Powers of Freedom

Reframing Political Thought

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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1   Governing

How should one analyse political power? For much of the twentieth century in European social and political thought, answers to this question were dominated by the massive spectre of 'the state'. Whilst political theory in the United States up through the 1950s and 1960s was more 'pluralist' in its vision of political power, even there, by the 1970s and 1980s, analysts were advocating the adoption of a 'state-centred' approach. The modern state was analysed in terms of an apparently ineluctable tendency to centralize, control, regulate and manage. Social and political theorists drew attention to this expanding role of the state, discovered the hand of the state even where it appeared absent, criticized prevailing conceptions of political pluralism because they seemed to ignore the structuring role of the state. In short, they wanted to 'bring the state back in' to the analysis of modern society.[1]

Over the last fifteen years, however, many sociologists and political scientists have argued equally vigorously in the opposite direction. They have tried to find ways of thinking about and investigating political power which are not immediately structured in terms of the hegemonic role of the state, which recognize, in different ways, that modern systems of rule have depended upon a complex set of relations between state and non-state authorities, upon infrastructural powers, upon networks of power, upon the activities of authorities who do not form part of the formal or informal state apparatus. One sign of this movement has been the emergence of 'governance' as a new field of social and political analysis. At its most general, the term 'governance' is used as a kind of catch-all to refer to any strategy, tactic, process, procedure or programme for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over others in a nation, organization or locality. This wide usage is certainly consistent with the definition provided in the Oxford English Dictionary, which gives examples of use going back to Middle

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[1] This was the title of the very influential work by Theda Skocpol and others (Evans, Rueschmeyer and Skocpol 1985).

English. Governance directs attention to the nature, problems, means, actions, manners, techniques and objects by which actors place themselves under the control, guidance, sway and mastery of others, or seek to place other actors, organizations, entities or events under their own sway. Used in this way, governance seems a handy and compendious way of pointing to a number of important questions for investigation. Thus texts proliferate on the governance of the universities, of the health service, of the environment, even of cyberspace. The term seems a useful substitute and analogue for regulation, administration, management and the like, precisely because it is not overly burdened with conceptual baggage. But in the more specialized literature on governance, two more specific themes are evoked.

The first is normative.[2] Governance can be good or bad. Governance tends to be judged good when political strategies seek to minimize the role of the state, to encourage non-state mechanisms of regulation, to reduce the size of the political apparatus and civil service, to introduce 'the new public management', to change the role of politics in the management of social and economic affairs. Good governance means less government, politicians exercising power by steering (setting policy) rather than rowing (delivering services). Organizations such as the World Bank have sought to specify 'good governance' in terms of strategies that purport to disperse power relations amongst a whole complex of public service, judicial system and independent auditors of public finances, coupled with respect for the law, human rights, pluralism and a free press. They urge political regimes seeking aid and loans to correspond to this normative image of governance, by privatizing state corporations, encouraging competition, markets and private enterprise, downsizing the political apparatus, splitting up functions and allotting as many as possible to non-state organizations, ensuring budgetary discipline and so forth.

This normative sense of governance links to a second, descriptive, sense. This 'new sociology of governance' tries to characterize the pattern or structure that emerges as the resultant of the interactions of a

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[2] The classic text here was *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector* by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (D. Osborne and Gaebler 1992). 'Reinventing government' became the slogan for the assault on 'big government' in the United States, and the title of a series of publications of hearings of the United States Congress Committee on Governmental Affairs in the 1990s, examining issues ranging from the use of information technology in government to the restructuring of the public sector to deliver more for less.

range of political actors – of which the state is only one.[3] Governance refers to the *outcome* of all these interactions and interdependencies: the self-organizing networks that arise out of the interactions between a variety of organizations and associations. It is argued that these are of particular significance today because recent political strategies have attempted to govern neither through centrally controlled bureaucracies (hierarchies) nor through competitive interactions between producers and consumers (markets), but through such self-organizing networks.[4] Politics is seen as increasingly involving exchanges and relations amongst a range of public, private and voluntary organizations, without clear sovereign authority. Terms like 'actor networks', 'self-regulatory mechanisms', 'trust', 'habits and conventions', 'gift relations' and 'informal obligations' are utilized to describe the actual operation of the complex exchanges through which governance occurs.

At first sight, it seems that, whilst the approach to political power in terms of 'government' has little in common with normative uses of the notion of governance, it shares much with this new sociology of governance. It is critical of the analytic utility of the classical concepts of political sociology: state and market, public and private, and so forth. It agrees that new concepts are required to investigate the exercise of 'political power beyond the state'. It argues that strategies of political rule, from the earliest moments of the modern nation state, entailed complex and variable relations between the calculations and actions of those seeking to exercise rule over a territory, a population, a nation and a microphysics of power acting at a capillary level within a multitude of practices of control that proliferate across a territory. Like the sociology of governance, it does not to deny the existence of 'states' understood as political apparatuses and their associated devices and techniques of rule. Nor does it ignore the potency of the juridical and constitutional doctrines of state, sovereignty, legitimacy or the specific characteristics of the legal complex in the programming and exercise of rule. But it rejects the view that one must account for the political assemblages of rule *in terms of* the philosophical and constitutional language of the nineteenth century, or that one must underpin this misleading account with a theoretical infrastructure derived from nineteenth-century social and

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[3] The most developed attempts to conceptualize governance can be found in the work of Jan Kooiman and his colleagues (Kooiman 1993). See also Leftwich 1994.

[4] Rhodes (1994, 1995) has used the phrase 'the hollowing out of the State' to describe this.

political theory which accords 'the state' a quite illusory necessity, functionality and territorialization.

From the perspective of government, the place of the state in specific strategies and practices for governing different zones, sectors or problems becomes a question for empirical investigation. Nonetheless, whatever arguments may have been made by the philosophers of liberalism, the key characteristic of 'actually existing liberalism', as it developed over the second half of the nineteenth century and the first seven decades of the twentieth, was what Michel Foucault termed 'the governmentalization of the State'.[5] That is to say, the invention and assembly of a whole array of technologies that connected up calculations and strategies developed in political centres to those thousands of spatially scattered points where the constitutional, fiscal, organizational and judicial powers of the state connect with endeavours to manage economic life, the health and habits of the population, the civility of the masses and so forth. This governmentalization has allowed the state to survive within contemporary power relations; it is within the field of governmentality that one sees the continual attempts to define and redefine which aspects of government are within the competence of the state and which are not, what is and what is not political, what is public and what is private, and so forth.

From the perspective of government, however, these developments are not best understood in terms of an relentless augmentation of the powers of a centralizing, controlling and regulating state. The thesis, inspired by Jürgen Habermas, that 'the state' has increasingly colonized 'the lifeworld' is misleading, not least because the very nature and meaning of state and lifeworld were transformed in this process.[6] State institutions certainly extend the scope of their operations and the depth of their penetration into the lives of their citizen subjects. But they do so by a complex set of strategies, utilizing and encouraging the new positive knowledges of economy, sociality and the moral order, and harnessing already existing micro-fields of power in order to link their governmental objectives with activities and events far distant in space and time.[7] These links between the political apparatus and the activities of governing are less stable and durable than often suggested: they are tenuous, reversible, heterogeneous, dependent upon a range of 'relatively autonomous' knowledges, knowledgeable persons and technical possibilities.

[5] Foucault 1991: 103.
[6] See, for example, John Keane's analysis of the extent to which we are moving towards a 'totally administered society' (Keane 1984, ch. 3).
[7] Cf. Stoler 1995: 28.

Despite these similarities, the ethos of analytics of governmentality is very different from that of sociologies of governance. First, analyses of governmentalities are empirical but not realist. They are not studies of the actual organization and operation of systems of rule, of the relations that obtain amongst political and other actors and organizations at local levels and their connection into actor networks and the like. In these networks, rule is, no doubt, exercised and experienced in manners that are complex, contingent, locally variable and organized by no distinct logic, although exactly how complex etc. they are would be a matter for a certain type of empirical investigation. But studies of governmentality are not sociologies of rule. They are studies of a particular 'stratum' of knowing and acting. Of the emergence of particular 'regimes of truth' concerning the conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, persons authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. Of the invention and assemblage of particular apparatuses and devices for exercising power and intervening upon particular problems. They are concerned, that is to say, with the conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends. And their role is diagnostic rather than descriptive: they seek an open and critical relation to strategies for governing, attentive to their presuppositions, their assumptions, their exclusions, their naiveties and their knaveries, their regimes of vision and their spots of blindness.

No doubt, at any one time, one can find a whole variety of different methods in play for acting upon others, linked in a whole variety of ways. Their variety, and their linkages, are empirical matters and worthy of study. But what distinguishes studies of government from histories of administration, historical sociologies of state formation and sociologies of governance is their power to open a space for critical thought. This stems from their preoccupation with a distinctive family of questions, arising from a concern with our own present. How did it become possible to make truths about persons, their conduct, the means of action upon this and the reasons for such action? How did it become possible to make these truths in these ways and in this geographical, temporal and existential space? How were these truths enacted and by whom, in what torsions and tensions with other truths, through what contests, struggles, alliances, briberies, blackmails, promises and threats? What relations of seduction, domination, subordination, allegiance and distinction were thus made possible? And, from the perspective of our own concerns, what is thus made intelligible in our present truths (in a 'cognitive' sense, but also in a bodily sense, in the sense of our habitual modes of being in the world and experiencing the world and ourselves

in it, and the ways in which the space of possible actions in that world has been put together) – what do our studies of governmentality make amenable to *our* thought and action, in the sense of us being able to count its cost and think of it being made *otherwise*?

Perspectivism, here, is thus partly a matter of introducing a critical attitude towards those things that are given to our present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable: to stand against the maxims of one's time, against the spirit of one's age, against the current of received wisdom. It is a matter of introducing a kind of awkwardness into the fabric of one's experience, of interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode that experience and making them stutter.[8] And the use of history here is to that untimely end – it is a matter of forming a connection or relation between a contemporary question and certain historical events, forming connections that vibrate or resonate, and hence introduce a difference, not only in the present, but also in the historical moments it connects up with and deploys. As Gilles Deleuze puts it, thinking of Nietzsche, things and actions are already interpretations. So to interpret them is to interpret interpretations: in this way it is already to change things, 'to change life', the present – and oneself.

Governmentality

To analyse political power through the analytics of governmentality is not to start from the apparently obvious historical or sociological question: what happened and why? It is to start by asking what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives, through what strategies and techniques. Such investigations do not single out a sector of the real for investigation – ideas rather than events, for example. But they adopt a particular point of view which brings certain questions into focus: that dimension of our history composed by the invention, contestation, operationalization and transformation of more or less rationalized schemes, programmes, techniques and devices which seek to shape conduct so as to achieve certain ends. They distinguish between historically variable domains within which questions of government have been posed: the ways in which certain aspects of the

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[8] 'Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium' (Deleuze, 'He stuttered', in Deleuze 1997: 111). As Deleuze puts it, this stuttering is the moment in which language is strained to the limits that mark its outside, when it is engaged in digging under stories, cracking open opinions, reaching regions without memories, destroying the coherence of 'the self'.

conduct of persons, individually or collectively, have come to be prob-
lematized at specific historical moments, the objects and concerns that
appear here, and the forces, events or authorities that have rendered them
problematic. They investigate the ways in which debates and strategies
concerning the exercise of political power have delineated the proper
relations between the activities of political rule and different zones,
dimensions or aspects of this general field of conduct of conduct – for
example, the ways in which the management of virtue and vice has been
contested and divided between theological, pedagogic, medical and pol-
itical authorities, or the regulation of economic life has been disputed
between attempts at political management and claims made for the vir-
tues of a self-regulating market guided by its own invisible hand. They
concern themselves with the kinds of knowledge, the ideas and beliefs
about economy, society, authority, morality and subjectivity that have
engendered these problematizations and the strategies, tactics and pro-
grammes of government.

Governing here should be understood nominalistically: it is neither a
concept nor a theory, but a perspective. For sociologists of governance
such as Kooiman and his colleagues, the object of investigation is under-
stood as an emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of
complex negotiations and exchanges between 'intermediate' social
actors, groups, forces, organizations, public and semi-public institutions
in which state organizations are only one – and not necessarily the most
significant – amongst many others seeking to steer or manage these
relations.[9] But the object of analytics of government is different. These
studies do not seek to describe a field of institutions, of structures, of
functional patterns or whatever. They try to diagnose an array of lines
of thought, of will, of invention, of programmes and failures, of acts and
counter-acts. Far from unifying all under a general theory of govern-
ment, studies undertaken from this perspective draw attention to the
heterogeneity of authorities that have sought to govern conduct, the
heterogeneity of strategies, devices, ends sought, the conflicts between
them, and the ways in which our present has been shaped by such con-
flicts. Far from reducing all to politics, they draw attention to the com-
plex and contingent histories of the problems around which political
problematizations come to form – cholera epidemics, wars, riots, tech-
nological change, the rise of new economic powers and so forth. Such
problematizations may or may not be shaped by previous strategies of
government. In any event, they do not speak for themselves. They must
always be individuated and conceptualized in particular ways. Political

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[9] See in particular Kooiman 1993.

thought is thus not auto-effective: in making thought technical, attempts at governing are always limited by the conceptual and practical tools for the regulation of conduct that are available, although they may use them in novel ways and inspire the invention of new techniques. Far from homogenizing discursive space, these studies show how the space of government is always shaped and intersected by other discourses, notably the veridical discourses of science and changing moral rhetorics and ethical vocabularies, which have their own histories, apparatuses and problem spaces, and whose relation to problematics of government is not expression or causation but translation. And far from offering a new theory of power, studies of government offer a perspective which brings into sight a domain of questions to be asked and practices to be analysed. In particular, they seek to interrogate the problems and problematizations through which 'being' has been shaped in a thinkable and manageable form, the sites and locales where these problems formed and the authorities responsible for enunciating upon them, the techniques and devices invented, the modes of authority and subject-ification engendered, and the telos of these ambitions and strategies.

It thus seems to me to be useful to regard the notions of government and governmentality as marking out, in the most general way, the field upon which one might locate all investigations of the modern operations of power/knowledge. The mechanisms and strategies of discipline and normalization that Foucault analysed so provocatively in *Discipline and Punish*[10] may certainly be seen in these terms. The prisoner – or the schoolchild or lunatic – may be constrained and confined. Disciplinary techniques may be embodied in an external regime of structured times, spaces, gazes and hierarchies. But discipline seeks to reshape the ways in which each individual, at some future point, will conduct him- or herself in a space of regulated freedom. Discipline is bound to the emergence and transformation of new knowledges of the human soul. And discipline is constitutively linked to the emergence of new ways of thinking about the tasks of political rule in terms of the government of the conduct of the population, or at least of those sections and zones which have forfeited their claims to be contractual subjects of law or have not yet acquired that right – criminals, paupers, lunatics, children.

Similarly, the technologies of bio-politics and the biologized state that are discussed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*[11] can be seen in governmental terms. They are strategies which recognize and act upon the positivity of the domains to be governed – the factors affecting

[10] Foucault 1977.
[11] Foucault 1979a.

rates of reproduction and population growth, the genetic make-up of the race and the like. They seek, with some notable exceptions, to act upon these domains by reshaping the conduct of those who inhabit them without interdicting their formal freedom to conduct their lives as they see fit. And if, in Nazi Germany, the freedom to act, indeed the very existence, of some subjects had to be erased, this was in the name of a greater freedom of the Aryan people and their destiny. Here, without the controls exercised by liberal concerns with limited government and individual freedoms, the despotism of the state that is always an immanent presence in all governmentalities is manifest in all its bloody rationality.

Foucault was far from consistent in his own thinking about the relations between the different ways in which he analysed power. He certainly cautioned against conceiving of a chronology that went from 'sovereignty' – a discontinuous exercise of power through display and spectacle, law as command, sanctions as negative and deductive – to 'discipline' – the continuous exercise of power through surveillance, individualization and normalization – to 'governmentality' focusing on maximizing the forces of the population collectively and individually. At one point he suggested that one could identify a 'triangle' of sovereignty, discipline and governmentality. Elsewhere he argued that it was simplistic to see the societies of normalization of the nineteenth century as disciplinary: rather, in such societies, life was taken in charge by the interplay between the technologies of discipline focused on the individual body and the technologies of bio-politics, which acted on those bodies *en masse*, intervening in the making of life, the manner of living, in how to live.[12] I am happy to leave textual analysis to others.[13] From my point of view, it is most helpful to consider that, in the power regimes that began to take shape in the liberal societies of the nineteenth century, the thematics of sovereignty, of discipline and of bio-power are all relocated within the field of governmentality. Each is reorganized in the context of the general problematics of government, which concerns the best way to exercise powers over conduct individually and en masse so as to secure the good of each and of all. It is not a question of a

[12] See the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (ibid.), and the discussion of Foucault's 1976 lectures in Stoler 1995, especially pp. 80–8.

[13] It is worth noting, however, that in an interview in 1984, six months before his death, Foucault says: 'I intend this concept of ''governmentality'' to cover the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other' (Foucault 1997: 300). I return to this issue of government and freedom in chapter 2.

succession of forms, but of the ways in which the discovery of new problems for government – and the invention of new forms of government – embraces, recodes, reshapes those that pre-exist them. Reciprocally, within new styles of government, older forms, for example the claims of an elected parliament to have assumed the mantle of sovereignty by virtue of representing the sovereign will of the people, find novel spaces of deployment and new points of support, and enter new dynamics of antagonism and conflict.

Rationalities

Of course, even terror can be a calculated instrument of government, as can naked violence. No complex analysis is required to count the costs in lies and lives of these ways of exercising power. But the claim of the analytics of government is that the 'modern' regimes for the conduct of conduct that have taken shape in the West, and those strategies that contest them, are ineluctably drawn to rationalize themselves according to a value of truth. Does it make sense to interrogate strategies of government in relation to truth? Is not government almost by definition the realm of the pragmatics of the possible, the territory of the deal-makers, of corruption, or pork barrelling and the like? Perhaps. But Foucault's own work on governmentality implied that one could identify specific political rationalizations emerging in precise sites and at specific historical moments, and underpinned by coherent systems of thought, and that one could also show how different kinds of calculations, strategies and tactics were linked to each. Thus Foucault and his co-workers examined European doctrines of police and argued that these embodied certain relatively coherent ways of understanding the tasks and objects of rule, which were codified and rationalized in particular texts and were linked to a range of regulatory practices which would be hard to understand otherwise. This secular 'science of police' was articulated in the German-speaking parts of Europe, and also in the Italian states and in France, in the period from about 1650 to 1800. It saw police not as a negative activity concerned with the maintenance of order and the prevention of danger, but as a positive programme (close to our contemporary notions of policy) based upon knowledge, which could act as the 'foundation of the power and happiness of States' (to quote from the title of von Justi's text of 1760-1).[14] Ian Hunter has suggested that the

[14] For discussions, see Knemeyer 1980; Oestreich 1982, esp. ch. 9; Raeff 1983; and Pasquino 1991. Andrew (1989) has a useful discussion of the arguments made by eighteenth-century charitable societies in Britain that their efforts

'confessional churches' played a key role in the emergence of this notion of governable populations, developing a particular understanding of their role as one of reshaping the conduct of their subjects in the name of spiritual purity, deploying a range of measures for their spiritual disciplining, and thus uniting those in particular geographical areas in 'moral enclosures'.[15] For present purposes, however, what is significant is that, whether solely secular, solely spiritual or as a conflict ridden hybrid of both, political and religious authorities now understood their powers and obligations in terms of relatively formalized doctrines of rule which made it both necessary and legitimate for them to exercise a calculated power over the conduct of populations of individuals, omnes et singulatim (of each and of all).[16]

Others have shown relatively consistent projects of rationalization at work in nineteenth-century liberal debates about the need to limit the scope of government vis-à-vis a principle of the market or of the rights of the individual: rationalities that make it easier to understand the apparent conflicts between doctrines that seek to delimit political interventions and the proliferation of laws, regulations and apparatuses of government.[17] The same kinds of argument can be made about the New Liberalism that developed in Britain, Australia and the United States in the late nineteenth century in an attempt to transcend the apparently irreconcilable positions of the advocates of individualism on the one hand and collectivism on the other.[18] And a certain attempt at rationalization is at work in the architects of the New Deal in the United States, despite the fact that it is undoubtedly also the case that laws, organizations and devices that it invented were often *ad hoc* attempts to address problems of unemployment, surplus production, farmers' bankruptcy and crises of banking.[19]

It is not only liberal forms of government that operate according to a certain rationality: however barbaric were the murderous strategies of government in Nazi Germany, they were not simply acts of irrational

were an essential part of a good national 'police' to maintain and refine civil order.

[15] Hunter 1998.

[16] See also Foucault's discussion of the idea of 'political reason' in Foucault 1981.

[17] E.g. Dean 1991.

[18] Useful accounts of the New Liberalism, although not formulated in these terms, are Clarke 1978 and Collini 1979; the standard source is Freeden 1978.

[19] On the New Deal, see Eden 1989; S. Fraser and Gerstle 1989; Finegold and Skocpol 1995.

brutality or the institutionalization of resentment. It is true, as Detlev Peukert has pointed out, that 'The social history of the Third Reich was a rank and tangled undergrowth of Nazi projects of reorganization which never got put into practice, rivalries and jurisdictional wrangles between different state, semi-state and non-state organizations, Schweikian strat-agems by the oppressed directed against the overweening demands of the bureaucracy, individual and collective acts of freebooting enterprise and clamours for privileges, if necessary at the expense of others, and deliberate self-sacrificing resistance.'.[20] Nonetheless, Nazism fused together a number of distinct elements into a relatively systematic matrix of political thought and action: a eugenic, biologizing and statist racism, prioritizing the management of the population through interventions upon the individual and collective body in order to control lineages, reproduction, health and hygiene; a pastoralized dream of the multipli-cation of practices for the disciplinary regulation of the body politic in the name of the race; the instrumentalization of the micro-fascisms of everyday life – of the band, the gang, the sect, the family; and a redeployment of an older thematic of race, blood and earth.[21] And, as we know, the actual power of Nazism as a mentality of government was its capacity to render itself technical, to connect itself up with all manner of technologies capable of implementing its nightmarish dreams into everyday existence.

One is not dealing here with a scientific discourse regulated by the apparatus of experiments, proofs, journals, peer review and so forth. Nonetheless, political rationalities are characterized by regularities.[22] They have a distinctive *moral* form, in that they embody conceptions of the nature and scope of legitimate authority, the distribution of authori-ties across different zones or spheres – political, military, pedagogic, fam-ilial and the ideals or principles that should guide the exercise of auth-ority: freedom, justice, equality, responsibility, citizenship, autonomy and the like. They have an *epistemological* character in that, as we shall see in detail later in this chapter, they are articulated in relation to some understanding of the spaces, persons, problems and objects to be gov-

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[20] Peukert 1987: 24. Other books I have found most helpful on the political rationalities that were at play in Nazi Germany are Mosse 1978 and Proctor 1988.

[21] I am paraphrasing Foucault's remarks in *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1979a: 149–50) and Deleuze and Guattari's comments on the relations of macro-fascism and micro-fascism in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guat-tari 1987: 214–15). Note that the issue here is one of rationalities in the plural, not of a specific rationality of modernity (cf. Bauman 1989).

[22] I am drawing here upon Rose and Miller 1992: 178–9.

erned. And they have a distinctive *idiom* or language. A certain element of thought, that is to say, is involved in all projects of government. John Maynard Keynes, one of the great thinkers of the social liberalism that took shape in the United Kingdom between the First and Second World Wars, might have been thinking of himself when he wrote, in 1926, 'the next step forward must come, not from political agitation or premature experiments, but from thought'.[23]

The critiques of welfare that have flourished over the past fifty years, in the post-war writings of neo-liberals such as Hayek, through the US critics of the New Deal and the War on Poverty and in contemporary 'post-social' political arguments from left and right, seek to rationalize government in new ways. Such strategic attempts to rationalize the problems of government have effects. For example, the various tactics enacted by the British Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s were not realizations of any philosophy – whether it was Keith Joseph reading Adam Smith or one of his advisers reading Hayek. They were, rather, contingent lash-ups of thought and action, in which various problems of governing were resolved through drawing upon instruments and procedures that happened to be available, in which new ways of governing were invented in a rather *ad hoc* way, as practical attempts to think about and act upon specific problems in particular locales, and various other existing techniques and practices were merely dressed up in new clothes. But, in the course of this process, a certain rationality, call it neo-liberalism, came to provide a way of linking up these various tactics, integrating them *in thought* so that they appeared to partake in a coherent logic. And once they did so, once a kind of rationality could be extracted from them, made to be translatable with them, it could be redirected towards both them and other things, which could now be thought of in the same way – as, for example, in the various deployments of the notion of entrepreneurship. And such rationalities were then embodied in, or came to infuse, a whole variety of practices and assemblages for regulating economic life, medical care, welfare benefits, professional activity and so forth.

It is not that the thought of Hayek, Friedman or anyone else for that matter was realized in neo-liberalism. It is partly that government continually seeks to give itself a form of truth – establish a kind of ethical basis for its actions. We can be cynical about this without, I hope, thinking that this is just legitimization or ideology. To govern, one could say, is to be condemned to seek an authority for one's authority. It is also that, in order to govern, one needs some 'intellectual technology' for

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[23] Keynes 1926: 53. I discuss social liberalism in chapter 3.

trying to work out what on earth one should do next – which involves criteria as to what one wants to do, what has succeeded in the past, what is the problem to be addressed and so forth. When studies of governmentality speak of liberalism, of welfare, of neo-liberalism and the like, it is in this sense that these terms should be understood: not as designating epochs, but as individuating a multiplicity of attempts to rationalize the nature, means, ends, limits for the exercise of power and styles of governing, the instruments, techniques and practices to which they become linked. The name merely individuates an assemblage which may have been in existence for a long time before it was named, and which may outlive its naming. But nonetheless, the naming is itself a creative act: it assembles a new individuation of concepts, symptoms, moralities, languages; it confers a kind of mobile and transferable character upon a multiplicity.[24]

At many times and places, and more or less consistently in Europe and the United States since at least the middle of the eighteenth century, those seeking to exercise power have sought to rationalize their authority, and these projects of rationalization have a systematicity, a history and an effectivity. Each such project or strategy of rationalization, in the name of the market, in the name of the social, in the name of the liberty of the individual, is a strategy to intervene, whether in thought or in reality, upon a set of messy, local, regional, practical, political and other struggles in order to rationalize them according to a certain principle. Political rationalities are discursive fields characterized by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organized, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts, by significant agreement on key political problems. Within this zone of intelligible contestation, different political forces infuse the various elements with distinct meanings, link them within distinct thematics, and derive different conclusions as to what should be done, by whom and how.

Intelligibility

It is possible to govern only within a certain regime of intelligibility – to govern is to act under a certain description. Language is not secondary to government; it is constitutive of it. Language not only makes acts of government describable; it also makes them possible. This emphasis on language is not at all novel. In relation to the history of political thought,

[24] Cf. Deleuze on the function of the proper name, in Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 120–3.

it is most impressively exemplified in the method of historical critique developed by Quentin Skinner and his colleagues. This 'consists in a survey of the language employed in order to identify the shared conventions (the distinctions, concepts, assumptions, inferences and assertability warrants that are taken for granted in the course of the debate) which render [certain acts] problematic and give rise to the range of solutions' in order to free ourselves from the conventions of our age.[25]

However, analytics of government are not primarily concerned with language as a field of meaning, or with texts embodying authorial intentions which may be recovered and made intelligible in the appropriate historical context. They are concerned with knowledges, or regimes of truth.[26] That is to say, they are concerned with 'historical epistemologies': the reconstruction of 'the epistemological field that allows for the production of what counts for knowledge at any given moment, and which accords salience to particular categories, divisions, classifications, relations and identities'.[27] But perhaps even this 'epistemological' characterization is a little misleading, to the extent that it might imply a somewhat calm and peaceful succession of bodies of knowledge. For it is not a matter of words, of concepts, of epistemologies, but of a whole 'regime of enunciation'. That is to say, an agonistic field, traversed by conflicts over who can speak, according to what criteria of truth, from what places, authorized in what ways, through what media machines, utilizing what forms of rhetoric, symbolism, persuasion, sanction or seduction. It is not so much a question of what a word or a text 'means' – of the meanings of terms such as 'community', 'culture', 'risk', 'social', 'civility', 'citizen' and the like – but of analysing the way a word or a book functions in connection with other things, what it makes possible, the surfaces, networks and circuits around which it flows, the affects and passions that it mobilizes and through which it

[25] Tully 1995: 35. A good introduction to the work of Skinner is the collection of essays edited by James Tully (Tully 1988).

[26] It should be noted that I part company with those who have traced a line in Foucault's own writings from 'archaeology' through 'genealogy' to 'ethics'. Analytics of government are concerned with truth, with power and with subjectification. For further discussion of the role of language in the exercise of political power, see the work of William Connolly and Michael Shapiro (Connolly 1983, Shapiro 1984).

[27] Mary Poovey, from whom this quote is drawn, provides a good discussion of this in the context of 'social' history (Poovey 1995: 3). The idea of historical epistemology is derived from the work of French historians of scientific discourse, notably Georges Canguilhem (Canguilhem 1994). The papers collected in T. Osborne and Rose (1998) provide a good introduction to Canguilhem's work. See also the discussion in Daston 1994.

mobilizes. It is thus a matter of analysing what counts as truth, who has the power to define truth, the role of different authorities of truth, and the epistemological, institutional and technical conditions for the production and circulation of truths.

As I have already suggested, one specific characteristic of modern strategies of government is that they harness themselves to practices for the production of particular styles of truth telling: the truth procedures and pronouncements of objective, positive or scientific discourses – what Georges Canguilhem terms 'veridical discourses'. Thus the exercise of government has become enmeshed with regimes of truth concerning the objects, processes and persons governed – economy, society, morality, psychology, pathology. Government has both fostered and depended upon the vocation of 'experts of truth' and the functioning of their concepts of normality and pathology, danger and risk, social order and social control, and the judgements and devices which such concepts have inhabited.

Perhaps there is a methodological point to be made here. A number of historians of political ideas, notably J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner and his collaborators, have helped us understand that the writings of philosophers – Kant, Hume, Locke and others – can be adequately understood only when located within the context of the problems that concerned the political classes in their time and place, and the field of social and political discourse within which they were engaged. They have also shown how many of those now assimilated into the academic canon were actively involved in inventing and arguing for new ways of governing, whether this be in the form of systems of taxation, practices of education or institutions for the reform of prisoners and paupers.[28] There is no doubt that, in certain times and places, the arguments and activities of philosophers have played a significant role in practices of government. This is a matter for empirical investigation in particular cases. But as significant, certainly since the middle of the nineteenth century, have been the truth claims articulated in texts that have a less elevated character: statistical texts discussing the importance of taking a census; proposals for reform of asylums written by doctors of the insane; medical debates about the nature of cholera and the mechanisms of its spread; economists' arguments for the need for labour exchanges in order to create a true market in labour and to expose the workshy and the unemployable for harsh intervention. This is not the 'appliance of science', in the sense that the truths worked out in the

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[28] An excellent example is Tully's study of John Locke (Tully 1993); see also the work of Duncan Ivison, especially his book *The Self at Liberty* (1997b).

university study or the laboratory are being applied to specific practical issues. Rather, it is in these pragmatic governmental arguments that the concepts are forged that will later be formalized in theories, experiments, comparative studies and the like. And the methodological point is this: it is, most often, at this vulgar, pragmatic, quotidian and minor level that one can see the languages and techniques being invented that will reshape understandings of the subjects and objects of government, and hence reshape the very presuppositions upon which government rests.

Governable spaces

Governing does not just act on a pre-existing thought world with its natural divisions. To govern is to cut experience in certain ways, to distribute attractions and repulsions, passions and fears across it, to bring new facets and forces, new intensities and relations into being. This is partly a matter of time. Thus, the invention of the factory and work discipline involves novel ways of cutting up time in order to govern productive subjects: we must learn to count our lives by hours, minutes, seconds, the time of work and the time of leisure, the week and the weekend, opening hours and closing time.[29] The bell, the time-table, the whistle at the end of the shift manage time externally, disciplinarily. The beeping wrist watch, the courses in time management and the like inscribe the particular temporalities into the comportment of free citizens as a matter of their self-control.

It is also a matter of space, of the making up of governable spaces: populations, nations, societies, economies, classes, families, schools, factories, individuals. Mary Poovey and Peter Miller have used the term 'abstract spaces' to characterize such governable zones.[30] Poovey used the term 'abstract space' in her examination of the different ways in which space is produced and organized in the exercise of power. She was concerned with the representational assumptions involved, for instance

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[29] Mariana Valverde pointed out to me the need to emphasize the role of temporalization in governing (see Valverde 1998c). This point is made classically by Edward Thompson in his analysis of time, work discipline and industrial capitalism (E. P. Thompson 1967). It is also, of course, a key theme in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977).

[30] Mary Poovey uses this term in her study of the construction of 'the social body' (Poovey 1995); Peter Miller uses it in the context of an analysis of the fabrication of the domains upon which accounting and management will operate (Miller 1994). See also Miller and O'Leary's analysis of the space of the factory (Miller and O'Leary 1994).

whether space is abstract or empty, the ways in which bodies are arranged in space, the metaphors of space such as machines or bodies, the relations of materialization or dematerialization that are involved. This notion of abstract space comes from Henri Lefebvre.[31] For Lefebvre, space becomes abstract only as a result of the crushing of lived experience and its vanquishing by concepts and representations. But these oppositions between the lived and the represented, the experienced and the conceptualized, the abstract and the concrete, seem to me to be misleading. Governable spaces are not fabricated counter to experience; they make new kinds of experience possible, produce new modes of perception, invest percepts with affects, with dangers and opportunities, with saliences and attractions. Through certain technical means, an new way of seeing is constructed which will 'raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect'.[32] They are modalities in which a real and material governable world is composed, terraformed and populated.

I think of these fabricated spaces as 'irreal'. I take this term from Nelson Goodman.[33] We need to use it with caution, lest we concede too much to the realists: reality is irreal; what else could it possible be? Goodman, in his foreword to *Ways of Worldmaking* says his irrealist position is a radical relativism under rigorous restraints. It is a radical relativism because, for Goodman, there is no independent access to one true world against which our versions of it can be compared and evaluated. All we have are different versions of the world, versions constructed out of words, numerals, pictures, sounds or symbols in various media. We take particular versions for real largely as a matter of habit. From my point of view, however, Goodman's irrealism is too psychological. His examples come from such well-worn and psychologically contentious claims as the relativity of the perception of colour, shape and movement. His image of a version of the world is that of a picture. My own irrealism is technical, not psychologistic. It is technical in so far as it asserts that thought constructs its irreal worlds through very material procedures. Thought, that is to say, becomes real by harnessing itself to a practice of inscription, calculation and action.

One should not try to make up a theory of the fabrication of these

[31] Notably in Lefebvre 1991.

[32] Gilles Deleuze is here talking about style in writing, music, painting; style in governing may be more mundane but it is no less a process of creative fabulation (Deleuze 1994b: 170).

[33] It is developed most clearly in his *Ways of Worldmaking* (Goodman 1978). Ian Hacking has discussed Goodman's work in a number of important papers (Hacking 1988, 1992).

irreal spaces: they are put together differently in different practices and
contexts. But we can make a few general points. The government of a
population, a national economy, an enterprise, a family, a child or even
oneself becomes possible only through discursive mechanisms that rep-
resent the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable
limits and particular characteristics, and whose component parts are
linked together in some more or less systematic manner by forces,
attractions and coexistences.[34] This is a matter of defining boundaries,
rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that
which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and
entities thus revealed. For example, before one can seek to manage a
domain such as an economy it is first necessary to conceptualize a set
of bounded processes and relations as an economy which is amenable
to management. One could write the genealogy of this 'economy', the
ways in which Adam Smith and David Ricardo presuppose that an econ-
omy is more or less coincident with the territorial boundaries of a nation
state, and that trading relations between countries typically take place
between distinct and relatively self-contained national economies.[35] It
was thus only in the nineteenth century that we can see the birth of a
language of national economy as a domain with its own characteristics
which could be spoken about and about which knowledge could be
gained. Once such an economy had been delineated, it could become
the object and target of political programmes that would seek to evaluate
and increase the power of nations by governing and managing 'the econ-
omy'. But spaces such as 'the economy' are not brought into existence
by theory alone. For example, the strategies of national economic man-
agement that were invented in the middle of the twentieth century were
made possible not merely by the installation of new sets of concepts to
think about 'the economy', but also through the construction of a vast
statistical apparatus through which this domain could be inscribed, vis-
ualized, tabulated, modelled, calculated, national economies compared,
indicators like 'rate of growth' devised and so forth.[36] And today, as the

[34] I am drawing directly here on some formulations in Miller and Rose 1990.
[35] Barry Hindess provides a useful discussion of these issues in the context of
an analysis of contemporary arguments concerning the fragmentation of such
national economic spaces (Hindess 1998a). Keith Tribe has written a com-
pelling study of the development and transformation of notions of oeconomy
and economy (Tribe 1978). The work of Donald Winch is particularly
instructive on all these issues: see for example Winch 1969.
[36] Grahame Thompson has analysed the forms of visualization out of which
knowledge and sense of the firm and the economy are constructed
(G. Thompson 1998).

discourse of globalization implies, this idea of the national economy is beginning to fragment, and we can begin to analyse the shifting forces, conditions and forms of visibility that have allowed the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of economic government, the emergence of a novel conception of economic space.

Elsewhere I consider the formation of a number of governmental fields or governable spaces. Here, however, I would like to make some general remarks on ways in which one might analyse the spatialization of governmental thought.[37] We can make a rough and ready distinction between three dimensions or sets of problems.

Territorializing governmental thought

Governmental thought territorializes itself in different ways. As William Connolly has pointed out, the term 'territory' derives from *terra* – land, earth, soil, nourishment – but also perhaps from *terrere* – to frighten, terrorize, exclude, warn off.[38] It is a matter of marking out a territory in thought and inscribing it in the real, topographizing it, investing it with powers, bounding it by exclusions, defining who or what can rightfully enter. Central to modern governmental thought has been a territorialization of national spaces: states, countries, populations, societies. One can trace the ways in which each of these territorializations takes shape.

Take, for example, 'society'. One can chart how, perhaps beginning with a book like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1721, a certain way emerges for visualizing the forms of government, religion and habits of a particular country, including one's own, as one of a variety of forms in which human existence can be organized in the shape of a society.[39] Montesquieu's sense of the variety of laws, customs and usages of different peoples is undoubtedly conditional upon the influx of information, speculation and invention 'made possible by the voyages of exploration, trade, missionary activity and colonization that Europeans had begun in the fifteenth century'.[40] This rendered the mores, habits and institutions that are taken for granted by inhabitants of a particular locale simultaneously extraordinary and difficult to understand, and yet intelligible and explicable. This

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[37] I am drawing generally on Foucault's suggestions in *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault 1973) and more directly on joint work that I have undertaken with Tom Osborne on the history of empirical social thought (T. Osborne and Rose forthcoming).

[38] Connolly 1995: xxii.

[39] Montesquieu [1721] 1971.

[40] Richter 1977: 32.