

Constituting Another Foucault Effect. Foucault on States and Statecraft

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The ‘Foucault effect’ documented here is – briefly stated – the making visible, through a particular perspective in the history of the present, of the different ways in which an activity or art called *government* has been made thinkable and practical. ... [W]hat ... our authors ... share is a particular exploratory passion, a striving to capture and analyze, across a range of its modern manifestations (reason of state, police, liberalism, security, social economy, insurance, *solidarisme*, welfare, risk management and others) a dimension of historical existence which Michel Foucault, perhaps, did most to isolate and describe (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991b: ix; see also Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996: 4).

The Foucault effect described above represents just one form of encounter with a particular subset of Foucault’s work – specifically his lecture courses, essays, talks, interviews and occasional remarks on governmentality and the art of government – interpreted in relation to a particular set of concerns – the conduct of conduct – in a distinct theoretical and political conjuncture – the decline of official Marxism,¹ the crisis of the post-war welfare state, and the turn towards neo-liberalism or, for some Anglo-Foucauldians, advanced liberalism. It refers primarily to the reception and appropriation of Foucault’s work to generate a distinctive theoretical, epistemological, and methodological approach² to empirical studies, both historical and contemporary, of technologies and practices oriented to ‘the conduct of conduct’ (for two good overviews, see Rose, O’Malley and Valverde 2006 and Rose and Miller 2008). It has had an important theoretical impact and has also been invoked to justify rejecting Marxist political economy and, more generally, to invalidate any ‘state theory’ that takes the state for granted as its theoretical object. Yet this interpretation overlooks Foucault’s continued, if often unstated, adoption of

key Marxian insights and his concern with the state as a (if not *the*) crucial site for the ‘institutional integration’ of power relations (cf. Foucault 1979b: 96; on Foucault and Marx, see Jessop 2007; Paolucci 2003).

This particular Foucault effect, which might more properly be termed the ‘*Anglo-Foucauldian effect*’, is only one among many critical effects of the work of Foucault and his French associates in philosophy, history, geography, and other branches of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. It can be contrasted with another ‘Foucault effect’ grounded in a different reading and appropriation of the great French scholar’s concern with the strategic codification of power relations in and through the state and the art of government considered as statecraft. For, while the Anglo-Foucauldian effect produced the increasingly heterogeneous but still one-sided and empiricist³ field of ‘governmentality studies’, another Foucault effect is the integration of governmentality and the art of government into critical but non-essentialist accounts of the state that continue to see the latter as a valid object of theoretical analysis and political practice. Whereas Miller and Rose pioneered the use of Foucault to study governmentality within but also, and more importantly, ‘beyond the state’, others focus on Foucault’s careful analyses of the role of governmental practices as an integral part of the overall exercise of state power since the eighteenth century. While they do not reject claims about the governmentalization of the state, they also explore the ‘meta-governance’ of governmental practices in and through the efforts of certain political forces to pursue specific state projects. After briefly presenting the ‘Anglo-Foucauldian effect’, I explore this other Foucault effect and locate it in Foucault’s own work on the role of the state in different periods in the strategic codification and institutional integration of power relations (1977b: 122, 216-17; 1979b: 96; 2003b: 30-1, 88; 2008a: 108-109; 2008b: *passim*).

The Anglo-Foucauldian Effect

The self-described Foucault effect is associated with scholars from Australia, Canada, and the USA as well as the United Kingdom who have been described as forming an ‘Anglo-Foucauldian school’. Rose and Miller, two of its key figures, write that it comprises ‘an informal thought community that seeks to craft some tools through which to understand how our present had been assembled’ (2008: 8). Anglo-Foucauldians do not aim to be Foucault scholars but selectively apply his initial insights on governmentality to new areas. They draw on *Discipline and Punish* (1977a) and the lecture on government from his 1977-78 course at the Collège de France, which appeared, out of context, in English in 1979 (Foucault 1979a; also 1991). Interestingly, this lecture was published in English five years earlier than in French, leading to a stronger response in the Anglophone than Francophone world, where his ideas on governmentality initially aroused little interest (Donzelot and Gordon 2008: 48; cf. Meyet 2003). This shared Anglophone appreciation is reflected in the rise of a distinctive academic field: governmentality studies. The coherence of this field rests on its narrow understanding of governmentality and resulting neglect of its place in Foucault’s intellectual and political reflections – including its import for the logic of capital and forms of political domination.

The scholars who initiated the Anglo-Foucauldian effect approved of Foucault’s apparent rejection of the state as a decisive political agent and interpreted governmentality as a *decentered* rather than centered process (cf. O’Malley, Shearing and Weir 1997: 501). This is reflected in Rose and Miller’s claim that the governmentality perspective focuses empirically on ‘forms of power without a centre, or rather with multiple centers, power that was productive of meanings, of interventions, of entities, of processes, of objects, of written traces and of lives’ (2008: 9). This involves a principled refusal to equate government with the state, understood as a centralized locus of rule, and focuses on how programmes and practices of rule are applied in

micro-settings, including the level of individual subjects. In short, government is the decentred ‘calculated administration of life’ (Rose and Valverde 1998). Thus Anglo-Foucauldian scholars aim to decompose power into political rationalities, governmental programmes, technologies and techniques of government (Miller and Rose 1990; O’Malley 1992; Rose 1999).

Anglo-Foucauldian Methodology: From Why to How

In discussing power, Foucault distinguished between why and how questions (1982: 216-17; 1979b: 97; 2003b: 24, 28-34) and declared a preference for how over why and what questions on the grounds that the latter take the nature and existence of power for granted.⁴ This distinction informs Rose and Miller’s account of the key Anglo-Foucauldian move. Thus, whereas theorists of the state posed ‘why’-type questions, they posed ‘how’-type questions (Rose and Miller 2008: 6; cf. Dean 2000: 23-9). They were more interested in the ‘art of government’ than in some abstract logic of a state machine. The aim was to concentrate on *how the state worked*, not on its grand projects and leading figures, but on *how the state penetrated and organized the wider social formation* by projecting state power through procedures of causal multiplication (Rose and Miller 2008: 7, citing Foucault 1996: 277). But even here governmentalist follow Anglo-Foucauldian principles in their concern to decompose the state into distinct apparatuses, branches, departments, or other units rather than treating it as a unified agent (see below).

While this focus on ‘how’ questions adequately reflects Foucault’s initial emphasis on the micro-physics of (disciplinary) power aimed at the individual body at the expense of the macro-physics of (monarchical) power associated with the king’s body (cf. 2003b: 34-7, 44-6; 2006: 28, 44f), it neglects the extent to Foucault will later develop a new macrophysics of state power that does not equate the state entirely with sovereign power but explores it as an emergent and vital strategic site for coordinating multiple arts of government.

Moreover, even in his early accounts of the micro-physics of power, Foucault called for an *ascending* analysis of power concerned with the mobilization and assemblage of local power networks into more global projects and structures (see below; cf. Wickham 1983). An overemphasis on how questions also tends to ignore Foucault's continuing interest in how various micro-technologies intensify the exercise of macro-power (1977a; 2003a: 49, 87, 193; cf. Nealon 2008) as well as his later interest in grand projects and leading figures and in the processes and practices of state formation, and state practices. Indeed, it would be more accurate to state that Foucault rejected those 'why' questions that tried to explain the state and its actions in terms of some juridical, economic, functionalist or otherwise essentialist account of *the* State and/or in terms of the personal motives or interests of specific power holders. He was more than prepared, as we will see below, to explore other types of 'why' question concerning the genealogy of states, their transformation, and their significance as strategic players in international and national politics.

The Anglo-Foucauldian critique of the state is also epistemological, i.e., a critique of the oppositions between state and civil society, public and private, government and market, coercion and consent, sovereignty and autonomy, and so on that shape so much discussion about the state. For such oppositions do not grasp the proliferation of 'shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct' (Miller and Rose 1990: 172). They also make it hard to capture how neo-liberalism reorganizes public-private rationalities and realigns them through new technologies of government and subjectivation. Included here are new forms of market and marketization to replace collective provision and mechanisms of social solidarity and the transformation of citizens with social rights into flexible, entrepreneurial individuals and/or self-responsible, active citizens. Crucial here are diverse projects, plans, and projects that seek 'to administer the lives of others in the light of conceptions

of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient or profitable' (Miller and Rose 1990). Another crucial Foucauldian theme in governmentality studies is that 'government is a domain of cognition, calculation, experimentation and evaluation' and therefore strongly lined to the production of knowledge(s) that enable the authoritative regulation of individuals, groups, organizations and populations (Rose and Miller 1992). Noting these affinities between Anglo-Foucauldian analyses and Foucault's work does not mean that they have followed his approach faithfully – which would be hard precisely because of its discontinuities and his refusal to identify a specific, consistent intellectual project. But there are certainly costs attached to the particular reading favoured by these students of governmentality. I explore these in the next section.

From the State to Governmentality

Anglo-Foucauldians reject, along with Foucault, the fetishization of the state as a thing or as a subject. Miller and Rose argue that 'the analysis of modern "government" needs to pay particular attention to the role accorded to "indirect" mechanisms for aligning economic, social and personal conduct with socio-political objectives' (1990: 76). They add that:

[t]his way of investigating the exercise of political rule has a number of advantages. Firstly, it refuses the reduction of political power to the actions of a State, the latter construed as a relatively coherent and calculating political subject. Instead of viewing rule in terms of a State that extends its sway throughout society by means of a ramifying apparatus of control, the notion of government draws attention to the diversity of forces and groups that have, in heterogeneous ways, sought to regulate the lives of individuals and the conditions within particular national territories in pursuit of various goals. Rather than 'the State' giving rise to government, the state becomes a particular

form that government has taken, and one that does not exhaust the field of calculations and interventions that constitute it (ibidem: 77).

This requires special attention to problematization, i.e., the discursive construction of problems requiring governmental action. In economic policy, for example, one should study the conditions that made it 'possible to conceive of a specifically economic domain composed of various economic entities with their own laws and processes that were amenable to rational knowledge and calculation, and hence to various forms of regulatory intervention' (Miller and Rose 1990: 79). Political economy becomes possible when the 'economy' is imagined as a feasible object of economic calculation, management, and governance (ibidem: 81).⁵ This depends in part on intellectual technologies that construct an object of governance out of the complex field of the economic that is capable of being known and administered through specific techniques and that can be linked to broader ethico-political visions of the national interest, public virtue, or the good life as well as to individual desires and aspirations (Miller and Rose 1990: 80).

This approach is reflected in Anglo-Foucauldian work on the periodization and practices of liberalism. This provides an anti-economistic reading that prioritizes governmental practices rather than economic interests. Indeed, in contrast to the critical realist approach of Marxist political economy, with its concern for underlying mechanisms and interests, and Foucault's own work, with its depth ontology,⁶ much Anglo-Foucauldian scholarship could be read as *critical actualist*. For it tends to decipher the complex articulation of practices and events at the level of the actual and to avoid the search for underlying mechanisms and motives. There are affinities here with Actor Network Theory's refusal of explanation in favour of thick description or continually expanding 'ex-plication' (Latour 1997). Thus Anglo-Foucauldians focus on the details of neo-liberal problematizations of the crisis of the social state (social liberalism) and shun explanation, especially when couched in

terms of capitalist dynamics or state crisis. Of special interest (and in line in this respect with Foucauldian reasoning) are the ways in which forms of liberalism differ in terms of how they imagine, define, and value the concept of freedom and utilize the capacities of ‘free subjects’.

From Governmentality to the State in the Work of Foucault

Foucault’s analyses of disciplinary power and the art of government should be read as part of his evolving intellectual project. Yet Anglo-Foucauldians tend to interpret them as a definitive statement of his opposition to macro-theorization and, relatedly, to any concern with how micro-powers were assembled into bigger programmes and projects (cf. Kempa and Singh 2008: 340). Yet Foucault himself noted:

I have not studied and do not want to study the development of real governmental practice by determining the particular situations it deals with, the problems raised, the tactics chosen, the instruments employed, forged, or remodeled, and so forth. I wanted to study the art of governing, that is to say, the reasoned way of governing best and, at the same time, reflection on the best possible way of governing. That is to say, I have tried to grasp the level of reflection in the practice of government and on the practice of government. ... to grasp the way in which this practice that consists in governing was conceptualized both within and outside government, and anyway as close as possible to governmental practice. ... In short, we could call this the study of the rationalization of government practice in the exercise of political sovereignty (2008b: 2).

This comment from 1978 seems to indicate that Foucault was unwittingly distancing himself in advance from governmentality studies, especially as he also linked the emergence of governmentality or governmental practices to the

macroscopic organization of the state and reflection on the government of government. He also argues for a combination of micro- and macro-analyses, presenting his later work on liberalism as a scaling up of his previous micro-analytics of power to macro-level questions about the state and political economy (2008b: 186; see below). Whilst noting that many important works by Foucault were not yet published in English as the Anglo-Foucauldian approach was taking shape in the early 1990s, we should not ignore the significance of this one-sided reading for the nature and significance of the ‘Anglo-Foucauldian effect’.

The distinction between the why and how questions noted by Foucault and since reproduced assiduously and one-sidedly by Anglo-Foucauldian scholars is also relevant here. For, in contrast to the latter, Foucault himself explored not only the generalization of the conduct of conduct across diverse spheres of society but also studied how specific governmental practices and regimes were articulated into broader economic and political projects. Thus he continued to argue into the late 1970s that capitalism had penetrated deeply into our existence, especially as it required diverse techniques of power to enable capital to exploit people’s bodies and their time, transforming them into labour power and labour time respectively to create surplus profit (see, for example, 1977a: 163-4, 174-5, 218-23; 1979b: 37, 120-4, 140-1; 2003b: 32-7; 2008a: 338, 347; 2008b: 220-2). On this basis, one might expect Foucault to differ from the Anglo-Foucauldians on the import of changes in governmentality for the logic of capital accumulation and the nature of political domination as exercised in and through the state. This is what we find.

Thus, as Foucault’s theoretical interests shifted from the micro-physics of the disciplinary society and its anatomo-politics of the body to the more general strategic codification of a plurality of discourses, practices, technologies of power, and institutional ensembles around a specific governmental rationality concerned with the social body (bio-power) in a consolidated capitalist

society, we can find a space opening up for Foucauldian analyses of sovereignty, territorial statehood, and state power and for less well-substantiated claims about their articulation to the logic of capital accumulation.⁷ As Kelly notes:

The concept of government appears in Foucault's thought as an attempt to deal with what his earlier analysis of power relations had deliberately bracketed, namely state power, as well as the other kinds of power which can be called governmental ... Having removed the state's status as the central concern of political thought in his earlier work, Foucault now moves towards understanding the state in the specific role that it actually does have in networks of power (Kelly 2009: 61-2)

The scope for integrating the study of sovereignty, statehood, and state power is reinforced when we recall Foucault's announcement that, if he could alter the title and theme of his 1977-1978 course, he would no longer refer to 'security, territory, population' but to the 'history of governmentality'. He would concentrate on 'government, population, political economy', which 'form a solid series that has certainly not been dismantled even today' (2008a: 108). Thus sovereignty-territory-security moves to the margins of Foucault's theoretical concerns even though he acknowledges the continued importance of this complex into the 20th century. It is replaced by interest in: (a) government as a relatively new and certainly more important mode of exercising power than sovereignty, discipline, etc.; (b) population as the specific object of governmental practices (in contrast to the body as the anatomic-political object of disciplinary power);⁸ and (c) political economy as the overarching object of inquiry and reference point for veridiction that frames governmental rationality in the transition from the *administrative state* in the 15th and 16th centuries towards the self-limiting *governmentalized state* in the 18th century and beyond. Foucault then suggests that, while the state has

been overvalued as a cold monster and/or as a unified, singular, and rigorously functional entity, it should remain an important object of study. Accordingly, it should be approached as a ‘composite reality’ and ‘mythicized abstraction’ that has survived into the present because it has been governmentalized. He then elaborates this claim:

it is likely that if the state is what it is today, it is precisely thanks to this governmentality that is at the same time both external and internal to the state, since it is the tactics of government that allow the continual definition of what should or should not fall within the state’s domain, what is public and what private, what is and what is not within the state’s competence, and so on. So, if you like, the survival and limits of the state should be understood on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality (2008a: 109; cf. Mitchell 1991).

Foucault concludes his path-breaking 1978 lecture on the problem of government with a provisional periodization of forms of power, beginning with the state of justice (i.e., organized around the adjudication of customary and written law), moving to the administrative state based on regulation and disciplinary power, and culminating for the moment in a state of government based primarily (but not exclusively) on the security of the population rather than territory *per se* and oriented by a governmental rationality premised on an emerging field of political economy (Foucault 2008a: 106-107; cf. 1980: 38-9, 125; for an earlier periodization of forms of punishment considered as technologies of power, see 1977a: 130-1).

Foucault’s interest here and in related work is different from that imputed to him by Anglo-Foucauldian scholars. He insisted in the so-called ‘lecture on governmentality’, in earlier work, such as *Discipline and Punish* (1977b) and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1979b), and in the three courses that directly or indirectly address the governmentalization of the state (*Society*

Must be Defended, Security, Territory, Population and *The Birth of Biopolitics*) (2003b, 2008a, 2008b), that the state apparatus had a continuing importance as part of the general economy of power. He also maintained that its overall form, its specific organization, and its activities were shaped by the distinctive combination and the relative primacy of different forms of exercising power within and beyond the state. In short, Foucault was concerned with the ‘state effect’.

In this regard he argues that the intelligibility of a given social phenomenon does not depend on the search for a cause but on the study of ‘the constitution or composition of effects’. Thus we should ask ‘[h]ow are overall, cumulative effects composed? ... How is the state effect constituted on the basis of a thousand diverse processes?’ (2008a: 239; cf. *ibidem* 247-8, 287; 2003b: 45; and, on the Napoleonic state, 1977a: 169, 217). This is the effect that mattered for Foucault. Thus his lectures on *Security, Territory, Population* reiterate that the state has no essence, is not a universal, and is not an autonomous source of power. Instead the state ‘is nothing else but the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of incessant transactions which modify, or move, or drastically change, or insidiously shift sources of finance, modes of investment, decision-making centers, forms and types of control, relationships between local powers, the central authority, and so on. In short, the state ... is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities’ (Foucault 2008b: 77).

In contrast, governmentality studies tend to focus on the logic, rationalities, and practices of government or governmentality in isolation from this broader concern with the state’s role as a major site for the institutional integration of power relations within the more general economy of power (Foucault 1979b). At issue here is not the value of specific studies of governmentality but their capacity to grasp the bigger picture that guided Foucault’s work when he realized the limits of his earlier concern with disciplinary techniques, anatomo-politics, and the micro-analytics of power. In short, whereas Foucault

was increasingly concerned to put the state in its place within a general economy of power and went on to explore how government is superimposed on preceding forms of state, including sovereignty over territory as well as disciplinary power and biopolitics (2003b: 36-9), governmentals have been more concerned to take it off the agenda entirely in favour of specific questions about specific techniques of power and, at best, their position within successive or at least, different forms of liberalism (cf. Curtis 1995; Deacon 2002; Dean 1994: 153-9; Lemke 2007; Meyet 2006).

It is in this context that the 1978-79 course turns from the promised topic of biopolitics to the broader question of liberalism as an art of government and, especially, as a distinctive form of the self-limitation of state power:

the theme was to have been “biopolitics”, by which I meant the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problem posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race ... It seemed to me that these problems were inseparable from the framework of political rationality within which they appeared and took on their intensity. This means “liberalism”, since it is in relation to liberalism that they assumed the form of a challenge (2008b: 317).

The eighth lecture in this particular course argued that the investigation of liberalism required movement beyond the microphysics of power to more macro-analyses. Foucault explains this shift in relation to his earlier concern with power relations as follows:

What I wanted to do – and this was what was at stake in the analysis – was to see the extent to which we could accept that the analysis of micro-powers, or of procedures of governmentality, is not confined by

definition to a precise domain determined by a sector of the scale, but should be considered simply as a point of view, a method of decipherment which may be valid for the whole scale, whatever its size. In other words, the analysis of micro-powers is not a question of scale, and it is not a question of sector, it is a question of a point of view (2008b: 186; cf. 1977a: 222-3; 1979b: 99-100; 2003b: 23, 32-4).

In other words, the study of governmentality and the art of government need not be confined to the microphysics of power nor should microphysics be privileged. His initial interest in micro-powers reflected his concern with anatomo-politics and did not exclude alternative entrypoints into other topics (cf. Gordon 2001: xxv). Foucault's approach is *scalable* and can be applied to the state, statecraft, state-civil society, or state-economy relations just as fruitfully as to the conduct of conduct at the level of interpersonal interactions, organizations, or individual institutions. Thus *The Birth of Biopolitics* is mainly concerned with macro-institutional issues and questions of government rather than specific governmental practices. Foucault traces the development of state projects and the general economic agendas of government over four centuries, noting how the problematic of government shifts during this period and poses different problems at each turn about the limits of state power as well as about the rationales and mechanisms of such (self-)limitation. Thus Foucault notes, for example, that, whereas political economy leads to non-intervention in the economy but strong legal intervention in the field of *Ordnungspolitik*, totalitarianism subordinates the state to the governmentality of the party) (2008b: 106-17, 190-1). Commenting on this shift in perspective, Senellart argues that 'the shift from "power" to "government" carried out in the 1978 lectures does not result from the methodological framework being called into question, but from its extension to a new object, the state, which did not have a place in the analysis of the disciplines' (2008: 382).

In contrast to the warm embrace by Anglo-Foucauldians of a decentred

account of the state, Foucault proclaimed ‘the problem of *bringing under state control*, of “*statification*” (*étatisation*) is at the heart of the questions I have tried to address (2008b: 77, my emphasis). In practice this translated into concern with the statification of government and the governmentalization of the state (2008a: 109). This can be seen in Foucault’s changing views on the state and state power, political struggles, the state’s role in capital accumulation (positing not a single capitalism but different modes of existence of capitalism), the articulation of the economic and extra-economic, the relation between state and civil society, and on the state and power more generally. Foucault’s ‘nominalist’ analytics of power initially stressed three themes: power is immanent in all social relations, it is articulated with discourses as well as institutions, and it is polyvalent because its impact and significance vary with how social relations, discourses and institutions are integrated into different strategies. He also focused on technologies of power, power-knowledge relations, and changing strategies for structuring and deploying power relations. In developing this approach, Foucault rejected attempts to develop any general theory about state power – or about power more generally – based on *a priori* assumptions about its essential unity, its pre-given functions, its inherent tendency to expand through its own power dynamics, or its global strategic deployment by a master subject (1979b, 1979c, 1980; cf. 2003b: 27-31, 45-6; 2008b: 77, 187-9). All of this is eminently sensible and gets to the heart of the basic problem with general theories of the state that treat it as a subject or a thing rather than in relational terms (cf. Jessop 1990).

In contrast, Foucault initially argued that the study of power should begin from below, in the heterogeneous and dispersed microphysics of power, explore specific forms of its exercise in different institutional sites, and then move on to consider how, if at all, these were linked to produce broader and more persistent societal configurations. One should study power where it is

exercised over individuals rather than legitimated at the centre; explore the actual practices of subjugation rather than the intentions that guide attempts at domination; and recognize that power circulates through networks rather than being applied at particular points (Foucault 1979b: 92-102; 2003b: 27-34). All of these microphysical themes are repeated by the Anglo-Foucauldian school. After this initial move, however, Foucault argued that three further interrelated issues required attention after the researcher had explored the micro-diversity of power relations, including resistances and micro-revolts, across a multiplicity of dispersed sites.

First, Foucault noted that resistances needed co-ordination in the same way that the dominant class organized its strategies to secure its own 'sur-pouvoir' (or political preponderance) in diverse power relations (ibidem). Thus one should investigate how both power relations and resistances were readjusted, reinforced, and transformed by global strategies of transformation (1979b: 96; cf. 1980: 143, 159, 195, 203; 1979c: 60). This had implications for contemporary politics when, for example, he criticized the French socialists for their failure to develop a coherent account of socialist governmentality (2008b: 91-2). Second, Foucault suggests that the overall unity of a system of domination must be explained in terms of the strategic codification and institutional integration of power relations. This process is both intentional and non-subjective. It is intentional because no power is exercised without a series of aims and objectives, which are often highly explicit at the limited level of their inscription in local sites of power (Foucault 1979b: 94). He refers here to explicit programmes for reorganizing institutions, rearranging spaces, and regulating behaviors (1980: 9). But it is also non-subjective because the overall outcome of the clash of micro-powers cannot be understood as resulting from the choice or decision of an individual, group, or class subject (cf. Foucault 1979b: 94-5). Things never work out as planned because 'there are different strategies which are mutually opposed, composed, and

superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects which can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality, even though they don't conform to the initial programming; this is what gives the resulting apparatus (*dispositif*) its solidity and suppleness' (Foucault 1980: 10). Or, as Foucault expressed it elsewhere: 'the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few can be said to have formulated them' (1979b: 95). This implies, of course, that there could be multiple state effects organized around competing state projects and, indeed, that no consistent state effect emerges because other more or less global projects are more significant in specific social formations, leading to the fragmentation, fragility, decomposition, or failure of the state.

To explain how the state can sometimes act as if it were unified, as if it had a head even though it is headless (Dean 1994: 156; cf. Kerr 1999), Foucault developed the problematic of government to explore the historical constitution and periodization of the state and to investigate the important strategic and tactical dimensions of power relations and their associated discourses. In rejecting various essentialist, transhistorical, universal, and deductive analyses of the state and state power, Foucault created a space for exploring its 'polymorphous crystallization'⁹ and its grounding in interrelated changes in technologies of power, objects of governance, governmental projects, and modes of political calculation. For Foucault, this does not mean that one needs a transhistorical, universal notion of the state before deconstructing it in and through an interrogation of historically specific, concrete practices. He avoids this paradox by asking how one might explore history if the state did not always-already exist (2008b: 3-5). Indeed, he deploys governmentality as a 'guideline' for a 'genealogy of the modern state' (2008a: 354) that would extend from Ancient Greece to neo-liberalism. For example, *Society Must be Defended* shows how the modern idea of the universal state emerged from a complex series of discursive shifts and the eventual combination of

disciplinary and biopolitical power within a redefined framework of sovereignty (2003b: 37-9, 242-50).

And, third, Foucault suggested that power can be exercised at different scales and that the question of whether one focuses on micro-powers or the organization of the state as a whole is a question of perspective. Thus *The Birth of Biopolitics* applies the same nominalist analytics to the succession of forms of state and forms of the limitation or self-limitation of state power. This course explores the import of political economy and the emergence of the notion of homo economicus as an active *entrepreneurial* subject rather than as the bearer of exchange relations (2008b: 225-294 passim).

Foucault as a Genealogist of the (Incomplete) State Effect

Let us now see what his courses of 1977-78 and 1978-79 say about the historical emergence of 'state effects' and their relation to statecraft. In his work on governmentality, Foucault redressed the imbalance produced through his earlier emphasis on disciplinary power exercised on 'docile bodies'. More specifically, he turned to the relations between technologies of the self and technologies of domination and their mediation through the concepts of freedom and the state (Lemke 2002). His interest in the state effect finds its fullest expression here insofar as the state is seen as something emergent rather than in the state as a foundational, universal subject of apparatus.

This idea was already presented two years earlier in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*:

An analysis in terms of power must not assume that state sovereignty, the form of the law, or the over-all unity of a domination, is given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes. ... power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and that

constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or, on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions that isolate them from each other; and, lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in various social hegemonies. Power's condition of possibility [and its role as a] grid of intelligibility of the social order must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and derived forms might emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable... Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (1979b: 92-3).

Thus Foucault regards the state as a relational ensemble and treats governmentality as a set of practices and strategies, governmental projects and modes of calculation, that operate on the 'something' called the state. This something comprises a non-essentialized set of political relations, however, rather than a universal, fixed, unchanging phenomenon. In this sense, while the state is pre-given as an object of governance, it also gets reconstructed as government practices change (2008b: 5-6).

In short, to study governmentality in its generic sense is to study the historical constitution of different state forms in and through changing practices of government without assuming that the state has a universal or general essence. This is why Foucault criticized analyses of the state (and/or states) as a juridico-political instance, a calculating subject, an instrument of class rule, a functional machine, or a mere epiphenomenon of production relations.

Nonetheless, whilst eschewing any general theory of the state, he certainly explored emergent strategies (state projects, governmentalizing projects) that identified the nature and purposes of government (as reflected in alternative forms of *raison d'État* or diverse forms of liberalism and neo-liberalism) in different contexts and periods. In particular, his Collège de France lectures from 1975 to 1979 argued that, while disciplinary power could compensate for the failure of sovereign power at the level of individual bodies, the harder task of controlling the population was only resolved with the development of biopolitics. Thus disciplinary power came to be supplemented by the emergence of security and biopolitics as new forms of *ratio gouvernementale* and it survived in combination with them.

This was a core theme of the two courses on government and governmentality (Foucault 2008a, 2008b). They studied changing theories and practices about the art of government as well as the changing institutions and institutional ensembles with which such practices were linked. Foucault identified three forms of government: sovereignty, disciplinarity, and governmentality. The first is associated with the medieval state based on customary law, written law, and litigation and concerned with control over land and wealth; the second with the rise of the administrative state of the 15th and 16th century based on the disciplinary regulation of individual bodies in different institutional contexts; and the third with the increasingly governmentalized state, which dates from the late 16th and came to fruition in the 19th century, when state concern was henceforth focused on controlling the mass of the population on its territory rather than controlling territoriality as such (Foucault 2008a: 109-110; 2008b: 317-21; cf., with the same sequence but other dates, 2003b: 37-9, 249-250). Expanding this account, Foucault traced governmental concerns back to 16th century interest in the administration of territorial monarchies; to 16th and 17th century development of new analyses and forms of 'statistical' knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the state, in all its elements, dimensions, and

factors of power; and, finally, to the rise of mercantilism, cameralism, and *Polizeiwissenschaft* (2008a: 274-6, 278, 312). Hence the governmental state arose from the governmentalization of the state rather than the statization of society and was based on continual (re)definition of state competences and of the division between public and private (ibidem: 109-10).¹⁰ The emergence of ‘civil society’ as a political and discursive resource in struggles over governmental practices is one important aspect of this continuing contestation over state power (2008b: 297-9, 309-10).

With Foucault beyond Foucault

Some of the ambiguities and confusions surrounding Foucault’s analyses of power and its significance in social life can be resolved if we distinguish three moments in the development of power relations. These are *variation* in the objects, subjects, purposes, and technologies of power; *selection* of some technologies and practices rather than others; and *retention* of some of these in turn as they are integrated into broader and more stable strategies of state and/or class (or national or racial) power. These three moments overlap and interact in real time but they receive more or less attention at different times and in different texts in Foucault’s work. Ignoring these differences for the moment, we can connect the three moments to his genealogical remarks on invention and innovation (variation), then on the emergent convergence of various technologies of power to delineate general conditions of domination as they are seen to have economic or political utility for an emerging bourgeoisie (selection), and, finally, on the strategic codification and retention of these practices of government to produce a global strategy oriented to a more or less unified objective (retention and institutionalization) (2003a: 270).

The first step in this trajectory concerns variation or ‘immanent multiplicity’ (2003b: 30) and can be approached in terms of the event or eventalization. This refers to the irruption of chance in social development so that the analysis

must focus not on *Ursprung* (origin, initial source) but on *Erfindung* (invention, innovation) and discontinuous *Herkunft* (provenance, descent) (cf. Kelly 2009: 13-14, 22). Foucault often refers to ‘inventions’ in his work on disciplines, bio-politics, and governmentality and emphasizes their diversity. He also observes how elements that will prove central to the formation of the modern state often emerged through independent innovations away from the centres of power. He remarked that the modern state’s disciplinary techniques had a pre-history: they originated as inventions in response to particular needs in dispersed local sites far from the centers of state power in the *Ancien Régime* and far from emerging sites of capitalist production and had their own distinctive disciplinary logics (1977a: 137-8, 224). In this sense they could also be seen as pre-adaptive advances, i.e., as prior inventions that can be mobilized, instrumentalized, extended, and intensified in response to crises, challenges, or needs that emerge at a later date. For example, disciplinary normalization initially focused on the conduct of persons who were not directly involved in capitalist production (e.g., in asylums, prisons, schools, barracks) and emerged at many different points, each with its specific logics, rationales, mechanisms, and procedures (1977a: 163). Such innovations can be seen as sources of local variation (each with its own forms of contestation and resistance) and would only later be selected and combined through trial-and-error experimentation to produce more global ensembles of power linked to a more general political outlook (Foucault 1977a: passim).

The moment of selection in Foucault brings social classes, capital, and the state back in after he had dismissed them as inappropriate, reified starting points in his nominalist analytics of power. He recognized that only some technologies and practices were selected and integrated into other sites of power and others remained marginal or were ‘doomed to immediate failure and abandonment’ (1977a: 123) As he noted in *Discipline and Punish*:

The problem, then, is the following: how is it that, in the end, it was the third [technology of power] that was adopted? How did the coercive, corporal, solitary, secret model of the power to punish replace the representative, scenic, signifying, public, collective model? Why did the physical exercise of punishment (which is not torture) replace, with the prison that is its institutional support, the social play of the signs of punishment and the prolix festival that circulated them? (1977a: 131).

In short, why do some technologies of power, some governmental practices, tend to disappear after their invention and others get selected? An initial explanation can be developed at the level of tactics, i.e., the inventiveness that seeks to turn everything to account and seek to accelerate useful changes, transferring and/or re-scaling them to promote particular interests (1977a: 139, 144; 2003b: 190). Thus Foucault noted how the disciplinary techniques first developed on the margins of the economy and the state were later introduced in factories to control the division of labour, bind men to the productive apparatus, and facilitate a capitalist political economy of time based on abstract labour.¹¹ The shift of attention from variation to selection can be seen in the transition between *Discipline and Punish* (1977a) and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1979b). Whereas the former tended to emphasize the *dispersion* of power mechanisms and their largely *tactical* articulation, the latter paid more attention to how different mechanisms were combined reflexively to produce social order through a strategic codification (*codage*) and institutional integration that sought to make them more coherent and complementary. In this regard Foucault notes the role of interest in influencing the adoption of some inventions rather than others. Thus he often remarks that the perceived interests of an emerging bourgeois class in social cohesion or the anarchic, profit-oriented, market-mediated logic of capital accumulation guide the selection of some forms of sovereign, disciplinary, or governmental power

in preference to others. At this stage, it seems, ‘the interesting thing is to ascertain, not what overall project presides over all these developments, but, how, in terms of strategy, the different pieces were set in place’ (1980: 62).

The third moment concerns the retention and institutionalization of some practices, programmes, and projects and their integration into broader, potentially society-wide, ensembles of power relations. Foucault typically rejected *a priori* assumptions that different forms of power were connected to produce an overall pattern of class domination. But this did not mean that he rejected the possibility of such global configurations as *terminal* forms of domination. This it is possible that a ‘network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions without being exactly localised in them’ (1979b: 96). The multifunctionality and generalizability of specific mechanisms of power contributes greatly to selection and retention (1977a: 218-19) It is in this context that Foucault’s frequent references to capitalist and bourgeois forces have a key role in providing the basis for an anti-essentialist, non-teleological, *ex post* functionalist explanation of capitalist development and state formation. It is important to note that Foucault never regarded the bourgeoisie, capital, or the state as pre-constituted forces, treating them instead as emergent effects of multiple projects, practices, and attempts to institutionalize political power relations. In this sense there was a co-constitution of strategic players and emergent structures that was facilitated by strategic reflection and mutual reinforcement. Thus, in the first volume of *History of Sexuality* and the roughly contemporary course, *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault links the retention of particular forms of disciplinary and governmental power explicitly to bourgeois recognition and promotion of their economic profitability and political utility (1979b: 114, 125, 141; 1980 41; 2003b: 30-33). This involves an ascending analysis of power in and through which local, indeed infinitesimal, relations and techniques of power ‘are colonized, used, inflected,

transformed, displaced, extended, and so on by increasingly general mechanisms and forms of overall domination ... and, above all, how they are invested or annexed by global phenomena and how more general powers or economic benefits can slip into the play of these technologies of power' (2003b: 30-1). In particular, of course, the state has a role in systematizing, centralizing and coordinating power mechanisms (1977a: 213; 2003b: 242) without ever fully absorbing them under direct state control (1977a: 215).

This codification and consolidation occurred in quite specific historical conditions that, according to Foucault, cannot be derived from the functional needs of the economy but have their own pre-history and developmental dynamic. For example, Foucault argues that only a post-sovereign state could consolidate the new forms of government insofar as the emergence of the problem of population enabled power to be refocused on the economy rather than the family writ large (2008a: 104-105). More generally, the articulation of the economic and political should not be explained in terms of functional subordination or formal isomorphism (2003b: 14). Instead it should be studied in terms of functional overdetermination and a perpetual process of strategic elaboration or completion. The former occurs when 'each effect – positive or negative, intentional or unintentional – enters into resonance or contradiction with the others and thereby calls for a readjustment or a re-working of the heterogeneous elements that surface at various points' (1980: 195). The latter involves a degree of reflexivity on the part of strategic actors and concertation of power relations across their different fields. Notions of pastoral power and *raison d'État* played a role in the development of the modern state and ideas about bio-politics and political economy were later superimposed to provide more sophisticated strategic orientations in more complex social formations. Political economy was especially important because of its partial correspondence to the separation of capitalist societies into a profit-oriented market economy and a state concerned to regulate the extra-economic

conditions of economic growth and competitiveness through an appropriate *Ordnungspolitik* (2008b: passim). The overall result can be ‘phenomena of coagulation, support, reciprocal reinforcement, cohesion, and integration’ (2008a: 239). Likewise, biopolitics as a technology of power could be linked to disciplinary power: it could ‘dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques’ (2003b: 242).

Foucault argues that power always operates on pre-existing differentiations and can involve different media and mechanisms, different objectives, different forms of institutionalization, different rationalizations (2001: 337, 344-5; 1980: 164; see also Mitchell 1991). Accordingly, in describing the strategic elaboration or completion of a general line, Foucault invoked concepts such as ‘social hegemonies’, ‘hegemonic effects’, ‘hegemony of the bourgeoisie’, ‘meta-power’, ‘class domination’, ‘polymorphous techniques of subjugation’, ‘sur-pouvoir’ (or a ‘surplus power’ analogous to surplus value), ‘global strategy’, and so forth. The range of metaphors deployed here indicates that he is still struggling to find an adequate explanation for what is occurring in this stage of the development of power relations. He nonetheless gave a privileged role to the state as the point of strategic codification of the multitude of power relations and the apparatus in which the general line is crystallized (e.g., 2003b: 27-28, 31-35; cf. 1979b: 92-96; 1980: 122, 156, 189-90, 199-200; 1982: 224; 2008a: 238-9, 338). He argues, for example, it was the rise of the population-territory-wealth nexus in political economy and police that created the space for the revalorization and re-articulation of disciplines that had emerged in 17th and 18th century, i.e., schools, manufactories, armies, etc (1977a: 217-19).

In approaching Foucault’s work in these terms, we can escape the dichotomy of micro- and macro-power, the antinomy of an analytics of micro-powers and a theory of sovereignty, and the problematic relation between micro-diversity

and macro-necessity in power relations (cf. Jessop 1990; Kerr 1999: 176). This is something that Foucault himself indicated was both possible in principle (scale is a matter of perspective) and necessary in practice (to understand the successive but subsequently overlapping arts of government in the exercise of state power beyond the state) (2008a: 15, 109; 2008b: 186, 313; cf. 2003b: 36-9, 173, 242, 250). For Foucault's insistence on the complexity, diversity and relative autonomy of local, everyday relations of power overturns neither Marxist accounts of the state nor liberal theories of popular sovereignty; it only exposes them as limited and inadequate (Deacon 2002). The challenge is to show how they might, in some circumstances, in some contexts, and for some periods of time, be linked. The idea of government as strategic codification and institutional integration of power relations provides a bridge between micro-diversity and macro-necessity and, as Foucault argues, a focus on micro-powers is determined by scale but applies across all scales. It is a perspective, not a reality delimited to one scale (Foucault 2008b: 186; cf. 2003b: 28-31). Introducing the concept of biopolitics requires Foucault to say more about the global strategies of the state and the 'general line of force that traverses local confrontations and links them together' (1979b: 94). We can thereby move from the analysis of variation to the crucial issues of selection and retention that produce a distinctive articulation of the economic and political in particular historical contexts.

Second, Foucault still argued for the dispersion of powers, insisted that the state, for all its omnipotence, does not occupy the whole field of power relations, and claimed that the state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. Yet he also conceded that the State invests and colonizes these other power relations in a conditioning-conditioned relationship to generate a kind of 'meta-power' that renders its own functioning possible (ibidem: 122-3). Indeed, 'power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and

centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions' (ibidem: 345). This explains why Barret-Kriegel could note that 'Foucault's thought opened the way to a return to the study of the State and the law' (1992: 192).

Conclusions

The difference between the Foucauldian and Anglo-Foucauldian approach to the state and governmentality can be explained in part in terms of Foucault's distinction between 'the relationships of power as strategic games between liberties – strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others – and the states of domination, which are what we ordinarily call power' (1988b: 19). He adds that, 'between the games of power and the states of domination, you have governmental technologies' (ibidem). In these terms, it seems that the Anglo-Foucauldians are uninterested in interpersonal power games and little interested in states of domination (in part because they reject essentialized notions of economic or political interests) and seem to prefer an apparently value-free empirical analysis of types of governmental practice and liberalism. Thus they focus more or less exclusively on the genealogies and effects of individual forms of power/knowledge and governmental technologies. Foucault wanted to connect all three but tended to focus on the last two.

In this sense, the so-called Foucault effect is the product of a one-sided reading of his work shaped by the same conjuncture in which Foucault operated but with different theoretical and political consequences. The Anglo-Foucauldian paradigm has certainly proved powerful and productive and that there is an obvious prudential wisdom in refusing to sit down at the table of state theory with its likelihood of an 'indigestible meal' (Foucault 2008b: 76-7). Almost all of what these scholars wish to study can be accomplished without addressing the 'state effect' that came to occupy Foucault for a time despite his recognition of the problems in studying the state (on the

indigestible meal, see Jessop 2007: 140-154; Lemke 2007). For, as he himself demonstrated, governmentality can also be explored in other ways. This can be seen in his contributions to political economy, his parallel critiques of the changing forms and functions of state power, and the production of the 'state effect' (cf. Dean 1994; Mitchell 1991). It remains the case that the 'state effect' (including questions of fragmentation, fragility, and failure) emerges as the culmination of research on the state, statecraft, and the art of government. It must also be studied from an anti-essentialist, relational viewpoint rather than from the assumption that the state is always-already there as some sort of master subject or super-machine. But this is a worthwhile objective and one that Foucault shared. In arguing for an alternative Foucault effect, I do not pretend to have revealed the true essence of Foucault's interest in governmentality but to offer an alternative reading to 'governmentalist' accounts of his work in the relevant period. For one can also see his work on governmentality as a contribution to a 'critical and effective history' of the state considered not as a universal or as a self-identical political formation but as the site of practices that produce different forms of state, each with their own historical specificities, agendas, typical forms of governmental practice, and so on (2008a; 2008b). It is certainly justified to reject an overly centered account of the state in favour of a de-centered account, insist on the fragility of state power and its practically predestined tendencies to failure in complex social formations, and emphasize the significance of the discourses and practices of individual freedom in modern societies. But it is also important to recognize the continuing centrality of the state in modern social formations as an addressee of demands and as the political organizer in the last resort of social relations in complex societies. This is especially important where governance through freedom breaks down and where crises of various kinds overwhelm existing forms of governmentality and approaches to government.

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Endnotes

¹ ‘Official Marxism’ refers here to the theoretical, organizational, and institutional legacies of the Second and Third Internationals.

² For an insider’s view on the heterogeneity of the Anglo-Foucauldian school, see Donzelot and Gordon (2008: 51-2).

³ On the empiricism of governmentality studies, see Frauley (2007: 259-60).

⁴ Foucault also implies that there are bad as well as good ‘how questions’ (see 2003b: 28-29 on descending Leviathanesque-type versus ascending questions about how power transfers upwards from the margins to power centres).

⁵ Foucault notes that the discovery of the emergent regularities of political economy entails the self-limitation of state intervention, 2008b: 30-34, 283-6).

⁶ On depth ontology in Foucault, see Paolucci (2003).

⁷ One source of Foucault’s difficulties in linking capital and the state is his tendency to reduce the economy to exchange relations in line with liberal thought: this rendered invisible the contradictions and substantive inequalities in the capital relation. Likewise, when he introduces the logic of capitalism, he does not ground it in a detailed account of the social relations of production as opposed to transferable techniques and/or technologies for the conduct of conduct (Tellman 2009; cf. Marsden 1999).

⁸ On the emergent properties of population as an object of government, see also Foucault 1979b: 24-26, 139-146; 2003b: 242-51, 255-6; 2008a: 67-79, 109-110, 352-7).

⁹ ‘Polymorphous crystallization’ is used by Mann (1986) to highlight the scope for different configurations of the state apparatus and state power based on the differential articulation of their various elements.

¹⁰ Foucault’s concern to link forms of state with governmental rationalities, forms of knowledge, and specific technologies of governance leads to a different periodization from that developed by Anglo-Foucauldian scholars.

¹¹ Discipline was also used to control workers' bodies: 'it was not just a matter of appropriating, extracting the maximum quantity of time but also of controlling, shaping, valorizing the individual's body according to a particular system' (Foucault 2001: 82).