rather than by a decision about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a given form of power resting on a “critique of representations in terms of truth or error, truth or falsity, ideology or science” (GV, 76/GL, 77). It is an *anarcheology*, then, not because it relies on the “anarchic” postulate that power is intrinsically bad and that we should therefore strive to obtain a society without power relations (Foucault rejects both of these ideas) but because it shares with anarchy—and with Paul Feyerabend’s anarchist epistemology⁴²—a theoretical-practical attitude based on “the non-acceptability of power” and the questioning of “all the ways in which power is in actual fact accepted” (GV, 76-77/GL, 78). In other words, even though Foucault does not think that power is *bad* in itself, he does believe that it is always

⁴¹ Unfortunately, the English translation here reads “standpoint” instead of “attitude” (GV, 76/GL, 77), thus obscuring the obvious connection with the notion of “critical attitude” that Foucault coined two years earlier in “What is Critique?”.

⁴² Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* (1975).

possible to criticize a given form or exercise of power, and always legitimate to ask if it would be better to be governed otherwise. Consequently, Foucault's anarcheology of the government of human beings through truth is essentially defined by "a theoretical-practical attitude concerning the non-necessity of all power" (GV, 77/GL, 78).

Although Foucault never utilizes the term in *GL*, and *contra* Jeremy Carrette,⁴³ it is clear that this historical investigation is also a form of genealogy.⁴⁴ Indeed, if it is true that Foucault's initial definitions of archeology and genealogy tend to link the former to discursive practices and the latter to systems of power-knowledge, in the last years of his life Foucault nevertheless refers to—and redefines—archeology and genealogy as two complementary (and not mutually exclusive) aspects of his work, often blurring the clear-cut distinction between them.⁴⁵ In April 1983, for instance, Foucault describes *all* of his (past and current) work in terms of genealogy, making clear that "genealogy" no longer applies exclusively to the field of power-knowledge:

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.⁴⁶

Thus, we can say that in *GL* too Foucault is tracing a *genealogy* of the relations between the government of human beings and alethurgy in the form of subjectivity—one that, more explicitly than ever before, relies on the critical postulate of the non-necessity of all power. If it is true that Foucault's genealogies of power-knowledge mechanisms are always also genealogies of the critical attitude,⁴⁷ it is only in *GL* that he explicitly situates, at the core of his methodology, the critical attitude as a theoretical-practical principle.

CONCLUSION

At first, it is of course puzzling that the notions of alethurgy, regime of truth, and anarcheology—the main conceptual and methodological innovations of *GL*⁴⁸—do not play any role whatsoever in the second, third, and fourth volumes of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.

⁴³ See Jeremy Carrette, "'Spiritual Gymnastics': Reflections on Michel Foucault's *On the Government of the Living* 1980 Collège de France Lectures," *Foucault Studies* 20 (2015), who argues that, in *GL*, "Foucault consciously moves back to the methods of archeology, to a discursive mode rather than continuing the genealogical—body and pastoral power—question in relation to Christianity" (281).

⁴⁴ As rightly emphasized, e.g., by Jean-Michel Landry, "Confession, Obedience, and Subjectivity: Michel Foucault's Unpublished Lectures *On the Government of the Living*," *Telos* 146 (2009). For some important remarks on the kind of genealogy that Foucault practices in *GL*, see Colin Gordon, "The Christian Art of Being Governed," *Foucault Studies* 20 (2015), 256-257.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984), 46.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" [1983], in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1997), 262.

⁴⁷ On this point, see Daniele Lorenzini, "On Possibilising Genealogy," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 9 January 2020.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Greg Hollin, "To Obey and to Tell," *History of the Human Sciences* 29:1 (2016).

It is a fact, however, that the methodological and conceptual architecture underpinning Foucault's in-depth analysis of a series of early Christian authors (from Tertullian to Cassian) and practices (from baptism to penance and spiritual direction) in *GL* is nowhere to be found in the pages devoted to these same authors and topics in *Les aveux de la chair*. We know that Foucault wrote the final draft of the book between 1981 and 1982, and sent it to Gallimard in the fall of 1982. Should we simply conclude that, in the span of a couple of years, Foucault changed his mind? Should we argue that, in *GL* as in so many other of his Collège de France lecture courses, Foucault was just "experimenting," and that the form that these analyses end up taking in *Les aveux de la chair* deserves to be considered as the "correct" one? Should we, as a consequence, dismiss *GL* as a more or less failed experiment, and only care about *Les aveux de la chair*?

I think that the answer to all these questions is no. Of course, I do not want to deny that Foucault, in his lectures at the Collège de France, often experiments with new ideas and concepts that he later decides to abandon. As he explains in *GL*, theoretical work for him "does not consist in establishing and fixing the set of positions on which [one] would stand and the supposedly coherent link between which would form a system," but rather in "leaving the trace, in the most intelligible outline possible, of the movements by which [one is] no longer at the place where [one was] earlier" (*GV*, 74-75/*GL*, 76). This systematic refusal of a fixed methodological and conceptual structure defining his work, this need to continually transform his own theoretical positions, certainly characterizes Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, but also more generally his books and other writings. It would therefore not be a "scandal" if Foucault just changed his mind between 1980 and 1982.

However, it seems safe to claim that this is not what happened. The continuities that I emphasized between *GL* and Foucault's study of the Greco-Roman care of the self and ancient *parrhesia* between 1982 and 1984, and the fact that Foucault already presents the main ideas of *Les aveux de la chair* (but without the methodological and conceptual apparatus of *GL*) in a seminar at the New York Institute for the Humanities in the fall of 1980,⁴⁹ clearly suggest that we should consider *Les aveux de la chair* and *GL* as parts of two different, conceptually autonomous, research projects. On the one hand, we have the project of a history of sexuality, which now consists in a genealogy of the subject of desire that goes back not only to the emergence of the flesh in early Christianity⁵⁰ but also to Greco-Roman *aphrodisia*—instead of just focusing on the Middle Ages, as it was the case in the manuscript of *La chair et le corps*.⁵¹ On the other hand, we have the project of an anarcho-genealogical investigation of the government of self and others through truth, which Foucault had in a sense already inaugurated in 1978 with his analyses of governmentality and the

⁴⁹ See Michel Foucault, "Séminaire au New York Institute for the Humanities" [1980], Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Michel Foucault (NAF 28730), box no. 40; to be published in *La généalogie du savoir moderne sur la sexualité*.

⁵⁰ Whereas, in the mid-1970s, Foucault still linked the "birth of the flesh" to the post-Tridentine Christian pastorate of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See "Cours de São Paulo."

⁵¹ See Michel Foucault, "La chair et le corps," Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Michel Foucault (NAF 28730), boxes no. 87-89.

critical attitude, but which—in an analogous fashion—no longer just focuses on Medieval pastoral power and counter-conducts but goes back to the complex interplay between (alethurgic) techniques of coercion and of the self in early Christianity and Greco-Roman antiquity. This project connects *GL* to the last three lecture courses at the Collège de France, but it is also crucial to understand some of the main lecture cycles that Foucault delivers in the 1980s outside of France—from *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self* and *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*⁵² to *Speaking the Truth about Oneself*,⁵³ *Technologies of the Self*,⁵⁴ and *Discourse and Truth*. And we now know that Foucault was collecting materials precisely from these lectures in view of the publication of a monograph, *The Government of Self and Others*, which he was planning on publishing with Seuil, independently from the *History of Sexuality* series.⁵⁵

Thus, if Senellart is certainly right in claiming that *GL* is “the first course for a long time in which the material is inscribed within the perspective of a future book,” although “nothing in the general organization of the course gave the least indication to his audience of this connection between the oral teaching and the resumption of the project of the *History of Sexuality*,”⁵⁶ we should be very cautious and *avoid* concluding that, “although the vocabulary of sexuality—desire, libido, flesh, concupiscence, etcetera—does not appear at any point in the course, it is quite clearly inscribed in the framework of the general problematic of *Les aveux de la chair*.”⁵⁷ In a book chapter published in 2013, Senellart even more strongly argues that Foucault’s analyses in *GL* “do not only overlap, by certain themes, with the domain of the history of sexuality,” but “constitute an essential part of this history and must therefore be read in light of the general project outlined in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* and reoriented in *Les aveux de la chair*.”⁵⁸

As I hope to have shown in this paper, this is not quite right: instead of reading *GL* in light of *Les aveux de la chair*, we should consider them as parts of two different—and relatively independent⁵⁹—projects. It may even be possible to completely *reverse* Senellart’s conclusion and interpret (at least some aspects of) the second, third, and fourth volumes of the *History of Sexuality* in light of the project of an anarcheo-genealogical investigation of the government of self and others through truth as defined in *GL*.⁶⁰ After all, in the fall

⁵² Michel Foucault, *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice* [1981] (2014).

⁵³ Michel Foucault, *Dire vrai sur soi-même: Conférences prononcées à l’Université Victoria de Toronto, 1982* (2017).

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* [1982] (1988).

⁵⁵ See Michel Foucault, “Le gouvernement de soi et des autres,” Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Michel Foucault (NAF 28730), boxes no. 72-74. On this point, see Elden, *Foucault’s Last Decade*, 162-163.

⁵⁶ Senellart, “Situation du cours,” 335 / “Course Context,” 336.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 348 / 344.

⁵⁸ Michel Senellart, “Le cours *Du gouvernement des vivants* dans la perspective de *l’Histoire de la sexualité*,” in *Michel Foucault: Éthique et vérité (1980-1984)*, ed. Daniele Lorenzini, Ariane Revel, and Arianna Sforzini (2013), 32.

⁵⁹ Of course, these two projects are not entirely unconnected, as they both explore the multiple forms taken by the relation between subjectivity and truth in the history of our society, thus jointly contributing to tracing the genealogy of the modern subject.

⁶⁰ For two attempts in this direction, see Daniele Lorenzini, “The Emergence of Desire: Notes Toward a Political History of the Will,” *Critical Inquiry* 45:2 (2019), 465-470 and Bernard E. Harcourt, “Foucault’s

of 1980, Foucault himself claims that he would like “in years to come to study government—especially in the field of sexuality—starting from the techniques of the self.”⁶¹

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⁶¹ *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, 26 (emphasis added).

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