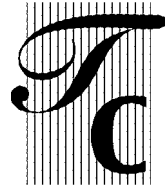


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## Foucault contra Foucault: *Rereading the 'Governmentality' papers*

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### Abstract

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This article provides a brief account of some key aspects of Foucault's later work in the area of power, security, population and 'governmentality', and a critical analysis of these in light of other of his writings. The argument is as follows. This later work is marred by an implicit idealism that takes two forms. First, there is a vulgar historicist logic, a neo-Hegelian objective idealism involving a unilinear theory of crucial aspects of western history and the use of a single measuring rod for comparing and contrasting successive forms of organization of societies, thereby pre-empting the possibility of examining the varying effects in different social contexts of seemingly similar ways of organizing social relations. Second, much of this work is overly intentionalist in its understanding of particular phenomena. This subjective idealism involves an explanation of social arrangements as the result of political activities which, in turn, are themselves understood through the extant writings of various governors, policy writers and advisors—namely, as the effect of self-consciously produced self-reflexive discourses. Some of his earlier work, notably *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, provides the conceptual resources to critique and go beyond these writings.

### Key Words

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discourse • Foucault • genealogy • governance  
 • governmentality • Hegel

[A] barbarous but unavoidable neologism: *governmentality*, the Government presented by the national press as the Essence of efficiency.

(Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1972 [1957]: 130)

‘Where is a Jew liked?’ Mom asked rhetorically. ‘Nowhere. He makes good cannon fodder. That’s the way it is in Russia, in all of Europe. Even in Austria where Franz Joseph tolerates the Jews. He won’t allow Black Hundreds to instigate *pogroms*, as they do in Russia under the Czar. So the Jew is a little safer, he can breathe a little freer. Still is the Jew liked? Need I ask? One thing they like him for: Give me your Jew to be a soldier. He at least has learned to read and write’.

(Henry Roth, *Mercy of a Rude Stream: Volume One, A Star Shines over Mt. Morris Park*, 1994: 76)

## Introduction

In this article we provide a brief account of some key aspects of Foucault’s later work, critically analyse these and then begin to reformulate their more persuasive residue in light of some of the more interesting elements of his earlier writings. This reworked Foucault provides an interesting analytic that sociologists can deploy in their conceptualization and explanation of such social phenomena as crime and law.

The argument, in brief, is as follows. While his later work on power, population, security, governmentality, etc. is full of insights, it is also marred by an implicit idealism that takes two forms. First, there is a vulgar historicist logic, a neo-Hegelian objective idealism<sup>1</sup> involving a unilinear theory of crucial aspects of western history and the use of a single measuring rod for comparing and contrasting successive forms of organization of societies, thereby pre-empting the possibility of examining the varying effects in different social contexts of seemingly similar ways of organizing social relations and of recognizing that advances in one area of human life may bear a non-contingent relationship to setbacks in other areas. It is only by disarticulating Foucault’s later corpus of work from this narrative of continuity in which it is embedded that it is possible to glean from it the fruitful insights which can be put to work in a systematic analytic. Second, much of this work is overly intentionalist in its understanding of particular phenomena. This subjective idealism involves an explanation of social arrangements as the result of political activities which, in turn, are themselves understood through the extant writings of various governors, policy writers and advisors—namely, as the effect of self-consciously produced self-reflexive discourses. Major resources for the development of this critique are to be found in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1975b [1963]), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974b [1969]) and *I Pierre Rivière* (1978 [1973]). In fact, if Foucault had more consistently developed these positions he would have not reached some of the impasses found in *Discipline and Punish* (1979a [1975]), and in the first volume of

*The History of Sexuality* (1979b [1976])—impasses which he resolved in a spurious way in his later work. Nevertheless, much of what is interesting in Foucault's earlier work might be fruitfully articulated within a more Althusserian tradition to develop a new and distinctive Foucauldian position (Pearce, 1988; Pearce and Tombs, 1998a; Pearce and Woodiwiss, 2000); in addition, a view towards integrating this more historical work with, for example, Foucault's writing on more artistic issues and figures such as Bataille, Klossowski and Blanchot (Foucault, 1998a [1963], 1998b [1964], 1998c [1966]) holds some promise. We should perhaps mention that the reading protocols we have deployed are spelt out in detail in *The Radical Durkheim* (Pearce, 1989).

### Governmentality according to Foucault<sup>2</sup>

In the last six or seven years of his life Foucault developed a set of arguments which represented a significant shift in both the content and focus of his work as a whole. In the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, namely, *The Use of Pleasure* (1985 [1984]) and *The Care of the Self* (1988a [1984]), and in work on 'Technologies of the Self' (1988b [1982]), he began to distinguish between subjectivation and forms of subjectification by exploring how selves were fashioned and then lived in ways which were both heteronomously and autonomously determined. Also in a series of lectures and articles, including 'The Birth of Biopolitics' (1997c [1979]), '*Omnes et Singulatim*: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason' (1981 [1979]), 'The Subject and Power' (1982) and 'What is Enlightenment?' (1997a [1984]), he posed questions about the nature of contemporary social orders, the conceptualization of power, human freedom and the limits, possibilities and sources of human actions. His best known formulation of these issues is his lecture entitled 'Governmentality' ([1978] 1991).

'Governmentality', for Foucault, referred to a historically specific economy of power—in which societies are ordered in a de-centred way and wherein society's members play a particularly active role in their own self-governance. In such societies there is a concern with both individuals and aggregates such as populations. Governmentality gives consideration to the organization of the social into distinctive domains, and having various immanent logics. Governmentality considers the construal of individuals in relation to different sites—for example, the family, schools, business establishments—and in relation to different regularities—including a biopolitics of birth, longevity, health, death, etc. In each of these domains and sites one finds the deployment of distinctive modes of governance—all of which generate knowledge of subject populations in order to govern 'the conduct of conduct' and to intensify and perfect the inherent nature of their object. This creates the possibilities that those human subjects who are so governed are well equipped to govern themselves. Governmental practices are

not restricted to the state and the state moreover has learnt or should have learnt the limits of what it can know and do, a realization, incidentally, which emerged first in the context of the economy. In fact, if anything, the state has been governmentalized and thus traditional concepts of 'sovereign power' and the state as a 'coherent entity' are little more than fictions. That society is complex, decentralized and heterogeneous has important implications for the political sphere, for this becomes a site where quite disparate goals will be pursued. What matters for social development is the way that activities, previously not reflected upon, can become problematized and hence rethought and potentially modified. As historians of the present we can construct genealogies of the current ways in which we have been constituted, allowing us to see their contingent, albeit, for us, historically determined nature. This gives us the possibility of being other than we now are, or of thinking in a way that is different from how we currently think. But this historico-critical attitude should be experimental—politics should not be global or too radical (Foucault 1997a [1984]).

How did this system come about? Foucault places special emphasis on a number of seemingly heterogeneous factors which combined to produce governmentalized societies. He examines the history of pastoral power; the 16th-century anti-Machiavellian treatises on government; the formation of a late 16th- and early 17th-century 'art of government' via the introduction of family 'economy' into the governing of the state; the doctrine of 'reason of state' and its associated political rationalities/knowledges including the technology of police (cameralism) and the practice of 'political arithmetic' or statistics; the emerging object of 'population', its subsequent articulation as a political problem, and corresponding associations with disciplinarity, political economy, biopolitics and biopower; liberalism, and its associated mechanisms of self-regulation and apparatuses of security; the German social market theorists and practitioners; and the neo-liberal critique of the state.

In '*Omnnes et Singulatim*' (1981 [1979]), Foucault finds a certain resonance with the technologies deployed by the 18th-century 'modern state' and what he describes as a 'pastoral modality of power'. Here the pastoral theme refers to, roughly, the metaphor of the shepherd guiding his flock of sheep as it is applicable to the activities of a deity, king or leader (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 227). Foucault suggests that the origins of this metaphor are rooted in the pastoral themes of ancient oriental—and particularly Hebrew—societies wherein the role assumed by Yahweh, 'the one and only true shepherd' (1981 [1979]: 228), centres upon the gathering, guiding and leading of each and every member of his flock so as to ensure their salvation. Foucault is interested in this notion of 'all and each'—hence the title '*Omnnes et Singulatim*'—as it relates to the 'individualized kindness' of the shepherd for whom each and every one of the flock is the object of care and sustenance. Commentaries on Moses, for instance, explain that Yahweh had chosen him to shepherd his people because 'he had left his flock to go and search for one lost sheep' (1981 [1979]: 229).

Foucault goes on to suggest that similar ideas obtain in Christianity with an additional emphasis on ‘self-examination’ and the ‘guidance of conscience’ (1981 [1979]: 238). That is, in the Christian conception the shepherd must render an accounting of all the deeds of each of his flock, necessitating, in turn, a particular and individual knowledge. Between the pastor and each member of his flock there develops, thus, a detailed knowledge of the latter by the former brought about by the Christian techniques of self-examination, confession, as well as the obedience/submission of each member—the ultimate aim of which is a renunciation of the world. Whereas in Foucault’s earlier works—e.g. *Madness and Civilization* (1975a [1961]) and *The History of Sexuality vol. 1* (1979b [1976])—he would have viewed these techniques as forms of subjectivation, his emphasis, latterly, is on the forms themselves and the way in which they combined to produce a guided, and yet self-governing subject.

As it relates to the 18th-century modern state, Foucault suggests that pastoral notions continue to apply, albeit recast in a secular light, with ‘worldly’ aims replacing religious aims, and a focus on salvation in this world replacing the traditional pastoral objective of salvation in the next world—via the emergent concerns of the state for the health, well-being and security of the people-flock as ensured by state apparatus or police (Foucault, 1982: 215). It is Foucault’s belief that the pastoral thematic has been integrated—in a new political form—into the political structure we know as the modern state (Foucault, 1982: 213). Thus we find, for Foucault, a linkage of the pastoral theme to the modern state by way of a ‘secularization’ of what was, formerly, within the domain of the traditional pastorate—namely, ‘salvation’ and ‘individual care’, reconfigured as technologies of government.

Proceeding somewhat in the opposite direction, Foucault proposes to examine ‘the problematic of government in general’ (1991 [1978]: 88), by, in this instance, exploring a ‘de-coupling’ between the 16th- and 17th-century literature on ‘government’ and a single text, namely, Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, which—according to Foucault—served as an important pivot-point against which the governmental literature of the time established itself. Contra Machiavelli’s prince, whose main interests revolve around the retention of his principality through an exercise of power meant to strengthen and protect his territory, the body of work on government endeavoured to ‘articulate a kind of rationality which was intrinsic to the art of government, without subordinating it to the problematic of the prince and of his relationship to the principality of which he is lord and master’ (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 89). The distancing or de-linking of this emergent art of government from the problematic of the prince highlights a shift in emphasis away from an exclusive concern with the prince’s interests as the ‘object and principle of rationality’ of government (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 89) in favour of a more broadly defined understanding of the forms/art of governing. For example, Foucault refers to Guillaume de la Perrière’s text of 1567, *Le Miroir Politique*, which suggests that the term

governor 'can signify monarch, emperor, king, prince, lord, magistrate, prelate, judge and the like' (de la Perrière, 1567: 24, cited in Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 90).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, and as Foucault notes, other texts of the time take up the notion of 'governing' as directed towards 'a household, souls, children, a province, a convent, a religious order, a family' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 90). Thus, while Machiavelli's prince stands in a relationship of singularity and externality to his principality, the practices delineated by the art of government are multiple and immanent to the state: of the many possible forms of government, the prince's relation to his state is now but one.

Foucault finds an essential similarity between the object of the prince's power in Machiavelli and the juridical principle that defined sovereignty in public law from the Middle Ages to the 16th century. That is, just as sovereignty is exercised above all on a territory, so too is territory the essential element in the Machiavellian principality. In contrast, Foucault points to Guillaume de la Perrière's definition of government, and argues it is notable for its absence of reference to territory: 'Government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end' (de la Perrière, 1567: 22, cited in Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93). That is, government concerns itself with men in their relations or imbrication with things such as wealth, resources, territory, climate, epidemics, famine, and so on (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93). Here, as Foucault puts it, the concern of government is with 'a sort of complex composed of men and things' of which territory is merely 'one of its variables' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 94).

Foucault also links the theory of the art of government so described by the literature of the time with such emergent developments as 'the administrative apparatus of territorial monarchies', 'mercantilism and the Cameralists' science of police', as well as what Foucault terms 'the science of the state', or 'statistics' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 96). In particular, and in the late 16th and early 17th century, Foucault suggests that 'the art of government finds its first form of crystallization, organized around the theme of reason of state' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 97). In '*Omnes et Singulatim*' (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 243–54) as well as in 'The Political Technology of Individuals' (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 148–53), Foucault elaborates this theme by drawing upon its explicit formulation in German and Italian texts: inasmuch as these societies had the most difficulty in establishing themselves as states, in turn, 'they produced the greatest number of reflections on reason of state' (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 243).

The doctrine of 'reason of state' endeavoured to define the principles and methods of state government; it refers to 'a rationality specific to the art of governing states' (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 243) which is intrinsic to the state itself—not derived from natural or divine laws (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 97; 1997b [1978]: 68). The emergence of reason of state, for Foucault, signals a transition from an art of governing based on principles derived from traditional virtues—i.e. wisdom, justice or divine laws—to an

art of governing ‘whose rationality has its principles and its specific domain of application in the state’ (Foucault, 1997b [1978]: 68). Furthermore, the aim of ‘reason of state’—and contra the Machiavellian legacy—is not to reinforce the power of a prince over his domain, but rather to reinforce the state itself (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 150). Reason of state is understood as rational government’s ability to increase the state’s strength.

The thesis that government’s aim is to strengthen the state itself conditions the possibility of a specific political knowledge. That is, a certain political competence and knowledge becomes necessary in order to rule others within the framework of the state. Government becomes possible only when the strength of the state, its capacity, and the strength and capacity of other states is known. The art of government which characterizes reason of state is thus closely linked with the development of what Foucault terms ‘political arithmetic’ or statistics: a knowledge of one’s own and other states’ ‘respective forces’ (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 151). The enhancement of the state’s strength occurs within a ‘competitive framework’—thus does the state’s knowledge of both itself, and other states, become crucial for ‘correct government’ (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 246).

The doctrine of reason of state, for Foucault (1988c [1982]), implies a particular type of relationship between the individual and the state: at issue is the political utility of the individual to the finality of the state. Individuals are relevant to the state only to the extent that they contribute to the state’s strength (1988c [1982]: 153). Foucault is interested in the technologies and techniques of government, developed within the general framework of reason of state, and deployed so as to obtain ‘the marginalistic integration of individuals in the state’s utility . . . in order to make of the individual a significant element for the state’ (1988c [1982]: 153). In particular, it is the technology of police that gives a material form to the new relationship ‘between the social entity and the individual’ (1988c [1982]: 153).

Foucault argues that the term ‘police’ is understood in a particular way by 17th- and 18th-century authors. That is, ‘police’ was perceived at the time as a whole set of techniques and strategies ‘by which a government in the framework of the state was able to govern people as individuals significantly useful for the world’ (1988c [1982]: 155). Foucault points to Delamare’s *Compendium*—a manual of the French kingdom’s police regulations—and von Justi’s *Elements of Police*—a German textbook for students of *Polizeiwissenschaft*—as illustrative of the orbit and practices of police at the time. According to Delamare, for example, the responsibility of police encompasses the following 11 domains of the state:

- (1) religion;
- (2) morals;
- (3) health;
- (4) supplies;
- (5) roads, highways, town buildings;
- (6) public safety;
- (7) the liberal arts (roughly speaking, arts and science);
- (8) trade;
- (9) factories;
- (10) manservants and labourers;
- (11) the poor.

(Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 249)

Here Foucault argues that inasmuch—in Delamare’s account—as police see to the moral quality of life (religion), life’s conveniences (trade, factories, public order), as well as its pleasures (theatre and literature, etc.), the true object of police is, in effect, life itself (Foucault, 1981 [1979]: 250). The happiness of individuals becomes a political object, which is conceived as a ‘requirement for the survival and development of the state’s strength’ (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 158), and which links the strength of the state to the industry and obedience of its subjects (Foucault, 1981 [1979]).

Foucault locates von Justi’s text within the administrative practice and pedagogy known as Cameralism or ‘science of police’ (the German discipline of *Polizeiwissenschaft*). Von Justi’s manual is of particular interest because it so clearly articulates what Foucault describes as the ‘paradox of police’: that is, the police must foster citizens’ lives—understood as improved living—in such a way that their development also fosters the state’s strength. Thus do police engage in techniques or ways of intervening in the common activities of individuals—work, production, exchange, accommodation—to enhance their lives so that the state is also strengthened. In addition, von Justi is one of the first to understand, according to Foucault, the importance of the emerging notion of population. For von Justi, the population and the environment are perceived as being in a perpetual living interrelation which falls within the domain of the state to manage (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 160). Population is seen as depending on the environment constituted by the physical and economical elements of the state, which itself, in turn, depends upon population. The state, according to Foucault, ‘has essentially to take care of men as a population’ (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 160). Thus, in relation to these police activities, ‘the health and physical well-being of populations comes to figure as a political objective which the “police” of the social body must ensure along with those of economic regulation and the needs of order’ (Foucault, 1980a [1976]: 171). By the end of the 18th century, ‘the true object of police becomes . . . the population’ (Foucault, 1988c [1982]: 160).

Correspondingly, the notion of population, by the end of the 18th century, becomes increasingly important vis-à-vis the transition from reason of state to a more autonomous art of government. That is, Foucault argues that while the art of government found its first material form in ‘reason of state’, in turn, reason of state, up until the beginning of the 18th century, also functioned as an impediment to the elaboration of an autonomous art of government. Foucault attributes this to several reasons: First, that the crises of the 17th century—including the Thirty Years War, peasant and urban rebellions and the western monarchies’ revenue crises—served to hinder the development of an art of government, which ‘could only spread and develop in an age of expansion, free from the great military, political and economic tensions which afflicted the 17th century’ (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 98). Second, that the articulation of reason of state within the mental and institutional structures of sovereignty, also blocked the development of this art. For example, Foucault argues that mercantil-



ism—the first attempt to apply an art of government at the level of political practices—was ultimately obstructed, precisely because it ‘took as its essential objective the might of the sovereign’, and sought to fulfil this objective through the traditional instruments of sovereignty, namely, its ‘laws, decrees, and regulations’ (1991 [1978]: 98). Third, that an over-reliance on the ‘family’ model of economy additionally served to restrict development of an art of government insofar as the family as a model of governance has become ‘too thin, too weak, and too insubstantial . . . unlikely to be able to respond adequately to the importance of territorial possessions and royal finance’ (1991 [1978]: 98). That the art of government comes to be reconfigured outside of the juridical framework of sovereignty and the theme of economy to be refocused on a different level from that of the family is attributed by Foucault to an emerging recognition of the phenomenon of population.

The domain of population came to emerge as a possible object of government against the backdrop of 18th-century demographic expansion, the increasing abundance of money, expansion of agricultural production as well as the earlier development of statistical methods and techniques, or what Foucault terms the ‘science of the state’ (1991 [1978]: 96). Through statistics, the phenomenon of population can now be shown to have its own regularities, as well as its own aggregate and economic effects. Statistics also illustrate that the specific phenomenon of population is irreducible to the family which ‘now disappears as the model of the economy’ (1991 [1978]: 99). Unlike sovereignty, whose end is ultimately the exercise of sovereignty, the end of government is not the practice of government, but rather ‘the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc’ (1991 [1978]: 100). Population has become ‘the ultimate end of government’ (1991 [1978]: 100).

This concern with population, and more specifically biopolitics, was given a particular inflection by the development of liberalism. For, ‘in a system anxious to have the respect of legal subjects and to ensure the free enterprise of individuals, how can the “population phenomenon”, with its specific effects and problems, be taken into account? On behalf of what, and according to what rules, can it be managed?’ (Foucault, 1997c [1979]: 73). In contrast to reason of state, the point of departure for liberalism is that government—understood as the activity of directing human conduct in the framework of the state—cannot be considered its own end, and thus its guiding principle cannot be its own maximization. Here, and as Foucault argues, liberalism breaks with ‘reason of state’ which, with the objective of increasing the state’s strength, seeks ‘the end capable of both justifying a growing governmentality and of regulating its development’ (Foucault, 1997c [1979]: 74). Accordingly, the governmental technologies of reason of state—i.e. the German *Polizeiwissenschaft* (police science)—sought to increase the state’s strength by managing the population and making it as large and as active as possible. These technologies shaped by the rationality

of reason of state endorsed the principle that there was always 'too little government'. Liberal thought, on the contrary, always suspects that there is 'too much' government (1997c [1979]: 74). Guided by this principle, liberalism sets for itself the problem of why, in fact, there must be government at all, and if it is necessary, what can be said to circumscribe the limits of its endeavours (1997c [1979]: 75). Within the liberal critique, for example, political economy would conceive of poorly functioning markets as indicative of excessive governmental activity, and, indeed, economics now illustrates that there is a 'basic incompatibility between the optimal development of the economic process and a maximization of governmental procedures' (1997c [1979]: 76). The question asked of any government policy was a new one: relative to the population, 'what ends should it pursue . . . in order to justify its existence?' (1997c [1979]: 75).

While liberalism—as a form of reflection on governmental practice—was neither inevitably connected with democracy in the form of a truly representative parliamentary system, nor the market economy, as conceptualized by political economy, it has strong affinities with both (1997c [1979]: 77). The distinctive feature of liberal political rationality, is, according to Foucault, that it breaks from the 'hegemony of "reason of state"', and its dictum of maximum government intervention (1997c [1979]: 77). Thus, the science of political economy shows 'the point at which governing was always governing too much', and the 'rule of law' and the participation of the governed comes to be understood as the most technically efficient 'system of governmental economy' (1997c [1979]: 76–7). By drawing upon the accomplishments of 'reason of state' but recognizing its limitations, both as a practice and a set of goals, liberalism transcends the political rationality of reason of state to play a key role in the production of governmentality. Thus, in one particular section of Foucault's governmentality lecture, the interconnections between all of these seem to be strongly intimated and suggest, moreover, that liberalism is the true heir to the earlier art of government:

In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health etc., and the means that the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all in some sense immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign . . .

. . . The new science called political economy arises out of the perception of new networks of continuous and multiple relations between population, territory and wealth; and this is accompanied by the formation of a type of

intervention characteristic of government, namely intervention in the field of economy and population.

(Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 100–1)

This, however, is an extraordinary statement. What government ever claims to do anything but improve the welfare of the population? When did any proponents of any version of liberal democracy ever describe it as anything but the best of all possible social arrangements? True, no such proponent would deny that social arrangements can be improved, but this seems only to involve the elaboration of basic principles and social arrangements, certainly no radical transformations. In fact, the work of the later Foucault seems perilously close to that of Francis Fukuyama, who, in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), recognizes the continuing existence of inequalities, and yet believes that only adjustments are required. There is, however, a more profound affinity here insofar as Foucault's work—much like Fukuyama's—has strong idealist overtones, and particularly with reference to the fact that each theorist employs a historicist logic (albeit not using identical categories) in the positioning of liberal democracy as the culmination point of the evolution of history.

### Objective idealism

That is, Foucault's account is structured—somewhat like the Hegelian concept of development—as if western political history can be construed in terms of a transhistorical process whereby, like the growth of a plant from a seed, an idea develops, confronts material obstacles, grows by overcoming and transcending them, to fully and finally realize itself in a particular social order (Hegel, 1956 [1831]).<sup>4</sup> Foucault starts with Hebraic pastoralism, highlighting Moses, a figure revered in Christian readings of the Old Testament, then progresses through Christianity to the somewhat Jansenist French confessional of the 17th century. The narrative is subsequently picked up with reference to such 16th-century thinkers as Guillaume de la Perrière, who was, in fact, a priest and teacher. De la Perrière began to develop a general but flexible art of government of self and others, the overall goal of which was the common welfare but which was flexible and tailored to distinct social domains. The rationality of this art of government was partially negated and thwarted but also partially developed through 'reason of state' and its associated material forms, mercantilism and cameralism. Reason of state, in turn, was partly impeded because of its articulation within the juridical framework of sovereignty, but was also developed through the recognition of the phenomenon of population. Reason of state's mandate to always increase the strength of the state and improve the welfare of the population gradually gave way to an understanding that 'if one governed too much, one did not govern at all' (Foucault, 1984a [1982]: 242).

The question of liberalism, hence, arises from a now emerging understanding of population as a 'complex and independent reality' (Foucault, 1984a [1982]: 242), which is, furthermore, thought to be a naturally self-regulating domain. And now it is through the market's 'invisible hand' that the individual pursuit of self-interest will altogether coincide with the realization of the common good (Smith, 1976: 456). With the suspicion of government associated with liberal rationalities, it becomes possible to transcend the contradiction between the diminishing returns of increasing governance by developing, in a society already characterized by disciplinary practices, an autonomized realm of rational economic action involving the free enterprise of individuals, as well as a legal sphere, the content of which is determined by a democratic parliamentary system and which is applied to legal subjects in a universalistic manner. A religious-based telos towards governmentality, its partial but incomplete realization, the negation of this negation through transcendence, a new order in which it is further developed and further blocked, the negation of this negation and its transcendence and then finally the end of history in our liberal democracies—and the owl still flies at day's end as liberalism comes to apprehend itself, through a process of negation and transcendence, as the concretely determined form and the mature actuality of the earlier arts of government:

The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.

(Hegel, 1967 [1821]: 13)

Ultimately, the most striking aspect of this account of the immanent logic and progressive unfolding of governmentality from the 16th century onwards must be Foucault's own well-documented opposition to such views, most notably in *The Order of Things* (1974a [1966]) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974b [1969]), but also in numerous interviews, essays and lectures (1980b [1975]; 1980c [1977]; 1980d [1976]; 1980e [1977]; 1996a [1966]; 1996b [1967]; 1996c [1968]; 1996d [1969]; 1998d [1971]; 1998e [1970]). What tends to disappear in such accounts—that is, of history as a coherent, rational development where spirit's immanent potentiality unfolds at the end of history to reveal its actuality—are discontinuities, historic losses, interruptions, displacements, breaks, ruptures, mutations: this is true of knowledge, sensibility, democracy and justice as one moves from one society to another. One also loses sight of political struggle, particularly the projects of the defeated. Ironically, Foucault took great pains to distance himself from all traditional histories which sought to elaborate the present 'as the outcome of a teleological progression' where

the logic of an immanent unfolding awaits only its historical reconstruction to be written into the annals of history (Foucault, 1980b [1975]: 49).

One finds further evidence of the neo-Hegelianism implicit in Foucault's work in his somewhat tendentious interpretation of the work of Guillaume de la Perrière. For example, Foucault takes up de la Perrière's understanding of government—and particularly as 'the right disposition of things'—as a discourse which anticipates later forms of governmentality, while transcending earlier forms, such as principality and sovereignty. A closer examination of de la Perrière's work, however, illustrates that the phrase in question is rather more derived from a Renaissance Christian humanist understanding of cosmic order, and located within what Foucault, in earlier works, described as an 'episteme of similitude' (Foucault, 1974a [1966]):

Ordered.

The Philosopher faith, That whereas there is no order, there must needs be confusion. As the good Housholder ought to set his house in order, and the Pilot the ship, so ought a good Magistrate to order a Cittie and Commonweale: for the Communaltie which by order is not brought to unitie, by confusion is destroyed. Order is the due disposing of al things: Order, as Saint *Augustine* saith, is a certaine disposition, giving due places, as well to such as are equall, as to such as are unequall. Saint *Paul* writing to the Corinthians, commandeth them that all things be disposed by order and honestie. The order of the heavens, of times and seasons, give us to understand (amongst manie other things) the wisdome of the Creator, who hath disposed all thinges divine, celestiall, and terrestriall, by an admirable order. As in this round globe, we see the heaven holdeth most high and honourable place, amongst elements the fire, gold amongst mettals, the head amongst the members of the body; likewise in every well ordered Commonweale, men of learning, noble and vertuous men, ought to be advaniced to the most honorable estates and offices, & to the worthiest dignities of a kingdome or citie; and foolish persons, and men of base estate ought not to have the administration of such offices as passe their capacitie. Wine of his owne nature doth comfort the spirites, but who so giveth overmuch unto a diseased person, he doth but increase his sicknesse, and maketh him worse: In like manner, when a King bestoweth estates and offices on men of no merite; of bad, he maketh them worse, and giveth them occasion to doe ill, whereof followeth the ruine of the state. The Venetians (as hath been saied before) to give some contentment unto mechanicall handicraftsmen, and others of base estate in their common-weale, leave unto them the execution of some meane offices, fortable to their degree and calling: which they doe to keepe them from murmuring, taking example from the Romanes, the especiall care of the Senate being, by pollitick and discrete meanes, to keepe the vulgar sort from mutinie: and notwithstanding all their policie, they did seldome keepe them in order, as is evident in *Titus Linius*, *Plutarch*, and other approved Authors. In bringing this to passe which I have set downe,

the citie shall be well ordered with profite. If we enter into the consideration of the nature of Bees, how well they are ordered in their hives, if we look into the spinning of the spiders webbe, if we marke well the graines that are in a Pineapple, if we note the members of a man's body, how well they are ordered, much more ought reason to persuade and teach us to range & bring the subjects of a good commonweale (who are reasonable creatures) into a decent order. Queene *Saba* comming to visite *Salomon*, wondred when shee beheld the order of his court, and of his traine, his officers and servants. What shall wee say more to shut up this title, when *Job* describeth a land of miserie, of calamitie, and of darknesse, he saith for a ful curse; That no Order remaineth therin. Wherefore, we may conclude, that a Kingdome, Commonweale, or citie, without Order, may rightly be compared to hell.

(de la Perrière, 1599: 22–23)

Then, in Foucault's essay 'Governmentality', he notes that the 16th- and 17th-century treatises on government inevitably invoke the metaphor of the ship as a way of describing 'what government has to do with' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93), and that while territory was the 'fundamental element in Machiavellian principality and in juridical sovereignty' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93), the use of this metaphor serves as confirmation that the object of the emerging 'art of government' is no longer territory, but rather 'a sort of complex composed of men and things' (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93). Foucault, in addition, employs a single statement from Guillaume de la Perrière's book, *Le Miroir Politique*—'government is the right disposition of things arranged so as to lead to a convenient end'—as a type of lynchpin for his argument that 'government' is not concerned with 'territory' per se but rather:

men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc.

(Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93)

Foucault sees an agreeable parallel between this understanding of government's sphere of influence and his interpretation of the metaphor of the ship. Foucault writes:

What does it mean to govern a ship? . . . [I]t consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors who are to be taken care of and the ship which is taken care of, and the cargo which is to be brought safely to port, and all those eventualities like winds, rocks, storms and so on; this is what characterizes the government of a ship.

(Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 93–4)

As we have seen, Foucault's selective quoting of de la Perrière—'government is the right disposition of things arranged so as to lead to a convenient end'—is taken somewhat out of context relative to the original passage in which it is embedded, and particularly in relation to its evident Christian humanist overtones. Additionally, Foucault's interpretation of the metaphor of the ship is also somewhat tendentious, and particularly relative to what is arguably an overly dichotomous rendering of, on the one hand, a view of 'territory' as the cornerstone of earlier forms of government, while on the other hand, a view of 'territory' as explicitly *not* fundamental to later governmental forms. De la Perrière's use of the ship-metaphor, however, focuses rather more on the pilot of the ship, and especially the extent to which the fate of the ruler-pilot is tied to the fate of those ruled by him:

Government presupposeth Order, forasmuch as without Order, there can be no due government. Government, is a right disposition of such things as are comitted to the charge of any man, to bring them to a meet end . . . There is necessarily required in everie Governour of a kingdome or commonweale, Wisdome, Patience, and Diligence: for like as a Pilot through his folly may easily be cause of shipwracke, so every Governour of a commonweale or citie, may by his indiscretion be the occasion of the overthrow of his subjects . . . Besides, a Governour ought to bee diligent: and if a carefull House-keeper (who will deserve the name of a good Husband) ought in his private familie to be himselfe first up, and last in bed, how much more diligent ought a Governour of a Cittie to be, where there are many houses, & a King over his kingdome, where there are many Citties? When the Prophet Jonas was overcome with sleepe, the Pilot rebuked him, shewing him that he should not have slept but waked, regarding the instant danger; and indeed he cast him into the sea, as being unprofitable in his shippe.

(de la Perrière, 1567: 24; 1599: 23–4)

What is of particular interest about a ship is that it is, in fact, a bounded territory and the fate of all those aboard, whatever their status, is mutually dependent upon its safe passage. In the above passage, and more generally contra Foucault, one finds an articulation of this mutual dependence and shared fate of the ruler and the ruled: they are, in fact, part of the same polity. Many of de la Perrière's counsels, hence, are counsels of prudence. De la Perrière also believes that since the lives of both the governor and the governed are connected to the security of a specific territory, it is for the common good, and in the common interest of all subjects of a territory to defend it—should the need arise—against such covetous neighbors as may come knocking:

Riches and prosperity in a Commonweale, doth stirre up the neighbours to assaile them, to robbe and spoile them, which they may easily do, if it be not stoutly defended by the subjects; who defendeth his countrey, defendeth himselfe and his owne company: And who so refuseth to die for the defence of the Commonweale, he dieth together with the ruine thereof: In as much as

the Commonweale being overthrowne, the Cittizens must needs come to ruine.

(de la Perriere, 1567: 21; 1599: 21)

Here, territory, and in contrast to Foucault's view, might equally be interpreted, so to speak, as 'the tie that binds', inasmuch as territory is the glue that binds the fate of the ruler and the ruled. That this may, perhaps, be more apparent under conditions of external threat, does not preclude such a dynamic from existing as unspoken or implicit during more prosperous and more peaceful times. As distinguished from sovereignty and principality, which can both be characterized by their singular relations to territory, de la Perrière depicts a relationship of mutuality between the governed and the governors and the territory that they share. That is, the governor and the governed share, relative to the territory they inhabit, a collective interest in its preservation. If there was, however, a shift to be seen in the writings of those concerned with successive forms of government, it was perhaps less founded upon an increasing benevolence towards the ruled than it was on a recognition by the governors that their lives and those of the governed were increasingly dependent upon the same 'ship of state'.<sup>5</sup>

Incidentally, this same 'ship of state'—or lack thereof—may be as revealing of contemporary relations and practices as it was for those of yore when Guillaume de la Perrière took up this metaphor to depict the practices of governing in his day, as he understood them to be. That is, the current de-regulatory environment encouraging global movement of capital, coupled with the economies of scale realized by capital through the increasingly prevalent trend of mergers and acquisitions, has resulted in conditions within which multinational corporations are able to operate with relative ease, provided that the ultimate arbiter—the shareholder's purse—grows heavy and heavier still. Under such conditions the global capital represented by multinational corporations and those who own and control such capital are a 'pilot' and 'ship' unto themselves: that is, and unlike conditions described by de la Perrière, while the fates of capital and shareholder are tied together, the fate of many of the powerful is no longer tied to that of particular territories or countries, and hence such 'pilots' are likely to be indifferent to the long-term interests and fate of those who *are* tied to those same countries. Given that the fate of capital and shareholders *is* tied together, it makes perfect sense, and as Pearce and Tombs (1998a) have argued elsewhere, that we find increasing pressure to organize the state, economy, society and the media according to neo-liberal protocols. Neo-liberalism is an ideology with a very tight fit indeed with the contemporary interests of many of the powerful.

The distorting effect of Foucault's grand narrative is further illuminated by the empirical evidence provided by Hunt (1996) and Curtis (1999). First, and contra Foucault, Hunt (1996) has shown how policing practices were to be found in much of Europe, particularly in city states, as early as



the late middle ages. Such practices were complex in their source, targets and rationale. Sometimes they were similar to police under the aegis of ‘reason of state’; at other times they were more governmental, associated with the democratic impulses of parliaments or the corporatist democratic practices of the guilds. This should sensitize us to the fact that history and forms of rule are not merely progressive and developmentally evolutionary.

Curtis (1999), additionally, illustrates how Foucault’s conceptualization of population is perhaps not quite so clear-cut as it would appear. On the one hand, Foucault represents population as the material form, and corporeal embodiment of the end of government—biopolitics, to be precise—wherein population is the ultimate target, subject and object of government action and of government knowledge (Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 101). On the other hand, it is population itself that becomes the logic and the organizing category utilized by Foucault to underwrite the transition—passage from the earlier arts of government to later ones. In the logic of this progressive tale of the practices of governance, population is the warrant that justifies and explains a transition from reason of state to a more autonomous art of government that Foucault describes as liberalism. Curtis (1999), however, highlights how much of the knowledge of population and associated governmental practices did not become an empirical reality until very recently indeed, and that both statistics and population had very discrete—synchronically defined—meanings at different periods. This should alert us to some of the difficulties inherent in conflating concepts, such as population, which may, in fact, exist at a conceptual or even pre-conceptual level with their subsequent and more material forms.

And yet one finds in some of Foucault’s earlier works a vision of history that does not fall prey to the lure of a Hegelian-inflected historicist logic. For example, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974b [1969]), it is Foucault’s general argument that traditional histories tend to unwittingly rely on coherent, logical frames that work to order incoming information and data in a particular way, *and* in the absence of our full understanding that such mechanisms are at play. These ordering frames have an affinity for stability, causal succession, linear progression, continuities of thought, and eventuate, ultimately, in ‘total histories’ or ‘total descriptions’ which draw ‘all phenomena around a single center—a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape’ (1974b [1969]: 10). One might usefully think of the ‘privileged status of the subject’ and the ‘primacy of the principle of continuity’ within traditional historical analysis as two such ordering frames which Foucault will ultimately seek to displace with his archaeological method.

In speaking of, for example, the ‘continuous progress of reason’ or of the ‘progressive advent of rationalism’ (1996d [1969]: 58), Foucault argues that traditional histories invariably set for themselves the impossible task of tracing back to an ever-receding origin, the seeds of the imposing present—a present understood as an inevitable and progressive culmination of all

that has gone before. Within such histories, furthermore, the voice of the subject is perhaps too well accompanied by the melody of continuity. That is, and as Foucault argues, continuous history provides a 'privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness' (1974b [1969]: 12) wherein the trajectory of the subject is underwritten by the notion of continuity, and where the subject, in turn—whether it is man, or humanity, or consciousness or reason—is the 'author and guarantor of this continuity' (1996d [1969]: 59), having constituted itself as the origin, fulcrum and logical endpoint of the history of thought. It is against these two notions that make 'historical analysis the discourse of the continuous' and 'human consciousness the original subject of all historical development' (1974b [1969]: 12) that Foucault offers up the form of analysis he designates as archaeology.

### **Subjective idealism**

In contrast to these early attempts by Foucault to delineate an approach to the history of thought that challenges the twin themes of a progressive history and of a sovereign subject, Foucault's later work on governmentality generally appeals to precisely these themes. That is, not only does Foucault employ—as suggested previously—the logic of a progressive and immanent unfolding to chronicle the development of the 'art of government' from the 16th century onwards, he also effectively preserves the sovereignty of the subject by grounding his chronology—and ultimately, his interpretation of liberalism—in an overly intentionalist reading of self-consciously produced, self-reflexive discourses. Here one finds a tale of the ever-progressing logic and rationality of the arts of government—as told through the extant reflections on this rationality by the governors and their advisors.

Foucault, for example, places a strong emphasis on reflection when discussing 'reason of state', grounding this discussion in an examination of the somewhat formal discourses elaborated in those countries which had difficulties in becoming states under conditions of state competition and religious strife. At the same time, however, he fails to pay attention to the well-developed but less reflexive practices of those countries where some form of state was already well established. In fact, Foucault relied almost exclusively on the self-reflexive discourses of those explicitly involved in practical political reflection for his analysis of the arts of government, thereby precluding, arguably, a certain potential for analysis which explicitly seeks to de-centre the sovereignty of the subject—a potential which, in previous works, he has spent considerable time and effort articulating as a critical alternative to the less-than-critical ego of the subject.

What warrant, however, is there for treating the statements of political practitioners, commentators and policy advisors as adequate accounts of the actual rationales of government practice? This raises the further question of how important, in fact, are the self-conscious reflexive dis-

courses of rulers in explaining what they actually do? While it is true that these reflexive discourses may play some role in practices of ruling, it is perhaps more likely that the foundations of such practices are emergent and contingent responses which are produced and reproduced over time in the form of recipes and formulae and institutional arrangements. Perhaps it is also true that enduring recipes are the ones that simply happened to 'work' for previous rulers responding to recurrent difficulties. That is, the rationales behind such recipes may have been thought through and yet may be no longer relevant, may have never been thought through or may now be forgotten.

The tapestry of the self-reflexivity of the ruler is a beguiling one, offering itself as both evidence and explanation, weaving 'dispersed events' into 'a community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflection' (Foucault, 1974b [1969]: 22): the unity and synthesis of pattern imposed upon multiple and disparate threads. Such patterns, as Foucault was so well aware—at least in earlier works—seem to take shape and develop according to a 'principle of cohesion that organizes the discourse and restores it to its hidden unity' (Foucault, 1974b [1969]: 149). One way to explore the problematic of reflexivity is to attempt a kind of unravelling of the tapestry into which it has been woven—perhaps allowing us to see more clearly how disparate threads so artfully disappear into coherent patterns. In this regard, another of the metaphors discussed by Foucault—namely, that of the shepherd—might fruitfully be juxtaposed against other potential interpretations in order to illustrate the extent to which self-reflexive statements can, in fact, mask as much as they describe.

We should note, that in his discussion of the shepherd and pastoral power, Foucault interprets Judaeo/Christian texts and practices as providing a concept of individualizing pastoral care which functions as the crucial relationship between the church and its members, and the ruler and the ruled. Foucault furthermore takes some care to claim that no such interpretation of relations of ruling occurred in Greek or Roman texts. While we claim no competency to judge the accuracy of this statement, we find in the work of Paul Veyne (1997 [1971]) an elaboration of this same metaphor in a significantly different way from that of Foucault, wherein Veyne overlays the metaphor of the shepherd with the end of Roman gladiator fighting in the 4th century AD as an exercise in how we might think about historical practices in a way that avoids ideological/idealist explanations.

Veyne (1997 [1971]) suggests that we consider how relations of rule in the Roman state might take place if rulers were to rule in a manner that approximated the pastoral responsibility of the shepherd to his flock. Here the essential task is to ensure the overall survival of the flock, notwithstanding its evident 'weakness and inertia' (Veyne, 1997 [1971]: 151), and despite such immanent dangers as may threaten this survival. In this instance, our human flock, the Roman people, requires leadership because 'we know better than it does what it needs' (Veyne, 1997 [1971]: 152).

This 'leadership', however, is largely limited to a type of optimization function: inasmuch as our chief concern is the overall strength of our flock, we attempt to keep the flock from dispersing while not abandoning too many of the weak, sick and hungry. We are not concerned, for example, with incestuous behaviour among our flock; indeed any issue of morality and immorality holds little interest for us with the critical proviso that our flock's strength not be diminished. Under these conditions our shepherd Roman emperors and senators are not concerned with the blood sport of gladiatorial games, in fact, such combat may have the useful effect of toughening up our flock. On the other hand, other public spectacles such as the theatre are prohibited, for they have a 'softening' effect upon our flock, and thus run counter to our objectives (Veyne, 1997 [1971]).

Of particular interest to us is how Veyne's alternative conceptualization of the pastoral function helps to illustrate how being a subject and being a ruler are both relations ordered around and produced by specific sets of practices which emerge out of the successful overcoming of contingently occurring but recurrent situations. Once these practices are well established both rulers and ruled may elaborate explanations for their actions, but these explanations may have little, if any, correspondence to the original set of practices from which the action in question arose. Thus I may say to my subjects: 'I give you bread because I love all of you', but do not think to say: 'I love you and feed you because you give me your strong bodies when I need them in time of war'; or, I may say to my ruler: 'I do what you tell me because I love you', but do not think to say: 'thank you for your kindness but I stay with you since nothing else is possible, I know my grandfather was flayed alive for disobeying your father'. In Veyne's words:

We are beginning to see what ideology is: a noble and vague style apt for idealizing practices while appearing to describe them. Ideology is an ample cloak that dissimulates the crooked and dissimilar contours of the real practices that succeed one another in history.

(Veyne, [1971] 1997: 156)

One need travel no further than the American South of the 1820s–1830s to see just how ample the cloak of ideology can be, masking coercion as humanity, torture as instruction, fatalism as loyalty. Said the slavemaster and Southern Statesman John C. Calhoun in 1837 to the Senate: '[Slavery] is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good'. In fact, he argues, the Negro has greatly benefited from slavery, precisely because there are few countries in which 'so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or . . . more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age' (1837 Senate speech of John Calhoun, cited in Hofstadter, 1967: 78). This 'paternal benevolence' however, was perhaps less benign than our eminent Statesman would have us believe, for in his own 'principality' he was not above the use of torture, albeit as a 'teachable moment': Opined

Calhoun of the 'lesson' to be 'taught' to Aleck, his runaway slave, upon the occasion of his recapture:

I wish you would have him lodged in jail for one week, to be fed on bread and water, and to employ some one for me to give him 30 lashes well laid on at the end of the time . . . I deem it necessary to our proper security to prevent the formation of the habit of running away, and I think it better to punish him before his return home than afterwards.

(Instructions left by John Calhoun for Aleck,  
cited in Hofstadter, 1967: 76)

Other accounts of slavery have suggested that there existed, between domestic slaves and their masters, relationships of 'gentleness, kind-hearted friendship and mutual loyalty' (Philips, 1918: 514, cited in Elkins, 1968: 11). While it is true that domestic slaves, having lived in intimate contact with their owners, sometimes developed emotional attachments to their masters and mistresses—to characterize such relationships as ones of 'mutual loyalty' is to ignore a larger point: namely that these mutual relationships and 'emotional economies' were constituted within 'complex articulations of repressive state apparatuses, . . . [and] an economic system based upon a race's monopolization of the means of production and subsistence' (Pearce, 1989: 125). What ruling class ideologies represented as relations of mutual friendship and loyalty would be understood much more ambivalently by the race of humans over whom they had legal ownership. Insofar as there were a lack of real alternatives to the domestic slave's conditions of existence, they may well have submitted somewhat fatalistically to, and made the best of, conditions over which they had no choice. However, once—in the course of the Civil War—the power of the state was broken, field slaves and domestic slaves left en masse. That slaves escaped when they could, suggests that even if some of them may have felt affection for their owners, to equate such affection with an active endorsement of their enslavement—by describing the bonds of slavery as ones of 'mutual loyalty'—is an ideological equation indeed (Pearce, 1989: 125).

### Theoretical impasses

Why then did Foucault end up over-emphasizing overt self-reflexive statements? Foucault had stumbled in his attempts to develop explanations that completely avoided any role for a subject that experienced self-reflexivity for he saw this as essentially humanist or psychoanalytic—both of which he rejected. This was relatively evident in *Discipline and Punish* (1979a [1975]) when, having spent much of the book describing the Prison as a laboratory for disciplinary practices, he is forced to recognize that it both failed in this aim and yet persisted as an institution. In his section on 'Illegalities and Delinquency' he ends up using an implicitly functionalist explanation for the institution's persistence. While it failed in one area, it still functioned—through the delinquency it produced—in the interests of

the system as a whole. First, it rendered the working class less dangerous by internally dividing it between the respectable and the criminal. Then, it provided a series of illicit services to the bourgeoisie, notably prostitutes, strike breakers and *agents provocateurs*. In *The History of Sexuality* he tried to explain the fact that power relations form 'comprehensive systems' where 'the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable' when agents neither control the state apparatuses nor 'make crucial decisions' by making an untenable system theoretic claim that power relations are 'intentional and non-subjective' (Foucault, 1979b [1976]: 95).

However, there are two texts where he more successfully deals with these issues. First, in 'The Confession of the Flesh' (1980c [1977]), he recognizes that nobody controls the totality of the social, and yet, at the same time, that different groups have different strategic capacities to take advantage of the unexpected, surprising effects of the operation of particular social apparatuses or *dispositifs*. Thus, when prison did not reform criminals but produced a delinquent subculture, the bourgeoisie, although disappointed in their original expectations, were well able to adapt. That is, if the bourgeoisie lost faith in the notion of criminals being reformed to become respectable citizens, they realized soon enough that within a network of ex-criminals a certain potential existed for the provision of illicit services including those that helped to secure order. In fact, immediately prior to the French Revolution, the police in Paris had employed 3000 spies, many of them criminals, including a sizeable number from the 20,000 or so then active prostitutes (Strayer, 1992: 20, 130). That the bourgeoisie were able to reactivate certain strategies and tactics in light of changing situations—but recurrent from the point of view of ruling groups—illustrates how they were able to re-utilize the delinquent milieu to their own ends as a 'perpetual process of *strategic elaboration*' (Foucault, 1980c [1977]: 195). It is essential at these moments to include in social explanations reference to agents who are capable of making calculations—but necessarily ones with an ever-changing 'bounded rationality'—and ones who *react to*, capitalize upon and rationalize their responses to whatever circumstances they find themselves caught in. Furthermore, in this text Foucault acknowledges that discourse can be deployed in different ways within the system of relations he describes as social apparatuses, including, for example, as a programme, a justifying rationale, something that masks a practice (Foucault, 1980c [1977]: 194–5).

What is usefully left open in Foucault's discussion of *dispositifs* is whether or not they are official and legitimate or unofficial and illegitimate, and whether or not they traverse official/non-official lines. The sets of arrangements discussed in 'illegalities and delinquency' clearly are traversal. Foucault discusses the issue of the disqualification of non-legitimate knowledges in his 'Two Lectures' (January 1980d [1976]) whereupon he also asserts the importance of subjugated knowledges. In *I Pierre Rivière* there is a fascinating example of this when the eponymous author reveals that he enacts a logic which had, in fact, been set up by what can be

described as a personalized and idiosyncratic *dispositif*, which he, as an autodidact *bricoleur*, constructed from a heterogeneous set of objects, and instruments (such as his birdkilling ‘calibene’), ideas, stories, memoirs, critiques (‘. . . I conjured up Bonaparte in 1815. I also said to myself: that man sent thousands to their death to satisfy mere caprices, is it not right therefore that I should [not] let a woman live who is disturbing my father’s peace and happiness’ (Pierre Rivière in Foucault, 1978 [1973]: 108)).<sup>6</sup> Indeed once we recognize that the social is traversed by official and unofficial *dispositifs* we realize that one cannot be explained without the other, a point well made in Pat O’Malley’s (1996) article ‘Indigenous Governance’.

### *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

It is in Foucault’s most Althusserian text, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974b [1969]), as has been argued elsewhere (see Pearce and Tombs, 1989; Pearce, 1998; Pearce and Woodiwiss, 2000), that he effectively illustrates how a conception of ideology as material and having determinate effects in no way commits us to a belief in discourse determinism, and/or that discourse develops over time through a process of immanent unfolding. The major axis of his argument is his concept of ‘discursive formation’. This can be identified:

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements . . . a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say . . . that we are dealing with a *discursive formation* . . . The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the *rules of formation*. The rules of formation are conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division.

(Foucault, 1974b [1969]: 38, emphasis in original)

These ‘rules of formation’ with respect to ‘objects’ are: their ‘surfaces of emergence’ or the institutional sites where they appear; the major ‘authorities of delimitation’ in these sites (e.g. professionals); and the ‘grids of specification’ such as the ‘body’, ‘psyche’ or ‘soul’ that these ‘authorities’ use to demarcate their areas of expertise (1974b [1969]: 40–2). The ‘rules’ with respect to the mode of statement or ‘enunciative modalities’ (cognitive status and authority) are: the identity of the qualified speakers; the institutional sites from whence they speak; and the modes of ‘interrogation’ they take up, such as listening, questioning or observing (1974b [1969]: 50–2). The ‘rules’ with respect to ‘concepts’ are: their order and forms of succession; their fields and forms of coexistence; and the ‘procedures of intervention’ for working within the conceptual field as instanced by

‘techniques of rewriting’, ‘methods of transcribing’ and ‘modes of translating’ (1974b [1969]: 56–9). Finally, the ‘rules’ with respect to themes or ‘strategies’ are: the determination of their points of diffraction and systematization; the identification of thematic authorities—whether these are located within the field of discourse involved, or are external to it and are therefore authorities by analogy; and the identification of ‘the *function* that the discourse under study must carry out *in a field of non-discursive practices*’ (1974b [1969]: 68 emphasis in original) and ‘*possible positions of desire*’ (1974b [1969]: 64–8, emphasis in original). Rules of formation, thus, can most usefully be thought of as ways in which the production and functioning of discursive formations come about.

Discursive formations always involve ‘positivities’ which have crossed an ‘epistemological threshold’—that is, they are delimited sets of statements which provide objects, types of authority (enunciative modes), concepts and themes (theoretical strategies) and sets of rules (e.g. for coherence or verification) that claim to provide standards of validity for knowledge. These discursive formations constitute a *savoir* that can subtend a range of discourses and discursive practices. Some of these may become *connaissances* by crossing a ‘threshold of scientificity’ and, some, by being able to exhibit their structures in an axiomatic form, also cross a ‘threshold of formalization’. Foucault furthermore suggests that within the putative unity of a discourse—such as that of political economy—there lies, in fact, a ‘dispersion of elements’. That is, Foucault argues:

This dispersion itself—with its gaps, its discontinuities, its entanglements, its incompatibilities, its replacements, and its substitutions—can be described in its uniqueness if one is able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts and theoretical options have been formed: if there really is a unity, it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of elements formed; it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation.

(1974b [1969]: 72)

Another aspect to consider are the relations which may exist between the discursive and the extra discursive (e.g. institutions, political and economic practices) in discursive formations. Here archaeology seeks to discover how the rules of formation that govern particular enunciative facts may be linked to extra-discursive systems. For example, in his earlier analysis of the *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault attempts to illustrate *not* ‘how political practice has determined the meaning and form of medical discourse, but how and in what form it takes part in its conditions of emergence, insertion and functioning’ (1974b [1969]: 163). All of these have their own genealogies and internal logics and hence they provide conditions of existence that may develop in a variety of different directions. The direction of development will change the conditions of existence of the



discursive formation and hence affect, but not necessarily directly determine, the way its discourses develop. There exists a relationship of mutual interdependence.

Furthermore, one discursive formation may be replaced by another and while, at times, this may be quite obvious, on other occasions, the change may be difficult to detect:

To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another . . . is to say that a general transformation of relations has occurred, but that does not necessarily alter all the elements; it is to say that statements are governed by new rules of formation, it is not to say that all objects or concepts, all enunciations or all theoretical choices disappear. . . . We must not forget that a rule of formation is neither the determination of an object, nor the characterization of a type of enunciation, nor the form or content of a concept, but the principle of their multiplicity and dispersion. One of these elements—or several of them—may remain identical . . . , yet belong to different systems of dispersion, and be governed by distinct laws of formation.

(1974b [1969]: 173)

The logic of this Foucauldian position is that any continuity in political discourse cannot be read as simply an immanent unfolding, or the increasing sophistication of the discourse. Rather such an unfolding will be an effect of the available repertoire of statements already produced by political discourses and the selection from it of elements which happen to work with dominant aspects of the extra-discursive relations within which it is imbricated. Foucault is emphatic in his argument that continuity ought not be treated 'as the support-element to which everything else is related': instead, the point is to illustrate the ways in which the continuous is formed and shaped according to the same rules and conditions as dispersion (1974b [1969]: 174). This 'stepping-back' from the ordering frame of continuity provides a gap of sorts where one can examine how the continuous itself 'enters . . . the field of discursive practice' (1974b [1969]: 175). Foucault made it clear that archaeological analysis could be extended to 'literary' or 'philosophical texts', and that knowledge 'is to be found not only in demonstrations, it can also be found in fiction, reflexion, narrative accounts, institutional regulations, and political decisions' (1974b [1969]: 183–4). This may offer intriguing possibilities, particularly if we are interested in potential alternatives to an over-reliance on the self-conscious, self-reflexive discourse by the rulers of the ruled. This may also be of crucial interest if we are interested in examining the phenomenon itself, for example, of the development of the rationales proffered by political leaders, or the development of religious mythologies/theologies or their combination. Liberalism, as political rationality, ideology and the end of history, is a prime candidate for such an analysis.

## Liberal democracy

It is perhaps ironic that Foucault was unable to avoid, in his essay on governmentality, the pitfalls and difficulties he so eloquently described in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Despite Foucault's representation of liberal democracy as the culminating point of an increasingly benevolent trajectory, such benevolence is not as democratically distributed as one might assume from a reading of Foucault's later work. In this instance, it behoves one to ask—benevolent for whom? That is, in contemporary capitalist societies governmental practices almost universally take place in situations of structural inequality, and hence contain elements of what Habermas would call 'repressive communication', because they are dialogical only for some groups and for many others are dialogical, if at all, only to a restricted degree. True, Foucault's model of communication and dialogue is unlike Habermas's. The latter advocates a communicative forum working as an ideal speech situation where all individuals put aside their interests and thus consensus can and should be achieved (Habermas, 1970, 1975). The former conceives of such a forum as an agonistic one in which each individual argues for his or her own interest, but can be intellectually challenged, and thus in dealing with these challenges, each and all can in principle develop their own positions, and, overall, a pragmatic compromise may be possible (Foucault, 1982; Simons, 1995). Both oppose the resolution of disagreement by *fiat*, by the dictates of 'power' (Pearce and Tombs, 1998b).

Now, within liberal discourse there have always been ways of differentiating between different members of a population—'we help you providing you help yourselves', 'providing you are sensible, reasonable, not deviant, not criminal etc., etc.'. The right to citizenship is always qualified by inclusions and exclusions. Such categories as these are deployed in a way that elides the structural context of the actions of individuals. As a somewhat more structurally sensitive Foucault himself said in relation to the recuperative capacity of liberal democratic discourse:

He steals because he is poor certainly, but we all know that all poor people don't steal. So for this individual to steal there has to be something wrong with him, and this is his character, his psyche, his upbringing, his unconscious, his desires.

(Foucault, 1980b [1975]: 44)

For an example of the marginalization of alternative discourses, one which is left somewhat under-emphasized in her own analysis, it is worth reading Barbara Cruikshank's article on 'Self-government and Self-esteem' since one discovers there that in California the organized official political discourse about self-esteem not only advocates that people should be trained in self-esteem but also that the development of self-esteem and *not* structural change in such areas as class, gender and racial inequality can provide a 'social vaccine' against 'crime, violence, substance abuse, teen

pregnancy, child abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and educational failure' (Cruikshank, 1996: 232). Here we have the marginalization of alternative discourses as a means of recuperation—power/knowledge indeed!

Furthermore, while in theory the legal system is universalistic, in practice, and particularly in its imbrication with other sets of social relations, it favours some and disadvantages others. This is relatively clear if we draw upon Hohfeld's distinctions between right-duty, liberty-'no-right', power-liability and immunity-disability (Hohfeld, 1913) to help examine the social forces actually at work in contemporary capitalist economies. Today, most enterprises are constructed through law as privileged, limited liability corporations, with their own legal personalities. The corporation's shareholders are personally immune from the consequences of its actions or its debts. Managers are responsible for the day-to-day activities of a corporation's factories, stores, offices, warehouses, and so on, and have the freedom and power to organize these, as well as a duty to ensure consistency with lawful company goals (including appropriate instructions to workers regarding their duties). Finally, its directors are legally responsible for determining its policy goals, organization and the kind of business it does, and thus have the power and the liberty, subject to their duties to their shareholders, to use assets appropriately.

The corporation and its officers have the liberty and power to hire and fire workers, to instruct them to perform lawful tasks, and to say when workers can have access to the workplace (hence the lawfulness of lock-outs). On the other hand, workers have no right, individually or collectively, to be hired, nor to refuse lawful managerial commands nor to use company property. Whereas capital has the liberty and power to dispose of its means of production, workers have no right to challenge such a decision even though they are personally 'liable' to become unemployed; indeed, they have a duty not to interfere with a company's lawful activities, to the extent that it has a right to sue them for the consequences of any such interference.

Now, even on the basis of such a schematic representation of the legal constitution of the corporation, it is evident that the individuals positioned in these relationships are provided with grossly differential capacities to formulate and realize their goals; and this is due to both the legal form and the economic assets that they possess. Most crudely, mainstream working-class men and women find themselves much more constrained in their economic activities than do corporate executives and shareholders. While the nation-state, partly through law, guarantees the conditions of existence of the corporate form, it also constitutes and reproduces the markets within which they operate, however 'free' these are claimed to be (Sayer, 1995).

Moreover, attempts to challenge these conditions of existence, and the constraints thereby imposed upon working men and women, are frequently met with state repression, through legal, economic and physical means. Such state attacks are, incidentally, in direct contrast to highly differential state responses to any 'challenges' posed to this legal and economic

ordering on the part of corporations, which routinely violate bourgeois law (Tombs, 1995). These aspects of social reality are hardly coincidental, and presented even summarily are an indication that the nature of contemporary legal forms must be grasped theoretically and empirically through their articulation with contemporary forms of capitalist states and social orders which are structured around class (Pearce and Tombs, 1998b). If there are difficulties in representing and theorizing relationships between state–law–economy, even in the relatively limited set of cases offered by western capitalist societies, then the realities that might be grasped by these theorizations and representations are not wished away through a failure to engage in them.

## Conclusion

Foucault so willingly walked out to the precipice of reason to illustrate in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that reason's penchant for coherence and internal logic eventuates in exactly that: coherent, logical frames or templates that order incoming information according to established protocols, allowing, additionally, the 'sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation' (Foucault, 1974b [1969]: 22). Foucault tried to interrupt the patterns of rationality, the endless repetitions in which we are collectively embroiled, so that we might see a gap, a break, an interruption, a space where we might attempt to see and think more clearly through the absence of imposition. That is, the gaps which Foucault sought were deliberate attempts to avoid the imposition of continuous histories and subject-centred understandings which not only cloud our understanding, but have a material effect in shaping our own knowledge of ourselves, and hence, of our possibilities. And yet Foucault never attempted to deny the materiality of our past, but rather denies the inevitability of those particular interpretations which serve as an over-fine shelter for the hubris of origin and the ego of the subject.

Such patterns as Foucault was attempting to interrupt are, perhaps, less easily analysed empirically, than they are described theoretically, as is illustrated by the difficulties in Foucault's later work on governmentality. Perhaps it is, as Foucault has alluded to elsewhere, that the template of continuity is more difficult to shrug off than might be supposed:

But to truly escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.

(Foucault, 1971 [1970]: 28)

What remains of value in Foucault's governmentality writings? First, he

is no doubt right that new ways of ruling do get created and they may depend upon new social and other technologies, although in some cases they may have been forgotten and recreated. In exploring these and other issues there is in Foucault's work a continuing and interesting development of a rich analytic of power. We find in Foucault's 'The Life of Infamous Men' (1979c [1977]) and 'The Confession of the Flesh' (1980c [1977]) early and complex displacements of the centrality of the juridico-discursive as a way of describing even Absolutist France. That such a complexification needs to be continued in relation to past and present societies Foucault himself indicated in the 'Governmentality' lecture when he wrote:

we need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle sovereignty, discipline, government which has as its primary target population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security.

(Foucault, 1991 [1978]: 102)

Alan Hunt's 'Governing the City' (Hunt, 1996) provides a good example of such work in his illustration of how policing practices in the Europe of the late Middle Ages were complex in their source, targets, rationales and articulations. More, similar work remains to be undertaken.

One possible direction for such work would be a creative synthesis of aspects of Foucault's work and ongoing work in the Marxist tradition. Some scholars working with Althusserian concepts (see Callari and Ruccio, 1996; Kayatekin and Ruccio, 1998), have recently explored the relation between the diverse forms of constitution of subjectivities and class politics. Indeed it is notable that Veyne's (1997 [1971]) account of Foucault's work, one written in consultation with him, is very close indeed to the aleatory materialism of Althusser's later years (Navarro, 1988: 34–5). We should perhaps note that in his 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', when discussing 'effective history', Foucault quotes approvingly Nietzsche's view that there is only 'the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance' (Foucault, 1998d [1971]: 381). Althusser's deployment of the category 'practice' in his discussion of the relationship between ideology and science (Althusser, 1969 [1966]), his discussion of the process of 'interpellation' by which subjects misperceive themselves as the punctual sources of the ideal motives which allegedly determine their actions (Althusser, 1984 [1970]), and his discussion of the 'society effect' produced by heteronomous social relations (Althusser and Balibar, 1970 [1968]), all provide ways to think these issues which are in many ways compatible with, but also go beyond, Veyne's Weberian Nietzscheanism and Foucault's idealism. Another possible direction is to integrate Foucault's more historical and his more literary writings by teasing out the relationship between *Madness and Civilization* and his essays on Bataille (1998a [1963]), Klossowski (1998b [1964]) and

Blanchot (1998c [1966]) and integrating this with a radical Durkheimianism (see Pearce, 1989; Gane, 1992). Indeed, revisiting one of his earliest works, 'Dream, Imagination and Existence' (1984b [1954]), and working with its more Heideggerian categories (masked by its overt Husserlianism) might help us to discover the 'non-intentional subjectivity' which is in accord with all of these positions. These, however, are projects for another time and place.

## Notes

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1. We were stimulated to follow this line of argument by reading both John Rajchman (1985) and Bruce Curtis (1999). We should perhaps mention that we are not suggesting that Foucault's texts simply replicate those of Hegel but rather that some of them are premised on a similar logic to aspects of Hegel's system of thought. It is an interesting coincidence that in *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* Hegel wrote 'that the world historic realms are the following: (1) the Oriental, (2) the Greek, (3) the Roman, (4) the Germanic [i.e. Protestant Christianity]' (Hegel, 1967 [1821]: 220) and that some of the major foci of Foucault's later work were 'Oriental' (in his case Jewish), 'Greek', 'Roman' and Christian, post-Reformation, societies.
2. We have deliberately restricted our discussion to Foucault's own work and we have only made two references to the voluminous Anglo-Foucauldian 'governmentality' literature. This was a conscious decision since this literature is, in a sense, secondary. It legitimates itself in relation to Foucault's texts but does not generally provide an adequate critical assessment of these. In this article we hope to challenge conventional representations and assessments of Foucault (see also Palmer and Pearce, 1983; Pearce, 1988; Pearce and Tombs, 1998a, 1998b; Pearce and Woodiwiss, 2000).
3. N.B. this is page 23 in the 1567 edition of de la Perrière's *Le Miroir Politique*.
4. John Rajchman (1985) has demonstrated that significant aspects of Foucault's work, up to and culminating in *Les Mots et les Choses* (*The Order of Things* (1974a [1966])) were also subtended by a Hegelian discourse, albeit one with affinities to slightly different aspects of Hegel's thought. Thus, Rajchman argues, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault writing from 'our' modern perspective produces a narrative in which art had a particularly privileged place vis-à-vis epistemes and one that, surprisingly—given Foucault's opposition to the Enlightenment idea of progress in science—functioned with a hidden teleology. Key works of art are about the limits

and moments of transformation of, particularly of the nature of signification in, epistemes.

In periods of ‘break’ or ‘rupture’ (as in our period) literature and painting articulate or relate the ‘discontinuous’ configurations, until in the modern period they assume their ‘avant-garde’ role . . .

. . . But the ‘most important’ is the last development, in which this ‘being’ itself is the issue: ‘the appearance of literature, of literature as such . . . [that] can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being . . . [E]criture is what the classical period had to cover over.

(Rajchman, 1985: 25–7)

Thus particular artistic works are allegories of the deep arrangements that make knowledge possible and in modern avant-gardist literature we find revealed the secret of the whole process and this literature may ultimately contribute to ‘a leap towards a wholly new form of thought’ (Foucault, 1971: 397). Compare this with:

A new epoch has arisen in the world. Finite self-consciousness has ceased to be finite; and in this way absolute self-consciousness has, on the other hand, attained to the reality which it lacked before. This is the whole history of the world up to the present time, and the history of philosophy in particular . . . For it becomes such only as the result of knowing itself to be absolute spirit, and this it knows in real scientific knowledge . . . This then is the standpoint of the present day.

(‘Lectures in Philosophy of History’, cited in Tucker, 1961: 56)

Yet, even in *The Order of Things* itself, there was an uneasiness about this idealist stress on language. For, in this text, Foucault also suggests that the return of language is not:

a folding back of thought upon itself in the movement by which it emancipates itself from all content, or a narcissism occurring within a literature freeing itself at last from what it has to say in order to speak henceforth only about the fact that it is language stripped naked.

(Foucault, 1971: 384)

He says, further, that: ‘It would be false to see in this general indication of our experience, which may be termed “formalism”, the sign of a drying up, of a rarefaction of thought losing its capacity for re-apprehending the plenitude of contents.’ (Foucault, 1971: 384)

5. How general was such a feeling is suggested by the argument in the next century by the theorist of Absolutism, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, that an advantage of Monarchical government was ‘that it makes the authorities who guide the state the ones most interested in its preservation. The prince who works for the state works for children, and the love he bears this kingdom, mixed with that he has for his family, becomes natural to him’ (Bossuet, 1990 [1670]: Second Book, tenth proposition: 50).

6. We have interpolated the word [not] because it is required to make sense of this passage. One also finds in Foucault's edited dossier on Pierre Rivière a wonderful exemplification of different medical discourses about 'la folie' traversing different epistemes and discourses—e.g. classical, clinical, eugenic (see Pearce and Woodiwiss, 2000).

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