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GOVERNMENTALITY

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■ **Abstract** This review surveys the development of Michel Foucault's analysis of political power in terms of governmentality and outlines its key characteristics. It examines the spread of this perspective, focusing in particular on how this genealogical approach to the analysis of the conduct of each and of all has been taken up and developed in the English-speaking world. It evaluates some of the key criticisms that have been made of the analytics of governmentality and argues for the continuing productivity and creativity of these ways of analyzing the emergence, nature, and consequences of the arts of government.

INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault introduced the term governmentality in the 1970s in the course of his investigations of political power. Government, as he put it in the summary of his 1977--1978 course entitled "Security, Territory and Population," was "an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (Foucault 1997, p. 68). Or, as he put it a couple of years later summarizing the 1979--1980 course "On the Government of the Living," governmentality was "understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior.

Government of children, government of souls and consciences, government of a household, of a state, or of oneself” (Foucault 1997, p. 82). In these lectures, together with those of 1978--1979 on “The Birth of Biopolitics” (see Foucault 1997, p. 73ff), his work with fellow researchers at the Collège de France such as François Delaporte, François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, Pasquale Pasquino, and his seminars and lectures in the United States, he proposed a particular approach to the analysis of successive formulations of these arts of governing.

One of the first illustrations of this approach was his analysis, in the lectures of 1977--1978, of the emergence in the first half of the eighteenth century of the idea of reason of state (in Foucault 1997, p. 67ff). Reason of state, he suggested, displaces an earlier art of governing whose principles were borrowed from traditional virtues, “wisdom, justice, liberality, respect for divine laws and human customs,” or from common abilities, such as “prudence, thoughtful decisions, taking care to surround oneself with the best adviser.” This gives way to an art of governing that assigned priority to all that could strengthen that state and its power and that sought to intervene into and manage the habits and activities of subjects to achieve that end. In these lectures and seminars, Foucault traced a movement from such doctrines of reason of state, through those of *Polizeiwissenschaft*, or police science, through to a form of reason that took as its particular object the political problem of population. In the mid-eighteenth century, he suggests, one sees the emergence of a novel idea, that of humans as forming a kind of natural collectivity of living beings. This population has its own characteristics that are not the same as those that shape individual wills. Thus, populations had to be understood by means of specific knowledges and to be governed through techniques that are attuned to these emergent understandings.

THE ART OF GOVERNMENT

In part at least, Foucault’s concern was to understand the birth of liberalism. This he understood not as a theory or ideology but as a political rationality, a way of doing things that was oriented to specific objectives and that reflected on itself in characteristic ways. Liberalism differs from reason of state in that it starts from the

assumption that human behavior should be governed, not solely in the interests of strengthening the state, but in the interests of society understood as a realm external to the state. In liberalism, he suggests, one can observe the emergence of the distinction between state and society (Foucault 1997, pp. 74--75). In the course of an analysis that moves from the classical liberalism of the nineteenth century to German liberalism in the decades after World War II and the Chicago School liberalism of the 1970s, Foucault suggests that liberalism is not so much a substantive doctrine of how to govern. Rather, it is an art of governing that arises as a critique of excessive government---a search for a technology of government that can address the recurrent complaint that authorities are governing too much.

We return to liberalism later. For the present, however, we use these short examples to emphasize the novelty of this perspective on political power. This perspective views such power as always operating in terms of specific rationalizations and directed toward certain ends that arise within them. An analysis of governmentalities then, is one that seeks to identify these different styles of thought, their conditions of formation, the principles and knowledges that they borrow from and generate, the practices that they consist of, how they are carried out, their contestations and alliances with other arts of governing. From such a perspective, it becomes apparent that each formulation of an art of governing embodies, explicitly or implicitly, an answer to the following questions: Who or what is to be governed? Why should they be governed? How should they be governed? To what ends should they be governed? Thus, the governed are, variously, members of a flock to be nurtured or culled, juridical subjects whose conduct is to be limited by law, individuals to be disciplined, or, indeed, people to be freed.

Further, instead of seeing any single body---such as the state---as responsible for managing the conduct of citizens, this perspective recognizes that a whole variety of authorities govern in different sites, in relation to different objectives. Hence, a second set of questions emerges: Who governs what? According to what logics? With what techniques? Toward what ends? As an analytical perspective, then, governmentality is far from a theory of power, authority, or even of governance.

Rather, it asks particular questions of the phenomena that it seeks to understand, questions amenable to precise answers through empirical inquiry.

In this review, we do not intend to provide an account of the development of governmentality in Foucault's own thought. Instead, we focus on the reception of this approach in the English-speaking world. In retrospect, it is possible to identify a number of factors that contributed to the spread of this style of analysis.

GOVERNMENTALITY: STRATEGIES, TECHNOLOGIES, PROGRAMS

At the start of the 1980s, Foucault's work was being taken up in different ways in various national and disciplinary contexts. In the United Kingdom, the context was undoubtedly political. In the late 1970s, many radical intellectuals of the left were seeking ways to extend and develop Marxist critical analysis to social, cultural, political, and legal practices. They wanted to find a way of analyzing these that did not simply regard them as expressions of, or as determined by, economic relations or the mode of production. Some had turned to Antonio Gramsci and especially his proposition that the exercise of rule involved hegemony or domination at the level of ideas (Gramsci 1971). However, Gramsci's ideas gave few clues as to how one might actually undertake empirical investigation of particular practices. Others had turned to the work of Louis Althusser and to his suggestion that capitalism reproduced itself through reproducing the relations of production, inducing the ideological conditions necessary for its survival through "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser 1977). However, Althusser's approach also turned out to be functionalist and reductionist, presupposing that every aspect of the school system, religion, and cultural artifacts operated to maintain the existing social order.

Foucault's work had already begun to reorient these ways of thinking. *Madness and Civilization*, a truncated translation of Foucault's *Histoire de la Folie*, had been taken up in the broad cultural movement of antipsychiatry, and books such as *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* had been largely received as philosophical and epistemological interventions, not as historical works---although they were seen as containing implicit critiques of the realism of Marxist sociology (Foucault 1967, 1970, 1972). However, Foucault's approach to power had a more

immediate effect. *Discipline and Punish* came into English in 1977 (Foucault 1977), and a number of Foucault's lectures and interviews on power dating from 1972--1977 were translated and published in English in 1980 with an extensive Afterword by Colin Gordon (Foucault & Gordon 1980). Many of those analyzing these issues had already recognized that these studies undermined the conventional view of the state as the origin, animator, beneficiary, or terminal point of power. They rendered power visible, in everyday life as well as in institutions, in a more tangible and material manner than Marxism. Even before the publication of the governmentality essay in English, this approach was generating empirical analyses of a number of sites for the creation and management of individuality. These included studies of asylum architecture, the development of the schoolroom (Jones & Williamson 1979), the regulatory role of psy-sciences such as psychology and psychiatry (Rose 1979; Miller 1980, 1981), the administration of the colonies, and much more.

Gordon's Afterword to *Power/Knowledge* identified the characteristics of Foucault's approach to power/knowledge in terms of the concepts of strategies, technologies, and programs (Foucault & Gordon 1980). He argued that each of these axes required an analysis that respected their distinctiveness. We live in a world of often rivalrous programs but not in a programmed world, and programs could not simply be implemented, as technologies have their own characteristics and requirements. Gordon also played a key role in arranging for the first translations of work on governmentality into English. The English translation of Foucault's February 1978 lecture on governmentality was published in 1979 in the short-lived but influential independent journal *Ideology and Consciousness* (I&C) (Foucault 1979). It had been preceded, in 1978, by the publication in the same journal of pieces by two of those in Foucault's seminar, Pasquino (1978) and Procacci (1978), that had demonstrated the fertility of this approach when applied to the political rationalities of police science and social economy, respectively. Each illustrated, through detailed investigation of original archival material, the new insights on political power that could be generated by a focus not on grand texts of political philosophy but on the more minor texts of political thinkers, polemicists, programmers, and administrators. Whether the concern was the economy or the

moral order, each was made thinkable and practicable by these governors as a knowable and administrable domain. These analyses also showed how each art of government entailed certain conceptions of the nature and obligations of those who were its subjects, those who were to be governed.

Foucault's essay on governmentality argued that a certain mentality, that he termed governmentality, had become the common ground of all modern forms of political thought and action. Governmentality, he argued, was an "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power..." (Foucault 1979, p. 20). He counterposed the arts of government that were taking shape in Europe in the eighteenth century to two other poles, those of sovereignty and of the family. Ways of thinking about power in terms of sovereignty were "too large, too abstract and too rigid," and the model of the family was "too thin, weak and insubstantial." Although the former was concerned with how a prince might best maintain his power over a territory, the model of the family was merely concerned with the enrichment of this small unit. Government, in distinction, was concerned with population that could not simply be controlled by laws or administrative fiat or conceived of as a kind of extended family.

This emphasis on population was grounded in the specific analyses that Foucault had presented in the earlier lectures in this series. For example, in relation to the politics of epidemics in the eighteenth century, he explored the processes through which authorities had come to realize that the population had a reality of its own, with its own regularities of birth, illness, and death, and its own internal processes that were independent of government and yet required the intervention of government. From this moment on, those who inhabited a territory were no longer understood merely as juridical subjects who must obey the laws issued by a sovereign authority nor as isolated individuals whose conduct was to be shaped and disciplined, but as existing within a dense field of relations between people and people, people and things, people and events. Government had to act upon these relations that were subject to natural processes and external pressures, and these had to be understood and administered using a whole range of strategies and tactics to

secure the well-being of each and of all. Authorities now addressed themselves to knowing and regulating the processes proper to the population, the laws that modulate its wealth, health, and longevity, its capacity to wage war and engage in labor, and so forth. To govern, therefore, whether to govern a household, a ship, or a population, it was necessary to know that which was to be governed, and to govern in the light of that knowledge.

Clearly, then, rather than conceiving of the state as the origin of government, one had to ask a different question: How could one account for the governmentalization of the state? That is, how, at a certain historical moment, had the formal apparatus of the state come to embroil itself with the business of knowing and administering the lives and activities of the persons and things across a territory? Although traditional conceptions of power had seen the imperative to govern as the essence of the state, it was now clear that states did not always govern in this sense. And the increasing centrality of a political apparatus to government, beginning in the eighteenth century in the West, was not a matter of a central power extending its sway throughout society through the expansion of the State machinery of control. It was more useful to start from the reverse hypothesis---that at a particular historical moment, states had managed to connect themselves to a diversity of forces and groups that in different ways had long tried to shape and administer the lives of individuals in pursuit of various goals.

The issue of I&C that preceded the translation of Foucault's lecture published a translation of a piece by Jacques Donzelot (1979b) that began to consider the political implications of this approach. The piece was originally published as "Pour une nouvelle culture politique" in 1978, the same year as Foucault's governmentality lecture, and in it Donzelot was particularly concerned to stress the need to move the state from its central role in political analysis. In the politics that had taken shape in France following the student uprisings of 1968, the power of the state had taken over from capital as the target of political protest. For Donzelot, the danger was that power itself would become regarded as the new motor of history. He suggested that the term as currently conceived should be abandoned altogether.

We would have then not a power and those who undergo it, but, as Foucault shows, *technologies*, that is to say always local and multiple, intertwining coherent or contradictory forms of activating and managing a population, and *strategies*, the formulae of government...theories which explain reality only to the extent that they enable the implementation of a program, the generation of actions; they provide through their coherence a 'practical object' (*practicable*) for corrective intervention of government programmes of redirection (Donzelot 1979b, p. 77, emphasis in original).

One effect of this analytical maneuver was that the state would not be seen as a subject of history, but instead only as "a support for technologies" or only as "an effect of governmental strategies" (Donzelot 1979b, p. 78). Donzelot illustrated his analytic with reference to the development of insurance and its nexus with the emergence of "the social." Insurance is depicted as a "very general technology" and a "mathematical solution" characterized by spreading the cost of compensating certain categories of injury or incapacity across "all social partners through a calculated distribution." In turn, it provided a condition of existence for a changing political imaginary oriented not so much around production, as in the nineteenth-century approaches to assistance, but around the provision of security. In this new governmental strategy of social security, new practices and agencies of governance emerge, such as social work, and new instruments of government are invented, such as family allowances. Technologies and strategies are thus seen as mutually formative and thus more or less consistently articulated.

Although these ideas were worked on in his *The Policing of Families* (Donzelot 1979a, originally published in French in 1977), and by the insurantal investigations of his colleagues, Ewald and Defert, not published in English until some years later (Ewald 1986, Defert 1991), this basic outline provided the foundation for later elaborations. During the 1980s, key elements were developed and made more explicit by a small group of British social theorists focusing particularly on the psy-sciences and on economic life (Miller 1986; Miller & O'Leary 1987, 1989; Miller & Rose 1988, 1990; Rose 1988, 1989; Burchell et al. 1991; Gordon 1991; Rose & Miller 1992). These studies also demonstrated that at particular historical moments,

programs often had a family resemblance in that they operated to a greater or lesser extent within shared problematizations, or modes of problem formation, and were formulated within shared rationalities or styles of thinking.

This body of work exemplified a style of analysis that would prove very attractive to many others because of its apparent ability to generate detailed empirical studies, both historical and contemporary, of practices of government. One significant contribution was the insistence that the language of programs was not merely to be regarded as an epiphenomenon, a gloss on the practices of rule. Rather, it was an intellectual technology, “a mechanism for rendering reality amenable to certain kinds of action” (Miller & Rose 1990, p. 7).¹ The approach to language developed here was in stark contrast to the Marxist “critique of ideology” approach; but it also diverged, in the opposite direction, from the other main critical perspective current around 1990, namely, discourse analysis. In the United States, many readers of Foucault, familiar only with his early works, identified Foucault’s work with discourse analysis, often taken as meaning that the internal organization of discourses directly forms and shapes realities and subjectivities. For example, in American debates on the history of sexuality, Foucault’s name became almost synonymous with such an approach. Governmentality studies, however, rejected the notion, popular in some versions of cultural studies, that discourses themselves create realities and identities. Language and other signifying systems were instead regarded as one element among many for rendering reality governable.

Adopting and reworking the idea of translation from Callon & Latour, Miller & Rose argued that language should be analyzed as a key element in the process of forming networks through persuasion, rhetoric, and intrigue. In the assemblage of networks, authorities, groups, individuals, and institutions were enlisted, brought to identify their own desires and aspirations with those of others, so that they were or could become allies in governing. In particular, such networks made possible what Miller & Rose termed governing at a distance---that is to say, acting from a center of

¹ Miller & Rose here were drawing in particular on the work of Jack Goody, as, for example, in his classic paper “What’s in a List?” (see Goody 1977).

calculation such as a government office or the headquarters of a nongovernmental organization, on the desires and activities of others who were spatially and organizationally distinct.²

The English governmentality approach also drew upon Foucault's observation that technologies of the self were formed alongside the technologies of domination such as discipline. The subjects so created would produce the ends of government by fulfilling themselves rather than being merely obedient, and in Rose's phrase (Rose 1989) would be obliged to be free in specific ways. Central to this approach was that attention would not only focus on the great technologies such as the Panopticon but would turn to the mundane, little governmental techniques and tools, such as interviews, case records, diaries, brochures, and manuals, that were key to this creative process. By the early 1990s, as a result of this work, the analytical framework of governmentality had assumed the form that, more or less, it takes today.

GOVERNING SUBJECTS

Although Foucault elaborated on his ideas about governmentality in a number of interviews conducted in the early 1980s, his own work began to focus more directly on the government of the self, in particular through developing a novel approach to ethics (Foucault 1982). The intrinsic relation between government and ethics linked Foucault's arguments into the lively debates at that time concerning the question of the subject. During the 1970s, many had argued that the constitution of subjectivity was a key political issue; that capitalism required the production of subjects who imagined themselves to be autonomous, self-possessed, bounded agentive

² This idea of "governing at a distance" drew on Latour's play on the idea of "action at a distance"---the possibility of which had been a subject of dispute within the sciences, for example in early debates over the existence of such invisible forces as gravity that appeared to act on spatially distinct entities without any direct or immediate line of contact. Latour and others in the approach that became known as Actor Network Theory (ANT) undertook a number of illuminating studies of these processes (Callon & Latour 1981, Latour 1986, Law 1986; see also Latour 2005).

individuals; and that radical thought needed to question this imaginary relation through semiotics or through a certain version of (French) psychoanalysis. The constitution of subjectivity had been a central theme in Marxist analyses of bourgeois ideology, notably in relation to the fiction of the isolated juridical subject of law, and this theme was given a renewed emphasis in Althusser's argument that the key work of ideology was to constitute individuals who took themselves to be autonomous subjects and who enacted their subjection as if it were a matter of their free will. Foucault's earlier work, in taking its distance from what he took to be the unproductive humanisms of phenomenology and existentialism, had, characteristically, addressed this issue genealogically, seeing the emergence of the centrality of the subject as a historical phenomenon, proposing an analysis of discourse that did not give priority to the subject that speaks, and, famously, remarking that this central image of humanism would soon be erased like a figure drawn in sand at the edge of the sea (Foucault 1970, p. 387).

Following his work on governmentality, Foucault began to mark out a new way of thinking about these issues in terms of ethics. Ethics, here, was understood in terms of technologies of the self---ways in which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves within certain regimes of authority and knowledge, and by means of certain techniques directed to self-improvement. Along these lines, Gordon (1987) considered some of Foucault's lectures on neo-liberalism and noted its proponents' ambition that individuals should conduct their lives as an enterprise, should become entrepreneurs of themselves. These arguments were developed in an empirical way in a number of papers by Nikolas Rose, notably in his 1989 book *Governing the Soul*, which focused in particular on the role of the knowledge and expertise of the social and human sciences in the rationales, practices, and technologies of contemporary government (Rose 1989). Although Rose's analysis shared much of its approach with that of earlier authors, it differed in one significant and provocative way in that it kept its distance from the rhetorics of social critique. Earlier authors had tended to link the ethical and the governmental in a diagram of control, allowing a positive space for freedom and self-expression as a site of resistance to government. However, Rose (1992) argued that central to

contemporary strategies for governing the soul was the creation of freedom. Subjects were obliged to be free and were required to conduct themselves responsibly, to account for their own lives and their vicissitudes in terms of their freedom. Freedom was not opposed to government. On the contrary, freedom, as choice, autonomy, self-responsibility, and the obligation to maximize one's life as a kind of enterprise, was one of the principal strategies of what Rose termed advanced liberal government. Freedom could no longer be taken so easily as the ground of critique of social control---as in such precursors as Cohen's (1985) *Visions of Social Control*---because the very ethic of freedom was itself part of a particular formula for governing free societies.

LIBERALISM, WELFARISM, AND ADVANCED LIBERALISM

Although at one level this analytical framework was not tied to a specific set of problems, it should be regarded partly as a response to a particular challenge---how to make sense of the transformations in the arts of government that were under way in Britain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, other Western countries. These took the form of a sustained critique of the welfare state, social security mechanisms, state planning, and state ownership of enterprises, indeed of the whole apparatus of the social state as it had taken shape across the twentieth century. Although many on the left had been critical of the practices of the welfare state, arguing that they were paternalistic, embedded discretionary professional power, extended social control, and actually sustained inequality, few found anything positive in the rise of what was often termed neo-liberalism. But it was in this context that a novel periodization of governmentalities began to take shape.

Liberal governmentalities stressed the limits of the political and stressed the role of a whole array of nonpolitical actors and forms of authority---medics, religious organizations, philanthropists, and social reformers---in governing the habits of the people. Strategies of social government had begun from the argument that such techniques were insufficient to ward off the twin perils of unbridled market individualism and the anomie it carried in its wake, or socialist revolution with all the dangers that it entailed. Government, from this point onward, would have to be

conducted from the social point of view, and these obligations had to be accepted by the political apparatus itself---a point of view embodied in the doctrines of social right in France, the ethical principles of social solidarity and social citizenship, and the technologies of social welfare and social insurance. This approach, with its requirement that the state was both orchestrator and guarantor of the well-being of society and those who inhabited it, was problematized by neo-liberal critics in Europe, by Thatcherites in Britain, and by Reaganites in the United States. Like critics from the radical left, they regarded social government as generating government overload, fiscal crisis, dependency, and rigidity. Yet unlike those critics, they created another rationality for government in the name of freedom, and invented or utilized a range of techniques that would enable the state to divest itself of many of its obligations, devolving those to quasi-autonomous entities that would be governed at a distance by means of budgets, audits, standards, benchmarks, and other technologies that were both autonomizing and responsabilizing. Many of these technologies were adopted and retained by social democratic strategies, notably in the programs that came to be termed the Third Way. These new ways of thinking about and seeking to enact the government of freedom characterized the problem space of advanced liberalism.

This tripartite division of liberalism, welfarism, and advanced liberalism was initially a heuristic device to mark the differences among these new arts of government. Later, at least to some extent, it became formalized into a typology and chronology in which explanation consisted of trying to place each and every program, strategy, or technology analyzed under this general covering law. Nonetheless, this mode of analysis also proved its versatility and its productivity. It rendered visible and intelligible the new forms of power embodied in advanced liberal arts of government, and it demonstrated the complex costs and benefits of those rationalities and technologies that sought to govern through freedom.

LOCATING GOVERNMENTALITY

Intellectual innovations do not fall out of a clear blue sky. The concepts and methodological choices utilized in governmentality studies spread so successfully

because they resonated with concurrent intellectual trends in a number of relatively independent fields. These helped to give the notion of governmentality and the research questions and perspectives associated with it traction across numerous disciplines, institutions, and geographical locations. Without attempting to be exhaustive, mentioning a few of these concurrent developments can help to illuminate some of the often serendipitous processes through which approaches associated with governmentality were disseminated (though by no means uncritically) across a variety of locations.

Within critical sociology and criminology, the social control analyses popularized in the 1970s and early 1980s were already being criticized as overly functionalist and simplistic by critical theorists before governmentality became a popular word. Corrigan & Sayer's (1985) *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* began to build links between Foucault's approach and a kind of neo-Marxism, using intellectual resources from both approaches to dislodge social control models for the study of what they called (following Durkheim) moral regulation. Not by chance, some of Philip Corrigan's Toronto friends and graduate students went on, in the early 1990s, to become part of the Toronto History of the Present group, which encouraged governmentality studies in a number of Toronto-area universities for about ten years. Subsequently, international scholarship in the area of moral regulation (including studies of sexuality and vice) became fertile ground for studies developing governmentality concepts and methods. Alan Hunt, through his studies of sumptuary laws (Hunt 1996) and his more general overview of moral regulation (Hunt 1999), was one of those who developed the conversation between the neo-Marxist approach to moral regulation and the perspective of governmentality. Mariana Valverde's (1998) study of the ways in which drinking and alcoholism have been important sites, in Anglo-Saxon countries, for the formation of liberal subjectivities came out of the same intellectual space but pointed in a more strictly Foucauldian direction (and hence avoided the term "moral regulation," with its Durkheimian connotations). Other work, much of it by feminist and postcolonial writers, explored issues of sexuality, race, and empire and used

governmentality perspectives as useful resources to go beyond the denunciation of top-down control that had been popular in the 1970s (e.g., Stoler 1995).

On another front, scholars in Paris and elsewhere working in science and technology studies (STS), honing analytic tools that would later be called Actor Network Theory (ANT), were taking their work in a direction that converged with governmentality methods at three principal points of convergence. First was a radical rejection of structuralist habits of thought in favor of studies showing in detail how knowledge and other resources flow and get recycled in particular networks. Second was a common agnosticism about “why” and “in whose interests” questions, accompanied by a commitment to studying how things get done. Third was an antihumanist stance that refuses to privilege not only Great Men but even Great Movements, considering instead the possibility that material things and processes might play an active role in many important processes. Governmentality studies do not explicitly take up Latour’s and Callon’s call to consider the agency of things. But there is an affinity between the antisociology developed, for example, in Latour’s (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern* and Foucault’s interest in examining how material structures (for example prison cells constructed to a certain design) have specific political effects, quite apart from the class or other interests of the people controlling them.

Influential well beyond STS, the work of Hacking and other scholars interested in documenting changes in knowledge practices, codes, and formats (Hacking 1990, Porter 1995) also converged with governmentality studies. Hacking was probably the first major English-language philosopher to take Foucault seriously, and intellectuals who had been alerted by Hacking and others (e.g., Daston 1996) to the theoretical fruitfulness of studying such phenomena as the rise of statistics were predisposed to regard the study of knowledge practices as important for social theory, not only for intellectual history. Poovey’s (1995, 1998) influential work, while not itself part of governmentality studies, could be seen as part of the bridge linking the field of the history and philosophy of science to governmentality studies. Finally, within political philosophy, a shift toward studying ideas in context had enabled at least some political theorists to take an interest in problems and topics

previously consigned to historians. Tully, one of the few internationally known political philosophers to take an interest in governmentality work, played a particularly important role in this regard (Tully 1993).

The publication of *The Foucault Effect* (Burchell et al. 1991) further consolidated the belief that the analytics of governmentality integrated and extended the insights that were contained within many of these areas. Many of the pieces had been separately available for some time. Yet when the pieces were consolidated in this way and framed with a substantive introduction to governmental rationalities that summarized many of Foucault's unpublished lectures on these topics, something like a school of thought appeared to be taking shape. In fact, this was always something of an illusion because many of the pieces translated from the French had been written a decade earlier, and many of the authors had long since moved on to other work. Further, these papers did not partake in a coherent methodology, and many shared little with the version of governmentality that was being developed in the English-speaking world. Even in that world, in Great Britain and its former colonies, there were many differences of emphasis and different styles of criticism, with some regarding governmentality analyses as descriptive, and others seeking to utilize them within a politics of critique.

DISPERSING GOVERNMENTALITY

By the early 1990s, the fertility of this approach seemed to be demonstrated, in particular its capacity to render intelligible ways of thinking, acting, and governing in a multitude of different practical sites, distant from the lofty concerns of political philosophy and analyses of machinations in high places given by political scientists and others. Although this work was largely ignored in the mainstream of sociology and cognate disciplines, it was taken up in a number of areas. Notable here were low-status regions of applied knowledge such as social work and nursing. It was taken up here not only by theoreticians but also by practitioners. The latter recognized intellectual equipment that would enable them to make sense of the situations in which they found themselves: the ways of thinking and acting that they

were obliged to enact and the cramped spaces and conflicting practices that they inhabited.

One key area explored concerned the economy and the government of economic life. This had been a central concern of Miller & Rose's influential paper of 1990 and had been the focus of a number of early papers published in I&C (Donzelot 1981, Meuret 1981). The capacity of this perspective to engage with economic issues was particularly welcome at a time when, with the degeneration of Marxism as a viable research program, many social scientists were abandoning the analysis of economic life in favor of apparently more fertile fields. From the perspective of governmentality, however, one could analyze the economy---from macro spaces of national economies to confined locales of factories or workplaces---in exactly the same way as one might analyze other domains (Miller 1986, 1990; Miller & O'Leary 1987, 1993, 1994; Miller & Rose 1988, 1995; Miller et al. 1991). One could chart the problem spaces within which these zones had been delineated and brought into existence as calculable and manageable spaces---the national economy, the industry, the factory. One could examine the emergence of the forms of knowledge and expertise such as that of management, human resources, or accountancy, which tried to render these spaces thinkable and develop tactics to govern them, often according to indices such as the national debt, the balance of payments, and the rate of profit, and one could examine, in particular, the role of work and the workplace as a crucial site for the formation and administration of individual and group identities.

It became clear that, from the perspective of government, work was as significant as a site of subjectification as it was as a site of economic exploitation, and economic life, from the workplace to the national economy, was crucial in programs for social government. And those gray and tedious sciences of economics, management, and accounting could be seen once again---as they had been by Marx, Weber, Sombart, and many other theorists of capitalism---as crucial for making up and governing a capitalist economy. Indeed, as Power (1995, 1997a,b, 2000) showed so clearly, the technologies of budgets, audits, standards, and benchmarks, apparently so mundane, were crucial for the operationalization of programs of

governing at a distance that characterized the forms of new public management taking shape under rationalities of advanced liberalism.

Another central focus for the analytic of government was technologies of risk. Foucault, but more centrally his colleagues in Paris---Ewald, Donzelot, and Defert, among others---had advanced this project during the early 1980s. Ewald's (1986) *L'État Providence*, focusing on risk as a central technology in the welfare state, was never translated. However, the papers by Ewald, Defert, and Castel that were translated in *The Foucault Effect* explored risk technologies, the first two dealing with insurance, the latter with psychiatry (Castel 1991, Defert 1991, Ewald 1991). For all three of these writers, risk is not regarded as intrinsically real, but as a particular way in which problems are viewed or imagined and dealt with. What is specific to risk, in their view, is that it is a probabilistic technique, whereby large numbers of events are sorted into a distribution, and the distribution in turn is used as a means of making predictions to reduce harm. As such it is highly abstract, giving rise to a very wide array of specific forms and ensembles of government. In such work, the interest not only is in the diversity of forms taken by risk, but also with their political and moral implications. Thus, in another foundational paper, Defert tracks the emergence of national workers' compensation insurance (Defert 1991). Although the actuarial nature of these national schemes meant that they were financially much more robust than the existing workers' mutual schemes, the new form of insurance meant that the insured no longer constituted a social community, but were the impersonal subjects of a probabilistic regime. In such analysis, governmentality was intended to describe not merely how government worked and what it sought to make of its subjects, but also what the implications would be for how life is to be led.

The 1991 publication in English of these essays on risk and governmentality was closely followed by the English translation of Beck's *Risk Society*, which was immediately adopted by many mainstream sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (Beck 1992, Beck et al. 1994). Despite the shared focus on risk, there was an almost polar opposition between Beck's grand theoretical work, resonating with the grand ruptural sociologies of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and the kinds of analysis

generated by the governmentality literature. Whereas governmentality eschews the reduction of complex social and governmental phenomena to sociological causes, for Beck the rise of risk society was the effect of scientific and technological development fueled by capitalist growth. By accelerating the rate of technological change, massively expanding its scale, and globally collapsing time-space distantiation, this unholy couple is seen as having created a new species of modernization risks. Exemplified by holes in the ozone layer, nuclear contamination, and global warming, these risks are viewed not only as global in their reach but also as unpredictable using risk technologies. Ironically, in the risk society, risk is seen as merely an ideology concealing the current ungovernability of modernization risks. Consequently, unlike studies conducted under the auspices of governmentality, Beck gives little or no attention to the diversity in form and implications of risk techniques; his theory deploys the vision of a thoroughgoing epochal rupture into the risk society driven by a single motor of history; his account creates a privileged access to reality behind the false surface of risk technology, and on its foundation he mounts a programmatic cosmopolitan politics (Beck 1996, 2000, 2002). In practice, therefore, although some have attempted to overcome this divide, for example Richard Ericson's work on policing and insurance (Ericson & Haggerty 1997, Ericson et al. 2000, Ericson & Doyle 2004) or Nigel Parton's work on risk and child protection (Parton 1991, 1997), governmentality and the theory of the risk society have tended to follow different courses (O'Malley 2004).

In another key area, the large number of scholars pursuing work in postcolonial studies in the 1990s drew on a host of traditions and methods, from psychoanalysis (Bhabha 1990, 1994) to Marxism (Arnold & Hardiman 1984, Spivak et al. 1996, Guha 1997). No generalization about this expanding field would do justice to it, but it is worth briefly noting here that some work in the postcolonial modality by scholars who, like the English Foucauldians discussed earlier, became disenchanted with Marxist theory, began to draw on Foucault's work for its own purposes. Foucault's histories of sexuality were probably of more significance for postcolonial work than the governmentality lecture and the subsequent English-speaking literature, but nevertheless, affinities developed and connections were made.

Important here is the fact that Cohn, an older historian of British India, had already alerted scholars in and of the subcontinent to the importance of studying knowledge forms, numeration in particular, in articles collected in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Cohn 1996). More recently, the influential historian and philosopher Chakrabarty (2000, especially Chapter 3) has used Foucault's governmentality essay (as well as the historiographic ideas of Foucault's colleague Paul Veyne) to help launch a wholesale attack on the static abstractions of conventional sociology, especially the questionable notion of power in general, that resonates at a number of levels with the concerns guiding the present review.

Finally, in this overview of the impact of governmentality approaches on various subfields, we should mention culture. Initially there had been some conflict between those who took up governmentality and those working in cultural studies. Hunter (1988, 1991, 1993, 1994) was one of the first to address culture from the perspective of government, arguing that early programs to extend schooling to the laboring classes, and in particular to inculcate the skills of literacy and artistic sensibility, had, as one of their central concerns, the shaping of citizens with a certain mode of self-reflection and certain civilized techniques of self-government. During the 1990s, many of those researching in the field of culture began to recognize that culture, too, could be analyzed from the perspective of government. A key contribution came from Bennett (1997, 2004), who argued that one could see cultural institutions, museums, exhibitions, and the like as explicitly partaking in certain governmental rationalities. Analyses by Bennett and others showed how these governmental aspirations were embodied in the aspirations of those who planned these developments, in how they situated bodies in space and time, and in their explicit wish to make possible a certain relation of subjects to others and to themselves (Bennett 2004). Culture itself, then, could be analyzed as a set of technologies for governing habits, morals, and ethics---for governing subjects.

CRITICISM AND RESPONSE

If one of the attractions of governmentality has been its capacity to render neo-liberalism visible in new ways, to understand its problematics and how these were

linked to its innovative reshaping of liberal technologies, ironically in certain respects this also has become a handicap. Although some writers have made it clear that neo-liberalism is a highly specific rationality (Rose 1996a), a marked tendency has been to regard it as a more or less constant master category that can be used both to understand and to explain all manner of political programs across a wide variety of settings (e.g., O'Malley 1996, Ruhl 1999). We argue rather that although elements of neo-liberal ways of thinking and acting can be found in most governing regimes and programs today---such as an emphasis on the market as a technology for optimizing efficiency---it is misleading to suggest that such contemporary arts of government are simply implementations of neo-liberal philosophies. To describe both the Blair and the Bush regimes of the early twenty-first century as neo-liberal ignores the fact that, for example, the architects of Blair's Third Way explicitly reject such a description and self-consciously incorporate elements---such as those derived from communitarianism---from elsewhere. Or, again, Bush's regime incorporates ways of thinking from self-styled neo-conservatives into its rationalities and strategies and grafts into the core of many programs and policies a religious moral agenda that has little or nothing in common with neo-liberal formulae.

To describe certain techniques or even programs as neo-liberal indicates their lineage and provides a point of family resemblance with other postsocial governance. This may be useful at a certain level of generality, but it is not the same as describing diverse contemporary regimes or rationalities as neo-liberal. On the one side, this latter move tends to blunt one of the cutting edges of governmentality---its specificity in identifying how government is formulated, how it problematizes, what techniques it uses, and so on. On the other side, it readily lends itself to a kind of cookie-cutter typification or explanation, a tendency to identify any program with neo-liberal elements as essentially neo-liberal, and to proceed as if this subsumption of the particular under a more general category provides a sufficient account of its nature or explanation of its existence. This practice, perhaps, has led to certain accusations that governmentality is guilty of homeostasis---that it provides rigid models of government that are so systematically integrated that change must be accounted for from elsewhere. In our view, to the contrary, the assembled nature of

government always suggests that rationalization---the process of rendering the various elements internally consistent---is never a finished process. Rationalities are constantly undergoing modification in the face of some newly identified problem or solution, while retaining certain styles of thought and technological preferences. This is why it is useful to speak about social rationalities of government, without implying that these are all identical in origin or in detail: They form a broad family of ways of thinking about and seeking to enact government, conceiving of that which is to be governed as a society of interdependent citizens and interlinked social and economic processes that are amenable to knowledge and planning. Hence, they can be contrasted to postsocial or advanced liberal rationalities that reject some or all of these presuppositions. In light of this discussion, we can see why some might see analyses of governmentality as sharing with mainstream sociology the tendency to divide history into eras embodying a single principle and to treat these characterizations of the arts of government as conceptually equivalent to such mainstream sociological categories of the risk society or postmodernity. However, if there are foundational principles to governmentality, one of these is a rejection of such totalizing tendencies, replete with the overtones of grand theorization that explains the transformation of society into something substantially novel. To describe a family of programs, strategies, or technologies as postsocial or advanced liberal should not be taken to imply a necessary or linear transformation of government nor (even more problematically) a change at the level of whole societies. The emergence of postsocial governance involves the rather contingent coalescence of a wide array of criticisms of social forms of governance. These included the visions of those strains of laissez-faire liberalism that had from the start been resistant to what were perceived as the accompanying state intervention, diminution of individual responsibility, and constraint of market freedom. They also included critiques from the political left concerned with technocratic domination by welfare expertise, the implied centralization of state power, and even theorizations about the impending crisis of capital brought on by the fiscal crisis of the welfare state. The convergence of these critiques, their rationalization into a coherent political vision, their linking to innovative ways of rethinking markets and

individuals, their capacity to utilize or invent mechanisms to translate these into techniques for governing, and their ascendancy into governmental prominence and even dominance came as a complete surprise. -In the analytics of governmentality, in contrast to epochal sociologies, transformation was not preordained by the working out of some logic of productive forces, of the contradictions of modernist technology, or whatever. Neither was its success complete or total---in the words of Miller & Rose (1990), governmentality may be eternally optimistic, but government is a congenitally failing operation.

Some have suggested that these analyses focus only upon the mind of the programmer and ignore the messy world of realpolitik, of implementation and nonimplementation---a world far from the serene world pictured in the texts studied by the governmentality. Analyses of governmentality are portrayed as merely creating abstract ideal types whose explanatory power is doubtful despite their attractiveness as generalized descriptions. Along the same lines, such critics argue that these analyses ignore the role of agency, experience, and resistance, thereby producing an image of government as a juggernaut that is somehow willing itself into existence, implementing itself into reality by mysterious means (Frankel 1997, O'Malley et al. 1997). Although these various criticisms appear closely interlinked, they need to be considered separately. We do not accept that the blueprints or programs of government that are analyzed in these studies of governmentality are ideal types. On the one hand, this image assumes that the blueprints are the second order constructs of analysis, produced by one-sided accentuation, and on the other it assumes that these are intended only as heuristic devices against which reality is to be contrasted. However, such blueprints are, rather, the empirically real plans and diagrams generated by programmers of various kinds. Certainly in some cases, such as the grouping of programs into families such as advanced liberalism, insurance, or the social, some analytical work is involved. But these do not aspire to identify some pure type. Thus, although Ewald focuses on the abstract risk technology as insurance's core characteristic, he is at some pains to stress that there is no one, right, or best application of this technology. It is merely an existing formula of government, common to insurance, that in practice is applied in diverse ways,

according to the identification of new opportunities by the insurance imaginary. Indeed, subsequent governmentality research suggests that even this formula is not common to all insurance practice, especially in the era post-9/11 when many assumptions of insurance have been challenged and new innovations made to render insurance viable in this new environment (Ericson & Doyle 2003).

The orientation of governmentality work, then, is not ideal typification, but an empirical mapping of governmental rationalities and techniques. Further, there is no assumption that the mere existence of a diagram of government implies either its generalized acceptance or implementation. Associated accusations of hypostasis, while possibly applying to the work of some who deploy a governmental analytic, ignore governmentality's genealogical foundations and thus its emphasis on the contingent and invented (and thus always mutable) nature of governmental thought and technique. Indeed, once this focus on inventiveness is recognized, most of the force of critiques about the denial of agency also evaporates. Government is not assumed to be a by-product or necessary effect of immanent social or economic forces or structures. Rather, it is seen as an attempt by those confronting certain social conditions to make sense of their environment, to imagine ways of improving the state of affairs, and to devise ways of achieving these ends. Human powers of creativity are centered rather than marginalized, even though such creation takes place within certain styles of thought and must perforce make use of available resources, techniques, and so on.

Some suggest that these analyses are flawed on account of their neglect of resistance. This seems a misconceived criticism. Empirical studies and genealogies of government are full of accounts of conflicts and struggles, although resistance seldom takes the form of a heroic meta-subject. Thus, Rose's (1996b) account of the emergence of advanced liberal rationalities is at pains to stress the role of those who opposed government through the social; but there was, here as elsewhere, no single movement of resistance to power, but rather a conflict of rival programs and strategies (Rose 1996b). The various neo-liberalisms and neo-conservatisms that formed in the 1970s and 1980s were assembled from critiques drawn from across the political spectrum. It is not, then, that studies of governmentality neglect resistance

to programs of government, or to techniques for the shaping of conduct; what they do refuse is the idea of resistance derived from the analytical framework of agency versus structure that has haunted so much contemporary social theory. After all, if freedom is not to be defined as the absence of constraint, but as a rather diverse array of invented technologies of the self, such a binary is meaningless. But more than this, structure almost always implies limits to freedom and almost always implies some underlying logic or social force that has to be overcome in order that the structures be breached or transformed. Ironically, by focusing instead on how those who seek to govern imagine their world and seek to fashion it anew, governmentality escapes the cage of structure that itself limits and constrains so much of the sociological imagination.

All of this discussion brings us back to the question of whether governmentality therefore studies only the mind or texts of the programmer. If the alternative is thought to be the sociological study of how programs are actually implemented, or the proportions and numbers of subjects who adopt or refuse governmental problematics and agendas, or whether or not according to their own criteria programs succeed or fail, then there is a limited truth to the statement. Governmental analysis does not aspire to be such a sociology. But there is no reason why it could not be articulated with such work. Those who criticize governmentality for not doing what it never claimed to do can only make their criticism bite to the extent that they imagine governmentality as a systematic theory that can be regarded as having logical incompatibilities with other theories. If, on the other hand, it is regarded as part of an analytical toolbox, good for some purposes but not for others, and capable of being used in conjunction with other tools, then the problem appears more as a limitation of the critique than a critique of the limitations of governmental analyses.

THE LEGACY OF GOVERNMENTALITY

Thirty years on from the initial formulations, the language and approach of governmentality has dispersed, hybridized with other approaches, and gone off in many different ways. This is to be celebrated, especially when its inventiveness is contrasted with the often sterile cookie-cutter approach or the application of a

template, a method, or a few catchwords. But what, then, is the legacy? What remains salient and challenging about this approach is its insistence that to understand how we are governed in the present, individually and collectively, in our homes, workplaces, schools, and hospitals, in our towns, regions, and nations, and by our national and transnational governing bodies requires us to turn away from grand theory, the state, globalization, reflexive individualization, and the like. Instead, we need to investigate the role of the gray sciences, the minor professions, the accountants and insurers, the managers and psychologists, in the mundane business of governing everyday economic and social life, in the shaping of governable domains and governable persons, in the new forms of power, authority, and subjectivity being formed within these mundane practices. Every practice for the conduct of conduct involves authorities, aspirations, programmatic thinking, the invention or redeployment of techniques and technologies.

The analytical tools developed in studies of governmentality are flexible and open ended. They are compatible with many other methods. They are not hard wired to any political perspective. What is worth retaining above all from this approach is its creativity. We should not seek to extract a method from the multiple studies of governing, but rather to identify a certain ethos of investigation, a way of asking questions, a focus not upon why certain things happened, but how they happened and the difference that that made in relation to what had gone before. Above all, the aim of such studies is critical, but not critique---to identify and describe differences and hence to help make criticism possible.

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