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ARTICLE

The Appearance of an Interminable Natural History and its Ends Foucault's Lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* at the Collège de France 1979

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. THE APPEARANCE OF GOVERNMENTALITY AND ITS UNYIELDING HISTORICITY

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

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

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

Initiated around the time of the Church Fathers,¹⁴ the Christian pastoral system continued to exist throughout the 12 catholic centuries following the creation of the Church. During this time, the pastoral structure of governmental rationality was

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In extension, the pastoral government of people no longer seemed so extensive or definitive. The government people exerted over each other had to be something other and

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

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

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

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

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

It would appear that reasons of state always rejected notions of justice and reasonableness in order to promote the interest of the state. However, in the literature, the term 'state' was viewed as positive and poignant. 'State' was understood as reliable government of a people. The state was able to establish security and order. In the reason of state, one sought to understand what had to be done to establish, maintain, and extend

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to distinguish violence from brutality. Sheer brutality is arbitrary and therefore also irrational and contemptible. However, there is no contradiction between violence and rationality. Violence is rational insofar as it is a necessity required by specific situations. In violence, the necessity of *raison d'état* thus appears in its purest form.

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

2. THE BIRTH OF BIOPOLITICS: A TURNING-POINT

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

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

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

Raison d'état leads to the development of a new governmental technology directed at the internal organization of states that went by the name of 'police.'²³ This was not yet understood as a delimited state authority that was given the task to ensure the public's safety and security.²⁴ Instead, the name refers to the technologies for individual and

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

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

²⁴ "The notion of police, even in France today, is frequently misunderstood. When one speaks to a Frenchman about police, he can only think of people in uniform or in the secret service. In the 17th and 18th centuries,

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

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

2.2. The biopolitics of the population

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

'police' signified a program of government rationality. This can be characterized as a project to create a system of regulation of the general conduct of individuals whereby everything would be controlled to the point of self-sustenance, without the need of intervention" (Foucault, "Espace, savoir, pouvoir" [1982] (1994), 272/Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," [1982] (2000), 351).

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

²⁶ Mercantilism concerns a number of ideas about balancing trade, which influenced European policies in the 17th and most of the 18th century. Thomas Mun's (1571–1641) *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (1664) was an important contribution to this tradition. Louis XIV's finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) implemented policies based on mercantilist ideas. Foucault views mercantilism and Colbertism as novel approaches to solving the problem of governmentality, rather than economical doctrines that anticipated the science of economics per se.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. THE FRUGALITY OF GOVERNMENT IN CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

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

The overruling principle of *raison d'état* being the maximizing of the state’s strength, Foucault primarily sees mercantilism less as proto-economic doctrine than as a particular

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The issue of the frugality of government is addressed in both French and British political thought around 1800, where a number of prominent writers rejected the idea that natural social developments must necessarily be managed or governed. These writers did not, therefore, seek to create a design for the best society but rather concentrated on existing governmentality in order to address and exert an influence on it. This was a

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

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

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

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

radical and provocative development for the time insofar as it was not only a critique pointing to the faults of the practice of government but also a statement that pointed out that governments ignored the important guidelines for government and simply governed too much or in an excessive manner. Such a line of reasoning, which can be found in thinkers such as François Quesnay (1694–1774), Adam Smith (1723–1799), and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), was radical but was also presented as containing a number of practical ideas for concrete reforms, before they became unified into a coherent theory.

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

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

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

A fundamental transformation of significant importance occurred in the 18th century that enabled the formulation of a liberal art of government. By way of 18th-century political economy, the market was reconfigured as a place with a certain naturalness that one had to be knowledgeable about. From being an *ordre artificiel*, established and regulated through mercantilist policies, the market had become an *ordre naturel*. From being a site of jurisdiction, the market had become a site for the formation of a “normal,” “good,” “natural,” or “true price,” that is, a price that “fluctuates around the value of the product” and is determined by the interplay between the costs of production and the

⁴⁴ François Quesnay, “Maximes générales du gouvernement économique d’un royaume agricole” [1978], in *Œuvres Économiques complètes et autres textes*. Vol. I. (2005), 571; my translation.

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

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

concrete demand rather than notions of justness.⁴⁷ To the extent that prices were formed through “the natural mechanisms of the market they constitute a standard of truth which enables us to discern which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous.”⁴⁸ In this sense, the market had become a “regime of veridiction” as to the governmental practice – not because political economy as such tells the truth to government but because political economy points to the site where a government needs to look “to find the principle of truth of its own governmental practice.”⁴⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

of public authorities, between basic rights and the independence of the governed.”⁵³ From directly intervening in and regulating things, men and wealth with the aim of maximizing the state’s strength, government should only deal with these insofar as they are of interest to somebody. Hence, as Foucault states, government “is only interested in interest.”⁵⁴ Still, and notably, government “must not obstruct the interplay of individual interest,” not only because of respect for freedom of circulation and self-regulation of the population but also because it is impossible for government to have full knowledge of the logic of this multiplicity of interests it seeks to encourage.⁵⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Foucault makes it a crucial point that it is misleading to confine liberalism to a pure and simple economic or political doctrine. Instead, liberalism is to be perceived as a far more general phenomenon, a new decisive turn within the art of government, insofar as it is characterized by the three salient features articulated by him: an art of government pledging its faith to the veridiction of the market, limiting itself by the calculation of governmental utility and positioning Europe as a region within an unlimited and never-ending exchange and competition. Moreover, rather than liberalism understood as a politico-economic doctrine simply asserting the freedom of the individual per se or recognizing the essential, basic natural rights of individuals, this liberal art of government distinguishes itself by another fundamental feature: Instead of being perceived as an orthodox doctrine proclaiming specific rights or the juridical freedom of the individual, the liberal art of government should be viewed as characterized by *naturalism*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

of the social fabric is at the same time that which produces the principle of historical transformation."⁶⁴

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

4. FORMS OF HISTORICITY

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

4.1 The appearance of an open-ended natural history

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

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

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

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

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

During the pre-history of governmentality as it came to the fore in pastoral power, the exercise of power and rule when understood as a protective shepherding continued to be perceived within a cosmo-theological continuum; and until the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modernity, the exercise of power thus continued to be regulated by the obligation to serve and render a more basic fundamental truth.⁶⁸ Here, human beings and the ruler had to take stock of and measure up to a world governed by final causes. The world governed in a pastoral fashion was a world governed to a system of salvation that culminated in man, but where men had to live in this world above all with the aim of passing on to another world.⁶⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This first rationalization of the art of government in the form of “the rationality of the sovereign state”⁷⁵ committed governmentality to follow guidelines that were not simply internal to government itself. Rather, the rationalization of government admonished government to adjust itself to the guiding principles that its privileged object of intervention, the state and the augmentation of its artificial reality under the auspices of sovereignty, provided. Nevertheless, this initial stage of governmentality raised the question of a proper acquaintance with the forces and the specific logic of this relative artificial reality under development.

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

Already with the first stage in the rationalization of government, the reason of state opened a new kind of historicity. The obliging perspective of government having to govern and cope with an open-ended and merciless secular history challenged the idea of finding one’s bearings and leading the flock ahead within the existing framework of a cosmo-theological world order. In the second stage of the rationalization of government, liberalism made it plain that a guiding principle for the series of forms of this never-ending history would be the logic that appears when the participants in this history each

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

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

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

follow their individual interests blind to the over-all pattern and perspective of this history still coming into being. This idea of a global historicity arising in and through a motor that would be “the perfectly logical, decipherable, and identifiable form or series of forms arising from blind initiatives, egoistic interests, and calculations which individuals only ever see in terms of themselves,” would become the “history of humanity in its globalizing effects,” a globalizing history of humanity that would spread on a global scale.⁷⁸ At the end of the day, the idea of an ongoing, never-ending globalizing natural-history generated by an interaction rending and re-weaving the social tissue (and demanding new forms of government) replaces the idea of a fall from the original transparency of a state of nature, and the corresponding demand for the restoration of original nature, in the establishment of a just empire and at the end of time.

4.2. Freedom, dangerousness and security

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

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

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

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

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

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

The precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all. The problem of security is the protection of the collective interest against individual interests. Conversely, individual interests have to be protected against everything that could be seen as an encroachment of the collective interest.⁸²

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

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

With liberalism, rationality of government not only becomes embedded in and committed to the necessity of a never-ending secular and merciless tragic history as it came to the fore with the reason of state; indeed, with liberal thought, the history of governmentality concludes in an unending historicity that is even one of an ongoing and still accentuated crisis. This experience of an ongoing crisis is closely related to the experience that the historicity that is generated as the participants each follow their own

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

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

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

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

rationality, blind to the overall pattern, constantly upsets and undermines what seems to be the very conditions of possibility for this exchange, wherefore it constantly generates its own dangerousity that necessitates amendment and strategies of security. In this, the governmentality of liberalism takes the modern form of relentless tragic history, appearing in connection with the reason of state, to the next level. With liberalism, thus, a crisis takes a specific accentuated form that is not limited to the liberal art of government but has marked the modern form of government since it began to become perceptible with the reason of state, its police and management of the welfare of the population. Consequently, this crisis should in retrospect be understood as “a crisis of the general apparatus of government.”⁸⁵

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

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