

Thinking Corona measures with Foucault

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The thoughts to follow have been formulated as a spur to discussion about some of the power relations manifested in state responses to the Covid-19 pandemic up to early April, 2020. While it touches themes covered by others, the essay is significantly longer and more detailed than most that have appeared at the time of writing. This is due to its pedagogical intent: it was conceived as a reading for a Masters seminar scheduled to take place in the summer of 2020. Its purpose is to introduce students to Foucault's work in a tailored summary of his thinking on power relations, and to deploy Foucault's ideas in a broad (and necessarily provisional) analysis of the current Corona crisis. Readers already familiar with Foucault's analyses of power relations may wish to skip directly to Part II (page 16). In the interest of timely distribution, the essay has not been subjected to a comprehensive review process, only discussed internally by the three authors. Lacking complete access to notes and sources, the text is relatively thin and unevenly sprinkled with citations to the academic literature. There is likewise no attempt to reference more than a handful among the hundreds of useful critical interventions that have been proliferating rapidly in recent weeks. Finally, it includes almost no specific citations of current reporting on the Corona situation. Familiarity with the unfolding of current events is simply assumed. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the lead author.

Part I of this essay explains the main kinds of power relations Foucault explored in his genealogies during the mid- to late-1970s, "sovereignty", "discipline", "biopower" and "biopolitics", and "governmentality", but in a manner tailored to the subsequent analysis of responses to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the illness it causes. Clearly very different kinds of political dynamics from those discussed by Foucault are also at work in the current situation, and depending on context, may play a more central role. These include party-political calculations, positioning of individual politicians with an eye to upcoming elections, strategies for expanding or containing right-wing populism, intensified re-masculinization of political culture, geopolitical considerations, crises of federalism, and more. These are largely, though not completely, left aside.

Many of the subtleties and complications involved in fully understanding Foucault's writings on power - brought out, for example, in the work of Mitchell Dean (1999, 2013), Nikolas Rose and Paul Rabinow (Rabinow and Rose 2006; Rose 1999), Thomas Lemke (2019) or in the invaluable recent studies of Stuart Elden (2016, 2017) - are left aside here for brevity. Nevertheless, Foucault's analyses of power simply cannot be summarized responsibly without extensive discussion. For this reason Part I is relatively long. Part II builds on the summary of features of power relations to begin to analyse state measures in relation to SARS-CoV-2 and Covid-19 in terms of Foucault's categories. Part II obviously cannot be exhaustive or definitive, not least because the situation remains in rapid flux all over the world at the time of this writing. Thus it is best thought of as one provisional illustration of how we might think with Foucault.

¹ Jan Simon Hutta contributed text and ideas especially to the passages concerning the relation between biopower and governmentality, the role of the family in power relations, and aspects of the current crisis. Christoph Schemann contributed text and ideas chiefly around Esposito's concept of immunity and the ideas of Agamben. Both also made a range of valuable suggestions and corrections throughout the essay.

In much of what follows, I provisionally bracket or de-emphasize the issue of "resistance", which is integral to many of Foucault's writings as a sort of inseparable twin and constant motivator of the emergence of new forms of power. I do this intentionally, in order to simplify the exposition as well as to avoid the appearance of simply condemning state responses to the Covid-19 outbreak from the outset. This does not detract too strongly from the explanation of Foucault's ideas on power, however, as he devotes far less detailed analysis to forms of resistance than to the power relations that provoke resistance or are called forth by it. Nevertheless, the question of whether and in what situations some forms of resistance are called for is highly relevant. I return to the issue of resistance in a more sustained way at the end of the essay.

PART I

Sovereignty, discipline, biopower and governmentality

One way to understand Foucault's genealogies of modern power relations, developed in the 1970s, is as a series of arguments about how traditional Western notions of politics in terms of sovereignty, centered upon states, law, domination and violence, do not tell the whole story about power relations, especially since the 18th century. In this sense Foucault's work constitutes, alongside feminist political theory based upon the insight that "the personal is the political", and theories of civil society and citizenship, as well as social movement theory, one of the most important expansions in recent decades of what we understand as the "political".

Very briefly (and with abject apologies to expert colleagues for rampant simplification!), Foucault argued that roughly since the mid-to-late 18th century, chiefly at first in Europe and North America, sovereign power relations centered on the state have increasingly become articulated with, and in some ways eclipsed or reconfigured by, other kinds of power relations operating at various scales. Among these new forms are disciplinary power, biopower and biopolitics, and governmentality. I follow Foucault in placing the focus firmly upon such non-sovereign power relations, as they are likely to be much less familiar to readers than the principles and trappings of sovereign power as these are enshrined, for example, in modern constitutions. However, as will become clear in what follows, thinking with Foucault also requires thinking more carefully about sovereignty at certain key points.

Disciplinary power

Discipline is a shorthand term for a set of non-violent techniques and practices aimed at the regulation of individual bodies and bodily behaviors (Foucault 1977). A core principle of disciplinary power is the comprehensive visibility of human bodies and behaviors to authority. Observation of behavior forms the basis for carefully calibrated proportionalities between infringements of rules and corresponding punishment. To the extent that such correspondences come to seem impersonal and automatic, any active role for authorities tends to recede into invisibility, and it becomes more difficult to hold anyone but ourselves responsible for whatever sanctions we face. Thus disciplinary subjects learn to internalize the assumption that our actions are being or can be observed, we learn to behave (at least outwardly, and at least in public) in orderly ways.

Disciplinary techniques did not emerge out of nowhere, but, as Foucault shows, were initially assembled and adapted starting in the late 18th century from pre-existing

practices such as military drill and dressage, or urban quarantine during outbreaks of disease. Quarantine is of course directly relevant to the current situation. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that the practices and structures of urban quarantine implemented in 17th-century Europe to combat outbreaks of the plague clearly illustrate the principles of disciplinary power. The entire population is meticulously fixed in place, registered and rendered visible in an urban space divided unambiguously into reporting districts. The daily checks of each member of every household by requiring everyone to stand at a window generate precise information that is then aggregated systematically and compiled to track the progress or regress of the disease. The circulation of the disease itself is cordoned off both by the requirement to stay at home and by buffering measures designed to prevent transmission in the delivery of food and the carting away of corpses (Foucault 1977).

One of the key innovations in the development of disciplinary power was to conceive ways of crystalizing the extensive surveillance systems typical of quarantine - which required systematic movements of police to patrol all quarters and to transmit information to central authorities - as efficiently as possible in architectural forms. Foucault famously illustrated the "architecturalization" of disciplinary logic through the image of Jeremy Bentham's late-18th century design for an ideal prison (the "panopticon"). In this design, all behaviors would be simultaneously and immediately visible from one central observation point. Prisoners' awareness of their own constant visibility would ideally lead them to self-police and behave in orderly ways.

A second principle of efficiency illustrated by the design for the panopticon concerns the benefits of synchronized regimentation of bodily behaviors, as found in long-standing practices of military drill. To the extent that the individual bodies assembled in an institution can be brought to perform identical tasks or movements simultaneously, this collective behavior forms a very effective background against which individual irregularities or transgressions stand out with heightened obtrusiveness. Thus disciplinary power is among other things a technique aimed at rendering authoritative attention more efficient.

By the late 19th century, according to Foucault, such techniques had "swarmed" out from their initial incubation in prisons and workhouses to become commonplace in many different everyday institutions such as schools, workplaces or hospitals. In all these settings disciplinary techniques have been tightly interwoven with the generation and use of new accumulations of knowledge (bodily measurements, dossiers, activity logs, medical histories, academic records, etc.), and associate forms and positions of expertise. The experts and their knowledge have formed the basis for the establishment of empirical norms for all manner of physical and mental attributes and functions of human bodies.

Such empirical norms, as well as non-empirical ideals, also anchor the normalization of behavior disciplinary techniques are supposed to produce. The contrast in military drill between irregular behaviors and the coordinated regularity against which they stand out is already a basic illustration of the construction of a difference between the abnormal and the normal. Ever finer divisions and gradations of the normal and the abnormal in many other settings (to take just one among millions of examples, tables of standard bodily dimensions of male and female children at different ages) constitute one of the now-ubiquitous results of the everyday exercise of disciplinary power.

Distinctions between the normal and the abnormal often take the form of lines drawn somewhere along what are actually continua (most typically, bell curves). But the continuous character of distributions of bodily attributes and behavior, and more generally, the grey zones and border areas between disciplinary institutions and surrounding societies, have been connected also to different forms of traffic crossing the normal-abnormal divide. Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* of "delinquent" populations composed of individuals who circulate between disciplinary institutions and "normal life" and may serve, for example, as a source of police informants. In more recent decades we can observe the data-driven construction of ever more "at risk" populations (poor, inner-city youth, the obese, etc.) around whom surveillance is usually heightened and linked to the more constant and proximate possibility of being placed under disciplinary regimes.

The emergence and consolidation of disciplinary institutions and regimes has been inseparable, as Foucault observes, from the rise of capitalism. Especially as industrial capitalism consolidated its central place in the shaping of European societies in the late-18th and 19th centuries, national populations came to be seen less as "subjects of rule" and more as political-economic resources whose fitness and productivity needed to be cultivated through disciplinary techniques. Thus, for example, those labelled criminals and other "abnormal" groups were no longer simply excluded from society but, where possible, were subjected to regimes of rehabilitation. Together, the "docile bodies" produced by the range of everyday disciplinary techniques form the previously unacknowledged basis and backdrop for the notion of the responsible, self-determined adult democratic citizen: only those able to keep themselves "in order" through internalized discipline are deemed qualified to participate in the maintenance of social order at a larger scale.

Biopower and biopolitics

These are terms denoting new logics of governing oriented around human populations. According to Foucault, another change complementary to the emergence of micro-level disciplinary power was a shift in state strategies away from the maintenance of rule as an end in itself - the underlying purpose of sovereignty up until recent centuries - toward the maintenance and cultivation of (national) populations as the proper end of government (Foucault 1978). To paraphrase his famous formula, if sovereignty is characterized by the two basic options of *killing or letting live*, biopower, or power over life, concerns *making live or letting die*.

The phrase "making live" points to the fact that the life of the population, its economic activity, health, family structures, hygiene, nutrition, demographic characteristics, etc., have come to be seen as positive targets of state activity (built urban infrastructure, social welfare programmes of all kinds). Central among the goals of such activity is the maintenance of healthy or beneficial forms of circulation (goods, money, fresh air) and the suppression of damaging forms (e.g. transmissible diseases). This ensemble of measures was the target of "police" understood in a broader sense than we think of it today. If the ensemble of demographic and economic processes is properly cultivated and tended, according to this rationality, the results will be increased wealth and productivity and at the same time, the stabilization of political rule. Thus the perpetuation of rule does not disappear as a goal, but rather is increasingly secured indirectly, through prioritizing the needs of the ruled.

Although the logic of biopower is oriented toward the good of the population, it is still manifested in exercises of power, that is, in the most basic sense, in potentially contestable interventions in social life. The two terms "biopower" and "biopolitics" are not always used in strictly distinct ways (Rabinow and Rose 2006), but it is helpful to think of "biopower" as referring to this basic underlying rationality of cultivating the life of the population, and of "biopolitics" as a term for the diverse range of different specific measures and techniques that have been drawn upon in many different settings to pursue this larger project. Like disciplinary measures, biopolitical techniques did not emerge from nowhere but have a long history. One important source Foucault explores is the long Christian tradition of what he calls "pastoral power" or the "shepherd-flock game", which provides a model for state care of a given population based upon intimate knowledge - and a commitment to the well-being - of "each and all" (Foucault 2007).

The modern discourse that "discovered" the population as an object of rule was the early political economy (Malthus, Smith, Ricardo and others) that gained prominence in step with the consolidation of capitalism in Europe and North America. A central claim of this discourse was that populations have their own intrinsic dynamics, and thus that cultivating and improving them successfully requires both detailed knowledge (for example, censuses and other social statistics) and restraint when it comes to intervention. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault portrays individual-level disciplinary techniques as complementary to biopower at the level of populations (Foucault 1978).

He makes a persuasive case that, at least in 19th century Europe, the techniques of individual discipline and the biopolitics of populations were articulated with one another with particular intensity around the theme of sexuality. In the habits, predilections and problems of sexuality, individual actions and the fortunes of larger populations intersect, and so it should not have been surprising that a great deal was said, written and done around issues such as sexually transmitted diseases, child masturbation or women's reproductive health. Here Foucault also placed particular emphasis on the *constitutive*, rather than restricting, functioning of biopower, as it operated through the multiplication of discourses around sexuality, thereby also inciting desires and fantasies. This efflorescence of discourse around sexuality refutes Freud's "repressive hypothesis", according to which Victorian European societies were largely silent about sex and sexuality.

Beyond sexuality, other issues such as home hygiene, urban sewage, overcrowding and air circulation, the placement of urban cemeteries, or more recently, inoculation, prenatal screening and genetic engineering have been analysed by scholars across many disciplines as examples of biopolitics. The policies, programmes and practices under which these kinds of issues have been governed by modern states were described by Foucault as "apparatuses of security", with "security" understood in a broad way as referring to the sustained well-being of a population. Epidemics and their complex power relations have likewise been subject to searching analysis (e.g. Braun 2007; more on this below).

Two of the many issues raised under the heading of biopower and biopolitics, deserve special mention because of their relevance to the current Corona virus pandemic. The first is raised by Foucault in his lecture course of 1975-1976, published in English as *Society Must Be Defended* (Foucault 2003c; see Philo 2007). Here he explores the ways in which early modern political thought constructed the problem of the internal enemy, and

argues, for example, that the modern discourses surrounding "class struggle" partake of the same logic as debates around the need to neutralize quasi-biological threats posed by "racialized" groups, that is, groups constructed as biologically different from the main body of a population. In other words, the thematic field of biopower and biopolitics also involves questions of immunity and auto-immunity. If a population is conceived as a biological phenomenon, how can it be immunized against external and internal threats? Such questions were front and center in the "racial science" of Nazi Germany, but also in the early 20th-century eugenics movement in the US and many other countries.

The concept of immunity has been given a more central place in an account of biopower advanced by Roberto Esposito (2008, 2010, 2011). Given its obvious relevance in the current conjuncture this perspective deserves a somewhat more extensive summary. For Esposito, Foucault did not successfully integrate his insights from *Society Must Be Defended* with questions posed in his lectures of 1976 and 1977 concerning the function of negating life in biopolitics. In *Bíos* Esposito claims to have found the missing "interpretative key" to a fuller understanding of biopower and biopolitics (2008: 45). With reference to authors such as Hobbes, Nietzsche and Arendt (amongst others), he strives to elaborate this missing link and introduces what he calls the paradigm of immunization (Esposito 2008: 45-77).

In Esposito's semantics of immunization, negation and protection of life do not exclude each other but are intrinsically tied together. To protect life, politics must negate life by means of an immune defence against certain invasions and unregulated "spillovers" of life. The (political) "form" of life and its vitality is therefore sacrificed to the biological viability of the population through the mechanism of an "inclusive exclusion" through processes of immunization. Whereas Foucault's discussion of threatening and invasive elements largely centers on practices of exclusion or internal separation alone, for Esposito, immunization also means including threatening elements to some degree, in order to strengthen self-defence of an enclosed (populational) body. The social body must allow some infiltration and occurrence of what threatens it, and to integrate the threat as well as the resulting formations of "antibodies".

Hence, for Esposito an important biopolitical technique of immunization is vaccination, a measure also mentioned by Foucault in his discussion of smallpox in the age of liberalism as an example for the ultimate biopolitical end of securing the population. To vaccinate means to intensify and strengthen life via the controlled intrusion of a certain dose of the objectionable pathogen, minor enough to not erupt as full-blown disease in the body, but nevertheless able to ward off further infections and preempt pathogenicity as far as possible with a newly strengthened immune defense.

Yet immunization also always carries the danger that it can develop marhmful dynamics, expressing itself in deadly, "thanatopolitical" measures. Thanatopolitics (Esposito 2008: 110-145) marks the point where the life-protective power of immunization turns radically upon its own body and collapses into something like an "autoimmune illness" (ibid.: 116) or autoimmune "paroxysm" (ibid.: 117), which Esposito sees as having been most clearly demonstrated in Nazism. In this case a fatal immunitarian machine can emerge that functions like a massive "antibody", destroying any possible balance or reciprocity between protection and negation.

Esposito's understanding of immunization and its dangers points to a second particularly relevant set of issues concerning biopolitics and biopower: the relation of the politics of

life to sovereignty as a politics organized around the family on the one hand and force and death on the other. Again, Foucault developed his understanding of discipline and biopower against the backdrop of sovereign modalities of power. He saw sovereign power, which had prevailed in the feudal societies of medieval Western Europe, as shaped by a legal order conceived as divinely sanctioned and embodied by the king. Sovereignty, according to him, structured the social life of feudal societies through ideas of a divine hierarchical order as well as ties of blood and honour.

In his lecture course from 1973-74, published as *Psychiatric Power*, Foucault pointed out that disciplinary institutions such as prisons, hospitals, asylums and schools were able to function only due to their close imbrication with an institution closely linked to sovereign power: the family (Foucault 2008b). For instance, it was the families' duty to make sure children would attend schools or to receive individuals who had been released from prisons and hospitals. While families have been essential to biopower, they are organized through sovereign logics that are also aligned to disciplinary power and include the patriarchal order as well as durable bonds established through marriage or birth. Importantly, Foucault did not conceive of families as mere remnants from the past, but rather elaborated on how the modern instantiation of heterosexual nuclear families rather intensified sovereign power at the same time that disciplinary strategies proliferated. The family as a building block of modern power relations is discussed further in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic below.

A further crucial issue concerning sovereignty concerns its perhaps most emblematic feature, which is the sovereign's capacity to decide over life and death. In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault proposed that modern state racism was expressive of a resurgence of the sovereign capacity to decide over life and death within the field of modern biopower: in seeking to enhance the life of the population, the state exercise this power of decision in declaring part of the population unworthy to live (Foucault 2003c). As noted above, Esposito writes extensively on the close intertwining of sovereign power and biopolitics in immunization. Giorgio Agamben likewise focuses strongly on the nexus of sovereignty and biopower, though in a different way than both Foucault and Esposito. Drawing upon the ideas of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin and others, Agamben has argued that biopower and sovereignty are much more intimately connected than Foucault would have us believe. In his influential book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben argues that biopower, far from being a modern phenomenon, was already closely linked to the exercise of sovereign power in ancient Roman law (Agamben 1998).

The sovereign in his account is the figure able to distinguish between politically relevant, "qualified" life or *bios* and "bare life" or *zoe*.² The political community is composed of those included in the *bios*, while *homo sacer* is the name for those placed by the sovereign outside the protections of the law, "bare life" able to be killed with impunity. Agamben understands such acts of exclusion as ex-ceptions (from the Latin for "taking-out"), and the declaration of "states of exception" as fundamental to the definition of sovereignty. "Outsideness" with respect to the law is paradoxically still connected to law in an inclusive exclusion that can be seen as the law's foundation. In a sense, then, regimes of biopower oriented toward the cultivation of the well-being of the population always operate in the shadow of the possibility that parts or the whole of the population could

² It is however debatable, whether the "qualified life" Agamben talks about can be equated to what Foucault has in mind when he talks about the emergence of "life" as part of a new episteme organized around modern sciences such as biology, economy or linguistics (see Ojakangas 2005).

be placed outside the *bios* in sovereign declarations of a state of exception. While Foucault had written of sovereign power as having been tendentially marginalized or "de-clawed" since the late 18th century, Agamben has reasserted its continued importance.

Agamben identified the concentration camps of the Nazis as paradigmatic localizations of bare life, concrete spaces defined by the law as outside it. His ideas were taken up as ready tools for the analysis of Guantánamo Bay detention center and other manifestations of the "Global War in Terror" (GWOT) initiated by the George W. Bush administration in the US in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, 2001 (cf. Minca 2015). Agamben himself discussed the GWOT in terms of the sovereign power of exception in the aptly titled *State of Exception* (Agamben 2005). Other scholars have productively explored the articulation of "softer" forms of power with sovereignty in the construction of terrorist or biological threats in different but related ways (e.g. Braun 2007; Cooper 2006).

Such issues were not entirely foreign to Foucault. In thinking about the state of emergency declared in West Germany in the Autumn of 1977 in response to the violence of the Red Army Fraction, he postulated the existence of an implicit "security pact" between states and populations. According to this pact, populations are prepared to tolerate major curtailments of normal rights and freedoms in situations where they accept the state's claims that they face an existential threat (Foucault 2003a, 2003b; cf. Hannah 2012). The security pact assumes, though, that the state's constructions of threat are not spurious or cynical, and that such exceptional situations will be temporary. Although clearly related to Agamben's concept of the state of exception, the notion of a security pact more explicitly acknowledges that two parties are actively involved, and that even seemingly unilateral acts of sovereign power rely upon a certain consent or acquiescence.

There is, however, another important difference between Agamben's and Foucault's analyses. While on an Agambenian reading, the security pact is linked to the sovereign state of exception, Foucault understood the exceptional measures taken by contemporary states as expressive, not of sovereign power, but of the 'liberal' art of governing. Put differently, the activation of the security pact can only be "exceptional" in a basically liberal context. This leads us to a further aspect of Foucault's work that is extremely relevant to understanding current responses to the Covid-19 epidemic.

It is already easy to see that concepts central to discipline and biopower such as circulation, biopolitical immunity, and states of exception can be helpful in understanding measures taken under the threat of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. But there is still one important "missing ingredient" in the Foucauldian toolkit, namely the family of ideas gathered around the term "governmentality".

Governmentality

The notion of governmentality is probably the most difficult to grasp of the major logics of power Foucault identified. The different ways in which he located it in relation to the other power-relations does not at first glance appear entirely consistent, and scholars disagree to this day on the scope and specifics of the term. So here I need briefly to step out of the shadows of neutral formulation and emphasize that what I present here is my own understanding of governmentality.

The term "governmentality" first emerges in Foucault's public work in early 1978 in the midst of what was originally conceived as a two-year-long lecture course on biopower

and biopolitics (Foucault 2007). In the lectures just before he introduces the new term, he has been surveying different ways in which, for example, urban design in the 18th and 19th centuries sought to implement disciplinary and biopolitical principles of social order. This discussion of *how to implement* biopolitical logics is a very helpful starting point for grasping what is distinctive about "governmentality".

It is necessary here to distinguish between two sense of the term "logic" that I have been using in an undifferentiated way up to this point (and more or less interchangeably with the Foucauldian term "rationality"). The "logic of biopower" is best understood as a logic primarily oriented to *ends*, that is, it sets out "the population" as its object, and the well-being or prosperity of this object as the end toward which specific biopolitical measures are to be oriented. What makes the "means" used to pursue these ends "biopolitical" is, by contrast, not very clear, beyond the basic fact that they are usually non-violent. The fact that these means intervene in some way in life-processes again defines them according to their ends, but otherwise sets no *a priori* limits upon what forms they could take.

It is helpful to interpret Foucault's introduction of the term "governmentality" as signaling a decision on his part to shift the focus more systematically toward the question of *means*, that is, toward the *how* of biopolitical measures. One of his starting points here is the principle already at work in biopower, according to which populations are understood to be animated by their own intrinsic dynamics and processes of development. By this principle, to avoid gumming up the works with unintended consequences, or creating problems worse than those they are trying to solve, the state and other authoritative actors should only intervene in the life of the population to the minimum extent necessary.

Under the heading of "governmentality", Foucault begins to explore in more depth this call to caution and restraint as illustrating a principle of "economy of government". A commitment to economy was already a theme in his genealogy of disciplinary power (see above), but was not systematically foregrounded in his discussion of biopolitics of the population. "Economy" should be understood here not only as dictated by what is good for the life of the population but also as promising improvement of the institutions and practices of government itself. One of Foucault's motivations for making this shift was the contemporaneous emergence in the late 1970s of neoliberalism as an increasingly influential ideology of rule in Western Europe and North America. A hallmark of neoliberalism has been an emphasis on minimal government intervention (in certain processes), and Foucault became increasingly interested, among other things, in tracing the long genealogy of this impulse. Thus, for Foucault, "governmentality" primarily means *liberal* governmentality.

Characteristically for Foucault, the principle of the economy of government could not simply be introduced as though it came out of nowhere. He accordingly re-orientes the remainder of the first year of his two-year course, and the entirety of the second year, transforming them into a tremendously rich genealogy of governmentality, one of the most impressive products of his entire career. The rest of the 1977-1978 course traces historical predecessors and precursors to modern rationalities and practices of economy of government, while the 1978-1979 course is largely composed of a meticulous reconstruction of different varieties of 20th-century neoliberalism (Foucault 2007, 2008a; Lemke 2001).

A key starting point for this long genealogy is the ancient Greek notion of the household or *oikos* as the original setting for economy of government. One of Foucault's historical claims is that the halting and uncoordinated emergence of new forms of government of larger entities over the intervening centuries was based on the recognition that the family or household, structured around intimate personal knowledge and tied together by duties of filiation, could not simply be transferred to higher levels of social collectivity as the unchanging model of government. The historical details of how techniques of government developed away from this micrological starting point will be left aside here in favor of a more abstract summary of some of the key issues.

The rationality of biopower already suggests that the legitimacy of a government's actions is to be judged according to its success in protecting and fostering the life of the population. Liberal governmentality interprets this principle chiefly in terms of the protection of individual and economic freedom, and the aforementioned "apparatuses of security" acquire additional significance beyond their directly disciplinary deployment. These apparatuses, Foucault argues in his 1977-78 course, are set up by governments wherever – and only where – self-regulation would fail if left entirely to its own devices. For instance, while a certain level of deviance from the norm with regard to food production (e.g. a lack of crops) or social behavior (e.g. performing badly at school) must be tolerated, the government needs to make sure, first that the respective system is set up such that self-regulation can proceed smoothly, and, second, that deviations don't become excessive enough to impair this system.

This tightrope act of balancing a commitment to hands-off government with the imperative of making sure social processes don't develop harmful dynamics explains why the "security pact" between states (or rather governments) and populations is a feature of liberal systems. While liberal governmentality has commonly been understood as shorthand for "soft" power, indirect "guidance" and the stimulation of "self-conduct", Foucault also sensitized us to its inherent exceptionalism. The possibility of invoking the security pact and imposing a state of exception are not external but internal to liberal government.

The idea of a security pact also raises the issue of the role of psychological dimensions of "security" in power relations. One important insight to emerge from the spate of critical analyses of the political fallout from the attacks of September 11th, 2001, is that the dynamics of *affect* and emotion play a central role in states of exception and emergency. As Ben Anderson has shown, the mobilization of fear and anxiety, as well as the cultivation of "morale", can play a central role in determining the level of acceptance, as well as the ultimate success, of extraordinary biopolitical measures taken in times of crisis (Anderson 2010, 2011).

Affective dynamics are both spurred and shaped by processes of the "militarization" of social life that often accompanies emergencies (Dowler 2012). The language of war is applied to a wide range of threats having nothing to do with military conflict, and members of the population are encouraged to value and to practice "everyday heroism". Implicitly at least, such patterns tend to validate masculinist models of subjectivity. To the extent that military rhetoric shapes the public discourse, those questioning the emergency suppression of rights or the specific executive decisions of leaders can more easily be re-framed as "weak", "unpatriotic" or lacking in solidarity. As Judith Butler has pointed out, the presence of such tensions indicates the ambivalence of experiences of

vulnerability, which can both motivate calls for protection and seek to keep protective powers at arm's length (Butler 2004; 2006).

To return to Foucault's main line of argument, in the logic of liberal or neoliberal governmentality, efficiency and economy of government are goals that can be approached by two basic avenues. On the one hand, examination and reform of state (or other institutional) structures and processes (as in currently hegemonic programmes of "continuous improvement") are seen as necessary. Secondly, new forms of subjectivation of members of the population compatible with the demands of the new institutional environment must be encouraged. In Foucault's analysis, both the state and individuals are to orient themselves toward a business model, to seek to act in an efficient and entrepreneurial way. The historical processes by which Western states have pursued this goal extends back at least to the early 19th century, and constitutes what Foucault calls the "governmentalization of the state". The reforms that have pushed this process forward have often come from outside the state apparatus. This is another hallmark of the concept of governmentality: it points to the political role of actors and dynamics outside as well as within the state (Rose and Miller 1992).

Foucault is careful to point out that (neoliberal) governmentality is not the same as 19th century liberalism, and that a neoliberalizing state is not necessarily a shrinking state. Among other things, surveillance and policing functions have tended to expand in step with the curtailment of social welfare functions over the past forty years of neoliberal hegemony. Governmentalization has often proceeded not only or even primarily by the self-amputation of the state in acts of privatization, but also by changing how parts of the state apparatus operate.

A crucial aspect of Foucault's notion of neoliberal governmentality is the transformations of subjectivity it foresees. If subjects of the Keynesian regimes that immediately preceded the rise of neoliberalism could still harbor a notion of entitlement to biopolitical care and support, neoliberal subjects can count on no such safety net. Thus, so the logic goes, we need to invest in ourselves as productive, flexible and resilient agents of our own fates. Governmental programmes, whether originating within or outside the state, are thus often aimed, on the one hand, at making us more efficiently governable, capable of being encouraged to do some things by incentives and deterred from doing others by disincentives. Childhood education- not least its disciplinary aspects - plays a central role here.

On the other hand, once we have reached adulthood, we should ideally be have become largely self-governing, and what is more, should engage in practices of self-improvement and self-optimization. A great deal of scholarship has chronicled the rising prominence of regimes and practices of unlimited self-improvement, familiar to us denizens of the Global North in the form of evening courses, personal fitness and coaching programmes, continuing education, and a host of other such services. Again characteristically, Foucault devoted much of his research in the last five years of his life to reconstructing the ancient and modern Western history of techniques of care of the self and the way the purposes and techniques of care of the self have been transformed in modern programmes of the "government of self and others" (Foucault 2010).

In modern neoliberal settings, to the extent that a population takes on and internalizes the various inducements to self-improvement, it collaborates in a process of "responsibilization" of individuals for the outcomes of social processes, in effect, a

"devolution" of power over (and vulnerability to) our own fates. Responsibilization is closely connected to the issue of "freedom". As Sergei Prozorov has argued, Foucault relies in all of his analyses of power relations upon the assumption of a basic intrinsic "freedom" enactable by all human beings in some degree, a contentless "ability to act otherwise" without which Foucault's conception of "resistance" would be unintelligible (Prozorov 2007).

But freedom has been addressed more prominently in the governmentality literature in a second sense, not so much as an intrinsic attribute of human beings but as something that can be constructed in different ways by specific regimes, involving specific sets of encouragements and discouragements (Rose 1999). Freedom is seen in this perspective as the most economical and efficient *means* of government. To the extent that individuals can be relied upon to interpret and exercise freedom in ways that spontaneously preserve an existing social order, the more invasive, resource-intensive and costly techniques of power (specialized institutions or massive police presence in public spaces, to take two examples) are rendered less necessary.

Perhaps the most basic governmental technique in this sense is that of insurance: social, retirement, automobile or health insurance schemes leave us free to live our lives. As we become old or infirm, or suffer accidents, however, we are protected (Ewald 1991). Since the first implementation of insurance schemes in the 19th century, however, governmental techniques have increasingly targeted the exact ways in which we exercise our freedom. Under recent neoliberal regimes, we are increasingly expected to act as entrepreneurs, investing in ourselves as healthy, productive individuals in competition with one another. Insurance discounts for non-smokers, or discounts and other benefits in exchange for data from personal fit-bits, are examples of this refinement. Through design or reform of the "landscapes of possibility" in which we operate, we can be induced to exercise choices "freely" but in ways that are beneficial both to ourselves and to the maintenance of specific social orders.

The recent development of techniques of libertarian paternalism - "nudge" - based upon the findings of behavioral economics, refines this approach further by surrounding our choices with more subtle and ramified incentive structures or "choice architectures" (Jones, Pykett and Whitehead 2010; Whitehead, Jones, Lilley, Pykett and Howell 2017). Generally speaking, if the original idea of biopower was to tweak the life-processes of populations so as to benefit them, the "rule of freedom" characteristic of neoliberal governmentality (Rose 1999) can be thought of as the devolved, individualized, "molecularized" version of this (Rose 2001). At its core, it consists of attempts to mold and shape our basic, intrinsic freedom into specific kinds of free activity compatible with prevalent social orders.

At this point it makes sense to ask what has become of the rationality of biopower. Has it been "devolved out of existence"? In the famous 1978 lecture in which Foucault first introduces the concept of governmentality, he presents a diagram of modern power relations, a "triangle" formed by governmentality, sovereignty and discipline, from which the terms "biopower" and "biopolitics" have disappeared (Foucault 2007). Foucault argues that in the last 200 years or so in Western societies, the methods associated with sovereignty (executive power, law, the courts, police forces - the whole "juridico-political" complex) have not disappeared, but rather have tended to become subordinated to or invested more strongly with the liberal logic of governmentality. The very political terrain on which liberal governmental techniques are deployed assumes the

form of what Foucault (2007) characterized as a liberal “play of interests”. Thus, rather than simply designing mechanisms in a top-down way, liberal governments need to mediate among the interests that are constantly being articulated and expressed from within the population. In this sense, liberal principles of government increasingly shape a “problem space” addressed by many voices. It is tempting in light of this to suggest that the concept of governmentality has basically subsumed those of biopower and biopolitics (Sarasin 2020).

This is too undifferentiated, in my view. It is necessary here to distinguish between the conceptual role played by logics of biopower and biopolitics and the shifting historical fortunes of these logics in concrete governing regimes. At the historical level, the active marginalization of biopower has indeed been one of the main goals of processes of “roll-back” neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002). If, as Margaret Thatcher infamously put it, “there is no such thing as society”, then states have no justification for seeking to cultivate or support any entities above the level of the individual. In the neoliberal logic of governmentality, individuals themselves should be “supported” *only* in their quest to cease needing support. In the context of the ongoing dismantlement of welfare measures, it is thus not surprising that some scholars of biopower and biopolitics, most influentially Mika Ojakangas, have argued that we should recognize and value more positively the protective logic of biopower, even though many concrete biopolitical programmes have historically been dangerous and destructive (Ojakangas 2005; Hannah 2011).

And yet, the historically specific suppression or marginalization of the rationality of biopower does not mean it has ceased to be relevant. At the conceptual level, following the distinction between logics of means and logics of ends, it makes sense to interpret Foucault's triangle as the complex of different means deployed in modern societies to serve the ends represented by the well-being of the population and its members. Thus, biopower persists, in principle at least, as the implicit point of these different measures, as a “present absence” hovering above (or below) the triangle. The increasing importance of liberal governmentality can then be seen to take two mutually reinforcing forms: one the one hand, an increasing prominence of liberal techniques foregrounding individual freedom as a means, and on the other hand, an increasingly liberal and individualistic interpretation of “the good of the population” as the end to be addressed by these means.

However, one thing the current crisis demonstrates is that both the preference for liberal means and the tendency to see biopolitical ends (the good of the population) in liberal-individualistic terms are contingent and reversible. Foucault's notion of the security pact (discussed earlier) suggests that in crises, the strategies and techniques of government that emerge from the liberal play of interests may not themselves be “liberal”. As in the current crisis, the population may be temporarily “re-biologized” as a vulnerable, embodied, mortal demographic collectivity. Protecting the re-biologized social body can then seem to require the deployment of discipline, sovereignty and other technologies in various combinations (Collier 2009).

The current Covid-19 crisis confirms the continued relevance of biopower, the project of protecting the population, of “making live or letting die”, demonstrating that it remains operative, even where it has been submerged or pressed to the margins by neoliberal ideologies. But it also shows the complexities introduced by the liberal play of interests. One avenue for thinking about this apparent resurgence of biopolitical concerns in the

Covid-19 crisis is indicated by the writings discussed above around the themes of biopower, (auto)immunity, sovereignty and state of emergency that emerged after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. These writings emphasized the reanimation of biopolitical impulses of protection and "hard" sovereign means of realizing them (e.g. Campbell 2006; Cooper 2006; Braun 2007). But the stream of critical scholarship centered on the concept of governmentality also provides some useful pointers.

As noted above, Foucault's notion of governmentality was developed in a manner strongly influenced by his interest in the genealogy of liberalism and neoliberalism in the Global North. Subsequently, however, scholars in a range of disciplines have expanded the remit of the concept of governmentality to address rationalities and techniques of government in the Global South and in less "liberal" political settings. Thus Mitchell Dean has identified features of "authoritarian governmentality" (Dean 1999), and a host of scholars have explored the specifics of "colonial governmentalities" (Prakash 1999; Legg 2007; Kalpagam 2014).

Regimes animated by colonial or authoritarian governmentality have in an absolute sense historically been much more interventionist and much less respectful of independent population dynamics and individual self-determination than those in Western Europe. A core feature of authoritarian and colonial forms of governmentality has been the obvious role of *dividing practices*, that is, categorizations and concrete political measures that draw distinctions between rulers and ruled, the more and the less privileged, the included and the excluded, those worthy of positive cultivation and those to be subjected to harder police or military measures.

It may help to imagine a spectrum of dividing practices, stretching from the most drastic and deadly distinction between life qualified for biopolitical care, and "bare life" or *homo sacer*, through forms of systematic social discrimination such as more mundane forms of racism and sexism, to the fine, everyday gradations of individual-level health or achievement captured in performance statistics and data of all kinds. Authoritarian and colonial governmentalities will tend to be structured more strongly around dividing practices in the "middle" and toward the "sharp" end of this spectrum. In these regimes, clear distinctions between entitled and unentitled groups, clear imposed patterns of beneficiaries and losers, cannot be explained away or papered over by spurious assertions that success or failure is just a matter of individual performance.

Do these studies stretch the notion of "governmentality" too far? Is there any real difference between, for example, imposed regulations under authoritarian governmentality and the imposed regulations Foucault had analysed in Europe under the heading of biopolitics of populations? In my opinion, the term "governmentality" does in fact add something to the study of non-liberal settings, and specifically, to the analysis of the current state of exception. Again, a key focus of these studies, despite the wide spectrum of very different empirical situations they explore, the principle of "economy of government" - one of the central features of governmentality. Economy of government, though, is relative to empirical context, and can be just as relevant in non-liberal settings as in privileged parts of the Global North. In a relative sense, colonial and authoritarian regimes, too, have sought to govern as efficiently as possible, and, for example, in the "civilizing missions" of many colonial powers, to encourage colonial subjects to become more like the white, bourgeois self-entrepreneurs of Western liberal ideology (Legg 2007). As I will suggest below, a specific problematization of "economy of government" is likewise at work in evolving responses to the Covid-19 crisis.

A second issue specific to discussions of governmentality that can be useful today concerns the "precautionary principle" involved in systems of risk-management and insurance. Foucault's former student and collaborator François Ewald has argued that, beginning in the 1980s, under the influence of the burgeoning environmental movement, state and non-state strategies for risk-management shifted from the Keynesian principle of "solidarity", the spreading of the costs of risks, to that of "precaution", that is, a logic whereby a lack of knowledge about consequences or future states should encourage careful, preventive action and restraint in human activities (Ewald 2002). It is arguable that the events of September 11th, 2001 led to a radical transformation or intensification of the precautionary principle, such that in the face of dramatic threats, a "trans-precautionary" form of actionism tends to be practiced, a commitment to "do something" even in the absence of specific knowledge that the actions will be helpful in averting the threat (Hannah 2010). Clearly there are affective and emotional dynamics at work here as well.

Stepping back, it is possible to see a range of features connecting the three different themes of disciplinary power, biopower and biopolitics, and governmentality. A commitment to minimize direct force, economy of power as a means and as an end, the de-personalization of relations of rule, the key role of knowledge and expertise, the construction and operation of individual and collective norms, and the dimensions of emotion and affect are all to be found across the major modes, even if each feature has chiefly been linked by Foucault or his interlocutors with only one of them. And again, all three are proposed as challenges to the idea that traditional sovereign notions of power associated with states, laws, police and violence are the only, or even the most important, forms power takes in the modern world.

Crucially, many concrete *dispositifs* or assemblages of power relations involve intricate combinations and articulations of rationalities and techniques of sovereignty, discipline, biopolitics, and governmentality. Since they are composed of modes of power that follow somewhat different, if related logics, such combinations often involve internal tensions and inconsistencies. The tension-fraught articulations of biopower and sovereignty were central, it will be recalled, to debates around the Global War on Terror and the writings of Giorgio Agamben. Some of the more exciting scholarship in recent years has been aimed precisely at exploring other articulations and combinations in other settings (Biolsi 2018; Parsons and Salter 2008; Collier 2009).

Finally, to return to a point mentioned briefly at the beginning, sovereignty, discipline, biopower and biopolitics, and governmentality in all their diverse forms are in a sense constantly provoked by and in "dialogue" with actual or imagined forms of resistance and struggle. As Deleuze and Guattari have argued so persuasively, ordering schemes and regimentations are in many ways traversed by all sorts of social and material dynamics that tend to overflow or disrupt these schemes, while also prompting new orders (2004a, 2004b). More deliberate and conscious forms of resistance and struggle have also perpetually haunted and called out or co-constructed by the sorts of power relations Foucault outlined.

He himself was involved in movements and conflicts around prison conditions, rights of asylum, anti-psychiatry, the oppression of sexual minorities, and - controversially - in connection with the Iranian Revolution in 1978-1979 (Afary and Anderson 2005). Fundamentally, resistance across many of the forms of power he analyses is a matter of

refusal to be governed in a particular way, by a particular set of authorities, in a particular situation (Foucault 1982). What kind of resistances may be called forth by current responses to the Covid-19 outbreak? What sense could resistance make in the context of an overwhelmingly powerful construction of biopolitical risk that seems to make any thought of resistance utterly irresponsible? I will return to these issues at the end.

PART II

Thinking through responses to the Covid-19 pandemic: an initial overview

The current situation is clearly one example of a constellation in which elements of sovereignty, discipline, biopower and biopolitics, and governmentality are combined in uneven (and rapidly shifting) ways. Equipped with the foregoing discussions of these categories, we can now finally follow up on some of the hints and allusions made above, and untangle some - though, again, not all - of the politics of the Covid-19 situation. One final preliminary note is in order, however. It is crucially important to preempt a fundamental misunderstanding that could arise regarding the analysis to follow. To identify disciplinary, biopolitical, governmental and sovereign strategies and techniques of power in state responses to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 viruses and of Covid-19 is *not* to imply that political and institutional decision-makers are acting cynically, or that they are "really" motivated by concerns other than genuine care for the population. One of the larger lessons of Foucault's genealogies of modern techniques of power is that they have gradually come to form a kind of "political-technical unconscious" shaping the very way decision-makers think and act in pursuit even of the most noble and irreproachable goals. In other words, the analysis below should in no sense be understood as *accusatory*.

We can begin with the basic rationality of biopower, and with Foucault's "triangle" of sovereignty, discipline and governmentality. If **biopower** is structured by the alternative between "making live" and "letting die", most state responses to the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been justified publicly by a "re-biologization" of the population, and a perceived overarching imperative to keep as many people alive as possible. Some of the most prominent means used to pursue this general end have been the familiar tools of state **sovereignty**: orders and decrees forbidding certain activities, requiring others, and the passing (or suspending) of laws in order to ensure that these measures are legally and constitutionally legitimate or adequately funded. Police, national guards and in some cases even the military have been called upon to enforce restrictions. These sovereign tools are being used biopolitically, that is, for *making* (rather than *letting*) live.

The **disciplinary** character of some of these measures is likewise fairly clear, especially in the case of (total or partial) quarantine. Many states have not imposed the kind of total lockdown that would take the form of a strict stay-at-home curfew with no exceptions. However, even the partial restrictions typical in Europe as of this writing already put in place the foreground-background structure at the heart of disciplinary power: dramatic reductions in public activity produce a background against which those who are still present in public stand out more clearly and can be required to justify their presence. To the extent that the comprehensive checks now mostly confined to international border crossings are also implemented at selected points within state territories, the level of visibility will increase. A requirement that everyone carry official identification outside the home is a logical pendant to partial curfew and can be expected to be implemented

where it has not been already. Disciplinary power functions at its core on the basis of awareness of one's own visibility to authorities.

Another telltale sign of the logic of discipline is the rhetoric some politicians and commentators have used (for example in Germany, where I live) to the effect that whether quarantine measures are tightened will depend on how well the public obeys the measures already in place. The notion, sometimes formulated explicitly, that "We are watching you!" is a classic example of seeking to transfer all responsibility for punishments or restrictions onto those under surveillance. We are to accept the idea that if measures are tightened further, it is not because state leaders have made decisions themselves, but rather because of the bad decisions we have made. In the process, a distinction between "normal" members of society and those engaging in "abnormal", dangerous behavior is constructed (more on this below).

This disavowal of official responsibility for decisions made is also underwritten by another hallmark of disciplinary power: the rule of experts. Epidemiologists and virologists are invoked as unquestioned authorities whose advice politicians are "merely following" despite the fact that almost all of these experts themselves emphasize the limits of their own knowledge. This is a point at which discipline is articulated with some of the features of **governmentality**. In liberal and neoliberal governmentality, limited knowledge, for example, about outcomes of market competition, have supported the principle of economy of government, of minimal intervention in socio-economic processes.

However, as noted above, especially in states of exception, there has arguably been an embrace in the last few decades of the "precautionary principle", whereby risks are no longer to be redistributed but rather to be avoided in the first place (Ewald 2002; Massumi 2015). Many experts in the current crisis thus cite the limits of their own knowledge as a reason for quarantine and the closing of borders. In the face of uncertainty and conflicting projections from experts, however, it is difficult to know where the precautionary principle becomes a "trans-precautionary" actionism motivated by an urge to "do something". Some state leaders may impose ever-stricter measures not only because the experts say they should but also because of an emerging dynamic of international comparison among security pacts. Most national publics are aware not only of what their own governments are doing but also of what governments elsewhere are doing. This will tend to heighten pressure upon decision-makers not to be seen as lagging behind or taking the threat less seriously than it is being taken elsewhere.

Pulling in the other direction, a liberal commitment to "freedom" has conditioned the somewhat restrictive deployment of disciplinary measures in Europe, which corresponds to Foucault's characterization of the "apparatuses of security" as safeguarding the fundamental processes of self-regulation. For instance, German politicians and experts alike have repeatedly rejected harsher controls regulations, on the one hand, by appealing to subjects' own reasonable thinking and, on the other, by highlighting the importance of maintaining as much continuation of "normal life" as possible (more on this below).

To summarize this initial survey, a biopolitical imperative for the protection of human life is being reasserted, through unusually interventionist means of discipline and sovereign power (partial quarantines and emergency decrees), resulting in a partial (and tension-ridden) curtailment of socio-economic freedoms enjoyed by 21st century neoliberal subjects, and in a partial suspension of democratic involvement in political

decision-making. The "economy of government" central to governmentality has been given a new meaning. In terms of the material and personnel of political rule, economy has been abandoned as public expenses skyrocket both to enforce restrictive measures and counter the economic damage. The invasive measures put in place also bite deeply into the social, economic and political processes that in "normal" times are supposed to be left alone. On the other hand, however, and although the liberal "play of interests" and the problem of governmental self-legitimation are still at work, "economy of government" has been strengthened, as a new, more authoritarian "economy of decision-making" has been put in place, one in which biopolitical subjects are not considered to have any active role (more on this below). To the extent that we revert to our biological status as living beings, we cease to be competent participants in decision-making.

We could thus characterize state measures as an instance of "authoritarian governmentality" (Dean 1999) or a "state of exception" (Agamben 2005). In either case, though, exceptional measures depend upon the implicit "security pact" implicitly agreed by populations and governments in times of seemingly existential threats (Foucault 2003a, 2003b). Whatever aspects we would emphasize under these different but related labels, we have a situation at least formally similar to the responses to the 9/11 and subsequent attacks: an emphasis on biopolitical ends and sovereign (as well as "harder" disciplinary) means, at the expense of democratic participation and of other socio-economic freedoms as well. In this initial survey, some tensions and contradictions within and between different kinds of power relations have already emerged. In the remaining sections I would like to briefly sketch some further important issues raised by the current pandemic: issues around circulation, immunity and capital; groupings; and freedom, resistance and democracy.

Circulation, immunity and capital

One of the key biopolitical aims of state measures is to shut down the detrimental circulation of the virus by shutting down the circulation of its human carriers, or at least limiting contact between units of human circulation by banning contact across households even in public or common spaces. As is now well known, the virus spreads not only by circulating directly from humans to humans but also by circulating as an aerosol, remaining suspended in air, smoke or fog up to three hours, or up to three days as adhesion on objects comprised of steel or plastics like doorknobs, bus handles or the keypads of automatic teller machines. These human-related interfaces and relays of circulation cannot be shut down completely. For one thing, physical movement itself generally contributes to the health of human bodies. The mobility needs of the millions of dogs living as companion species must also be taken into account (Haraway 2008; cats can generally be left to their own devices, fish left in their tanks, etc.).

A second major "positive" dimension of circulation is the movement of goods and money, both in general and especially in order to keep partially immobilized human - and pet - life alive. The division between benign and dangerous circulations of goods also cannot be complete due to the necessity of human beings in transport and distribution. This already points to a tension *within* the basic biopolitical logic of the cultivation of human life: to "make live" rather than "let die", it may be seen as necessary to make the specific form of life temporarily less healthy or fulfilling. Being "made to live" at the price of quality of life is perhaps most poignantly illustrated by the situation of many elderly and infirm people housed in institutions now forbidding visits by family and friends.

In general, the problem of circulation can be described as an auto-immune problem. The "internal enemy" cannot be eliminated because it only exists in "personal union" with the population to be protected. Or in loose reference to Esposito, the self-destructive potential of (auto-)immunity is already incorporated by infected individuals who, as they keep moving through the "body" of the population, could infect still healthy people and therefore pose a threat to the community in general. What must be negated here in order to protect the population is the mobility of the already infected – least as long as they are still contagious.

Social distancing and careful hygiene measures acquire their central importance from the fact that ongoing circulation of human bodies is simultaneously dangerous and necessary. The contradictory biopolitical valence of individual bodies is perhaps most intensely experienced in visits to doctors and hospitals or in check-out lines at supermarkets. At these critical points, we place ourselves and potentially also others in immediate danger in order to acquire the means to survive. In a sense, these points of public proximity between bodies can be seen as occupying a paradigmatic place similar to the place occupied by sexual practices in Foucault's studies: a particularly important hinge point between personal and demographic well-being.

The issue of circulation also raises fundamental questions about the ends of biopower. Foucault started from the assumption - which I have not called into question until now - that the ends of biopower are human populations and the individuals making them up. The first sense in which this assumption can be questioned has to do with the circulation of capital, the second with what might be called the "ethics of biopolitical valuation". In Germany as elsewhere, there have already been increasing calls to loosen restrictions for the sake of the health of the economy, often flanked by speculation about the human price of partial or total lockdowns (depression, stress, domestic violence - more on this below). But lurking behind these calls is the possibility that, especially under neoliberal forms of governance, the real priority of biopower is increasingly the cultivation of capital, not of human life per se.

We are accustomed to the idea that neoliberalism has starved and marginalized social safety nets, health and education systems, and other infrastructures for the support of human life. At the same time, though, neoliberalized regimes at all scales have demonstrably coddled and supported packets of capital in various different forms (corporations, as in "corporate welfare", but also investment funds and the holdings of wealthy individuals) to an extent never dreamed of by the human beneficiaries of Keynesian welfarism of the immediate postwar decades. Through deregulation, tax loopholes, abatements and holidays, international trade and finance regimes and massive rescue packages of capitals "too big to fail" - all undergirded by the expansion of corporate human rights - states (and their human populations) have repeatedly enacted massive and extravagant programmes to "make capital live" rather than "let it die" (Dyer-Witford 2008; Hannah 2011). At the very least, capital has become ever more prominent in the "play of interests" characteristic of liberal governmentality.

Making capital live means, as legions of scholars from Adam Smith onwards have demonstrated, promoting its free circulation in ever new rounds of investment. Perhaps the centerpiece of neoliberal ideology is the notion that it is only by cultivating a generous biopolitics in favor of the ongoing circulation and growth of capital that the "secondary" biopolitical end of human life can achieve its own continuation and flourishing. As the "sufferings" of capital intensify in the current crisis, we can expect a

shift in crisis policy toward a more open assertion that if the biopolitical interests of capital and those of human life increasingly clash, the interests of capital "must" be given precedence. There is some affinity between alarm around the suffocation of capital circulation and economic activity, on the one hand, and on the other, Esposito's discussion of the danger of immunization measures getting out of control and resulting in "thanatopolitical" auto-immune over-reactions (see above).

Of course, such a stark contradiction cannot be presented as such, and as of this writing, challenges are beginning to emerge to the idea that the needs of "the economy" and those of the human population are really in tension with each other. The interests of capital can be seen to converge with the interests of humans in recovering access to the full range of forms of consumption necessary to support a good *quality* of life. (It is important to keep in mind that this convergence is differential: capital tends to serve *some* humans more than others, and the privileged tend to dominate the liberal play of interests). At the same time, though, prioritizing quality of life could still conflict with keeping as many people as possible alive. Some interventions in the debate go further, and suggest that the long-run economic benefits of keeping the death toll to a minimum through restrictive measures will outweigh the short-term shock of global recession or depression. This, again, can be seen as a debate around the point at which immunization tips over into a destructive thanatopolitics.

However this issue is couched, it will bring with it debate about the second issue, the "ethics of biopolitical valuation". To the extent that the health and well being of a human population and the individuals making it up continue to be important "ends" of biopower, how exactly are these ends understood? The term "ends" could conjure up the Kantian ethical principle that human beings are never to be evaluated as "means" but as singular "ends in themselves". A contrasting ethical perspective is that of utilitarianism, whereby the good of a population would be understood as the greatest good for the greatest number of people. At its most extreme, utilitarian thinking can inform a Malthusian willingness to let "weak" segments of a population die. The rationality of biopower could be interpreted according to either of these ways of valuing a population. Whereas quasi-Kantian biopower would insist on the incomparable and singular value of, and the necessity of preserving, every human being, utilitarian biopower would be more willing to trade off the interests, or even the lives, of some in order to maximize the benefit to the majority.

We can see an interesting example of the tensions involved in this shift in the initial flirtation of the British government with a policy of "herd immunity". Letting the virus take its course in order to develop widespread immunity in the British population as quickly as possible would have illustrated some of Esposito's ideas about immunization very well, and would have constituted a capital-friendly policy, but would have cost thousands of lives in a short period of time. In part due to the strenuous objections of epidemiologists and virologists, but also in view of the political dangers of shifting too openly from a Kantian to a utilitarian biopolitical ethics, the British government backed down and fell into line with other national policies, at least for the time being. Similarly, open discussion of ethical principles of triage in cases where hospitals are overwhelmed by acutely ill sufferers of Covid-19 construct categories of human lives that can be valued comparatively and traded off against each other.

Groupings – nation, ethnicity, class and the family

As this last point makes clear, problems of circulation and immunity are necessarily connected to shifting "dividing practices" that configure and reconfigure groupings of human beings. If the tension between valuing humans and valuing capital has intensified divisions among more or less vulnerable groups, the segmentation of the population into sub-groups as part of the biopolitical measures taken in response to Covid-19 has actualized a series of further divisions related to nationalism, ethnicity, class, age and the family.

Generally speaking, the exceptionality of the pandemic has been responded to with a re-affirmation of *national* sovereignty, correlating with an emphasis on each nation-state's population as primary target of protective measures. This emphasis on the nation-state as the primary scale for attributing risks and interventions has directed particular attention to the protection of national borders. For instance, even after an uncontrolled spread of Covid-19 had already been reported across Germany, the government's early measures focused largely on protecting the borders to neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, resettlement agreements regarding war refugees were suspended. And while German citizens dwelling abroad were brought back to Germany, undocumented migrants continued to be deported to other countries – even after Germany as a whole had become a major risk area in terms of international health standards.

The affirmation of the national population has given rise to, and been supported by, implicit or explicit evaluations around who does or does not deserve biopolitical care. For instance, while the particular vulnerability of elder national citizens has been a major concern, undocumented migrants' limitations in accessing healthcare – for instance due to German welfare offices' obligation to report these migrants to the immigration office, which increases their risk of being deported – simultaneously increased the vulnerability of these migrants. (It has also increased the risk for the spread of the virus in the countries to which migrants are deported.) A similar increase in undocumented migrants' vulnerability ensued where police officers have gained the right to randomly check people's identity cards in public space as part of emergency decrees.

This accentuated division between "national citizens" and "foreigners" is in danger of leading to the kind of racialized split between those worth living and those who must die, which Foucault (1978) identified as a recurrent feature in modern biopower. This is signalled by the broad reflex toward rejection or expulsion of "outsiders", already evident in right-wing populist movements in many countries, which has dovetailed with a spate of uncoordinated decisions over the past few weeks to close international borders. That such decisions are not necessarily beneficial in a biopolitical sense can be seen, for example, in the dangers posed to national agricultural systems by the blockage of the seasonal immigration of migrant farm workers.

A second sense in which groupings are reconfigured concerns relations of privilege and underprivilege defined in terms of exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most jobs that place people at the critical juncture points of the circulation of goods and the medical care of the population (storage and transport workers, supermarket and filling station workers, nurses, elder-care workers, and postal carriers) are considered relatively unskilled and are poorly paid. The number of the workers exposed to the virus is further augmented by many governments' decision to keep up large parts of the production – which simultaneously led to elevated levels of new infections even after contact restrictions were introduced (leading back to the valuation of capital). Moreover, despite

some variation across sectors, these groups of workers tend to be composed disproportionately of women, migrants and people of color. Thus an intersectional dynamic of economic underprivilege for these groups is often intensified at a biopolitical level.

Another change evident in quarantine practices is the suppression of elective or recreational groupings. This lays the groundwork for identifying unauthorized elective groupings (youth "hanging out" in public space, or people getting together for "Corona parties") as scapegoats. The escalation of fines, jail time and other punishments recommended or already enacted against such groups positions them as dangerous outsiders posing an autoimmune problem to be combatted with more intrusive sovereign and disciplinary measures.

On the other side of dividing practices, at least two "positive" groupings can be identified. The first of these is composed of "the vulnerable", a grouping worthy of protective care, both through policies and decrees banning or minimizing contact with them, and as an ethical point of orientation in public appeals to comply with the restrictions declared in the state of emergency. The second positive group is composed of those who have survived Covid-19 already and can thus be assumed to have developed immune resistance. Being immune afterwards, their mobility and economic productivity acquires the opposite, positive value: their movement enhances the (economic) life of the community. As their numbers grow, these recovered individuals increase the resistance of the social body and, at least in terms of economic circulation, can be seen as loosely equivalent to "antibodies". Calls are already emerging to mobilize this group especially in "front-line" situations of direct contact with the infected. This group would represent a new immunological element in Esposito's sense, one whose role is to reconcile the separation of the infected with the need to care for them.

Populations in some disciplinary institutions, such as the prison or – particularly prevalent today – refugee camps, are situated at the intersection of contradictory biopolitical categorizations of "a risk to society" and "vulnerable populations". On the one hand, these spaces and populations have been depicted as posing a particular risk for society. For instance, instead of re-locating people to emptied hotels, refugee camps across Europe have been sealed, often accompanied with their sensationalist depiction as potential Corona hot spots. Likewise, prisoners have been subjected to new restrictions, including for instance the suspension of visits or exercise in the yard. On the other hand, as the keeping of physical distance is often not possible in prisons, some countries and regions have suspended detention for part of the detainees. Whether in these cases the reason for suspending detention is to protect convicts or to avoid the development of dangerous virus hot spots would need to be investigated.

The final grouping to mention is the family. In a sense, the current restrictions in many countries amount to a forced recentering of social relations and decision-making toward family or household units. As has already been noted in some commentary, this shift can easily place women in a multiply disadvantaged position. On the one hand, domestic violence, which disproportionately threatens the well-being – and the very lives – of women, is expected to increase with the combination of increased stress and experiences of loss-of-control and the increased opportunity afforded to potential abusers by continuous co-presence. On the other hand, children remaining at home due to school closings can be expected to intensify demands on women, who still assume a

disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities in all countries. Incidents of child abuse can likewise be expected to increase.

But the family has also acquired renewed significance in another sense. The instrument of contact restrictions aims first of all at the creation of “redundant circles”, which means that people should be in close contact only with the same small number of people, wherever possible. Or, as German epidemiologist Alexander Kekulé has repeatedly put it, “You should only be in close contact with those with whom you wish to share the virus”. While – both in theory and in practice – redundant circles assume a range of different forms, including for instance shared housing arrangements, close (temporarily exclusive) friendships, or polyamorous networks that span two or three apartments, political discourse has tended to foregrounded one form in particular: the family, often narrated in terms of the model of the heterosexual nuclear family. Even where emergence decrees used the term “households” rather than “families”, politicians and media reports often used the latter term.

Apart from forming an obvious reference for biopolitical measures in contexts where the nuclear family is a privileged institution organizing private sociability, the family also seems to fulfill here a particular function in rendering biopolitics effective – akin to their role in relation to disciplinary power (Foucault 1977; Donzelot 1979). While contemporary families have to a certain degree diversified in relation to the sovereign model of patriarchal authority as Foucault described it in the 18th and 19th-centuries, state authorities still count on the family as the mediator of the daily control exerted over, and care extend to, children, elderly relatives, returned patients or ex-detainees. The state’s assumptions around these routinized exercises of control and care might in part explain why “the family” has assumed such discursive prominence (e.g. in relation to the household).

In this context it is worth considering to what extent the political responses to the Covid-19 epidemic might lead to an unprecedented, longer-lasting reaffirmation of the bourgeois nuclear family as *the* privileged micro-component of social life. This new centrality can be seen as an additional dimension of what Don Mitchell diagnosed as the “SUV model of citizenship” (Mitchell 2005): the “shell” around the family unit symbolized by the SUV controls not only political and economic but explicitly biological exchange between family units. Building on Foucault we can thus think of the renewed importance of family units as a form of “non-modern” government – that is, government of the *oikos* through non-chosen relations based on intimate personal knowledge, duty, tradition, and often hierarchy. Thus the family persists not as “the anachronistic [...] residue” of a former system, but rather as “an increasingly essential component” (2006: 80) of biopower, being tasked with a larger role in the self-immunization of the population.

Freedom, resistance and democracy

Taken together, the above issues point to the fact that the “security pact” between states and populations that Foucault suggested goes into effect in times of unusual crisis is no simple construct. Whether after the attacks of September 11th, in the wake of other disasters, or in the current Covid-19 outbreak, states of emergency are likely to involve a range of competing or mutually complicating logics, policies and measures. Rationalities and techniques of sovereignty, discipline and governmentality intertwine and mix in often unstable and changing ways within the liberal play of interests, preventing any one

of these kinds of power relation from dominating the pursuit of the ends of biopower, the protection of the population— at least in much of the North Atlantic.

At the same time, capital has been granted a special place in this play of interests, its “healthiness” in some respects even being privileged over the protection of the population as a whole. (Even more than in the US president’s initial response to the pandemic, such privileging of capital over the population has been pronounced in the statements of Brazil’s president Jair Bolsonaro – which have however also been met by serious pushback within the government, bringing into relief how difficult it is for a president to maintain and enact a politics that openly does *not* care for the population.) Additionally, the populations have themselves been subjected to forms of national closure as well as a series of rearranged internal divisions (for example, those relating to gender, race and ethnicity, and capitalism) which intersect with the complex of issues discussed here.

A final theme it is important to examine more closely is the pervasive issue of individual freedom. As noted in Part I, one of Foucault's crucial insights in his writings and lectures on governmentality is that "freedom" is politically relevant not merely as a trans-historical given but, also always as a specific construct associated with different kinds of social power relations. Specific constructions of "freedom" have traversed many different responses to the spread of the virus, and it is worth examining some of the details.

To start with a disciplinary technique, the partial character of quarantine is explained on the one hand by invoking "freedom" as something to be protected. Limited quarantine is often linked in the official pronouncements of politicians to "rights", thus suggesting the relevance of democratic citizenship. However, the freedom to be protected is more accurately seen as a construction connected to the liberal rationality of governmentality, not the more familiar liberal rationality of citizenship. In other words, only those "freedoms" which contribute to the productivity and well-being of the population (traveling to work, consumption, physical exercise) are invoked.

There is little acknowledgment from politicians or those in charge of institutions (at least at the time of this writing) of the need to protect *democratic* "freedoms" of participation in decision-making. Quite the opposite: freedom of assembly is constructed as a biopolitical danger, and the setting-up of technologically supported virtual substitutes or enhancements for public interaction have thus far been restricted to production, consumption and volunteering, not public debate or participation. In the prevailing "economy of government", democratic debate is treated at least implicitly as a luxury for normal times, when many decisions are less urgent. Through interesting combinations of the imageries of war and of family, dissenting or questioning voices are stigmatized as unpatriotic or dangerous. Even where new legislation has acknowledged some minimal rights of participation on paper, governmental discourse and practice has not. For instance, while the Berlin emergency decree includes a passage allowing public assemblies of up to twenty persons under certain circumstances, local politicians as well as police patrols have consistently emphasized the rule that restricts outdoor presence to individuals and pairs.

On the other hand, freedom as the more general possibility of acting in different ways, is widely acknowledged as the flipside of the limited character of state resources, capacities and knowledge. In this second sense, the population possesses a *de facto* freedom that fills all the spaces not controlled by authorities. Thus, states appeal strenuously and

repeatedly to individuals to exercise this freedom responsibly: to obey curfews, to refrain from hoarding consumer goods or organizing "Corona parties". Freedom is to be exercised in line with the goals of biopower, that is, in solidarity with other members of the population. Probably the clearest expression of responsibly exercised freedom in the current situation is the widespread practice of "self-quarantine".

One difficulty with such appeals to solidarity is the by-now long hegemony of neoliberal ideology in many societies of the Global North especially, but elsewhere as well. According to this ideology, again, individuals should operate as entrepreneurial businesses, looking out for our own good and trusting (if we waste any thought on the question at all) that the collective results of the individual pursuit of self-interest will redound to everyone's benefit. In effect, we are now suddenly being asked to renounce neoliberal self-interest in favor of older biopolitical notions of solidarity. The fact that hoarding and gatherings of unrelated, non-cohabiting people continue to occur may thus be attributable to some extent to the atrophied sense of social solidarity resulting from long neoliberal hegemony.

More fundamentally, such "non-compliance" raises the issue of affect and emotion. As mentioned earlier, the logic of the security pact between state and population – and the liberal art of governing more generally – relies centrally on the cultivation of fear and anxiety. Yet promoting anxiety while trying to steer it only in helpful directions (social distancing, hygiene measures) and not in unhelpful directions (hoarding) is extremely difficult. Where (as in Germany and many other parts of the world) many people have personal memories of extreme shortages relating to wars or natural disasters, widespread refusal to act in solidarity can be expected.

The cultivation of fear and anxiety also may not be sustainable in the long run. If the SARS-CoV-2 virus proves not to kill as many as originally feared, or if infection rates soon go down, this would obviously tend to relax fears. If its results are as deadly as many experts predict, it is still likely that in the long run, the new, terrible features of everyday life would gradually become routinized and incorporated into the everyday experiences of the population. If, finally, the measures taken up to this point do not prevent overwhelmed health systems and tens of thousands of deaths, the decisions already taken by states up to this point would lose credibility in retrospect. In all three of these scenarios, it is likely that general acceptance of the curtailment of *democratic* freedoms - especially participation in decision-making - so central to the security pact would evaporate, either slowly or quickly. The emergency decisions of political and institutional authorities are already being questioned in many settings (including the German university system in which I work), and this kind of debate can only be expected to increase.

It therefore becomes clear that biopower and governmentality cannot be understood as transparent and internally consistent logics. Rather, they denote messy and tension-ridden projects that often generate effects that contradict declared aims. It makes sense to return in this context to the role of resistance in power relations. As noted earlier, Foucault understood resistance fundamentally in terms of situation-specific refusals to be governed in a particular way, by particular authorities (Foucault 1982), and considered countless forms of resistance to accompany all exercises of power, both as provocation and as response. Though he acknowledged their historical importance, he was generally interested less in the grand and long-familiar phenomena of "revolt" and "revolution"

than in many of the more everyday struggles and negotiations around how social life is to be ordered.

In the current context, an instructive example of the intimate interplay of power and resistance in this latter sense surrounds the exact meaning of curfews and limitations on personal mobility. To take Germany again as an example, the initial orders at the state and then the federal levels foresaw people still being allowed to leave their houses, but only to go to work, to shop for groceries and other necessary goods, or to engage in physical exercise (including walking dogs). In recent days, however, reports of people sunbathing in parks have provoked authorities (including the Federal Health Minister Jens Spahn) to specify that recreating outside does not include being stationary.

In effect, thousands of Germans have been defining necessary forms of recreation in their own way, to include not just physical but mental and emotional health, for which being outside *as such* may be necessary, so long as social distancing is still practiced. This interpretation is fully understandable especially in the case of city-dwellers who may not have even a balcony on which to sun themselves, much less a garden in which to get some movement. This situation highlights the importance of negotiations - also taking place in many other countries - around the way people's basic, inherent freedom is shaped in relation to officially sanctioned forms of freedom, and associated issues of whose knowledge forms the legitimate basis for decisions about self-government. In the governmentality literature, such issues are often discussed in terms of the emergence of spontaneous or more coordinated forms of "counter-governmentality", forms of self-government at odds with the orderings imposed from above (e.g. Appadurai 2001).

In every "state of exception" called out by modern authorities, resistance and questioning of authoritative decisions is - at least in the initial stages - stigmatized by authorities in strong terms as dangerous to the well-being of the population, as "divisive" at a time when "we must all act together", or worse, as "treasonous" or "unpatriotic". However the Covid-19 crisis plays out, we can expect it to be accompanied by increasingly open and widespread struggles both over the exact limits of state impositions and over the degree of democratic participation in decision-making.

New forms of self-organization have already taken shape at the level of neighbourhoods – often organized via chat group that the messenger app Telegram – and virtual spaces in the compilation and distribution of information through various online platforms. In these forms of non-state organization, the terms “solidarity”, “care” and “vulnerability” have also figured prominently. For instance, online neighborhood initiative have summoned and coordinated the distribution of food and services to homeless people and vulnerable groups. While many of these self-organized networks have emanated from leftist constituencies critical of state responses, the discussions surrounding these solidarity activities have frequently re-emphasized the importance of the governmental measures relating to a reduction of contacts. And although some leftist critics such as Agamben have denounced what they see as a straightforward aggravation of a deeply demonic force of biopower, others have called for acknowledging the democratic promise inherent in the care for the vulnerable (Mezzadra 2020). Alongside recurrent mistrust of biopolitical measures, there has also been a call for enacting a kind of “biopolitics from below” (Sotiris 2020).

This latter issue will become stronger the closer societies come to being able to "return to normality": the question will then become, which normality? In light of the climate

crisis, to take the most obvious example, but also in view of increasing awareness of the human costs of the accelerated form of neoliberalized global capitalism that reigned up until the virus became a global issue, it already seems clear that the long-reigning principle according to which "there is no alternative" is empty. Different ends are imaginable for biopower: the support of planetary life not limited to human beings, as well as human well-being not chained so strongly to the demands of capital circulation. And, given all the complexities and contradictions involved in the current state of exception, it is also clear that there is no single, inevitable or mandatory constellation of means, no exclusively legitimate way in which social power relations must be organized.

Foucault was famously and rightly critical of the idea that social life could ever be organized in a way that dispensed with power relations altogether. Instead, two questions are always paramount: Which forms of power relations, in which articulations, are preferable?, and secondly, Through which kinds of power relations should decisions about what is best be made? Sovereignty, discipline, biopower and biopolitics, and liberal governmentality are neither the only nor always the most important forms of power shaping our lives. However, understanding how they work, and seeing how the current crisis has shifted the ways in which they are articulated, may be helpful more generally in supporting reflective involvement in present and future decisions about how life during and after the Corona crisis should be shaped.

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