I declare that authorship of this thesis is my own and that acknowledgment of other sources has been provided where appropriate.

Kate Krinks
August 1998
'the problem always has the solution it deserves, in terms of the ways in which it is stated (i.e., the conditions under which it is determined as a problem) and of the means and terms at our disposal for stating it.'

- Gilles Deleuze  *Bergsonism*

'Definitions have their uses in much the same way that road signs make it easy to travel: they point out the directions. But you don’t get where you’re going when you stand underneath some sign, waiting for it to tell you what to do.'

- Kate Bornstein  *Gender Outlaw*
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores and critically reflects upon the relation in Foucault’s work between government and freedom. Instead of seeing them as opposed to one another - in the sense that ‘the Government’ impinges on individuals’ freedom, for better or for worse - Foucault sees government and freedom in a mutually dependent relationship: the exercise of one is inconceivable without the practise of the other. According to this formulation, resistance is also in an internal relationship to government.

Two conceptions of resistance are apparent in Foucault’s work. The first is resistance as ‘reactive,’ something that simply occurs and, therefore, needs no explanation from the perspective of a subject who acts. The second conception of resistance is ‘programmatic,’ and develops from the idea that subjects are capable of making strategic choices as to whether they participate in or resist attempts to govern their conduct in particular ways. The thesis argues that this second account of resistance relies on Foucault’s notion of ethics. Foucault uses this term to refer to the practices individuals employ on themselves to govern their own conduct and thus to make themselves into certain kinds of subjects. According to him, individual ethical practices should be the source of all resistance.

In order to further explore these issues, I look at two bodies of literature that take up Foucault’s formulation of the productive relationship between government and freedom. The first is the ‘governmentality literature,’ so called because it is concerned with the forms of rationality that inform the practise of modern liberal government. I argue that much of this literature presents a conception of resistance only in the reactive sense, because it does not address Foucault’s account of the role that ethics plays in government.
The second body of literature addressed in this thesis is queer theory. The focus in queer texts is on the ways in which subjects position themselves in relation to directions for conduct, either in conformity or in opposition. Much of this writing is influenced by Foucault's conception of subjects who are capable of making calculated and strategic choices about their actions. I argue that, in this writing, as in Foucault's, ethical practices are the source of the most effective strategies of resistance to the normalisation of sexualities. I also argue, however, that ethical practices alone are not sufficient to bring about meaningful political change.

The thesis concludes by pointing to difficulties that emerge from positing ethics as the source of all resistance. I argue that there are conditions under which the practise of ethics is an impossibility in some situations and that, therefore, Foucault's notion of ethics as resistance needs supplementing with a more conventional notion of freedom. This is one that takes into account that individuals might need to be 'freed' from a situation of domination before they can practise either ethics or resistance.
INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term conduct is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to ‘conduct’ is at the same time to ‘lead’ others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government. 1

Where there is power, there is resistance... These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network... But this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat. 2

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1 Michel Foucault ‘The subject and power.’ In Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (eds), 1982, 220-1.
Government and freedom: two words usually discussed in opposition to one another.

In this thesis I discuss a rather different view of the relation between these terms, one put forward by Michel Foucault. Rather than seeing government and freedom as opposed to one another, Foucault sees them in a mutually dependent relation. The formulation of the thesis title, ‘Government as a Practice of Freedom,’ is somewhat dissonant for a second reason. It is common to view government as something that is, such as ‘the government’ of a state or territory that makes decisions affecting the lives of the citizens or subjects to whom it bears a certain responsibility, just as the citizens carry reciprocal obligations towards the state. Foucault’s use of the term ‘government,’ however, mobilises its meaning as an exercise, something that individuals and groups do to achieve certain effects or outcomes concerning their own or others’ conduct. Similarly, freedom is most often thought of as a state or a condition to be reached, as well as usually being conceived as a condition marked by the absence of power. Foucault, in contrast, understands freedom as something that one does, a practise or an exercise, and as a latent force that exists permanently in humans. Most importantly, he sees the practise of freedom as internal to or interdependent with relations of power.\(^3\)

This thesis is an exploration of the links between Foucault’s notions of freedom and government. I want to focus on their implications for the way we think about ethics and, in particular, the role that ethics plays in governing, in resistance and, potentially, in political transformation.

**General Approach**

First of all, let me say a little more about Foucault’s notions of government and freedom, and about how I intend to discuss them in this thesis. In Foucault’s schema, government is one modality of the exercise of power; it is one possible form a power relation can take. Foucault’s notion of government refers to techniques that aim at the conduct of

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\(^3\) Throughout this thesis I use ‘practice’ as a noun and ‘practise’ as the verb. Translators and commentators of Foucault’s work tend to use the noun only.
conduct; that is, government refers to the means by which possibilities of action are (or are attempted to be) structured. Notice that in this formulation government is not characterised by the attempt to foreclose all but one path of action; in Foucault’s view, such a situation constitutes a state of domination, marked by the lack of possibilities of action on the part of those subject to domination. In contrast to domination, government relies on the governed having a capacity for action. Foucault calls this capacity for action ‘freedom’ and he argues that, except in cases of domination, freedom is an ever-present capacity in human beings. Foucault argues that freedom is a latent capacity, and that it is always exercised in the context of a relationship of power or of government. According to Foucault, then, neither power nor government should be seen as wholly negative or repressive, since both can be fundamentally enabling.

The exercise of freedom is, in much of Foucault’s work, presented as an instance of government - the government of the self. In this sense freedom can be thought of as a kind of relation with oneself in which individuals use certain techniques to govern themselves in particular ways and for specific ends. Foucault calls this relation ‘ethics.’ Ethics, according to him, refers to the ways in which individuals relate to themselves as certain kinds of subject, and this includes the kind of person or way of being to which they aspire. For example, there are various ways of relating to oneself as a subject of desire: one can be celibate and practise techniques of denial, or suppression, of one’s desires, in the belief that one can form oneself into a being untouched by ‘base’ desires; one can engage in a whole range of unconventional sexual practices and so constitute oneself as a sexual ‘deviant,’ and so on. Ways of relating to oneself, and forming oneself as a certain kind of subject, can fit in with governmental attempts to produce certain kinds of subject, such as a subject who practises cultural norms regarding the ‘proper’ sex and gender of their object of desire. But the notion of ethics also gives Foucault scope to argue that individuals can resist techniques that attempt to constitute them as subjects of certain kinds. Through ethical practices, according to Foucault, individuals can create new forms of subjectivity that disrupt attempts to govern them in certain ways.
As I have mentioned, in this thesis I explore the implications of Foucault’s thinking on government and freedom for the ways in which we think about resistance and political transformation. Foucault’s insights are developed in two bodies of work that are particularly useful for my exploration. The first is known as the ‘governmentality literature,’ so called because it takes Foucault’s concepts of government and governmental rationality as a starting point. These concepts are used in analyses of governmental programs and techniques such as work-for-the-dole schemes, population health policies and psychoanalysis. I use the governmentality literature to clarify and expand our understanding of Foucault’s notion of government, and particularly of techniques and rationalities of liberal government. But my discussion of this literature also has a critical dimension. By not paying sufficient regard to Foucault’s notion of ethics, the literature presents a top-down account of how government works. This amounts to a one-sided view of the operation of modern power because, according to Foucault, the top-down operation of power is only one dimension of its operations.

The second body of work to which I refer is queer theory. Queer theorists use Foucault’s work on power and resistance to investigate how sexualities function to produce subjects with identities that enable them to be governed, by themselves and by others. I discuss key texts in queer theory to illustrate how Foucault’s notion of ethics is used in analyses of a specific field of power: sexuality. My presentation of queer theory serves an important critical purpose that relates to the queer literature itself as well as to Foucault’s own work. The critical points I make relate mainly to the difficulties associated with the argument that ethical practices should be the starting point for resistance. In particular, I take issue with claims made about the political effectiveness of ethical practices.

In light of these discussions, we come to a clearer understanding of how to conceive of Foucault’s notions of government and freedom. If there are difficulties in Foucault’s work, the place to discuss them is towards the end of the thesis when an informed
judgment can be made. It must be emphasised, therefore, that my approach in this thesis should be distinguished from that of some of Foucault’s critics, such as Jürgen Habermas and Nancy Fraser. These writers engage with Foucault’s thought from the surety of their own philosophical and political preferences. For example, in her ‘Introduction’ to a collection of essays, three of which are on Foucault, Fraser explains that she writes:

as a democratic socialist and a feminist... Consequently, even the most unabashedly theoretical pieces are responses to problems generated in, and solvable only through, political practice; and even the most ostensibly personal essays grew out of existential dilemmas and personal/political conflicts... In short, I have tried to understand and to evaluate Foucault’s analysis of ‘disciplinary power/knowledge’ from the standpoint of the exigencies of political practice.4

Habermas, similarly, states his philosophic-political commitment in the following way. Philosophers, he says, ‘develop arguments... which are binding, not just for us here and now, being members of a particular community, but which claim to be true, simply true.’5 In the same essay he states, ‘in morality it is only the universal core of the moral point of view which is a matter for philosophers.’6 Habermas sees the role of the philosopher as being to discover universals, and it is from this perspective that he evaluates Foucault’s work. Hence Habermas criticises Foucault’s work on the grounds that it ‘brackets normative validity claims as well as claims to propositional truth and abstains from the question of whether some discourse and power formations could be more legitimate than others.’7

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4 Nancy Fraser Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory, 1989, 3-4. The most critical of the essays in this book is ‘Michel Foucault: a “young conservative”?’. Fraser argues that Foucault swings between ‘neutrality and engagement,’ provides no criteria with which to evaluate which forms of power are better, or worse, than others, and, consequently, can offer no reason why particular forms of power should be resisted. While I do not take issue directly with Fraser’s criticisms in the body of the thesis, I do argue that normative criteria are apparent in Foucault’s work.

5 Jürgen Habermas ‘Life-forms, morality and the task of the philosopher.’ In Autonomy and Solidarity, Peter Dews (ed.), 1986, 205.

6 Habermas ‘Life-forms,’ 205.

7 Habermas ‘Some questions concerning the theory of power: Foucault again.’ In The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 1987, 282.
Habermas and Fraser may point to real difficulties in Foucault’s work, but it seems to me that criticism is appropriate only after we have fully examined Foucault’s position. My concern is less with uncovering such difficulties than with investigating, as far as possible on Foucault’s own terms, the meanings he attaches to notions of power, government, freedom and resistance. But, as I have indicated, my treatment of Foucault’s thought is not uncritical and this differentiates my thesis from a number of commentaries on Foucault’s work, such as Charles E. Scott’s text, *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger* and John Rajchman’s *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. Both of these texts display the opposite tendency to Habermas’s and Fraser’s insofar as Scott and Rajchman take Foucault at his word and thus present an uncritical perspective on the latter’s work. For example, Scott writes at one point that Foucault is not ‘developing or even suggesting an ethical option,’ and that instead he ‘engages in a process of “constantly checking” the regulations, procedures, and constellations of power that make up our inheritances for identity and commitment.’¹⁸ Rajchman’s text also focuses on Foucault’s ethics, describing this work as ‘neither prescriptive nor merely descriptive.’ Instead, Rajchman claims, Foucault’s thought is ‘spark, challenge. It is risk... it always remains without an end.’¹⁹ By risk Rajchman means a process of ongoing and open questioning and criticism, a process that aims at a kind of transformation that is ‘nonfinalizable’ and somewhat unpredictable.¹⁰ In other words, like Scott, Rajchman argues that in his studies of power Foucault avoids making judgments about the power relations he uncovers, and nor does he make prescriptions about alternative arrangements.

Rajchman and Scott identify a level of Foucault’s rhetoric that lends weight to their argument, such as when Foucault writes that he does not engage in ‘prescriptive’ and ‘legislative’ discourse nor in telling people ‘what must be done.’¹¹ There is, however, a

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¹⁰ Rajchman *Michel Foucault*, 124. Rajchman’s characterisation of Foucault’s thought as fundamentally about risk is influenced by Foucault’s characterisation of his own ‘philosophical ethos’ in very similar terms in an article entitled ‘What is enlightenment?’. In *The Foucault Reader*, Rabinow (ed.), 1984, esp. 45-7.
¹¹ For example, see Foucault ‘Questions of method.’ *Ideology and Consciousness*, 8 (Spring), 1981, esp. 12-3; and Foucault *Remarks on Marx*, 1991, esp. 27, 41,174.
clear sense in which Foucault does engage with his studies on a prescriptive level. This is an important dimension of Foucault’s work on ethics that Scott and Rajchman miss because of their tendency to be uncritical of Foucault’s statements that his own work is descriptive and not prescriptive. Once this prescriptive dimension is acknowledged, the way is open to critically engage with the kinds of prescriptions Foucault makes, such as those regarding forms of sexual subjectivity. My explorations of Foucault’s ideas in the first two chapters of the thesis form a solid basis from which to engage in this kind of criticism in the last two chapters. As we see throughout this thesis, Foucault advocates the development or invention of new kinds of self-relation or ‘ethical options.’ These are ones that minimise the effects of normalising and regulatory processes, those governmental invitations or injunctions to be or to become a certain kind of subject, by creating for oneself new ways of being. We see this most clearly in Foucault’s comments on sexual subjects, comments in which he advocates certain ways of being, in terms of one’s sexual practices, over others.

The remainder of this Introduction, ‘A Reader’s Guide,’ presents in more detail the structure of the thesis and the development of its overall argument. It also serves as an introduction to the key texts in the governmentality and queer literatures to which the thesis refers and provides an indication of how they are used in my argument. It is important to stress that, regarding my treatment of the uses to which Foucault’s ideas are put in these texts, I do not claim to get Foucault ‘right.’ There are many plausible yet mutually incompatible readings of Foucault’s material, of which the present text is one. This thesis therefore does not aim to adjudicate between these various readings but rather aims to present a convincing and defensible account of his work on government and freedom.

A Reader’s Guide

The thesis consists of four chapters and a short concluding chapter. The first chapter, ‘Questions of Method,’ introduces and explains the central terms and concepts of
Foucault’s used in this thesis. It begins with an explanation of the investigative approach Foucault adopts in his studies of power. This approach is given various labels by Foucault himself as well as by commentators on his work. In this thesis I adopt the term ‘problematisation,’ which Foucault uses in his late interviews, because it encapsulates the sense in which, in Foucault’s studies, method and object slide into one another. That is, Foucault’s approach is to problematise certain taken-for-granted ways of thinking, behaving and being; but these ways of thinking and so on are themselves presented by Foucault as problems, in that they are solutions to very specific problems that have been posed historically. The method of problematisation means uncovering the ways in which problems have been posed that have made certain solutions thinkable.12

Foucault suggests that problematisation is an investigatory approach that involves analysing three dimensions of power: truth; ethics; and politics. He conceives of these as distinct arenas of power, although in their actual operation each always involves the others. The first, truth, refers to knowledges and rationalities; ethics refers to the relations individuals have with themselves; and politics is Foucault’s term for practices of power that aim at the government of the conduct of others - a dimension of power that Foucault often discusses in terms of totalising power such as the government of populations. My explication of Foucault’s notion of government draws on his historical studies, each of which, according to him, highlights one of these three dimensions. So, for example, *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault explains, traces the development of a science or certain form of knowledge and a corresponding definition of its object; *Discipline and Punish* explores a political strategy of punishment; while *The History of Sexuality* isolates the development of ethical attitudes regarding sex and sexuality.13

In presenting an account of government by referring to Foucault’s historical discussions of specific configurations of power, my thesis covers territory similar to that in Lois

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12 Foucault ‘Polemics, politics, and problematizations.’ In *The Foucault Reader*, 388-9. The idea that method and object merge is well expressed by Dreyfus and Rabinow, although they use the term ‘interpretive analytics’ rather than problematisation to describe Foucault’s approach. See their *Michel Foucault*, 104-25.

13 See especially Foucault ‘Polemics, politics, and problematizations,’ 381-90.
McNay’s *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*. A significant difference, however, stems from the implications of her chronological approach. She presents an account of Foucault’s notion of government as a development within his overall conception of power. Her discussion of Foucault’s early articulations of power is therefore conducted without referring to his notion of government.14 Towards the end of the book McNay introduces this notion, arguing that it overcomes many conceptual problems with Foucault’s earlier theory of power. The most significant of these problems, she suggests, is his tendency to present power as a monolithic and constraining force. The notion of government, McNay goes on to argue, enables Foucault to present power as a relation that is productive and enabling.15 In McNay’s text Foucault’s work appears as an unfolding story in which only the last chapter can bestow the full and correct meaning on the earlier chapters. In this thesis, in contrast, I do not assess Foucault’s earlier work in the light of his later work. Rather, I present his writing on subjectifying and disciplinary forms of power as fundamental to his notion of government. In other words, while I am careful not to impose a retrospective unity and coherence on Foucault’s work, the account this thesis provides of Foucault’s notion of government involves discussing his earlier conceptions of power.

During my opening presentation of these ideas in Chapter One I also introduce and clarify the key terms of freedom, government and power. We gain here a clearer understanding of Foucault’s claim, which is central to his thinking about resistance, that freedom is always in an internal relation to power; that is, that there is no power without freedom. The corollary of this argument is that where there is no freedom there is not a power relation but only physical force. This allows him to argue that, while freedom is a necessity for a power relation to exist, freedom can be disruptive of those relations. So, while the exercise of freedom always occurs within a power relation, the particular form that freedom takes is not determined by the relation - hence the permanent possibility of

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14 Lois McNay *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*, 1994, 3. It is only in his later work that Foucault makes explicit connections between his work on government and that on disciplinary and subjectifying forms of power. See for example ‘Polemics, politics, and problematizations,’ 386-8.
altering the terms of the relation or of ending the relation. An extract from an interview conducted with Foucault illustrates this point.

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.) Consequently there is no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power (at the same time as its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination).16

Three points emerge from my discussion in Chapter One of the relationships between power, government and freedom. These points form the basis of more detailed discussion and critique in later chapters. The first is that, far from being opposed to each other, government and freedom are inextricably bound together; the practise of each relies on the other. The second point is that Foucault presents the relation between power and freedom as one of perpetual struggle, so that resistance is a permanent possibility in every relation of power. In this sense we might think about resistance as a kind of reaction to attempts to control, limit or otherwise constrain the exercise of freedom. Third, Foucault believes that resistance to specific normalising techniques can also take on a more deliberate or programmatic character through the techniques that individuals apply to themselves and through which they fashion themselves as certain kinds of subjects. That is, he suggests that ethics is the primary site for resisting relations of power. Furthermore, he seems to believe that transformation in the ways in which individuals form themselves as subjects will flow on to transformations in the dimension of politics.

Foucault’s ideas about effective forms of resistance to power stem in part from his historical studies into the roots of modern power. In Chapter Two I discuss these

16 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 221.
studies, beginning with Foucault’s account of the emergence of the form of power he calls ‘governmental rationality’ or ‘governmentality.’ Tracing this emergence leads Foucault to study early Christian and ancient Greek practices of rule, which he refers to, respectively, as ‘pastoral power’ and the ‘city-citizen game.’ In the first part of the chapter I set out Foucault’s account of these and their combination in an early modern form of power he calls ‘omnes et singulatim’: ‘of all and of each.’

The second part of the chapter returns to a more conceptual level. I discuss Foucault’s notion of ‘governmental reason’ which refers to the establishment of a domain of knowledge concerning the object of government (this can be a state or territory, a corporation or business, or an individual), the way in which the object is to be governed and for what purpose(s). According to Foucault, the deployment of governmental reason depends upon the operation of certain techniques, characterised by him as either disciplinary or subjectifying. These might usefully be thought of as participating in, respectively, the establishment of a domain of politics in which power is exercised over others and a domain of ethics, in which individuals govern their own behaviour. That is, I discuss disciplinary techniques mainly in terms of their use in the operation of a power that works on others, while subjectifying techniques are discussed primarily as power that individuals exercise over themselves.

By the end of the first two chapters, the main thrust of my argument should be clear. According to Foucault, modern power operates across three dimensions - truth, ethics and politics - which form a complex of knowledges and techniques. The interactions between these knowledges and techniques form a power that Foucault calls ‘governmentality.’ He suggests that governmentality relies particularly on the dimension of ethics. While Foucault argues that, due to the irrepressible nature of freedom resistance to this power simply will occur, he clearly believes that some relations of power (especially, but not always, domination) should be resisted; and that it is through their relations with themselves that individuals are most capable of resisting such relations. In other words, Foucault’s notion of ethics allows him to think about
resistance as something that can and, in many cases, should occur in a programmatic, as distinct from a merely reactive, fashion.

In Chapter Three, "'That Mortal God,'" I turn to some key texts in the governmentality literature. To date only a handful of collections have been published in English that take as their point of departure Foucault's notion of governmental rationality. A sample of these are: *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds); *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose (eds); *Economy and Society*, Special Issue, 24 (4), 1995. Part I of the chapter uses these texts to present an account of liberal government. It looks closely at the transformations that have occurred in the rationalities and techniques of liberal government from the early twentieth century to the present. This discussion provides a detailed account of liberal governmental rationality and of liberal governmental techniques that clarifies and expands Foucault's preliminary investigations into this area. The discussion is also the basis for my critique of the governmentality literature in Part II of the chapter, where I demonstrate that there is a tendency in the literature to focus on the top-down operation of power, the operation that Foucault calls 'politics' or the government of others. Using the work of Nikolas Rose as an example, I argue that a focus on top-down practices of power leaves the notion of resistance at best under-theorised and at worst incomplete. For, in the governmentality literature, freedom is viewed primarily as a tool for government. As a result, resistance can only be conceived in a reactive way, or as something that occurs when individuals are enjoined to participate in governmental programs that ascribe to them conflicting roles. This contrasts with the notion of freedom that I indicated can be found in Foucault's work. There, freedom involves a capacity for action that enables individuals to make some choice about which governmental programs to resist; resistance, in this sense, has a programmatic character, involving calculation about the goal and the means of resistance. Viewing freedom and resistance from this second perspective requires a 'bottom-up' analysis of governmental
relations, an analysis that involves looking at the techniques of the self practised by
individuals in what Foucault sees as a permanent struggle to be free.

At the end of Chapter Three I discuss the work of two writers on governmentality who
begin to balance the top-down analyses of liberal government by focusing on the ways in
which techniques of the self are deployed in liberal modes of government. Their analyses
point to important directions in which to take Foucault's thought on ethics and liberal
government. These analyses are, however, preliminary; we need to look elsewhere for a
fuller understanding of the notion of programmatic resistance in Foucault's work.

Foucault's notions of ethics and of programmatic resistance are developed more fully in
queer theory, to which I turn in Chapter Four, 'Ars Erotica.' Exploration of resistance to
normalising discourses of sexualities is the focus of much of this literature. In a sense
this chapter parallels Chapter Three, in that, where the governmentality literature applies
Foucault's notion of government to contemporary forms and practices of liberal
government, queer theory uses Foucault's notions of power and resistance to investigate
contemporary rationalities and techniques through which sexualities are constructed and
regulated. In Part I of the chapter I show that the work of queer theorists such as Judith
Butler, David Halperin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Teresa de Lauretis ranges from
research into cultural constructions of the hetero-homosexual binary, to investigations
into the ways in which individuals resist the imposition of binary sexual and gender
identities. Sedgwick provides an example of the first kind of project.

Epistemology of the Closet proposes that many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in
twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured - indeed, fractured - by a chronic, now
endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the
nineteenth century... [A]n understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must

17 Works by these writers in which these ideas are articulated are: Judith Butler Gender Trouble:
Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, 1990 and 'Critically queer.' GLQ, 1, 1993, 17-32; David
Halperin Saint Foucault, 1995; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick Epistemology of the Closet, 1990 and
Tendencies, 1993; and Teresa de Lauretis 'Queer theory: lesbian and gay sexualities. An Introduction.'
differences, 3 (2), 1991, iii-xviii.
be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition...18

The following quotation from Halperin, meanwhile, indicates the second focus of queer theory - the effects of, and possible ways of resisting, the hetero-homosexual divide.

Sexuality, he writes,

amalgamates desire and identity into a unitary and stable feature of the individual person and thereby imparts to the subject a ‘true self’ - a ‘self’ that constitutes the ‘truth’ of the person and functions as an object both of social regulation and of personal administration... through the invention of novel, intense, and scattered bodily pleasures, queer culture brings about a tactical reversal of power differentials, physical sensations, and sexual identity categories in order to create a queer praxis that ultimately dispenses with “sexuality” and destabilizes the very constitution of identity itself.19

In their attention to questions of sexual identity and resistance to the performance of these identities, queer theorists employ a conception of individual action that is equivalent to Foucault’s notion of ethics or self-government.

In Part II of Chapter Four I focus on Halperin’s work, which epitomises central problems in the way in which queer theorists use the notion of ethics or government of the self to theorise actual and possible acts of resistance to normalising techniques of power. In this part of the chapter I introduce a distinction between resistance, which refers to an act or acts that clash with a governmental program or technique, and subversion, which refers to the disruptive effects of an act or acts of resistance. Halperin tends to conflate resistance with subversion; at times he suggests that certain practices are acts of resistance because of the subversive effects they produce. He therefore steers away from the notion of programmatic resistance which Foucault’s work points toward, a notion that considers certain practices as acts of resistance regardless of whether they produce subversive effects. I also argue that Halperin has a tendency to be prescriptive about what kinds of queer practices have the greatest subversive potential. As a result,

18 Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 1.
19 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 7.
Halperin circumscribes his theorisation of resistance by effectively excluding individuals who are not able to practise the kinds of acts that, he argues, exemplify queerness and that have the most transformative potential. Foucault’s arguments about the relation between ethics and resistance are subject to some of the same criticisms I make of Halperin’s work. This part of the chapter therefore marks the starting point of my critical discussions of Foucault’s work.

I continue these discussions of queer theory in the third part of Chapter Four, where I address the work of another queer theorist, Judith Butler. Her work is instructive here because it overcomes some of the difficulties I identify in Halperin and Foucault’s work. In their discussions of resistance against normalising discourses of sexuality, Halperin and Foucault focus on specific queer sexual practices, such as fist-fucking and sadomasochism. Butler, in contrast, offers examples - such as drag and butch-femme styles - that are less specific and less limiting. Such examples, I suggest, allow her to make general points about possibilities of resisting norms of sexuality and of gender. Her arguments are not only directed at, and not only relevant to, queers; they speak about a general condition in which subjects are constructed in relation to various norms - of sexuality, gender, class, family and so on. I also argue that Butler makes a distinction between resistance and subversion that Halperin, and Foucault at times, fails to make. This allows her to theorise a notion of deliberate and programmatic resistance more fully than either Halperin or Foucault. In the process she points to directions in which Foucault’s notion of ethics might usefully be taken.

In the concluding chapter I recount my presentation of Foucault’s account of the relation between government and freedom. I pay particular attention to the contribution he makes to thinking about resistance - the ways in which it might be conceived, the sites at which it does and might occur and the forms resistance might assume. I also discuss the treatment of his conceptualisations of resistance in the governmentality and the queer literatures. Finally, I make some brief final comments about Foucault’s view of the relation between ethics and freedom.
CHAPTER ONE

QUESTIONS OF METHOD

The history of the 'objectification' of those elements which historians consider as objectively
given (if I dare put it thus: of the objectification of objectivities), this is the sort of circle I want
to try and investigate.¹

I have tried to get away from the philosophy of the subject, through a genealogy of the modern
subject as a historical and cultural reality. That means as something that can eventually change,
which is of course politically important.²

¹ Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 14.
IT ruth. History. Ethics. The Body. The Subject. Politics. Knowledge. The Present. Foucault deals with all of these in his historical studies, which makes a clear and brief description of his aims and methods extremely difficult; as he admits, ‘It’s a difficult tangle to sort out.’ Not impossible, however, and this disentanglement is one aim of this chapter. The title of this chapter, ‘Questions of Method,’ comes from an interview in which Foucault explains how he conducts his historical studies and what he sees are the benefits of his approach. This account is the focus of the first part of the chapter. In the first section of this part we see that Foucault’s studies aim to provoke ruptures in established modes of thought and action. In the second section, ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ I argue that, according to Foucault, individuals create these ruptures through changing the way in which they relate to, and conduct, themselves. Foucault terms the relation to oneself ‘ethics’ while ‘ethical practices’ refers to the specific forms of conduct that the relation to oneself entails.

In Part II of this chapter, ‘Power and Freedom,’ I situate Foucault’s notion of ethics in his general schema of power. This requires an understanding of key concepts in Foucault’s work; these are power, freedom, government and resistance. I set out one way of understanding the meanings that Foucault attaches to these terms, and the way in which they are connected in his thought. His account of the relation between power and freedom, I suggest, involves a movement from description to prescription. Foucault moves from an analysis which aims only to describe how power works, to an analysis which argues that certain relations of power ought to be resisted. This movement has important implications for the way in which Foucault conceives of resistance. In the second section of Part II, ‘The margin of liberty,’ I point to two conceptions of resistance that operate in his schema of power. The first is what I call ‘reactive.’ This conception stems from Foucault’s claim that resistance is a permanent possibility within every exercise of power. The explanation for resistance therefore need not be traced to an autonomous subject; resistance is an inevitable counterpart of attempts to govern conduct

3 Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 14.
4 Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 3-14.
in ways that produce or mobilise conflicting ways of being in an individual. The second conception of resistance that has a foundation in Foucault’s work is ‘programmatic,’ where individuals are considered capable of engaging in calculated and strategic forms of resistance to particular relations or techniques of government.
I begin with an illuminating extract from an interview with Foucault published in the journal *Telos*:

I would like to say something about the function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present. It does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead - by following lines of fragility in the present - in managing to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which is. In this sense, any description must always be made in accordance with these kinds of virtual fracture which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, i.e., of possible transformation.5

In this passage Foucault makes distinctions among three dimensions of analysis and shows how they are related. The first, politics, is indicated by the phrase ‘lines of fragility in the present,’ and might be thought of as conflicts or salient issues that exist within societies or cultures at any particular time (such as debates about prison reform, or reforming legislation regarding homosexuality). The second dimension is what might be called truth or knowledge, and is suggested by the phrase ‘that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is.’ Later in the interview Foucault clarifies this when he says, ‘history serves to show how that-which-is has not always been; i.e., that the things which seem most evident to us are always formed in the confluence of encounters and chances, during the course of a precarious and fragile history.’ In other words, he aims to show that what might be thought of as objective truth or knowledge, whether about the way power works within a social organisation, or the ability of a particular body of knowledge to uncover this ‘truth,’ at a particular time and in a particular culture is really an historical configuration of a relationship of forces (a politics of truth).

The third dimension, ethics, might be thought of as a possible result of this political analysis of truth, because Foucault uses his analyses to show that the ways in which

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5 Foucault ‘Structuralism and post-structuralism.’ *Telos*, 55 (Spring), 1982, 206.
human beings have come to think about themselves as subjects of certain kinds is also the result of a particular configuration of forces. Foucault does not despair at the idea that human subjects are formed in large part by forces beyond their control. Rather, Foucault sees this in a positive light, as a process that creates possibilities for the expansion of freedom. As we will see, Foucault talks about freedom in terms of ethics - in fact he says that liberty, or freedom, is the condition of ethics. Ethics very broadly refers to the ways in which individuals conduct themselves in relation to codes of behaviour (social, cultural, moral, and so on) as well as to their own conception of what sort of person they want to be. Thus his third dimension might be thought of as involving an analysis of the possibilities for becoming other than what one is through the exercise of new or different ethical practices.

Given the centrality to my thesis of this three-part schema of Foucault’s, it is worth further explanation. He says in an interview: ‘[m]y objective... has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.’ He goes on to explain that this involves looking at three ‘modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects.’ These are ‘a game of truth, relations of power, and forms of relation to oneself and to others.’ Foucault also refers to these axes in terms of, respectively, rationalities (or particular assemblages of knowledge), politics (discipline and the government of others) and ethics (or forms of the relation of self to self). The following excerpt from an interview illustrates this schema.

Three domains [of analysis] are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.

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6 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 208.
7 Foucault ‘Polemics, politics, and problematizations: an interview,’ 387.
8 Foucault ‘On the genealogy of ethics: an overview of work in progress.’ In The Foucault Reader, 351.
Foucault believes that this kind of ‘historical ontology of ourselves’ involves analysing relations between, and leads the way to the transformation of, the ways in which we relate to ourselves, to others and to particular regimes of truth. According to him, this process must begin with an investigation into current forms of truth and the processes through which these forms are established as such. In an interview entitled ‘Practicing criticism’ Foucault talks about the centrality to ‘“real” transformation’ of changing ‘modes of thought’ (we can think of this as another term for truth, knowledge or rationality). Foucault believes that transformation which ‘remains within the same mode of thought’ is ‘superficial.’ What he means by this will become clear as this discussion continues, but it can be explained briefly in terms of games of truth. Foucault distinguishes between, on the one hand, a kind of critique that refutes claims to truth by arguing a different truth and, on the other hand, critique that concerns itself with ‘the establishment of domains’ in which distinctions between true and false become possible and produce effects.\(^9\) It is the latter kind of critique that Foucault hopes to produce in order to point out ‘on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest... as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult, and quite possible.’\(^{10}\)

Foucault thus believes that ‘real’ transformation begins with thought, or thinking otherwise, which as we have seen depends upon challenging the status of the truths (or rationalities and forms of knowledge) in relation to which subjects govern themselves and others. It is through challenging truth, according to Foucault, that subjects come to think and to act differently, in relation to themselves (ethically) and in relation to others (politically). Furthermore, he clearly believes that political transformation will flow from transformation in the ways in which subjects think about and act on themselves. In other words, ‘real’ transformation at the level of political structures, institutions and so on, in Foucault’s view, is most likely to occur, or can only occur, when individuals think about

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9 Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 8-11.
and act on themselves in such a way that the structures and institutions they oppose are forced to ‘reform themselves,’ or to operate with a minimum of coercion or domination. Foucault thus presents a schema in which the ‘diagnosis’ of a contemporary problem involves the analysis of a domain of truth, opening up the possibility of different ways of being which might then lead to different approaches or practices in the present. We might conceive of this movement as a spiral: politics > truth > ethics > political transformation.

Foucault’s historical studies begin, then, by identifying a contemporary problem. During an interview, for example, he explained that he wrote *Madness and Civilization* in order to have:

an experience of what we are today, of what is not only our past but also our present. And I invite others to share the experience. That is, an experience of our modernity that might permit us to emerge from it transformed.¹²

And in *Discipline and Punish* he describes a similar approach when he writes that:

I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present.¹³

Robert Castel explains Foucault’s use of the term ‘history of the present’ when he writes that it is oriented or directed by ‘the present situation, the way in which the question is asked today.’ He goes on: “To write “the history of the present” is to consider the history of a problem in terms of how it is seen at present.”¹⁴ Two statements by Foucault are particularly useful for fleshing out this approach, one in the interview

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¹¹ This is a phrase Foucault used in an interview about the politics of reform that David Halperin quotes in his book *Saint Foucault*, 56.
entitled ‘Questions of method’ the other in a short article entitled ‘What is enlightenment?’ In these he describes what he calls ‘a philosophical ethos’ and the way in which it can be applied to the process of critique and transformation. ‘A philosophical ethos,’ he writes in ‘What is enlightenment?’, consists ‘in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves.’ 15 What is the point of this critique? ‘To transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.’ 16

Here Foucault refers to and contrasts his purpose with that of Kant’s, which was, according to Foucault, to know what limits there are to knowledge. This is a negative question, he claims, and ‘has to be turned back into a positive one,’ that of determining where, in what is given as ‘universal, necessary, obligatory,’ are the fractures that show these to be contingent and ‘the product of arbitrary constraints.’ 17 The outcome of this kind of critique, Foucault continues, is neither the development of a formal method of inquiry nor a search for ‘formal structures with universal value.’ One of Foucault’s targets here is perhaps Marxism, which, in its orthodox form, claims to have developed a form of analysis that uncovers the way power ‘really’ works in all societies, whether capitalist or pre-capitalist. The human sciences generally, however, come under Foucault’s attack for the same reason. What characterises his approach, Foucault argues, is firstly that it is ‘not transcendental - in the sense that it... will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events.’ Secondly, it aims to ‘separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.’ In this sense Foucault’s approach or philosophical ethos is ‘an experimental one,’ in that it involves ‘a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond.’ 18

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15 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 45.
16 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 45.
17 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 45.
18 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 46-7. See also ‘Nietzsche, genealogy, history.’ In Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Donald F. Bouchard (ed.), 1977, 139-64.
In the interview ‘Questions of method’ Foucault elaborates on the idea that his objects of study are ‘events’ and that his purpose in studying them is to create opportunities for change, for thinking and being otherwise. What he calls ‘eventalisation’ is a ‘procedure for analysis’ that first of all involves ‘making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant... to show that things “weren’t as necessary as all that.”’

For example, *Discipline and Punish* is intended to demonstrate, among other things, that the practise of imprisonment does not mark the beginning of an historical evolution towards ever more ‘humane’ methods of punishment. Instead, Foucault talks about the ‘birth’ of the prison, and argues that its emergence was the result of the intersection of a whole series of events concerning the development of knowledge, new forms of architecture, attempts to find solutions to ‘new’ social and economic problems and so on. The terms Foucault uses in this and in similar contexts are indicative of his approach. ‘Birth,’ ‘emergence,’ ‘entry,’ ‘metamorphosis’ all carry connotations of breaks and discontinuity, as well as of beginnings and arrivals.

Once an event has been identified, the first step in eventalisation, the next step is to investigate the conditions that make it an event (historical events, scientific ‘discoveries,’ new problems of management to which solutions must be found, technological advances and so on), and the ways in which these conditions interact with each other. The second aspect of eventalisation, then, according to Foucault, involves ‘rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary.’ In this sense his work is also concerned with continuities, or series. Foucault explains that “eventalisation” thus works by constructing around the singular event analysed as process a “polygon” or rather a “polyhedron” of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite.”

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20 Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, 22-4.
21 Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 6.
Foucault goes on to say that eventalisation involves studying the practices, or ensembles of practices, according to which ‘men govern (themselves and others)’...’\(^{22}\) This returns us to the three axes discussed above - knowledge (or truth), ethics and politics. It also returns us to the question of what an historical ontology of ourselves is. According to Foucault, it is the study of the relations subjects have to each of these realms.\(^{23}\) Foucault emphasises that none of these dimensions functions in isolation from the others and one of his aims in his histories is to show how they are related. Foucault sees *Madness and Civilization* as focusing on the establishment of a domain of quasi-scientific knowledge, or of a certain kind of objectivity and corresponding processes of normalisation; *Discipline and Punish*, meanwhile, focuses on disciplinary technologies; and his later works, the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, are concerned primarily with ethics or the elaboration of various practices of the self. However, Foucault writes of these works:

> if each of these examples emphasizes, in a certain way, one of these three aspects - since the experience of madness was recently organized as primarily a field of knowledge, that of crime as an area of political intervention, while that of sexuality was defined as an ethical position - each time I have tried to show how the other two elements were present, what roles they played, and how each one was affected by the transformations in the other two.\(^{24}\)

Foucault’s studies aim at the clearing of a space of freedom, so that ‘that-which-is’ might become something else. He clearly believes that, in terms of the three axes along which he investigates ‘that-which-is,’ it is the ethical axis that presents the greatest possibilities of expanding the exercise of freedom and of transformation. In the next section of this chapter we begin to see why this is the case.

\(^{22}\) Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 9.

\(^{23}\) Foucault ‘On the genealogy of ethics,’ 351.

\(^{24}\) Foucault, ‘Polemics, politics, and problematizations,’ 389.
The ethic of care for the self

Gilles Deleuze, in an article written about Foucault’s methods, is in agreement with Foucault about the importance of ethical practices to political transformation. While he distinguishes four dimensions of the social apparatuses that Foucault studies (I identify three; the dimension I call knowledge is divided in two in Deleuze’s schema - ways of seeing and ways of speaking), he identifies subjectification, which corresponds to Foucault’s ethical axis, as crucial to the maintenance and potential disruption of an apparatus. He suggests that subjectification forms ‘the extreme boundary of a social apparatus [dispositif]’ and that forms of subjectification ‘sketch the movement of one apparatus to another, in this sense preparing for “lines of fracture.”’25 In other words, like Foucault, Deleuze sees transformations in practices and forms of subjectivity (ethics) as opening the way for transformations in social apparatuses (the practise of politics).

According to this schema of power, techniques of the self are important dimensions of analysis not only because they are the form assumed by freedom; if techniques of the self are practised with care and with much thought, they can also contribute to the expansion of the space of freedom. Thus we can expect that Foucault’s notions of resistance and freedom revolve around the identification of, and alternative suggestions for, the techniques that individuals apply to themselves and to others. In an interview that focuses on this relation between techniques of the self, or ethics, and resistance, Foucault says, ‘what interests me is much more morals than politics or, in any case, politics as an ethics.’26  What he might mean by this is partially explained later in the interview, when he says:

ethics is a practice; ethos is a manner of being. Let’s take an example that touches us all, that of Poland. If we raise the question of Poland in strictly political terms, it’s clear that we quickly reach the point of saying that there’s nothing we can do. We can’t dispatch a team of paratroopers, and we can’t send armoured cars to liberate Warsaw. I think that, politically, we

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25 Gilles Deleuze ‘What is a dispositif?’ In Michel Foucault, Philosopher, Timothy Armstrong (ed.), 1992, 159-61.
have to recognize this, but I think we also agree that, for ethical reasons, we have to raise the problem of Poland in the form of a nonacceptance of what is happening there, and a nonacceptance of the passivity of our own governments. I think this attitude is an ethical one, but it is also political; it does not consist in saying merely, 'I protest,' but in making of that attitude a political phenomenon that is as substantial as possible, and one which those who govern, here or there, will sooner or later be obliged to take into account.27

In the interview entitled ‘The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom,’ Foucault points to the connection between this type of ethical attitude and politics. He explains that, in classical Greece, the ‘proper’ government of others (or politics) requires first practising appropriate government over oneself. While he points out in this interview (and in many others) that he does not look back to the Greeks as a model for contemporary ethics, and furthermore that many aspects of Greek ethics were ‘disgusting’ or undesirable to him, it is clear that he believes the general principle behind Greek ethics (in which importance is placed on the practices through which one conducts oneself according to a moral code) is more attractive than that which he sees behind Christian ethics (in which one technique - the confession - has become an expected and dominant means of conforming to a moral code).28 At times he even suggests that the question of ethics is absent from much modern political thought.

I have the impression that in the political thought of the nineteenth century... the political subject has been thought essentially as subject to law, either in naturalist terms or in terms of positive law. In turn, it seems to me that the question of an ethical subject does not have much of a place in contemporary political thought.29

And, in answer to the question of whether this notion of ethics, or care for the self, should be ‘actualised’ against ‘this modern thought,’ Foucault replies, ‘Absolutely.’ How this might be achieved is hinted at in the passage above about Poland, but another

28 Foucault ‘On the genealogy of ethics,’ 346.
29 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom.’ In The Final Foucault, James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (eds), 1988, 14.
indication is provided by Foucault later in the same interview, when he says:

I don’t believe there can be a society without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behaviour of others. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games to be played with a minimum of domination.30

Here Foucault uses the term ‘power,’ or relations of power, to mean what he elsewhere calls ‘politics,’ or techniques that aim at the government of the conduct of others. He seems to adopt what he sees as the classical Greek attitude towards this aspect of government, in that the process through which ‘strategic games between liberties’ become ‘states of domination’ can be avoided by practising appropriate techniques of self-management; in other words, adopting a certain type of ethical relation to oneself. This is what he has to say about the relationship between politics and ethics in classical Greece:

It is certain that if one takes the history of care for self in Greek thought, the relationships to politics is obvious... you see Socrates, for example - as well as Plato in the Alcibiades, as in Xenophon in the Memorabilia, who calls out to young people, ‘Hey, you, you want to become a political person, you want to govern the city, you therefore want to take care of others but you did not even take care of yourself, and if you do not take care for yourself, you will be a bad leader.’ In that perspective, the care for self appears like a pedagogical, moral and also ontological condition, for the constitution of a good leader.31

Foucault’s understanding of ethics in classical Greece clearly informs his judgment regarding contemporary relationships between politics and ethics. While he does not wholeheartedly endorse Greek ethics (the practise of which, after all, was restricted to free men), he does believe that, insofar as the Greek model represents an alternative to contemporary models of morality, there might be things to learn from studying those past practices.

30 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 18.
In this first part of the chapter I demonstrated that Foucault conducts his critical histories by analysing how power works in terms of three dimensions. He calls these ‘truth,’ ‘ethics’ and ‘politics.’ The aim of his histories is, in his words, to ‘open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, i.e., of possible transformation.’

Through my discussion of this aspect of Foucault’s work we gained a sense that ethics is central both to Foucault’s account of how power works as well as to where he sees possibilities for resisting power in ways that open space for transformation. In order to appreciate more fully the centrality of ethics to Foucault’s notions of resistance and of freedom, however, we need a clearer understanding of the relations between his conceptions of power and freedom.

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32 Foucault ‘Structuralism and post-structuralism,’ 206.
One of the consequences of Foucault's understanding of power, and particularly that form of power he calls government, can be highlighted through an example. In the 1960s and 1970s political groups often referred to as 'new social movements' emerged as influential contributors to the progressive political agenda. Groups such as women, lesbians and gays, greens and so on exerted something of a critical influence on this agenda in that they challenged the mainstream Left view of the target of political critique - broadly speaking, the state and the economic order. The new social movements, by contrast, sought to expand this target with slogans such as 'the personal is political.' In other words, they refigured what was thought of as 'political' in order to take into account activity including but also distinct from governmental activity (in the sense of 'the government') such as sexual relationships and the domestic division of labour.

Foucault has very positive comments to make about these movements. In an interview conducted shortly before his death, he said of this aspect of the 1960s and 1970s that:

> there has been political innovation, political creation and political experimentation outside the great political parties, and outside the normal or ordinary program. It's a fact that people's everyday lives have changed from the early 1960s to now, and certainly within my own life... These social movements have really changed our whole lives, our mentality, our attitudes, and the attitudes and mentality of other people - people who do not belong to these movements. And that is something very important and positive.³³

Foucault might be thought of as continuing this process by challenging us to rethink what we mean by 'government.' That is, instead of conceiving of government in terms of 'the government' of a state, he gives the term a very broad meaning: government refers to the 'conduct of conduct.' He explains the term in a piece entitled 'The subject and power':

designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the
government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. It did not only cover
the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also modes of action,
more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action
of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.34

So, Foucault expands the conventional understanding of government and, for those so
inclined, thereby also expands the forms of governmental activity that may be subject to
criticism. In the process, however, Foucault introduces certain complexities into thinking
the relations between government, freedom and the individual. According to Foucault it is
possible, and in fact inescapable, to be subject to government and at the same time to
exercise one’s freedom. That is, freedom exists alongside and indeed through the
capacities and requirements involved in governing oneself and others. Consider this
passage from Foucault’s lecture ‘Politics and reason’:

Power is only a certain type of relation between individuals... The characteristic feature of power
is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men’s conduct - but never
exhaustively or coercively. A man who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted
over him. Not power. But if he can be induced to speak, when his ultimate recourse could have
been to hold his tongue, preferring death, then he has been caused to behave in a certain way.
His freedom has been subjected to power. He has been submitted to government. If an
individual can remain free, however little his freedom may be, power can subject him to
government. There is no power without potential refusal or revolt.35

In this passage we see that freedom, for Foucault, refers very broadly to the capacity to
act. In “The subject and power” he writes that freedom means ‘individual or collective
subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving,
several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized.’36 This freedom, Foucault
emphasises, is an essential condition in the exercise of power; more accurately, freedom is
an essential element in power relationships between parties. To put it in slightly
mechanistic terms, freedom for Foucault is something like a latent force that, when

34 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 221.
36 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 221.
harnessed by a power relation, results in action or apparent non-action of a certain kind. So we see that, despite the negative tone of the terminology in the passage above ('His freedom has been subjected to power'), to be subject to power is not to have one's freedom taken away. On the contrary, because freedom is a capacity to act, the realisation of this capacity only comes about through the interplay of power relations between parties.

Power, then, which Foucault points out is always his shorthand for 'power relations', refers to relations between individuals or groups, characterised by the attempt to structure the actions of others or of oneself.\textsuperscript{37} In other words power functions for Foucault as something of an umbrella term to refer to certain types of relation between parties.\textsuperscript{38} Foucault makes this clear in the interview entitled 'The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom.' He writes:

\begin{quote}
we must distinguish the relationships of power as strategic games between liberties - strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others - and the states of domination, which are what we ordinarily call power. And, between the two, between the games of power and the states of domination, you have governmental technologies...\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Foucault thus locates governmental technologies between, on the one side, 'games between liberties'; these occur in contexts in which few rules or conventions determine the outcome of these games. On the other side are states of domination. In contrast to the former, these are marked by the structuring of relations such that outcomes are more or less predictable.\textsuperscript{40} Governmental techniques are important to Foucault's schema of power because of the implications for thinking about resistance and transformation. He argues that the analysis of these techniques helps to identify how domination works: 'it is often

\textsuperscript{37} Foucault 'The ethic of care for the self,' 11.
\textsuperscript{38} Some commentators argue that 'government' replaces 'power' in Foucault's later work - for example Pasquale Pasquino 'Political Theory of War and Peace.' \textit{Economy and Society}, 21 (1), 77-89. We see in the next section, however, that 'power' actually often refers to a certain aspect of government - that which aims at the government of others' conduct. Foucault, however, retains the term 'power' throughout his work on government. In fact he often uses the term to refer to the government of others' conduct - the dimension of government he also refers to as 'politics.' Mitchell Dean outlines this shift in "'A social structure of many souls": moral regulation, government, and self-formation." \textit{Canadian Journal of Sociology}, 19 (2), 1994, 145-67, esp. 157-64.
\textsuperscript{39} Foucault 'The ethic of care for the self,' 19.
\textsuperscript{40} Foucault 'The ethic of care for the self,' 19-20.
through this kind of technique that states of domination are established and maintain themselves’; he implies that the analysis of governmental techniques is useful for identifying points at which domination can effectively be resisted. I turn to Foucault’s analyses of these techniques in the next chapter. My aim in the remainder of this chapter is to demonstrate why Foucault believes that resistance is a permanent possibility in every situation of domination.

**The margin of liberty**

In the quotation at the end of the previous section, Foucault refers to domination as ‘what we ordinarily call power.’ What he means is that power is usually used to describe a situation in which those subject to it have little or no capacity for action. But Foucault’s understanding of power is quite different from this. Firstly, it implies a productive relation because it is only in the context of power relations that subjects exercise their capacity for action. Secondly, these relations are reversible or unstable because they rest on the freedom or capacity for action of the subject(s) involved. Foucault suggests that where such capacities exist, the effects of power can never be entirely predicted or controlled. For him, then, domination refers to a situation where ‘the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and the margin of liberty is extremely limited.’ He gives this example of a state of domination:

> in the traditional conjugal relation in the society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we cannot say that there was only male power; the woman herself could do a lot of things: be unfaithful to him, extract money from him, refuse him sexually. She was, however, subject to a state of domination, in the measure where all that was finally no more than a certain number of tricks which never brought about a reversal of the situation.

In other words, power, or a power relation, is understood by him as that which harnesses a capacity in order to produce a certain effect or effects. Domination, meanwhile, refers to a state in which possibilities for action are minimised and in which,

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41 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 12.
42 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 12.
as a consequence, the effects of power are more stable and predictable than is the case in ‘strategic games between liberties.’ In ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ Foucault places his conception of domination in a cultural context. He argues that the ‘important question’:

is not whether a culture without restraints is possible or even desirable but whether the system of constraints in which a society functions leaves individuals the liberty to transform the system. Obviously constraints of any kind are going to be intolerable to certain segments of society. The necrophiliac finds it intolerable that graves are not accessible to him. But a system of constraints becomes truly intolerable when the individuals who are affected by it don’t have the means of modifying it. This can happen when such a system becomes intangible as a result of its being considered a moral or religious imperative, or a necessary consequence of medical science.43

Or as a consequence of ‘nature,’ one might add. For example, discrimination against and the oppression of sexual minorities (in terms of their sexuality, not just, or not only, their sex) is seen to be justified because what these minorities practise is ‘against nature.’

So, according to Foucault, power always involves resistance, or at least the possibility of resistance, because power is a relation between free subjects who are capable of action of various kinds. He says, for example, that freedom is power’s ‘permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination.’44 Now, within a state of domination there may still be power relations such that those who are subject to domination are capable of action of various kinds. This is what Foucault means in the quotation above when he claims that in the traditional conjugal relation of the nineteenth century there was not only male power - the woman could act in a variety of ways such that her husband could not be said to have removed all of her possibilities for action (which, as we have seen, is Foucault’s condition of existence for power). Nevertheless, Foucault wants to emphasise, she was subject to a

43 Foucault ‘Sexual choice, sexual act: Foucault and homosexuality.’ In Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, 294.
44 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 221.
state of domination because these games of power or ‘tricks’ could not reverse the ultimately asymmetrical nature of the relations between her and her husband.

Foucault’s insistence on the existence of freedom - however limited - within states of domination allows him to argue that domination can always be resisted. The assertion that domination can always be resisted is based on what he calls ‘the intransigence of freedom.’ To explain this concept I draw on Paul Patton’s discussion of Foucault’s notion of freedom. Patton points out that, in accord with my comments above, domination involves ‘the exercise of power over another in order to maintain a form of capture of the other’s own power or capacities.’ He explains that this is a relational form of power given that ‘it is a particular effect of some modes of action upon the actions of others.’ Patton argues that in Foucault’s work this relational form of power is conceptually, and to a certain extent empirically, distinct from a more basic form of power that is non-relational. Patton calls this more basic form of power ‘power to’: ‘[t]he power of an individual or body to act in certain ways is logically independent of relations to others and empirically the precondition of any action upon other bodies.’

Foucault and Patton therefore argue that all power relations are marked by the capacity for action, or the freedom, of the subjects involved - what Patton calls ‘power to.’ Thus it follows that this capacity exists, even if only to a limited degree, in all parties within a state of domination - those exercising, and subject to, domination alike. In an important sense, then, freedom or the capacity for action is a permanent basis from which to resist certain forms of power, including domination. For Foucault, the permanent existence of freedom in this sense - its ‘intransigence’ - is all the explanation required for instances of resistance to power and domination. Resistance simply will occur. Foucault is adamant on this point. He said in an interview, ‘[o]ne cannot impute to me the idea that power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for

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45 Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 222.
46 Paul Patton ‘Taylor and Foucault on power and freedom.’ Political Studies, 37, 1989, 270.
Another commentator, Chris Falzon, supports this view when he writes:

> the human material upon which power is exercised is irreducibly resistant and always capable of subverting the existing order. If it were not, history itself would be unthinkable. Thus, the notion of resistance is not something which has been arbitrarily added by Foucault to avoid a picture completely given over to power. On the contrary, resistance is necessarily presupposed by power, and this reflects the primacy of corporeal, active human beings, of corporeal history, rather than power, in Foucault’s thought.

In this passage Falzon presents one side of Foucault’s notion of resistance. I identified this earlier as a notion of ‘reactive’ resistance in the sense that resistance is seen as a permanent possibility in every relation of power, including domination, and it is something that simply will occur. From this perspective, resistance does not need to be interpreted with reference to an autonomous subject. It is an inevitable counterpart to the government of subjects because, not only are subjects of power ‘irreducibly resistant,’ but governing conduct often occurs in haphazard and conflicting ways. That is, one way of being within a governmental relation conflicts with ways of being in other governmental relations. Before I elaborate this in the next chapter, I want to provide a brief summary of the points raised in this chapter.

First, we saw that Foucault’s analyses of power are conducted partly with the aim of clearing a space for freedom and for possible transformation. ‘[T]he function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present,’ Foucault says in an interview, ‘does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead - by following lines of fragility in the present - in managing to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is.’ His ‘diagnoses’ of the nature of the present begin, as he indicates in the quotation above, with a political problem or ‘that-which-is.’ For example, Foucault asks how it has come about that sexual practices now express the identity of those who engage in them, because in the past no such necessary relation existed between sexual act

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49 Foucault ‘Structuralism and post-structuralism,’ 206.
and sexual identity. Problematising current practices or issues in this way involves
Foucault in a critical investigation of the truth claims and forms of knowledge that give
support to these practices. Continuing the example just given, he looks at the
development of a medico-scientific knowledge of sex and sexuality that produced
categories of sexualities, ranging from the ‘normal’ to the ‘perverted,’ and produced
corresponding sexual identities.

Second, Foucault’s commitment to the ‘history of the present’ means that he asserts as
historical what many disciplines take to be ‘natural,’ ‘universal’ or ‘inevitable.’ By
adopting a broadly constructionist approach to practices such as punishment, concepts like
madness and ways of being, for example regarding one’s sexual practices, Foucault does
not need to posit some essential nature or self that can and needs to be ‘liberated.’
Instead, he sees sexual desire, the practice of imprisonment and divisions between sanity
and madness, for example, as the product of a series of historical developments that
include forms of knowledge, techniques of government, the emergence of new political
problems to which solutions must be found and so on. In other words, Foucault takes the
concepts and figures of the human sciences as what needs to be explained rather than as
the starting point for a project of liberation. Through his analyses of the operation of
power in fields such as those just mentioned, Foucault develops a conception of freedom
that does not rest on the unveiling of hidden truths. For, if there is no essential nature or
self to be liberated, the nature of freedom takes on an unconventional meaning. According
to Foucault, freedom is not so much a state to be reached through liberation, but more a
continuing practice, one in which individuals engage through techniques of the self, or
ethical practices. This is what Foucault means when he argues that there is no ethics
without freedom, but that ethics is the form assumed by the practice of freedom.50

Third, Foucault believes that his analyses of contemporary political issues and their
regimes of truth are incomplete without also looking at the kinds of relations individuals
establish with themselves in relation to these truths, such as those surrounding

50 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 4.
sexualities, or madness, or punishment. This is what he calls the ethical dimension of
power. In his account, it is by changing the ways in which they relate to, and act on,
themselves that individuals can produce changes in the relations of power which operate
in the domains of truth and of politics. This is indicated in the example he gives of
objecting to sending armoured cars into Poland. He says, 'I think this attitude is an
ethical one, but it is also political.' What he suggests is that enough individuals taking
such an ethical stance (of saying, 'I protest') will have a cumulative political impact,
resulting in a political phenomenon that 'those who govern, here or there, will sooner or
later be obliged to take into account.' 51 Finally, Foucault suggests that there are some
relations of power that should be resisted. This suggestion comes across most clearly
when Foucault discusses practices of government that are implicated in the establishment
or the preservation of a state of domination. He argues that the ethical relations that
individuals have with themselves can form the basis of resistance to undesirable or
intolerable governmental practices and relations. Foucault implies here a form of
resistance that is different from the notion of reactive resistance discussed in this chapter.
This second form might be termed programmatic because it involves a degree of
calculation not present in reactive resistance. I elucidate the difference between the two
forms of resistance in the chapters that follow.

After considering the place of ethics in Foucault's schema of power, it is appropriate that
the next chapter pays close attention to Foucault's notion of government, particularly the
place that ethics occupies in governmental techniques. This requires that we look at
Foucault's historical studies into specific forms and practices of government and to the
governmentality literature that has taken up this aspect of his thought.

51 Foucault 'Politics and ethics,' 377.
CHAPTER TWO

OMNES ET SINGULATIM
or, OF ALL AND OF EACH

Very significantly, political criticism has reproached the state with being simultaneously a factor for individualization and a totalitarian principle. Just to look at nascent state rationality, just to see what its first policing project was, makes it clear that, right from the start, the state is both individualizing and totalitarian. Opposing the individual and his interests to it is just as hazardous as opposing it with the community and its requirements.¹

¹ Foucault ‘Politics and reason,’ 84.
Foucault sees government as an exercise, as a way of governing conduct.

'Government,' he says in a lecture, 'is not to be understood as an institution but, rather, as the activity which consists in directing human conduct within the setting and with the instruments of the state.'2 This way of thinking about government has historical roots and an understanding of these roots, Foucault argues, can help to shed light on contemporary political issues. For example, in the opening quotation Foucault refers to a tradition in Western political criticism that 'reproaches' the state either for pandering to claims made on behalf of the collectivity or collectivities, or for safeguarding the interests of the individual at the expense of the collectivity. According to this tradition of criticism, Foucault suggests, the interests of individuals and of the collectivity are inherently opposed. Defending the interests of one involves attacking the interests of the other.

Foucault himself, however, casts the tension between the individual and the collectivity in a very different light. He argues that modern states are founded on the principle 'of all and of each,' a method of rule that aims at the simultaneous care of the collectivity and of individuals. Foucault's account of the emergence of this form of rule is the focus of Part I of this chapter. Part II of the chapter, 'Politics and Reason,' moves on to discuss specific rationalities and techniques of modern government that characterise contemporary government, according to Foucault. In Part II, I also discuss the forms of subjectivities and the particular modes of conduct that are constituted alongside these rationalities and techniques.

My presentation of Foucault's historical material is highly schematic and is not intended to be an accurate periodisation. The aim, rather, is to present his account of a series of 'problematisations' posed at various times by political authorities regarding the nature of political rule - its objects, its means, its justifications and its ends. In this historical aspect of Foucault's work we encounter the methodological approach that I referred to in Chapter One as 'history of the present.' As we saw, this approach intends to illuminate

2 Foucault 'Foucault at the Collège de France ii: a course summary.' Philosophy and Social Criticism, 8 (3), 1981, 354.
the historical components of contemporary ways of being and understanding. Dean comments that this historical approach is able to:

undertake an analysis of those objects given as necessary components of our reality. It isolates a form of analysis which suspends contemporary norms of validity and meaning at the same time as it reveals their multiple conditions of formation.³

Let me now introduce Foucault’s notion of governmentality.

³Dean ""A social structure,"" 33.
PART I
Men and Things

The purpose of Foucault’s investigations is, in his words, ‘to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.’ Foucault argues that modern forms of subjectivity are the effect and the condition of the form of power he calls government. As a general problem, ‘government’ emerged in the sixteenth century, Foucault tells us. Its emergence was associated with diverse questions such as the governing of oneself (introduced through the Stoic revival), the government of souls and lives (the theme of Catholic and Protestant pastoral doctrine), and the government of the state by the prince. All these questions of government were posed at a time of the convergence of two very different tendencies, according to Foucault: the establishment of administrative states with the break up of feudalism (which introduced state centralisation); and the spread of religious dissidence fuelled by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

Foucault begins his account of these processes with a discussion of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, a text that circulated in the sixteenth century, and the critical responses to it, which Foucault follows up to the nineteenth century. The debate between Machiavelli and his critics is of interest to Foucault for two reasons. First, it marks a significant point in the development of governmentality because the debate revolved around the problem of how to define an ‘art of government’ specific to the government of the state. Second, the debate illustrates general points that Foucault wants to make about the way power works. Machiavelli’s critics argued against what they saw as Machiavelli’s conception of rule in which the interest of the prince was the ‘object and principle of rationality.’ According

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4 Foucault ‘The subject and power.’ In Dreyfus and Rabinow *Michel Foucault*, 208.
5 Foucault ‘Governmentality.’ In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds), 1991, 87-8. Held’s *Democracy and the Global Order*, 1995, contains a lucid account of the movement from what is referred to as ‘international Christian society’ (which ‘was conceived as being Christian first and foremost; it looked to God for the authority to resolve disputes and conflicts; its primary political reference point was religious doctrine; and it was overlaid with assumptions about the universal nature of human community’ (p.34)) to the sovereign state system, which crystallised with the signing of the treaty that ended the Thirty Years War in 1648.
6 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 89. Foucault distances his own view of Machiavelli from that of the anti-Machiavelli writers he discusses in ‘Governmentality,’ 89-90.
to this conception, the prince stands in an ‘external’ and ‘transcendent’ relation to his principality; in other words, the power of the prince is distinguished from any other kind of power exercised within the state. The analysis of sovereignty - of ‘principalities’ - therefore focuses on a singular form of power wielded by a single figure. According to Foucault, any study of the exercise of sovereign power presupposes that the aim of the exercise is to increase the power or security of the sovereign and/or the sovereign’s territory; this is what he refers to when he says that sovereignty is caught in a ‘self-referring circularity.’ An analysis of the government of the state that is based on the model of sovereignty, then, will look to:

the general mechanisms of power, to the way in which its forms of existence at the higher level of society influenced its exercise at the lowest levels. In other words, the relationship of sovereignty, whether interpreted in a wider or narrower sense, encompasses the totality of the social body. In effect, the mode in which power was exercised could be defined in its essentials in terms of the relationship sovereign-subject.

Machiavelli’s critics, meanwhile, wanted to define an art of government that was not subordinated to or equated with the interest of the prince and his relationship with his principality. The writers to whom Foucault refers in this context (for example, Guillaume de la Perriere and La Mothe Le Vayer) emphasise that government can refer to a whole series of relations, such as those mentioned above: priest-congregation; teacher-pupil; parent-child. Foucault claims that, in the wake of this writing on government, in the sixteenth century sovereignty and governmentality began to take on different meanings; by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was no longer possible to think of them as the same thing. Consequently the analysis of these forms of power must also differ. In the anti-Machiavelli literature, governmental relations are at once ‘multifarious’ and ‘internal to the state or society.’ What emerges is a conception of a fundamental continuity of government in which government by the prince is seen as one amongst many forms of government. Foucault explains that these forms are viewed in terms of an

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7 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 91.
9 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 91.
ascending and descending continuity. ‘Upwards continuity means that a person who
wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods and his
patrimony, after which he will be successful in governing the state.’ Downwards
continuity, meanwhile, means that ‘when a state is well run, the head of the family will
know how to look after his family, his goods and his patrimony, which means that
individuals will, in turn, behave as they should.’

Foucault explains that the literature on the art of government posits the family as the
central term of this continuity; the family provides the model for the government of the
state. More precisely, Foucault goes on to explain, the art of government is seen to
revolve around the problem of how to introduce a ‘householding conception of the
economy’ into the management of the state.

The art of government, as becomes apparent in this literature, is essentially concerned with
answering the question of how to introduce economy - that is to say, the correct manner of
managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do
in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper - how to
introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the
state.12

There is a second point to note about the difference between the critical texts on the art of
government and Machiavelli’s text. The problematic of the prince, in Machiavelli’s text,
revolves around the question of how to retain his principality; that is, the territory was the
object of government - its protection, maintenance and, often, expansion - while the
inhabitants were the target of government. Foucault writes: ‘Obviously enough, these
territories can be fertile or not, the population dense or sparse, the inhabitants rich or
poor, active or lazy, but all these elements are mere variables by comparison with territory
itself, which is the very foundation of principality and sovereignty.’13 In contrast,
Foucault goes on, in the other texts the concern of the government of the state is

10 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 91-2.
11 Dean Critical and Effective Histories, 1994, 189.
12 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 92.
13 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 93.
presented as ‘a sort of complex composed of men and things’:

The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc.\(^\text{14}\)

The question of territory or property is thus secondary to the general management of the population, which is conceived in terms of the family and the individuals of which it is composed.

This early formulation of an art of government represented a significant development in terms of those conceptualisations of political rule based solely on notions of sovereign power, such as Machiavelli’s. According to Foucault, however, two obstacles had still to be overcome before an autonomous art of government, or ‘reason of state,’ could develop that was free from conceptual and practical ties to sovereignty. The first was the model of the family, or rather the householding model of economy as it was applied to the government of the state, while the second was the remnants of the sovereign conception of the government of population. Fundamental to overcoming both of these obstacles were two connected developments, according to Foucault: the emergence of ‘population’ as a problem for government; and the development of the ‘science’ of statistics. Foucault explains the way these developments worked together to overcome the first obstacle.

Whereas statistics had previously worked within the administrative frame and thus in terms of the functioning of sovereignty, it now gradually reveals that population has its own regularities, its own rate of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, etc.; statistics also shows that the domain of population involves a range of intrinsic, aggregate effects, phenomena that are irreducible to those of the family, such as epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, ascending spirals of labour and wealth; lastly it shows that, through its shifts, customs, activities, etc., population has

\(^{14}\) Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 93.
specific economic effects: statistics, by making it possible to quantify these specific phenomena of population, also shows that this specificity is irreducible to the dimension of the family.15

The second obstacle was the lingering conception of sovereignty. In this conception, as we saw above in the anti-Machiavelli literature, the end of government is the act of government itself, while the subjects of the principality are the target of laws designed to ensure their submission to the sovereign. With the emergence of population and of the form of knowledge, or science, of statistics, comes the notion that populations are both the object and instrument of government. It is the health, welfare and prosperity of populations (including the individuals of which the population is composed) that are the aims of government; but the population itself is also the means for achieving these aims. Rather than, or in addition to, laws, therefore, Foucault argues that government begins to be exercised through a whole range of direct and indirect tactics and techniques that work on and through individuals and populations, for example, attempts to reduce the movement of individuals and populations in order to reduce the risk of epidemics; the promotion of marriage in order to increase the pool of military recruits; and so on. And as we saw, statistics enables the collection of the data about populations and individuals according to which they are governed.

Governmentality, then, is distinguished from sovereignty in three significant respects. First, governmentality refers to a form of power that functions in diverse relations, from that between self to self, to the relation between teacher and pupil, to that between a citizen and various agencies of the state. Each form of relation - self to self; priest to congregation; teacher to pupil; and so on - has its own specific aims (that may change over time) and specific tactics used to achieve those aims, although tactics developed in one sphere may be adopted into others. Second, in contrast to the sovereign model (in which power is exercised upon largely powerless subjects and so implies an authoritarian and repressive relationship), governmentality involves relations of power that are productive, that aim to produce subjects of certain kinds: for example, an individual capable of exercising self-control; a congregation that will confess its sins; a pupil who

15 Foucault 'Governmentality,' 99.
will be educated and dexterous and thus prepared for various types of labour. Finally, governmental relations consist of lines of force that cut across traditional sovereign-type relations. That is, the term ‘subjects’ here does not refer to individuals who are the relatively helpless target of governmental strategies; it suggests that individuals and groups within particular governmental regimes play a part in their constitution and subjection to government as well as in resistances to attempts to constitute and subject them in certain ways.

Foucault’s historical investigations into early forms of political rationality are motivated by a desire to understand better the processes of modern government that play a constitutive role in the formation of political subjects. In order to understand the significance of this kind of analysis for contemporary forms of government, we must first delve further into Foucault’s account of the emergence of the modern form of power he calls governmentality. In this, we follow Foucault’s steps in conducting a ‘history of the present’ where he delves into very early reflections on the nature of political rule in order to find the roots of, or influences on, current concerns with individualisation and totalisation in modern states.

**Pastoral Power and the ‘City-Citizen Game’**

This section looks at early Christian and Greek conceptions of the proper role of political leaders. According to Foucault, the Christians and the Greeks developed certain ideas about the rule of individuals and populations that have proved to be highly influential in societies of the modern West. Foucault writes:

> Political rationality has grown and imposed itself all throughout the history of Western societies. It first took its stand on the idea of pastoral power, then on that of reason of state. Its inevitable effects are both individualization and totalization. Liberation can only come from attacking, not just one of these two effects, but political rationality’s very roots.16

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16 Foucault ‘Politics and reason,’ 85.
The first conceptualisation of the nature of political rule that Foucault discusses is described by him in terms of a shepherd and his flock. Foucault refers to this model variously as the 'shepherd-flock game' or 'pastoral power,' and characterises it as primarily an 'individualizing' power. Foucault argues that this model was 'developed and intensified' by the Hebrews, but what seems more important in his analysis is the way in which Christianity took up aspects of this model and altered them. Again, Foucault's interest in these modifications stems from his belief that Christian notions of pastoral government have been highly influential in the development of contemporary political rationalities in the West. Foucault does not argue that this model was 'instituted as an effective, practical government of men.' His point, rather, is that 'a yearning to arrange pastoral relations among men' influenced many subsequent forms or rationalities of government.

The shepherd-flock model of government, as developed in Western Christianity, is characterised by four principles. The first concerns the role of the shepherd, or pastor. He is accountable for all of the members of the flock or pastorate. That means he must know, not only the movements and deeds of the flock as a whole, but those of each member. Second, each member of the flock exercises total obedience and self-control with regard to the wishes of the shepherd. Third, the shepherd-flock relation establishes an individualising knowledge - the shepherd must know the needs and desires of each member of the flock and provide for these. This individual and particular knowledge is to be gained through the techniques of 'self-examination' and 'guidance of conscience' - techniques that are elaborated in Part II of this chapter. Here it is necessary only to point out that this mode of government organises 'a link between total obedience, knowledge of oneself, and confession to someone else.'

Finally, the 'shepherd theme' is associated with the notion of self-renunciation. This is not posed in terms of sacrifice for the good of the flock, however, but rather in terms of

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17 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 60, 71.
18 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 73.
19 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 70.
a kind of relation of oneself to oneself.' In Dean’s words, in the elaboration of the pastoral model can be seen ‘the development of a dynamics of self-decipherment as self-renunciation.’ Pastoral forms of power are questioned by Foucault (and by others influenced by his ideas) primarily because of their links to self-renunciation. In a lecture on the topic of technologies of the self, Foucault argues that ‘one of the great problems of Western culture has been to find the possibility of founding the hermeneutics of the self not, as it was the case in early Christianity, on the sacrifice of the self but, on the contrary, on a positive, on the theoretical and practical, emergence of the self.’ Foucault holds to the idea of the self as emergence, or as something that can be cultivated in creative and positive ways. I return to this idea later in the present chapter as well as in Chapter Four.

The shepherd-flock game can be summed up as follows. The welfare of the flock depends upon the shepherd looking after each individual member as well as the collectivity, and this requires that the shepherd has a thorough and permanent knowledge of the thoughts and deeds of each member. Acquiring this knowledge, in turn, relies upon certain techniques through which the individual’s conscience can be known and directed. The ‘shepherd-flock game,’ then, is primarily individualising (although the metaphor of ‘the flock’ indicates that it also has a totalising dimension). It is this aspect, together with the particular techniques that enables it to be thus, primarily the confession and the examination, that Foucault sees as central to liberal modes of government.

Foucault contrasts this shepherd-flock, or pastoral, model of government with one developed by the Greeks. He calls this the ‘city-citizen game.’ According to this model, and Foucault draws on Plato’s critique of the shepherd-flock model of rule here, a ruler cannot be thought of in terms of a shepherd - for, as Foucault puts it, the problem Plato poses is ‘how would the politician ever find the time to come and sit by each person, feed

20 Foucault ‘Politics and reason,’ 68-70.
21 Dean Critical and Effective Histories, 183.
22 Foucault ‘About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self.’ Political Theory, 21 (2), 1993, 222.
him, give him concerts, and care for him when sick?'. The task of politicians, then, doesn't consist in fostering the life of individuals. It consists in forming and assuring the city’s unity. In short, the political problem is that of the relation between the one and the many in the framework of the city and its citizens. The pastoral problem concerns the lives of individuals.23

The ‘city-citizen game,’ then, is characterised by its problematic of establishing ‘a legal framework of unity.’24 Hence this model of government can be thought of as a ‘totalising’ one, in which the leader ‘had naturally to make decisions in the interest of all.’25 Because of its primarily totalising approach, the city-citizen model requires knowledge and techniques of a different order from those required by the pastoral model. This model is concerned with collating and maintaining norms relating to populations, and governing according to these norms - rather than governing in order to meet the needs of individual members of the population.

The city-citizen game can be contrasted in a second way with the shepherd-flock model. According to the latter, individuals are ‘subjects,’ in the sense that the ruler is less concerned with their freedom than with their welfare; the ruler has licence to make decisions and to give directives to her or his subjects, with the aim of meeting the needs of each individual as well as those of the flock, or of the subjects of a sovereignty. In this model, then, the flock relies upon the shepherd for its very existence and for its well-being; without the shepherd, there would be no flock. As Barry Hindess explains, in Foucault’s account of pastoral power, the shepherd is not just:

first among equals (as the lead animal in a flock might be regarded), but [is] a superior kind of being. In this respect, pastoral power as Foucault describes it is still dependent on the representation of the human individual as in a natural condition of subjection - and consequently on some variant of the problem of sovereignty.26

The city-citizen model is based upon a quite different conception of the relation between a
sovereign and the inhabitants of a territory. As its name suggests, this model of rule
assumes the existence of ‘citizens,’ ‘free’ inhabitants of a community of citizens, where
the community exists regardless of the existence of a sovereign or other ruler. This
means that the role of a ruler or of the government is to secure the conditions for the
community to function and to prosper; its focus is therefore not so much on individuals as
on the population as a whole.\(^2^7\) As we will see shortly, the city-citizen model of rule is a
precursor to a fully developed rationality of state because both are based upon the idea
that there is an intrinsic purpose to the state’s existence, and that purpose is to secure the
conditions for the autonomous functioning of the elements of a state’s population (the
economy, families, the production of wealth, and so on).

Foucault’s interest in these conceptualisations of political rule stems from his claim that
their respective individualising and totalising techniques are later realised in what he calls
their ‘demonic’ coupling in modern states.\(^2^8\) Foucault makes an important distinction,
however, between these early forms of rule and modern forms of rule. The distinction
revolves around the notion of political rationality that, as I alluded to in the previous
section, Foucault identifies with the development of what he calls an ‘autonomous’ art of
government. What characterises an autonomous art of government is that it assumes an
intrinsic rationality belonging to the state - that is, one that is not simply derivative of
some higher order or principle.

Hindess points out that with the notion of an intrinsic rationality goes the idea that
‘members of the population ruled by the state cannot be conceived of as if they were
naturally or essentially in a condition of subjection.’\(^2^9\) For, it was shown in the previous
section that with the emergence of governmentality came the idea that the ‘men and
things’ within a state were to be governed according to their internal laws and processes,
rather than with regard to the will or laws of a sovereign or God. It follows, then, that

\(^2^7\) Hindess *Discourses of Power*, 118-20.
\(^2^8\) Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 104.
\(^2^9\) Hindess ‘Politics and governmentality,’ 259.
political rationality regards the object of government - the ‘men and things’ that constitute the state or territory - as needing to be governed according to their capacities and interests. The two models of rule discussed above - the ‘city-citizen game’ and the ‘shepherd-flock game’ - thus cannot be thought of as political rationalities as Foucault uses the term. For, as Hindess points out, a political rationality:

is a rationality which presents itself as intrinsic to the nature of the state, focusing on the welfare or the interests of the state, and of the community which is ruled by the state, and understanding those interests in their own terms, rather than as if they were dependent on some external, superordinate principle.30

Before modern political rationalities could emerge, however, a rationality specific to the government of states had to be developed. This development is the focus of the next section.

**Omnes et singulatim**

Foucault calls the first such specific rationality of government ‘reason of state.’ I introduced it in the previous section as an early, but undeveloped, form of the art of government. Reason of state as a political rationality is analysed by Foucault in the following terms: what is to be governed, in this case all those ‘men and things’ that are pertinent to the activities of and relations between the members of the state’s population; the justification for governing, which according to the rationality of reason of state is that it is the nature of the state itself - as well as the population of that state - to be governed according to its own inherent rationality; how the state is governed, in other words the techniques by which political authorities gain the information required to regulate and administer the population; and the aim of government, which is ‘to strengthen the state itself.’ Reason of state thus refers to ‘a rationality specific to the art of governing states.’31

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30 Hindess ‘Politics and governmentality,’ 258.
31 Foucault ‘The political technology of individuals.’ In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Luther Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick Hutton (eds), 1988, 150.
Now what is significant for Foucault about reason of state as a political rationality is that it 'presupposes the constitution of a certain type of knowledge.' Government, according to this political rationality, depends upon knowledge of the strength of the state, of the state's forces, as well as knowledge of rival states. The object of government - the population, or 'men and things' in all of their relationships - make up the state's forces, so it is knowledge of the population, and the correct use of this knowledge, which will enable 'government in accordance with the state's strength.' The means through which the knowledge of the state's strength was gained depended on a specific technology called, in France and Germany in the eighteenth century, 'science of police.' The word 'police' had a very different meaning then than it does now, as Foucault explains. 'Police' referred to the administration of virtually all of society. An eighteenth century manual of police regulations lists the areas to be administered: religion; morals; health; supplies; roads, highways and town buildings; public safety; the liberal arts; trade; factories; manservants and factory workers; and the poor. So, as Foucault points out, with the exception of the army, justice and taxes, 'the police apparently see to everything.' In a more specific sense, however, '[s]ociety and men as social beings, individuals with all their social relations, are now the true object of the police.' In the manual to which Foucault refers, and in others he mentions that were written around the same period (the eighteenth century), the object of this intervention in the lives of the population is 'life': '[t]hat people survive, live, and even do better than just that, is what the police has to ensure.' Science of police thus refers to the means of collecting data and constituting certain types of knowledge of populations - their birth and death rates, marriages, diseases, cycles of scarcity, and so on.

From its beginnings, then, political rationality has relied on the development of certain types of knowledge of individuals and populations. This reintroduces the question of the

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32 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 76, 77.
33 Foucault 'The political technology of individuals,' 156-7.
34 Foucault 'The political technology of individuals,' 158.
35 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 81. A more detailed account of science of police is found in Pasquino, 'Theatricum politicum: the genealogy of capital - police and the state of prosperity.' In The Foucault Effect, 105-18.
manner in which the population is regarded as an object of government. From the perspective of the rationality of reason of state it is clear that the members of the population must be governed according to their own ‘natural’ laws and cycles. That is to say, the population must be governed both as individuals - married or single, wealthy or poor, adult or child, with all the specific needs these situations connote - and as members of a larger group that is the site of disease, of production of goods and wealth, as well as being the site where future generations of workers are conceived and so on. Again, these needs and requirements vary and need to be specifically determined and planned for in government calculations about how to achieve its objectives.

The significance of the science of police, for Foucault, is its focus on the point at which the lives of individuals and that of the population as a whole connect. As Foucault writes, police refers to ‘the new techniques by which the individual could be integrated into the social entity.’ 36 This contrasts with the account of pastoral power given above, according to which an intimate knowledge of the members of the population is required for their proper government. It also contrasts with Foucault’s account of the ‘city-citizen game,’ in which a sovereign attempts to govern in the interests of all, rather than looking after the needs of each individual as in the pastoral model. In his account of the science of police, on the other hand, Foucault demonstrates that the aim of this method of government is to secure the well-being of individuals, but only insofar as ‘[h]appiness of individuals is a requirement for the survival and development of the state. It is a condition, it is an instrument, and not simply a consequence. People’s happiness becomes an element of the state’s strength.’ 37 That is to say, police science aims neither to individualise completely the aims and methods of government, nor to totalise them by disregarding individual differences. The task of police, then, is to ensure the prosperity ‘of all and of each.’

Foucault calls this ‘the central paradox of police’ : ‘to develop those elements constitutive of individuals’ lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength

36 Foucault ‘The political technology of individuals,’ 153.
37 Foucault ‘The political technology of individuals,’ 158.
of the state.'

We see in a later section that Foucault believes this ‘paradox’ is carried over into contemporary forms of government, as evidenced by competing and apparently contradictory criticisms made either against the state in the name of freedom of the individual, or in the form of claims made on the state in the name of community or society. In other words, Foucault argues that both poles of this problem of governing 'are still highly important for contemporary society. They deal with the relations between political power at work within the state as a legal framework of unity, and a power we can call “pastoral,” whose role is to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one.' The rationality of reason of state is also significant from Foucault's point of view because of the way it conceives of the members of the population as subjects and as objects of government (rather than, as with sovereign notions of government, seeing the population as purely an object of sovereign laws). As I indicated above, with reason of state comes the belief that individuals are not subjected to government because it is their natural state to be ruled by an external authority, a God or a king. Rather, individuals' subjection to government is seen as the always precarious result of certain techniques or practices of government that aim to develop what are regarded as the natural or inherent capacities of the members of the population.

This part of the chapter presented the technologies that Foucault identifies as being involved in constituting members of a state’s population simultaneously as part of a collectivity and as an individual within a collectivity. The next part of the chapter presents Foucault’s account of how these techniques have been carried over to contemporary practices of government in a range of spheres. I also discuss Foucault’s account of how these techniques contribute to the development of various attributes and capacities in human subjects.

38 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 82. See also Colin Gordon 'Governmental rationality: an introduction.' In The Foucault Effect, 10-12.
39 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 67.
According to Foucault, the individualising and totalising principles behind the techniques of rule discussed above, such as science of police, inform a range of contemporary practices of government, from the government of the state to the government of prison inmates. Foucault is also concerned to demonstrate the role played by these and other practices of government in the constitution and regulation of certain subjectivities - the mad person, the sexual pervert, the prisoner and so on. For, according to him, attributes such as psychological depth, and capacities such as self-knowledge and autonomy often associated with conceptions of the modern subject are the effects of specific techniques of government, techniques that the individual is enjoined to practise on herself and that are practised on her by others. Foucault refers to these as, respectively, subjectifying and disciplinary practices.

In what follows I demonstrate the role played by these techniques, and the knowledges that guide their deployment, in the functioning of the dimensions of power which Foucault calls ‘truth,’ ‘ethics’ and ‘politics.’ In the opening section I introduce Foucault’s notion of governmental reason. Governmental reason participates in the operation of power in the dimension of truth because it concerns itself with establishing a domain of knowledge (that is, what is to be governed) and determining what is ‘true’ in relation to the object or objects of government. Section two deals with disciplinary techniques that play a fundamental role in the realm of power which Foucault calls ‘politics,’ the realm in which subjects govern the conduct of others. The third section looks at subjectifying techniques that can be thought of as participating in the operation of ethics, or the practices through which individuals play a part in their constitution as certain kinds of subjects. In the concluding section I discuss how this notion of ethics plays a part in Foucault’s conceptions of freedom and of transformation.
It is important to bear in mind that Foucault’s investigations into this area (that were preliminary but have been taken up by other researchers prior to and since his death) were motivated by a strong dissatisfaction with conventional approaches to the relation between government and individuals. As we have seen, in his ‘Governmentality’ lecture Foucault argues that conventional studies of the relation between government (meaning government of the state) and the individual emphasise ‘the genesis of the state, its history, its advance, its power and abuses, etc.’ One of two approaches is usually adopted, he suggests. One sees the state as a ‘monstre froid’ - the large and ever growing repository of all political power within a territory. The other sees the state purely in terms of its functionality - economic and social functions such as securing the conditions for the development of the forces of production and ensuring the welfare of its citizens. In both cases the state’s role ‘renders it absolutely essential as a target needing to be attacked and a privileged position needing to be occupied. But the state,’ Foucault goes on, ‘... does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance.’ He suggests in this lecture that, instead of concentrating on the powers of the state - whether they are seen as growing or diminishing, for example in the face of ‘globalisation’ - a more significant development ‘for our modernity’ is ‘the “governmentalization” of the state.’

When Foucault refers to ‘the state’ here he does not mean conventional notions of the state, such as those involving rule by a sovereign or the collective rule of citizens over themselves and others, as is often thought to have been the case in the polities of ancient Greece and Rome. By ‘the state’ Foucault means to invoke the notion of a population of a state as well as the multitude of state and non-state agencies that regulate the conduct of groups and individuals within the population. When Foucault talks about the governmentalisation of the state, then, he means that rule within states increasingly takes

40 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 103.
41 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 103.
42 Foucault ‘Governmentality,’ 103.
the form of government, meaning the conduct of conduct. Hindess explains the concept of governmentalisation like this:

first, that the activities of the state have increasingly taken the form of government - that is, of attending to the conduct of its subjects as distinct from relying on ad hoc interventions, law-enforcement and straightforward domination - and, secondly, that the state itself has been subsumed as a set of instruments within broader programs of government.43

Governmentalisation, in other words, refers to a method of rule, that Hindess describes as 'the regulation of conduct through the more or less rational application of the appropriate technical means,'44 and to a particular configuration of relations amongst state and non-state institutions, individuals and populations. From this perspective, Hindess continues, 'the agencies of the state appear as one, albeit significant, set of instruments of government amongst others, and as part of the population that is to be governed.'45 As an institutional structure, in other words, the state does not determine what is within its competence to govern, and how to do so. According to Foucault, it is specific rationalities of government that determine this.

Two lectures by Foucault, delivered in 1979 and entitled 'Omnes et singulatim: towards a criticism of political reason,' argue that a useful analysis of the relations between rationality and political power will not begin by asking 'whether aberrant state power is due to excessive rationalism or irrationalism,' but rather will attempt 'to pin down the specific type of rationality the state produced.'46 In other words, he suggests that different types of rationality are involved in the 'government of men by men.' The notion of governmental rationality, then, was developed by Foucault (and subsequently elaborated by others) to study the relationships between individuals and groups, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the authorities that seek to govern them.

43 Hindess Discourses of Power, 108.
44 Hindess Discourses of Power, 106.
45 Hindess Discourses of Power, 112.
46 Foucault 'Politics and reason,' 73.
Three definitions of governmental rationality are set out below, in order of their level of detail. Hindess describes governmental rationalities as 'discourses that address practical questions concerning how to conduct the conduct of the state and of the population which the state claims to rule.'47 Colin Gordon writes that a 'rationality of government will thus mean a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed), capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it was practised.'48 Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller provide a more detailed explanation. Political rationalities, they write, are:

the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualised, the moral justifications for particular ways of exercising power by diverse authorities, notions of the appropriate forms, objects and limits of politics, and conceptions of the proper distribution of such tasks among secular, spiritual, military and familial sectors.49

What all of these definitions emphasise is that political rationalities are, as Rose and Miller point out, 'more than rhetoric.' They see such rationalities as ‘a kind of intellectual machinery or apparatus for rendering reality thinkable in such a way that it is amenable to political deliberations.’50 Dean points out that ‘[p]olitical rationality is a condition of governmental practice, but as a practice, government relies on means irreducible to this rationality.’51 As a practice, then, government relies on certain techniques, instruments, mechanisms and apparatuses in order to accomplish, or try to accomplish, its objectives. I discuss examples of these technologies in more detail in the next section.

Foucault’s notion of governmental rationality both expands and circumscribes what is usually understood by the term ‘government.’ It is expanded in the sense that government, understood broadly as the conduct of conduct, occurs in diverse spheres which include political programs directed by the state (for example schooling systems)

47 Hindess Discourses of Power, 45.
48 Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 3.
49 Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller 'Political power beyond the state: problematics of government.' British Journal of Sociology, 43 (2), 1992, 175.
50 Rose and Miller 'Political power beyond the state,' 179.
51 Dean “A social structure,” 187.
and the direction of conscience in churches and psychoanalysts' offices. We have also seen that the notion of government in the governmentality literature includes the government of oneself. Foucault's use of the term government to mean the conduct of conduct is also circumscribed in an important sense. While the understanding of government in terms of the conduct of conduct might appear to be 'so inclusive that it no longer has any distinct meaning,' in fact Foucault would want to emphasise that this usage is restricted in at least one important sense. That is, in Hindess's words, government 'involves a significant element of calculation that is by no means always present in attempts to influence the behaviour of others.' Here Hindess identifies a key aspect of analyses conducted from the perspective of governmental rationality. Defining government in terms of the conduct of conduct that is informed by a rationality overcomes a conceptual problem associated with Foucault's notion of power. That is, instead of being seen as coterminous with or a conceptual replacement for power, government comes to be understood as one modality of power. The introduction of rationalities into the analysis of power relations is important to Foucault's studies for a second reason. Foucault argues that technologies of government are always informed by a specific rationality that addresses local concerns or problems. Therefore he looks at the rationalities behind the practices and relations of government of which he is particularly critical.

Rose and Miller caution, however, that governmental practices should not be thought of as merely implementing 'ideal schemes' - or failing to implement such. Rather, they should be viewed as 'the complex assemblage of diverse forces - legal, architectural, professional, administrative, financial, judgmental' through which individual and collective actions and decisions 'come to be understood and regulated in relation to authoritative criteria.' Foucault also emphasises this point. He writes:

'Discipline' isn't the expression of an 'ideal type' (that of 'disciplined man'); it's the

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52 This is a criticism formulated by, but not subscribed to, by Hindess in *Discourses of Power*, 145.
53 Hindess *Discourses of Power*, 144.
54 Rose and Miller 'Political power beyond the state,' 183.
Foucault's historical investigations (for example into the birth of the prison and the development of a scientific knowledge of madness) are complex and involved and for the purposes of this chapter need not be gone into in detail. In the sections that follow I concentrate on his account of the relationships between governmental rationalities and practices, on the one hand, and the types of subjects that are constituted by these, on the other. My aim is to present, firstly, what Foucault sees are the knowledges and associated techniques that constitute human beings such that we think of them as 'subjects' of certain kinds; and secondly, to illustrate that, according to Foucault, the government of modern states relies more on technologies of the self than on technologies for the government of others.

We have seen that, according to Foucault, the government of states involves managing the 'men and things' of which a state or territory is made up. This management requires looking after the health, welfare and wealth of the population, and this in turn requires an intimate knowledge of the functions of bodies as they live, work and labour - both individually and in groups - as well as of the actual and potential irregularities and pathologies that might occur. In Foucault's words:

Interest at the level of the consciousness of each individual who goes to make up the population, and interest considered as the interest of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it, this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population.56

The government of populations, then, according to Foucault, involves the deployment of two distinct but related kinds of techniques. The first might be called disciplinary and centres on the body 'as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration

55 Foucault 'Questions of method,' 9.
56 Foucault 'Governmentality,' 100.
into systems of efficient and economic controls.’ In other words, ‘an anatomo-politics of the human body.’ Foucault associates techniques of this kind with the establishment of institutionalised relations of power, such as occur in prisons. He seems to view this dimension of power in terms of strategies for, for example, the government of delinquency. His focus, then, is on techniques that primarily objectify individuals and groups - techniques for the government of others (that nevertheless rely on certain capacities for self-government on the part of the governed).

The second kind of technique can be called ‘subjectifying.’ This kind of technique enjoins individuals, with the help of various ‘expert’ authorities, to know and to master themselves. Foucault calls these kinds of techniques ‘technologies of the self.’ Technologies of the self, according to him, are the means by which individuals govern their own actions, behaviour and thoughts; they are also the means by which subjects establish certain kinds of ethical relations with themselves, an idea that we have seen is central to Foucault’s notions of resistance and freedom. I deal with each of these in the sections that follow.

**Docile Bodies**

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault provides an account of a transformation in the practise of punishment that occurred between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. He describes more than simply the implementation of a new technique of punishing criminals, however. Discipline, he argues, is a technology that operates in a variety of spheres and is central to the constitution of the modern subject. In modern society discipline has two dimensions, according to Foucault. The first is ‘individualising,’ the second ‘universalises.’ The operations of both forms of control are discernible in the architectural figure of the ‘Panopticon’ designed by Jeremy Bentham in the early

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nineteenth century. Foucault explains:

at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in the central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery... in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible.\footnote{Foucault \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 200.}

The Panopticon thus achieves an 'economy of power.' Because its inmates are never sure whether they are being observed they learn to monitor their own behaviour: the inmates are 'caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.'\footnote{Foucault \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 201.}

In this way the Panopticon puts into operation three instruments central to the success of disciplinary power, according to Foucault. These are hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and the examination (which combines the first two). With regard to observation, individual prisoners, workers or school pupils can be observed in their cells and their performance, behaviour or efficiency measured against one another. Such observation allows the establishment of 'norms' - of behaviour, productivity, sanity, and so on. This introduces the judging aspect of disciplinary power - once a field of comparison is set up and individuals are differentiated from one another, a norm comes into effect against which individuals and groups can be measured. Foucault gives the following examples of the establishment of norms: 'the effort to organize a national medical profession and a hospital system capable of operating general norms of health;' and 'the standardization of industrial processes and products.'\footnote{Foucault \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 184.} Finally, the examination is, Foucault writes, 'a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish.'\footnote{Foucault \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 184.} In the ritual of the examination, furthermore, the formation of knowledge and the exercise of power are linked. Foucault describes the movement,
observable in both hospitals and schools, whereby continual surveillance - of patients in
the former case, pupils in the latter - functions in order simultaneously to extract
knowledge and exercise control. Both the pupil and the patient or inmate thus become at
once objects of knowledge and subjected to power.63

Foucault emphasises how important the examination is in the constitution of fields of
knowledge and their correlative relations of power. He argues that, as a technique, the
examination is far more significant in its political effects than is ideology. For,
techniques such as the examination operate within relations of power with effects, he
writes, 'not simply at the level of consciousness, of representations and in what one
thinks one knows, but at the level of what makes possible the knowledge that is
transformed into political investment'.64 So clearly Foucault believes that it is certain
techniques or mechanisms, as much as if not more than ideas, theories or ideologies,
which have the power to constitute and effect changes in the individual. And the
examination, as was shown, operates in fields (medicine, education, the hiring of labour,
and so on) in which it helps produce an object of knowledge and a subjected body. The
examination alone could not effect this simultaneous objectification and subjection,
however. What Foucault terms the 'apparatus of writing' - 'the accumulation of
documents, their seriation, the organization of comparative fields' - accompanied the
examination and made possible, firstly, 'the constitution of the individual as a
describable, analysable object' and secondly, 'the constitution of a comparative system
that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the
characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their
distribution in a given "population."

In the examination, then, which combines the instruments of normalisation and
surveillance, the individualising and universalising aspects of disciplinary power are most

63 Lack of space prevents a detailed account. For more detail see Discipline and Punish, 185-7.
64 Foucault Discipline and Punish, 185 (emphasis added).
65 Foucault Discipline and Punish, 190.
evident. Individual bodies and behaviours are observed and noted in meticulous detail. This provides valuable information about individual members of a population - a prison population, school, hospital and so on - and so enables general or 'universal' rules and laws to be generated about such populations. The role of the examination in the Panopticon introduces another of the latter's functions. It was also, Foucault points out, a laboratory:

- it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals. To experiment with medicines and monitor their effects. To try out different punishments on prisoners, according to their crimes and character, and to seek the most effective ones. To teach different techniques simultaneously to the workers, to decide which is the best.66

In other words, Foucault wants to show that with the development of the disciplines goes the advancement of knowledge. He does this by pointing out that the Panopticon is not simply an utopian building. 'It is,' he writes, 'in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.'67 He goes on to detail the spread and transformations of disciplinary mechanisms that have as their model the 'tactics of individualizing disciplines and 'the universality of disciplinary controls' that characterise the Panopticon. Again, for reasons of space, this detail will not be entered into here.

Three 'profound' processes associated with the spread of disciplinary mechanisms, however, are important to note. For it was through them, Foucault argues, that a 'disciplinary society' was formed. (In his later work, Foucault rejects the notion that contemporary society can be characterised solely as disciplinary. He suggests instead that disciplinary mechanisms are one, albeit important, amongst different kinds of techniques of power in modern society.68) First was the 'inversion' of the function of the disciplines. They were no longer expected just to punish, detain, or neutralise disturbances. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they 'were asked to play a positive role' because they were 'able to do so, to increase the possible utility of

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67 Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, 205.
68 See for example 'Governmentality,' 102 and 'About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self,' 203-4.
individuals.'69 Second, the mechanisms of the disciplines became ‘de-institutionalized’ and ‘broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted.’ Finally, in the eighteenth century, Foucault explains, the mechanisms of discipline came under the control of the state - more specifically, the police. This ‘sanctioned a generalization of the disciplines that became co-extensive with the state itself.’70 Foucault injects a note of caution here. He argues that disciplinary functions were not ‘confiscated and absorbed’ by the state apparatus. It was shown in the previous section that various spheres of government operate within the domain of the state, the aims and rationalities of each of which are irreducible to those of the state. The same can be said with regard to the ‘disciplinary society.’ Foucault points out that:

'Discipline' may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology.71

The individual in a disciplinary regime (such as a hospital, prison or school), then, is constituted as an ‘effect and object of power’ and as an ‘effect and object of knowledge.’ Each technique required to achieve this - the examination, documentation, registration, and so on - has a long history and emerged or was developed according to very specific and local concerns, such as the medical examination, collecting data on populations, and so on. Foucault points out, however, that through their combination and generalisation in the eighteenth century, ‘they attained a level at which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process.’ So institutions like the hospital, the school and later the workshop became sites where ‘any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge.’72 It was these apparatuses and their functions as disciplinary institutions, then, that allowed

70 Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, 211-5.
71 Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, 215.
72 Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, 224.
the formation of medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, the rationalisation of labour and so on - in other words, the ‘sciences of man.’

Discipline, then, is the name given by Foucault to a variety of techniques that are predominantly techniques for the government of others. I write ‘predominantly’ here because techniques of the self through which, for example, individuals monitor their own behaviour, as Foucault suggests they do in the Panopticon, can be essential to the operation of disciplinary techniques. Such self-government, however, is carried out within a setting or institution, such as the prison, the school, the workhouse and so on, the primary function of which is to govern the conduct of others.

An important distinguishing characteristic of disciplinary techniques in particular, and techniques for the government of others more generally, as opposed to subjectifying techniques, therefore, is that the success of the former requires a constant presence, whether that presence be active or threatened. A constant reminder is needed of the consequences of not practising the appropriate or required techniques of the self. In contrast, techniques that are carried out without the need for such ongoing surveillance and corrective mechanisms might be thought of as subjectifying techniques, for it is these that enable the constitution of subjects, properly speaking, as distinct from objects of government. Subjectifying techniques belong in the domain of ethics, for it is in this domain that, according to Foucault, individuals can carve a space of freedom in which they can constitute themselves as different kinds of subjects.

‘Tell me who you love and I will tell you who you are’

Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, according to Foucault, birthrates, marriages, legitimate and illegitimate births, the frequency of sexual relations, incidence of fertility and sterility - and how to induce these - came to be recognised by administrators as revolving around sex. Sex thus became an object to be studied,
classified, managed, utilised and administered; a matter involving the state and the individual.\textsuperscript{74} In this way Foucault wants to show how sexuality was at the ‘pivot of the two axes’ of governmentality. Of sexuality he writes:

On the one hand it was tied to the disciplines of the body: the harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies. On the other hand, it was applied to the regulation of populations... giving rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations...\textsuperscript{75}

In order to retrieve information relating to an individual’s hidden practices, Foucault writes, there emerged an ‘incitement to talk about sex.’\textsuperscript{76} Those involved in accumulating and interpreting this data made use of the technique of the confession, the origin of which lies in the Middle Ages, while its present use was introduced with the Christian penance.\textsuperscript{77} Since that time, Foucault explains, Western societies have relied on this method for the production of truth. As a technique, however, the confession has spread beyond the context of religion and into a multitude of spheres.

It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites: one confesses one’s crimes, one’s sins, one’s thoughts and desires, one’s illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell.\textsuperscript{78}

The use of the confession as a technique for producing a true discourse of sexuality depended on a ‘great innovation,’ according to Foucault. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, he explains, a transformation occurred that consisted of a separation of ‘the medicine of sex from the medicine of the body; it isolated a sexual “instinct” capable of presenting constitutive anomalies, acquired derivations, infirmities, or pathological processes.’\textsuperscript{79} Dreyfus and Rabinow point out that ‘[t]hrough these

\textsuperscript{74} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 24-5.
\textsuperscript{75} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 145.
\textsuperscript{76} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 23.
\textsuperscript{77} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 58.
\textsuperscript{78} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 59.
\textsuperscript{79} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 117.
"scientific" breakthroughs sexuality was linked to a powerful form of knowledge' that constructs sexuality as something that simultaneously is 'natural' and potentially 'disoperative.' Instead of techniques that operate to a large extent as corrective or disciplinary mechanisms, those focused around sexuality were ‘therapeutic.’

Interventions in this area became a medical and scientific matter; the ‘experts’ here are doctors and psychiatrists trained to extract the ‘truth’ about individuals’ secret desires and fantasies - and then to correct these when they are judged abnormal or pathological.

But the important aspect of this telling the truth about oneself, Foucault argues, more than the corrective mechanisms it might bring into play, is the relation it establishes within the subject herself. The confession works to entwine the subject in a triangle of confession-power-truth. So, on the one hand, the individual’s confession gives authorities certain information, regarded as ‘facts,’ about her sexual practices and desires - and thus contributes to an ‘objective’ science concerning sexuality. On the other hand, the individual is persuaded that through the confession she can know the truth about herself - thus contributing to the processes which constitute her as a ‘subject’. Through the confession individuals enter into a certain relationship with themselves. Dreyfus and Rabinow write that it is through the confession that we ‘supposedly reveal our deepest selves'81 - and, we can add, come to think of ourselves as possessing a certain ‘depth.’

Foucault argues that the ‘obligation to confess’ now seems so natural to us that we do not consider it an effect of a power of constraint. In Western societies the notion is entrenched that ‘[c]onfession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom.’82 Foucault wants to show, on the contrary, firstly that the confession and the ‘truth’ it reveals are effects of power. Through participating in the confession, ‘the speaking subject is... the subject of the statement.’ But this also places her within a power relationship, ‘for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply

80 Dreyfus and Rabinow Michel Foucault, 170.
81 Dreyfus and Rabinow Michel Foucault, 174.
82 Foucault The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, 60.
the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile.\textsuperscript{83}

Moreover, the act of confessing produces ‘modifications’ in the speaking subject: ‘it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation.’\textsuperscript{84} In other words, Foucault explains, ‘[s]poken in time, to the proper party, and by the person who was both the bearer of it and one responsible for it, the truth healed.’\textsuperscript{85}

Secondly, Foucault shows the way in which the confession contributes to the formation of a certain type of subject. It is through the deployment of sexuality that the main characteristics of what is commonly thought of as modern subjectivity are established. The ‘modern subject’ is a unified individual capable of being understood, has a hidden ‘depth’ of meaning and is unique. Foucault writes:

\begin{quote}
It is through sex - in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality - that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of a history).\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

Foucault aims to overturn the common assumption that sex - and sexuality - has been the target of repression since the eighteenth century, a repression from which we, in the twentieth century, are only just emerging. According to this story the advent of sexual repression coincided with the development of capitalism. Foucault sums up the logic behind this thinking: ‘if sex is so rigorously repressed, this is because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative.’\textsuperscript{87} The corollary of this explanation is that ‘the demand for sexual freedom, but also for the knowledge to be gained from sex and the right to speak about it - becomes legitimately associated with the honour of a political

\textsuperscript{83} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 61-2.
\textsuperscript{84} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 62.
\textsuperscript{85} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 67.
\textsuperscript{86} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 155-6.
\textsuperscript{87} Foucault \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Vol. I, 6.
cause: sex too is placed on the agenda for the future.'88 Furthermore, Foucault points out, merely speaking about sex becomes a ‘transgression,’ a flouting of the rules, thereby placing the speaker ‘outside the reach of power.’ To speak of sex in terms of repression, then, is to cling to the sovereign notion of power that Foucault argues is now inadequate as a model for describing the workings of power in Western societies. In fact, as we have seen, he claims that government, a fundamental modality of modern power, relies heavily on the deployment and dispersion of technologies of sex, particularly the confession. Sexuality is, in turn, produced alongside these technologies, according to Foucault.

Foucault argues that the operation of governmental techniques whereby individuals are invested with a sexuality and a sexual identity functions more generally: what we have come to think of as the ‘modern subject,’ endowed with various inherent or potential capacities (autonomy, individuality, depth of meaning, intelligibility and so on), is actually the effect of techniques of power such as the confession. Subjectifying techniques operate within various discourses (religious, medical, pedagogical, familial) and often become attached to particular institutions (the hospital, the school, certain government agencies such as social security), thus touching individuals in many aspects of their lives and marking ours, in Foucault’s words, as ‘a singularly confessing society.’89

If it appears that Foucault overplays the importance of sexuality to the operation of modern power, this is because he sees sexuality as a central means of classifying and governing subjects in Western societies. For example, in an interview published under the title ‘Sexuality and solitude,’ Foucault explains that he is interested in exploring how it came about that there is a ‘fundamental connection among sexuality, subjectivity, and truth obligation.’ He writes that ‘in this indefinite spiral of truth and reality in the self, sexuality has been of major importance.’90 In terms of this interest, he explains, his

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90 Foucault ‘Sexuality and solitude,’ 11.
work joins with that of Richard Sennett who was interviewed for the piece in which Foucault’s interview appears. Sennett writes:

> Few people today would subscribe to Brillat-Savarin’s dictum, ‘Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are,’ but a translation of this dictum to the field of sex does command assent: Know who you love, and you will know who you are.91

Here Sennett refers to the idea that one’s identity is inescapably bound to one’s sexual object choice. This suggests a cultural organisation in which the hetero-homosexual divide is an important means through which subjects are identified and governed and, more importantly, through which subjects identify themselves and govern their own behaviour. Both Sennett and Foucault emphasise that self-government is tied to programs and techniques for the government of others. For example, a confession is normally conducted in the presence of an authoritative other who uses religious or psychoanalytic ‘expertise’ to legitimate and interpret the confession; in some cases, this expertise might be used to justify suggesting or enforcing particular practices of self-government. But Foucault wants to highlight that it is through their forms of self-government - their ethical practices - that individuals can challenge and resist injunctions by others to govern themselves in particular ways. In order to see how, we need first to understand the components of this notion of ethics and second, to see how Foucault himself posits the relation between ethics and freedom.

### On Self-fashioning

In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault sets out his account of how an individual constitutes herself as a subject of a certain kind. That is, instead of focusing on the techniques for the government of others, Foucault reverses his emphasis to look at what is involved in the government of oneself. He refers to this type of government as ‘ethical self-formation.’92 Foucault distinguishes between moral codes and ethical

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91 Richard Sennett ‘Sexuality and solitude,’ 3.
92 Foucault ‘On the genealogy of ethics,’ 352-5.
practices, although he recognises their associations. Moral codes of behaviour, Foucault suggests, refer to certain rules and values prescribed by various agencies regarding the action of individuals and groups. A study of such codes would then focus on their content - what is being prescribed - on the agencies or authorities making the prescriptions, and on the extent to which individuals conform to or transgress the codes. Ethical practices, in contrast, refer to 'the manner in which one ought to “conduct oneself” - that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code.' It is this aspect of ethics that Foucault wants to emphasise, for it leads to a focus on the different ways in which one can conduct oneself in relation to a code of rules. The following remark by Foucault illustrates this point.

Take, for example, a code of sexual prescriptions enjoining the two marital partners to practice a strict and symmetrical conjugal fidelity, always with a view to procreation; there will be many ways, even within such a rigid frame, to practice that austerity, many ways to 'be faithful.'

According to Foucault, there are four dimensions to this 'conduct of oneself.' The first is the 'ethical substance' - or what it is that we seek to govern in ourselves. With regard to the moral code of fidelity, the ethical substance might be 'the mastery of desires,' or it might be 'the intensity, continuity, and reciprocity of feelings that are experienced vis-a-vis the partner,' or it might yet be 'the strict observance of interdictions and obligations in the very acts one accomplishes.' The second aspect is what Foucault calls the 'mode of subjection,' or why the ethical substance is governed in a particular manner. This concerns 'the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice.' For example, an individual might comply with the interdiction to practise fidelity 'because one acknowledges oneself to be a member of the group that accepts it,' or 'because one regards oneself as an heir to a

93 Foucault makes more complex distinctions within the term 'morality,' but these need not be discussed here. See The History of Sexuality, Vol. II, The Use of Pleasure, 1985, 25-32.
spiritual tradition that one has the responsibility of maintaining or reviving,’ or ‘in response to an appeal.’

The third aspect is the ‘ethical work’ that one performs upon oneself, firstly so that one’s conduct conforms to a given rule, and secondly in an attempt ‘to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour.’ In other words, ‘ethical work’ refers to how the ethical substance is governed. ‘Sexual austerity,’ then, might be practised through an exacting effort of learning precepts, and measuring one’s behaviour in relation to these, or ‘in the form of a sudden, all-embracing, and definitive renunciation of pleasures,’ or ‘through a decipherment as painstaking, continuous, and detailed as possible, of the movements of desire in all its hidden forms, including the most obscure.’ Finally, Foucault identifies the ‘telos’ or goal of these practices as an important aspect of the conduct of oneself. This telos is ‘a certain mode of being,’ into which other moral actions are integrated and, to a certain extent, with which they conform. So, Foucault explains, ‘conjugal fidelity can be associated with a moral conduct that aspires to an ever more complete mastery of the self,’ or ‘it may strain toward a perfect tranquillity of soul, a total insensitivity to the agitations of the passions,’ and so on.

In focusing on the constitution of ethical subjects in this way, Foucault does not want to suggest that moral codes are unimportant. His point, rather, is that a focus only on moral codes misses ‘a whole rich and complex field of historicity in the way the individual is summoned to recognize himself as an ethical subject of sexual conduct.’ In other words he wants to emphasise the ‘coexistence’ and ‘interrelations’ between the elements of a moral code and the ethical practices that individuals undertake on themselves. The distinction Foucault makes between ethical practices and moral codes might usefully be compared to a similar distinction he makes between subjectifying practices and disciplinary practices. In both pairs, ethics and morals; subjectifying practices and

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disciplinary practices, the second term is predominantly associated with the government of others, while Foucault sees the first term as mainly referring to techniques through which individuals govern themselves - although Foucault emphasises that the deployment of each kind of technology often involves dimensions of the other, as we saw in the example of the Panopticon. Another similarity in his treatments of the pairs of terms concerns the relative emphasis he places in his analyses of power on the first term in each pair - ethics and subjectifying practices. By way of concluding this chapter I want to reiterate how this emphasis relates to his concern with freedom.

Foucault’s studies aim to open space for the creation of new ways of thinking and of being subjects; in his words, he wants to ‘give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.’103 If freedom can only be thought in terms of ethics, as Foucault suggests, then expanding the space of freedom must also involve increasing the place that certain forms of ethics, or techniques of the self, occupy in relations of power. These are techniques that experiment with new ways of being a certain kind of subject, and that perhaps aim at the creation of new subjectivities. Experiments with subjectivities are, to Foucault, important sources of resistance because self-government or ethics involves establishing a relationship to a particular code of conduct and acting accordingly. Individuals might establish a conflictual or antagonistic relationship to a code of conduct or governmental program and this relationship might involve choosing to resist attempts to govern their conduct in certain ways. They might do so with the aim of transforming the broad programs of government of which such attempts are part (for example the economic rationalism that drives downsizing in the public sector), or they might resist particular techniques for the government of their conduct (such as work-for-the-dole schemes). These forms of resistance are ‘programmatic’ because of the calculation that lies behind them. Foucault’s notion of ethics enables him to think about subjects as capable of formulating and undertaking resistance of a programmatic nature.

103 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 46.
We saw in this chapter, however, that Foucault does not see all forms of ethical practices as equal in the extent to which they embody a spirit of freedom. Some techniques of the self - for example the confession and self-surveillance - tie subjects into certain, restrictive, relations and ways of being. Fixing relations and ways of being in this way is one element of what Foucault calls domination, and this fixity is therefore an important reason for his argument that domination should be kept to a minimum; within a relation of domination, subjects have little or no room in which to practise their freedom. And it is through the practise of freedom, he argues, that domination can be kept to a minimum.

‘The problem,’ he states in an interview, ‘[is] to give oneself the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.’\textsuperscript{104} Foucault’s suggestion that domination should be kept to a ‘minimum,’ however, indicates a belief that, in some situations, a certain fixing of relations may be necessary, unavoidable, or even productive. For example, pedagogical relations are characterised by one party coming under the guidance of another. Of course this relation can be practised in different ways, but the relative positions of the pupil and the knowledgeable authority remain fixed. Or, as another example, a community of individuals or citizens might require certain behavioural limits for these individuals to coexist with a minimum of violence, theft and the like.

Foucault’s main concerns, however, do not lie with the necessary limits to freedom. He is interested in transgression, or in creating situations in which transgression is possible and desirable. The spirit of transgression underlies much of his work. This spirit, he writes,

has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 18.
\textsuperscript{105} Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 50. In The Passion of Michel Foucault, James Miller reads Foucault’s œuvre as embodying this spirit of transgression. He takes this reading further, however, by characterising Foucault’s work and his life in terms of a ‘death drive,’ or a drive towards the ultimate ‘limit experience’ that, on Miller’s reading, can only be death.
Foucault’s discussions about the kinds of ‘limits that are imposed on us,’ are largely conducted in the context of his historical investigations into the nature of discipline and punishment, sexuality, madness and so on. Later in his life he discussed these limits in relation to more conventionally ‘political’ matters, through his investigations into liberal forms of rule in late twentieth century Western societies. These investigations are also pursued within the governmentality literature. According to the perspective on liberal government that is proposed by Foucault and governmentality writers, freedom is an artefact of government. Liberal government, then, promotes certain modes of action that are considered to represent freedom. These modes of action simultaneously, however, constitute limitations in terms of other possibilities for action. The focus of the next chapter, then, is what the governmentality literature has to say about these limits and the possibilities for moving beyond them.
I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God our peace and defence.¹

¹ Hobbes *Leviathan*, 1881, 131.
It is commonly understood that, in liberal societies, the freedom of the individual sets the limits on, and provides the reason for existence of, the role of government within a state. As Hobbes suggests throughout *Leviathan*, government should thus be regarded as a necessary imposition: it is necessary in order to provide its citizen-subjects with the conditions in which they can survive and prosper; but government is evil, or potentially so, in terms of its tendency to overstep its circumscribed role and thereby to disrupt the otherwise natural functioning of the population and of the economy.2

In what should be by now a familiar move, in this chapter I give an account of a slightly different way of conceiving the relation between government and subjects in liberal societies. Drawing on Foucault's notion of government, this account views freedom as indeed essential to government. However, far from being a principle or a right that must be protected by (and from) government, it is considered as an artefact of government. That is, an important feature of liberal government is its promotion of capacities for autonomous action in its subjects. Following from this idea, different liberal programs and policies can be thought of, not so much, or not only, as driven by ideological principles, but equally, as technical and practical attempts to promote in the population autonomous modes of action.

Analyses of liberal government that are informed by the perspective just outlined can be grouped under the title of what I call the 'governmentality literature.' Drawing on the work of several contributors to this literature, I piece together an account of liberal government, from its emergence to its contemporary manifestations. In addition to its exegetical aim, this chapter has a second function, which is to explore critically the ways in which resistance is conceived of in the governmentality literature. I use a comparative approach for this second function, contrasting Foucault's analyses of liberal governmental techniques and rationalities with those in the governmentality literature. Central to my comparison is ethics; my focus is the importance these writers accord to ethics in their analyses of power, and the possibilities of resistance, in liberal states.

2 Hobbes *Leviathan*, esp. Part II, Chapter XVII, 'Of Commonwealth.'
The chapter is divided into two parts. Part I, ‘An Instrument for the Criticism of Reality,’ is more descriptive than critical, bringing together different writers’ accounts of transformations within the rationalities and techniques of liberal government since its inception. In Part II, ‘Where There is Power There is Resistance,’ I discuss critically the question of resistance in the governmentality literature. I focus on writers whose work epitomises certain tendencies in the ways the literature deals with resistance. The first writer I discuss, in the opening section of Part II, is Nikolas Rose. His work epitomises the tendency in the governmentality literature to analyse power predominantly in its top-down operation. This kind of analysis, I argue, misrepresents Foucault’s notion of resistance in his account of governmentality. According to him, any discussion of resistance in the context of governmental relations is incomplete without considering ethics, or the ‘bottom-up’ functioning of power. In the first section, then, we see that many governmentality analyses, and Rose’s in particular, cannot account for the different forms of resistance that are, or that might be, manifest in liberal societies.

Some governmentality writers recognise the importance of pursuing investigations in this area and in the second section of Part II I turn to the work of two such writers, Graham Burchell and Mitchell Dean. Burchell and Dean present resistance as something that occurs in a programmatic, as distinct from a merely reactive, fashion. This view of resistance, I argue, stems from their explicit concern to incorporate the ethical dimension in their analyses of how power operates in liberal societies.
The previous chapter discussed an early form of political rationality - reason of state - and the political technology by which it was accompanied - science of police. One of the characteristics of reason of state is that it assumes there is no limit to the amount of useful information to be obtained in order to govern effectively and efficiently. The development of science of police therefore can be seen as an attempt to acquire this knowledge and simultaneously to put it into practise. As Foucault notes, reason of state:

Foucault argues that this view of the relation between the sovereign, government and knowledge began to be questioned with the ‘discovery’ of a domain of ‘society’ with its internal processes and regularities. Here Foucault refers to the emergence of a notion of ‘society’ that is quite different from the understanding of society that preceded it. Gordon explains that ‘[f]or Locke, as for his predecessors, “civil society” is in effect a straightforward synonym of political or juridical society.’ In the late eighteenth century, he continues, the term took on another meaning. Adam Ferguson’s *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* is referred to by Foucault and others as exemplifying the new perspective. Gordon writes that, according to Ferguson,

society makes itself. There is no historical act which founds it: groups of men possess and exercise a capacity to organize themselves and divide their labour (which includes political

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3 Foucault 'A course summary ii,' 354.
labour, specialized tasks of command being allocated to those best endowed for them), no less naturally and spontaneously than in their exercise of their sense organs and the power of speech.\textsuperscript{4}

With the idea that there exist ‘quasi-natural’ domains to be governed (civil society, the economy, the family) came the argument that any benefits that might come from interfering in their processes are likely to be offset by unintended and even damaging effects.\textsuperscript{5} As Burchell writes, ‘[n]ot only is the attempt to govern reality in this way unnecessary, since reality contains intrinsic mechanisms of its own self-regulation, but it is harmful because it is likely to produce effects other than those desired.’\textsuperscript{6} In other words, the discovery of a new object of government prompted the question of why it must be governed. The answer was put in terms of security. Government’s role is to secure the conditions under which these ultimately self-regulating domains can continue to function more or less autonomously.\textsuperscript{7} The technical forms of regulation through which such automatic functioning can occur are what Foucault describes as:

mechanisms of security... mechanisms or modes of state intervention whose function is to assure the security of those natural phenomena, economic processes and the intrinsic processes of population: this is what becomes the basic objective of governmental rationality. Hence liberty is registered not only as the right of individuals legitimately to oppose the power, the abuses and usurpations [sic] of the sovereign, but also now as an indispensable element of governmental rationality itself.\textsuperscript{8}

The end of government, according to this rationality, may be termed ‘economic government’ in a dual sense: it is, writes Burchell, ‘both a government orientated by the performance of the economy and a government which is economical or frugal.’\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{4} Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 22.
\textsuperscript{5} Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 15.
\textsuperscript{6} Burchell ‘Peculiar interests: civil society and governing “the system of natural liberty.”’ In The Foucault Effect, 126.
\textsuperscript{7} Hindess Discourses of Power, 125-7; Osborne ‘Security and vitality: drains, liberalism and power in the nineteenth century.’ In Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government, Barry, Osborne and Rose (eds), 1996, 101-2. Security is discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{8} Foucault, quoted in Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 19-20. In an interview entitled ‘Social security’ Foucault writes that civil society ‘was a quasi-polemical concept, opposed to the administrative power of the states at the time, in order to bring victory to a certain liberalism.’ (In Politics, Philosophy, Culture, 167.)
\textsuperscript{9} Burchell 'Peculiar interests,' 140.
The problem left for liberalism was how best to achieve economic government. That is, by what methods and techniques could the ends of government be linked to the functioning of what it is that is governed - civil society, the economy, the family and so on - while respecting the autonomous reality of the latter? Foucault argues that, for liberalism, the answer to the problem of how to govern was found in the very category that threw into question the rationality of reason of state: society. He writes,

> [t]he idea of society permits the development of a technology of government based on the principle that it already possessed 'too much' and 'excessive' practice of it - or at least that government adds itself as a supplement which always requires questioning of its necessity and utility.¹⁰

The emergence of this notion of civil society as a 'natural' domain posed limits to the legitimate exercise of government. Burchell suggests that the work of the 'Anglo-Scottish school of early liberalism' is a good example of this way of thinking about the exercise of government. According to this school of thought, he explains, 'the reality of the market or of commercial exchanges, and more broadly of civil society, as quasi-natural domains with their own intrinsic dynamic and forms of self-regulation' places limits on the 'State's capacity to know and act.'¹¹ In other words,

> [l]iberalism registers an incompatibility between the optimal functioning of economic processes and the maximization of governmental regulation. It pegs the rationale for its activities, and the principle of their necessary self-limitation, to the naturally self-regulating processes of what must be governed. The objective of a liberal art of government becomes that of securing the conditions for the optimal and, as far as possible, autonomous functioning of economic processes within society...¹²

It is the recognition of, and need to maintain, this 'quasi-natural domain' of civil society that introduces the liberal trope of individual liberty. That is, liberals do not prescribe limits to state action purely out of an ideological or philosophical commitment to the

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¹⁰ Foucault 'A course summary ii,' 355.
¹¹ Burchell 'Liberal government and techniques of the self.' In Foucault and Political Reason, 22.
¹² Burchell 'Peculiar interests,' 139.
individual’s right to be free from (excessive) governmental interference. As Burchell writes, ‘[l]iberty is... a technical requirement of governing the natural processes of social life.’\textsuperscript{13} Here it is useful to discuss the significance of the difference between, on the one hand, viewing liberalism as a rationality of government and, on the other hand, seeing it as a political philosophy or ideology committed to the freedom of the individual. ‘Liberalism,’ Hindess writes, ‘is commonly understood as a political doctrine or ideology concerned with the maximization of individual liberty and, in particular, with the defence of natural liberty against the encroachments of the state.’\textsuperscript{14} Government, in such understandings, is seen as the work of the state. Thus liberalism can be thought of as a ‘doctrine of limited government... in the interests of individual liberty.’\textsuperscript{15} Such a view of liberalism suggests that individual liberty is a given and thus a natural right upon which governments must not encroach. Nevertheless, the state’s role is seen by liberalism as one which must provide the conditions in which individual liberty can be maintained.

The perspective of political rationality, however, sheds a different light on the nature of individual liberty in liberal societies. Hindess again:

Considered as a rationality of government, liberalism maintains not only that the ability of central government to pursue certain kinds of objectives will be limited by the character of the economy (and by the character of such other aspects of social life which may also be understood as self-regulating systems), but also that a central government which respects those limits is likely to be more effective than one which does not. On this liberal view, limited government is a recipe for success while unlimited government is a recipe for failure.\textsuperscript{16}

So far there appears to be little difference between this and the conventional view of liberalism. But, as Hindess cautions, this understanding of liberal rationality as involving limited government ‘should not be taken to imply a commitment to the absence of governmental regulation.’\textsuperscript{17} Certainly, state action in the self-regulating spheres of the

\textsuperscript{13} Burchell ‘Peculiar interests,’ 139.
\textsuperscript{14} Hindess \textit{Discourses of Power}, 124.
\textsuperscript{15} Hindess \textit{Discourses of Power}, 124.
\textsuperscript{16} Hindess \textit{Discourses of Power}, 128.
\textsuperscript{17} Hindess \textit{Discourses of Power}, 129.
market, civil society, the family and so on must be kept to a minimum, given that these domains function optimally through self-regulation. Excessive interference by the state in these spheres is thus likely to produce harmful effects. Nevertheless, as explained above, securing the conditions under which these domains are to function is the task of the state. As Rose explains, ‘government acquired the obligation to foster the self-organizing capacities of markets, citizens and civil society, now seen as natural spheres, with their own characteristics, upon whose well-being good government would demand [sic ].’18 Here Rose introduces a much neglected aspect of liberal thought. As Hindess has documented, most accounts of liberalism emphasise its foundation in and its (for the most part) compatibility with the notion of individual autonomy as a given reality.19 What Rose’s comment suggests (and which both he and Hindess expand on in numerous writings) is that individual liberty is as much an accomplishment of liberal governmental practices as it is a prerequisite for them.20 Examples of such techniques are discussed in the later sections of this chapter.

A brief point must be made here regarding my discussion of liberal governmental techniques that aim at the development of individuals who are capable of exercising a certain type of self-government. Following Rose and Miller, a number of writers discuss these formative governmental techniques in terms of ‘expertise.’21 That is, they argue that liberal government depends upon the knowledge and techniques developed in certain areas of expertise - from medicine and psychiatry to education and social work. I discussed in Chapter Two, for example, the important role that the medical examination plays in the development of a knowledge of both individuals (their functions, capacities, weaknesses and so on) and of populations (the construction of ‘norms’). Such

18 Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise in advanced liberalism.’ *Economy and Society*, 22 (3), 1993, 290. The last word in this quotation should read ‘depend.’
knowledge enables the development of governmental techniques that govern through individual capacities and in relation to certain norms. In other words, techniques such as the examination produce a nexus between the government of others and self-government.

Another way of discussing the multitude of agencies that make liberal government possible is more general than the first. Hindess, for example, refers simply to the means of ‘indirect legislation’ (a term borrowed from Jeremy Bentham) by which individuals’ capacities for self-government can be used to govern their behaviour.\textsuperscript{22} He provides examples such as:

the design of buildings and public spaces so as to leave individuals open to the regulatory gaze of others; the constitution of markets (or quasi-markets in the case of public service organisations) with their characteristic patterns of positive and negative incentives; the design of taxation and welfare regimes so as to encourage some types of behaviour and inhibit others; macro-economic management by national governments and central banks, which operates by affecting some of the parameters within which independent actors make their decisions.\textsuperscript{23}

Hindess, Rose and Miller nevertheless agree that, for liberal government, a population of autonomous individuals is an ongoing achievement of particular techniques of direct and indirect regulation. The difference in emphasis in these accounts - Rose and Miller’s on ‘expertise,’ Hindess’s on ‘indirect legislation’ - is however more a matter of the different kinds of examples used than any difference of opinion as to the fundamental characteristics of liberal modes of governing.

What occurs with the advent of the liberal rationality of government, then, is the emergence of what Gordon has called a ‘dual-tier structure of public order and private order.’\textsuperscript{24} In Gordon’s account these tiers represent, respectively, state and non-state authorities. Governmental regulation, as distinct from state regulation, is not absent or limited. Liberalism inaugurates particular \textit{technical forms} of government, as will be seen

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Hindess ‘A society governed by contract.’ In \textit{The New Contractualism?}, Glyn Davis, Barbara Sullivan and Anna Yeatman (eds), 1997, 20.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Hindess ‘A society governed by contract,’ 20.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Gordon ‘Governmental rationality,’ 27.
\end{itemize}
below. In both the ‘public’ and ‘private’ tiers, furthermore, government depends upon, and must continually foster, the liberty or freedom of individuals active in the various spheres of the market, family, and so on. So, as Burchell writes:

liberalism set[s] out a schema of the relationship between government and the governed in which individuals are identified as, on the one hand, the object and target of governmental action and, on the other hand, as in some sense the necessary (voluntary) partner or accomplice of government.25

A further characteristic of liberalism as a rationality of government must be mentioned here. Foucault states that:

I attempted to analyze ‘liberalism’ neither as a theory or as an ideology, still less, to be sure, as a manner for ‘society’ to ‘represent itself.’ Rather, I approached it as a practice, that is, as a ‘way of doing’ which is directed toward goals and which regulates itself by means of a continuing reflection.26

Foucault suggests here that the nature of liberalism’s ‘goals’ - to secure the more or less autonomous functioning of the natural domains of civil society, market, and so on - involves continuing ‘critical reflection on governmental practice.’ That is, what characterises liberalism is not its pursuit of defined objectives, nor its coherence as a body of politico-philosophical thought, but that it constitutes ‘an instrument for the criticism of reality.’27 Burchell explains this point more clearly. Liberalism must govern an object-domain which is a kind of quasi-nature with its own specific self-regulating principles and dynamic.’ Therefore,

[l]iberal governmental reason does not so much set out what in any particular case government policy should be, as define the essential problem-space of government, and define it in such a way as to make a definite art of government both thinkable and practicable.28

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26 Foucault ‘A course summary ii,’ 354.
27 Foucault ‘A course summary ii,’ 356.
28 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 24-5.
Rose adds another dimension to the notion of liberalism as the continuing critique of rule. 'This leads,' he writes, 'to the recurrent dilemma of liberal government: the fear of not governing enough versus the fear of governing too much.'

According to Rose, Gordon and others, it is the fundamentally critical aspect of liberalism that explains the 'experimental' nature of many of early liberalism's programs. That is, Gordon writes,

liberalism has functioned historically not so much as a web of inveterate contradiction (reverie of a minimal state, as background music to a real state that ceaselessly grows), but as a prodigiously fertile problematic, a continuing vector of political invention.

This aspect of liberalism sheds light on the place of disciplinary techniques within forms of liberal government. In The History of Sexuality, Volume I, Foucault seems to suggest that, where indirect practices fail, in other words, when individuals do not or cannot acquire the capacity for self-government, 'disciplinary' techniques are invoked. In other words, while liberal government is characterised by its 'security' function (as distinct from, for example, the 'disciplinary' society he wrote about in Discipline and Punish), forms of disciplinary power co-exist with more recognisably 'liberal,' or indirect, techniques of regulation. This is perhaps what Foucault has in mind in his 'Governmentality' lecture when he writes that 'in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security.' Rose and Miller pick up on this point when they argue that: '[g]overnment is a congenitally failing operation... Things, persons or events always appear to escape those bodies of knowledge that inform governmental programmes, refusing to respond according to the programmatic logic that seeks to govern them.' Hence, they argue, new solutions, in the form of new techniques for governing, must be developed to cope with these unexpected outcomes. This is the sense in which Foucault sees liberalism as 'continuing reflection' on the work of government. And, as we see in the next section, liberal government is marked by its

29 Rose 'Government, authority and expertise,' 292.
30 Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 18.
31 Foucault 'Governmentality,' 102; see also The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, 144.
32 Rose and Miller 'Political power beyond the state,' 190.
inventiveness in terms of finding technical solutions to the problems of government it has itself created.

When Foucault’s work on ethics, subjectivity and resistance is read alongside his work on liberal government, the continuing failures of liberal governmental techniques, and the constant creation of new ones, is seen in part as the result of challenges to these techniques by those subject to them. The governmentality literature, on the other hand, has very little to say about how different techniques of the self can and do present obstacles to programs and techniques of government. Thus new techniques for liberal government are seen as manufactured, or at least deployed, by the authorities or experts whose task it is, according to this literature, to instil in individuals the capacities for appropriate self-government. In Part Two of this chapter I discuss what this means for the possibilities for resistance and change as presented in the governmentality literature.

The discussion above was partly concerned with setting out the way in which Foucault and the governmentality literature present the differences between early reason of state and the rationality of liberal forms of rule. Before going on to discuss in more detail rationalities and techniques of liberal government, it must be emphasised that there is also a continuity between the early and more contemporary rationalities of state rule. We saw that an important difference between reason of state and liberalism can be summarised along the following lines: whereas reason of state and its accompaniment, police science, operated according to the principle of ‘never enough government,’ liberalism is characterised by the principle of ‘always too much government.’33 The continuity between the two, however, concerns the totalising aspect of these methods of rule, both of which target the population of a territorial state. That is, when Foucault argues that modern political rationality has its roots in two movements - one individualising, one totalising - he presents the latter in terms of the population of a territorial state, and not in terms of some other totalisation, for example humanity as a whole.34

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33 Foucault ‘A course summary ii,’ 354-5.
34 See for example ‘Politics and reason.’ In Politics, Philosophy, Culture, 83; ‘A course summary’ [i and ii].
A certain conflation exists here between territorial state and population which is by no means restricted to Foucault’s writing. There is a long tradition within Western political writing (especially that which concerns itself with inter-state relations) of viewing a population of a given territory as, firstly, an identifiable ‘society’ or culture and, secondly, as needing and producing certain political structures for its government. This writing has roots in Hobbes’s account of the development of the state, in which the Leviathan or state is seen as a necessary and inevitable restraint on fundamentally aggressive and competitive human instincts.\textsuperscript{35} According to this tradition of political writing, since around the fifteenth century the most significant of these political structures has been the state. Hindess points out, however, that this development is often viewed as a naturally occurring one, whereas in fact there is no necessity for the division of the human population into societies and states. Hindess writes:

\begin{quote}
while there are many distinctive ways of life or cultures, their establishment at the level of the populations of modern states - or at least the belief that such things can be identified at that level - should itself be seen as an artefact of government. The division of humanity into distinct national populations, many of them with their own national territories and states, operates as a dispersed regime of governance of the larger human population.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

In other words, the international state system is an important means by which the world’s human population is governed. By viewing totalising power solely in terms of the power wielded within the territorial state, Foucault does not pursue a significant dimension of his own governmental project, which is to attack the roots of political rationality. Hindess’s comments suggest that the rationality according to which the world population is divided into distinct national populations, is a pervasive rationality that requires questioning.

\textsuperscript{35} See \textit{Leviathan}, Part II, Chapter XVII, ‘Of Commonwealth.’
We saw in the first two chapters how the development of governmental rationality is intricately bound up with the development of forms of knowledge concerning human beings, in their existence as individuals and as members of populations. The section above demonstrated that liberal governmental reason, too, presupposes a certain knowledge of its object. Due to the nature of this object, however, as Gordon points out, 'the immediate unity of knowledge and government which typifies raison d’État and police science now falls apart.'\(^37\) What he means is that it no longer makes sense to aim to govern by acquiring as much information as possible regarding ‘men and things.’ Instead, liberal governmental reason recognises that the regulation of conduct in various spheres ‘outside’ of politics is best left to the internal functioning of the laws and processes of these spheres, or at least to the wisdom of those directly engaged in these spheres. Nevertheless, alliances of various kinds do exist amongst the political strategies of the state and the agencies involved in the regulation of conduct in other spheres. These are discussed in the sections that follow.

Since its emergence at the end of the eighteenth century the technical forms of liberal government have gone through several changes. These can be understood in terms of the notion of security that functions as something like a guiding principle for liberal rationality’s search for appropriate technical forms of government.\(^38\) In this section I discuss the transformation of these technical forms for two reasons. The first is in order to show that, according to the governmental analyses discussed here, these transformations occur when solutions to specific problems of government raise new problems to which solutions must be found. In other words, the conditions and characteristics created by both the success and the failure of certain governmental practices lead to the development of new problems and new practices of government.

The second reason for discussing the transformations within liberal political reason is to

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37 Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 16.
38 The use of the notion of security as an organising principle for this section draws on Hindess 'A society governed by contract,' 20-6. Foucault also discusses transformation in liberal government in terms of security in 'Social security,' 160-1.
demonstrate the two defining traits of this rationality as presented by the governmentality literature. The first trait is that liberal governmental techniques aim to govern individuals and populations in an ‘economic’ fashion - that is, through their freedom, rather than governing through costly and inefficient apparatuses of repression and discipline. The second trait is that this form of government is practised ‘at a distance.’ Liberal government depends upon the government of conduct, which is carried out by a multitude of regulatory techniques not formally related to or controlled by the state. The discussion below concentrates on the role of ‘expert knowledge’ of various kinds in this regulation.

**The politics of order**

Early liberal government posed a series of problems concerning how best to govern individuals, markets, the family and populations. It found at least a partial solution to this question of governability in what Rose terms ‘[e]xpertise in the conduct of conduct - authority arising out of a claim to a true and positive knowledge of humans, to neutrality and to efficacy.’\(^3\)\(^9\) To the extent that the operation of liberal government relied upon this expertise in the conduct of conduct, it can be said to have inaugurated what Rose and Miller describe as ‘action at a distance.’ They mean by this the liberal governmental strategy of attempting to manage domains ‘outside “politics”’ without destroying their existence and autonomy. ‘This is made possible,’ Rose and Miller write, ‘through the activities and calculations of a proliferation of independent agents including philanthropists, doctors, hygienists, managers, planners, parents and social workers.’\(^4\)\(^0\)

The relations between these independent agents, or experts, and the state is complex, and should not be thought in merely functional terms. That is, the role of experts in the government of conduct in liberal societies does not mark a replacement of state intervention in the lives of individuals by the intervention of non-state agencies, as if the latter merely carry out the same role as that which would have been carried out by the state. Rather, the activities in which such experts are engaged are identified by

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\(^3\)\(^9\) Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 284.

\(^4\)\(^0\) Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 180.
‘independent authorities’ as needing attention because of their ‘consequences for national well-being.’\textsuperscript{41} For example, Rose writes that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

> a number of frictions and disturbances - epidemics and disease, theft and criminality, pauperism and indigence, insanity and imbecility, the breakdown of marital relations - were recoded as ‘social’ problems, events which had consequences for national well-being and thus called for authoritative attention. The relations that were brought into being between political authorities, legal measures and independent authorities differed according to whether one was seeking to regulate economic exchanges through contract, to mitigate the effects of factory labour upon health, to reduce the social dangers of epidemics through sanitary reform, to moralize the children of the labouring classes through industrial schools and so forth.\textsuperscript{42}

In each of these domains different aims are pursued, and different legal and other techniques are developed and deployed in order to accomplish those aims. What is common to them all, however, is the continuing task of installing in citizens the self-regulatory techniques that, in the words of Rose and Miller, ‘will align their personal choices with the ends of government. The freedom and subjectivity of citizens can in such ways become an ally, and not a threat, to the orderly government of a polity and a society.’\textsuperscript{43} Like all governmental rationalities, then, liberal government relies upon a detailed knowledge of that which it governs. What distinguishes liberalism from earlier forms of governmental rationality discussed in previous chapters, however, is that the former is characterised by ‘a dispersion of systems of authority’ involved in the government of populations.\textsuperscript{44} In other words, we see with liberalism the development of forms of governmental action that operate precisely through their distance from ‘the state.’ Further, the techniques employed by various governmental agencies attempt to instil in individuals the means with which they can and will govern themselves in ways that are consistent with broader governmental aims.

\textsuperscript{41} Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 291.
\textsuperscript{42} Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 291.
\textsuperscript{43} Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 188-9.
\textsuperscript{44} Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 297.
Direct intervention, in the form of disciplinary measures such as jailing, the withdrawal of social security benefits and the removal of children from families, in the lives of those who do not or cannot participate in this form of government, are a common and fundamental element of liberal government. But such coercion technologies are expensive, intrusive and not very effective on a long-term basis - all characteristics that are antithetical to the principles of liberal government: economy; action at a distance; and security. A preferred solution, according to the rationality of liberal government, is, firstly, to instil in those who pose a threat to the order the techniques of self-government which allow them to govern themselves in an economic and autonomous fashion. The second dimension of the solution is to devise governmental programs that have a monitoring and regulatory function, so that any disruption to the liberal order can, hopefully, be preempted.

Jacques Donzelot provides an example of the workings of this rationality and its associated technologies. In *The Policing of Families*, he reconstructs the process whereby the family becomes central to governmental strategies aimed at combatting the problems of pauperism and indigence in the late nineteenth century, problems that posed a threat to liberal order and security. The solution was found, Donzelot argues, in philanthropy. Philanthropy was, he writes, 'a deliberately de-politicizing strategy for establishing public services and facilities at a sensitive point midway between private initiative and the state.'

This strategy had two poles, Donzelot explains. The first, a 'moralizing' pole, aimed at instilling in families and their individual members certain moral standards, particularly that of family responsibility. The aim was the 'autonomization of the family,' such that direct interference in its affairs could be kept to a minimum. Philanthropists and others during the nineteenth century were concerned that their assistance avoided what they saw as the two dangers of, on the one hand, 'indigent insurrection,' the result of needs that were not met, and on the other hand 'statist temptations,' meaning the taking on by the state of responsibility for the welfare of the needy.

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of those unable to look after themselves and their families. Both were regarded as threats to the liberal political order.\textsuperscript{46}

The central technique of this moralising strategy was ‘the philanthropic visit,’ according to Donzelot. Philanthropists visiting the poor or needy would discriminate between “artificial indigence” and “genuine poverty” so as to determine the sorts of social assistance most appropriate to the eventual elimination of need in specific cases. The main strategy employed by these philanthropists was to teach the poor ‘the virtues of saving’ in the belief that family economic autonomy would ‘eliminate the risk of dependence as well as the parallel risk of insurrection.’\textsuperscript{47} As Donzelot explains,

\begin{quote}
[...] this was why, in every request for aid, one had to locate and bring to light the moral fault that more or less directly determined it: that portion of neglectfulness, laziness, and dissolution that every instance of misery contained. In this new policy, \textit{morality was systematically linked to the economic factor}, involving a continuous surveillance of the family, a full penetration into the details of family life.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

The second pole of the ‘de-politicizing strategy’ is what Donzelot calls the ‘medical-hygienist’ pole. Again, the family, or specifically, the ‘adult-child’ relationship was central to this strategy. However, the problem it addressed was located in a different sphere than that of morality and hence called for different techniques. The problem was the threat to the economic order caused by social unrest in the industrial cities, with many people claiming a relationship of cause and effect between ‘the development of industry and that of pauperism, revolts, and revolutions.’ The ‘hygienist philanthropists,’ in contrast, argued that the problem was rather one of education. Industrial abuses, they argued, could be stopped ‘by decreeing norms that would protect children, health, and education.’\textsuperscript{49} Given that many of the social problems these philanthropists addressed were associated with industrial life, they argued that such education was best carried out in the workplaces. The hygienists won the debate, and towards the end of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{46} Donzelot \textit{The Policing of Families}, 64.
\textsuperscript{47} Donzelot \textit{The Policing of Families}, 64-8.
\textsuperscript{48} Donzelot \textit{The Policing of Families}, 69 (emphasis in the original).
\textsuperscript{49} Donzelot \textit{The Policing of Families}, 72.
\end{flushright}
nineteenth century a series of legislation was passed ‘decreeing standards for protecting children’ concerning, for example, child labour, unsanitary housing, apprenticeship contracts, the use of children by merchants and peddlers, compulsory education, and so on.

What we see occurring at the end of the nineteenth century, then, in Donzelot’s account, is the emergence of a complex political strategy centred on the family, in which the ‘state norm’ and ‘philanthropic moralization’ work together to re-establish social and economic order. This demonstrates the importance of regulatory techniques in early liberal government. On the one hand, the self-regulatory technique of saving is taught to and encouraged in individuals by private philanthropists. On the other hand, we see occurring the regulation of individuals by others in the medical and educative practices directed by the state through legislation. Both forms of regulation rely upon expert knowledge of some sort - medical, economic, sanitary, judicial, educational and so on. And both forms seek to instil in individuals (and families) modes of behaviour (prudent, hygienic, self-reliant, moral) that are in harmony with what Donzelot describes as the state’s ‘function of guarantor of the sound working of liberal societies’. Public and private hygiene, education and, more broadly, philanthropy can thus be understood as examples of ‘mechanisms of security’: means of establishing and maintaining the conditions under which the intrinsic processes of the economy, population and so forth can continue to function optimally.

Social government

Around the beginning of the twentieth century a shift in the techniques of liberal government occurred. Government was not seen to be fulfilling its objective - that of securing the conditions under which civil society, the market, the family, and so on can continue to function optimally. The result of this failure was that the politics of security was under threat by what Gordon describes as ‘the indiscipline, the asocial autonomy, of

50 Donzelot The Policing of Families, 78.
51 Donzelot The Policing of Families, 89.
the pauperized urban masses. Donzelot argues that the notion of ‘solidarity,’ which became very influential at the turn of the century, provided the rationalisation for redefining the forms of state action. Developed by Emile Durkheim, Donzelot explains, the concept of solidarity entails a view of social organisation that is ‘based on the similarity of its’ members situations.’ This notion provided a rationalisation for the state to intervene directly in areas previously regarded by liberals as largely off-limits. He writes:

> [t]he concept of organic solidarity justified this intervention by allowing the principle of the interdependence of the individuals composing society to override the state of dependence in which they were placed inside the framework of so-called natural associations. Thus it is in the name of social solidarity that the state is entitled to intervene in associations like the family or the enterprise.

Here Donzelot identifies a change in the liberal characterisation of ‘society.’ As Gordon points out, the twentieth century form of liberal government marked ‘the beginning of the end of a certain idea of civil society.’ He means that it became increasingly difficult to think of civil society as a ‘quasi-natural’ order to which the state is external and, to a large extent, incursive. But, he cautions, ‘[t]his is not because society is swallowed up by some new avatar of the police state.’ Instead, government is recognised by liberal thinkers as having the complexity once attributed only to the market or civil society. What occurs is a ‘transmutation’ of liberal government, Gordon explains, ‘not a liquidation or betrayal’ because:

> it proceeds not by the institution of a new reason of state but by the invention, out of a range of extraneous sources, of a set of new roles for the state. The state of the mid-nineteenth-century crisis, variously perceived as at once minimal and monstrous, gives way to a state which is at once activist and disengaged, interventionist and neutral.

Early twentieth century liberal government, usually referred to as ‘the welfare state,’ is

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52 Gordon ‘Governmental rationality,’ 31.
53 Donzelot ‘The mobilization of society.’ In The Foucault Effect, 172.
54 Gordon ‘Governmental rationality,’ 33-4.
able to achieve this simultaneous activism and disengagement largely through forging alliances between, on the one hand, political strategies and the activities of various authorities or experts, and on the other hand between authorities and individuals. The ‘authority of expertise’ and ‘the formal political apparatus of rule’ become ‘inextricably linked,’ argues Rose, in the attempt ‘to tame and govern the undesirable consequences of industrial life, wage labour and urban existence.’

One of the techniques used to ‘tame and govern’ these dangerous social and economic consequences is social insurance. Like the philanthropic strategies discussed earlier, insurance is a technique designed to re-establish social solidarity while avoiding the twin evils of liberal rationality: leaving the individual to fend for herself, and thus risk the dire social consequences if she is unable to do so adequately; or establish a state apparatus upon which endless claims for social and economic assistance can be made. The former poses a serious threat to the liberal politics of security, while the latter is in fundamental conflict with the principle of economic government. Insurance establishes a partnership between the individual and the state. As Donzelot explains,

> [i]t is not by proclaiming the injustice of his condition that the worker benefits from social right, but as a member of society insofar as society guarantees the solidarity of everyone with those who find themselves in a particular situation of need as a result of the hazards of its [society’s] development.

He goes on to explain that the activities of the state entailed by state-sponsored insurance aims at ‘the development of forms of solidarity in society which take account of the greater risks faced by certain of its members, risks to which they were also in a position to expose society as a whole.’ As a member of society, then, each individual has certain rights that do not exist ‘as absolutes but rather as a function of specific recognized facts

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55 Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 180.
58 Donzelot ‘The promotion of the social,’ 404.
and empirical contingencies.' It can be seen, then, that the insurance technique depends upon a very particular kind of knowledge: statistics.

Ian Hacking makes an interesting contribution to the literature on this aspect of liberal government. In an essay called ‘How should we do the history of statistics?’ he argues that statistics is ‘part of the technology of power in a modern state.’ As a ‘scientific’ means of discovering the laws of chance, he explains, statistics enables a new sort of government of persons. This government, ironically, works on and through the freedom from the laws of determinism that statistics itself had discovered. In Hacking’s words,

[t]he erosion of determinism and the taming of chance by statistics does not introduce a new liberty. The argument that indeterminism creates a place for free will is a hollow mockery. The bureaucracy of statistics imposes not just by creating administrative rulings but by determining classifications within which people must think of themselves and of the actions that are open to them. The hallmark of indeterminism is that cliché, information and control. The less the determinism, the more the possibilities for constraint.

Hacking’s view of the uses of statistics is somewhat more sinister than it need be. Indeed, I would argue that a contradiction exists in his argument on this point. On the one hand he claims that the indeterminism introduced by statistics ‘does not introduce a new liberty,’ while on the other hand he notes that statistics enables new classifications of types of person and the actions open to them. The latter observation suggests to me that statistics does create certain liberties, precisely by opening up new ways of being. Hacking’s perspective focuses on what Foucault calls techniques for the government of others, which Hacking attributes to an ‘obsession’ with nineteenth century forms of deviance and control - that is, with largely disciplinary and objectifying practices. I suggest, however, that this approach also reveals a lack of interest in, or importance attributed to, the practices Foucault calls techniques of the self.

59 Donzelot ‘The mobilisation of society,’ 173.
60 Ian Hacking ‘How should we do the history of statistics?’ In The Foucault Effect, 181.
61 Hacking ‘The history of statistics,’ 194.
As we have seen, these techniques are central to Foucault’s understanding of government, as they allow him to take into account the fact that subjects engage actively and with specific aims in their own self-formation. The strong implication in his work is that this self-formation can take the form of resisting, or using for different purposes, the labels that Hacking sees only in a coercive or negative light. George Chauncey provides a good example of how such labeling can open space for forms of resistance. He discusses the nineteenth century classification of the homosexual, a classification that drew on biology and genetics. One outcome of the adoption of this perspective by medical and other authorities was that homosexuals were regarded as perverts who could not help themselves; thus they should and must be locked away to prevent them from ‘harming’ others. Sympathisers to those so labeled and, indeed, many homosexuals themselves, embraced the biological or genetic definition of their being and used this definition to demand their acceptance, or at least that their ‘naturalness’ be recognised, and in some cases also their legal recognition. If homosexuality was congenital, one such argument ran, there was a strong case to have it removed from the purview of the law.62 Hacking recognises that the ‘top-down’ process of self-formation is only one ‘vector’; the other is ‘the autonomous behaviour of the person so labeled.’ These vectors have different relative importance depending on the category under analysis. For reasons I need not enter into here, Hacking suggests, for example, that the second vector is ‘negligible’ for multiple personality while it is ‘very powerful’ for the homosexual.63

Aside from a brief mention of ‘bottom-up’ processes of self-formation, however, he nowhere gives an account of how the ‘bottom-up’ process of ‘making up’ might work, for example for homosexuals.

Nevertheless, together with Donzelot’s discussion of insurance, Hacking’s essay illustrates the reliance of governmental practices on specific types of knowledge focused on human beings, in their individual existence and as members of a population. Their


63 Hacking ‘Making up people.’ In Reconstructing Individualism, Thomas Heller et al. (eds), 1986, 228.
accounts also provide an example of what Rose calls the ‘alliances’ formed, on the one hand, between political strategies and the activity of certain authorities or experts and, on the other hand, between these authorities and individuals. The work of Hacking and Donzelot points to the existence of an alliance between political strategies and the bureaucratic practise of statistics, in the form of the technology of insurance. This technology involves the direct intervention of the state in contracts between employer and employee, with the dual aims of, first, ameliorating hardship and need, and second, reducing the risks to security that may result if the first aim is not achieved.\(^6\) The other side of this technology concerns the relationship between political and expert authorities and individuals. Rose and Miller argue that:

\[\text{[i]insurance constituted individuals as citizens bound into a system of solidarity and mutual interdependency... } \text{the vocabulary of insurance and the technique of contribution were chosen in the belief that this would constitute the insured citizen in a definite moral form: payment would qualify an individual to receive benefits, would draw the distinction between earned and unearned benefits, and teach the lessons of contractual obligation, thrift and responsibility.}\]

What these accounts show is the development with liberal government of a form of state action that can still be characterised as ‘action at a distance,’ while at the same time being actively engaged in the government of members of the population through a system of alliances with various professional or expert authorities. Further, this form of liberal government aims at integrating the self-conduct of the members of the population with the practices through which they are governed. That is, with the help of various professionals and experts, individuals are directed to acquire the appropriate social norms and modes of conduct so that they can be governed through the very ways in which they exercise their freedom - in this case, through their activities as responsible social subjects possessing rights and duties.

\(^6\) Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 196.
\(^6\) Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 196.
Once again following Foucault’s analyses, the governmentality literature documents another mutation within liberal government in the post-war period. It suggests that an ‘advanced liberal,’ or ‘neo-liberal’ form of government is discernible. Foucault argues that this new form of liberal thinking is largely a response to the interventionism, over-administration, bureaucratisation and resulting economic distortions that characterise what is known as ‘the welfare state.’

He discusses two schools of thought that have attempted to formulate responses to this situation: the German *Ordoliberalen* and the American Chicago School. Both of these schools of thought break from earlier liberal conceptualisations of the market in seeing it as a *constructed*, rather than a quasi-natural, domain. As Burchell explains, for these neo-liberals ‘the market exists, and can only exist, under certain political, legal and institutional conditions that must be actively constructed by government.’ For the *Ordoliberalen*, a new kind of interventionism is required to address what Gordon describes as ‘not the anti-social effects of the economy, but the anti-competitive effects of society.’ In other words, what is required is the spread of ‘the enterprise-form throughout the social fabric as its generalized principle of functioning... Economics thus becomes an “approach” capable in principle of addressing the totality of human behaviour.’ Similarly, for the Chicago School, in Burchell’s words, ‘new quasi-entrepreneurial and market models of action or practical systems must be invented for the conduct of individuals, groups and institutions within those areas of life hitherto seen as being either outside of or even antagonistic to the economic.’ This is not just a reworking of eighteenth- and nineteenth century free market ideas, however. For the neo-liberals, both the individual economic agent and the market are wholly constructed realities. Their characteristics and capacities thus do not stem from some essential

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67 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 23.
68 Gordon ‘Governmental rationality,’ 42-3.
69 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 27.
70 Rose ‘Towards a critical sociology,’ 24.
nature, but have to be nurtured, in some sense, or manipulated. As Gordon notes, 'Economic government here joins hands with behaviourism.'

Another way of understanding the shift from 'welfarism' to 'neo-liberalism' is in terms of security. Hindess argues that neo-liberal scepticism about the welfare state reflects:

a shift in the balance of perceptions concerning the main danger now facing individual autonomy and family integrity... The main danger, it now seems to neo-liberalism, is the governmental promotion of dependency, a condition which is to be combated by governmental regimes designed to encourage dependent individuals and households to take responsibility for their own affairs.

Burchell points out that the specific techniques used to create forms of self-responsibility are varied and make possible different forms of action for government and the governed in different spheres. However, he notes, as do other commentators, that there seems to be 'a general consistency in these invented forms and in the style of government that has constructed them.'

Rose and Miller sum up the consistency in this way:

active entrepreneurship is to replace the passivity and dependency of responsible solidarity as individuals are encouraged to strive to optimise their own quality of life and that of their families... The language of the entrepreneurial individual, endowed with freedom and autonomy, has come to predominate over almost any other in evaluations of the ethical claims of political power and programmes of government.

The language of autonomisation, however, does not signal an abandonment by neo-liberal government of the characteristic liberal technique of action at a distance. As Rose argues, advanced liberal rule:

does not seek to govern through 'society,' but through the regulated choices of individual citizens. And it seeks to detach the substantive authority of expertise from the apparatuses of

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71 Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 43.
72 Hindess 'A society governed by contract,' 24.
73 Burchell 'Liberal government,' 29. See also Gordon 'Governmental rationality,' 44; Rose and Miller 'Political power beyond the state,' 198-201; Foucault 'A course summary ii,' 358-9; Hindess 'A society governed by contract,' 22-5.
74 Rose and Miller 'Political power beyond the state,' 198.
political rule, relocating experts within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand.\textsuperscript{75}

Dean suggests that recent OECD recommendations regarding employment services illustrate fundamental aspects of neo-liberal attempts to encourage the formation of responsible and entrepreneurial individuals from a distance. He explains that the key to this process is ‘the administrative practice known as the “activity test.”’\textsuperscript{76} In the Australian context, he goes on, this involves claimants demonstrating that, not only are they actively seeking work, but that they are undertaking the appropriate ‘training and job-preparation activities.’ These might involve, for example, English language courses, on-the-job training, short courses in particular skills, part-time work, motivation and presentation courses and so on.\textsuperscript{77}

Dean quotes a Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) report which states that “‘if the Government is providing income support, labour market programs and other services, it is only fair that clients take up any reasonable offer of assistance and do whatever they can to improve their employment prospects.’”\textsuperscript{78} The individual is no longer regarded as a citizen with the right to certain benefits or protection from the state. Instead, the individual is regarded as a ‘client’ in a relationship of ‘mutual obligation’ with the government.\textsuperscript{79} Rose and Miller concur with this assessment: ‘for neo-liberalism the political subject is less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is active. This citizenship is to be manifested not in the receipt of public largesse, but in the energetic pursuit of personal fulfilment...’\textsuperscript{80}

According to Rose and Miller, Dean and other governmentality writers, the aim of the various technologies of welfare is to promote a certain type of individual, one who will

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{75} Rose ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 285. \\
\textsuperscript{76} Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 573. \\
\textsuperscript{77} Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 574. \\
\textsuperscript{78} DEET Annual Report 1991-2, quoted in Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 574. \\
\textsuperscript{79} Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 574. \\
\textsuperscript{80} Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 201. \\
\end{flushleft}
take responsibility for her own future by taking up opportunities provided by the labour
market, education, social networks, and so on. These technologies rely upon a swathe
of agencies and experts all claiming a certain knowledge - educational, psychological,
statistical, economic, and so on - of the individuals in their care. Dean writes:

[Thus businesses, employers, consultants, academics, community associations, technical
colleges... and so on are employed in a variety of ways to fulfil the objectives of labour-market
and job-retraining programmes, to define and bring into play domains of expertise, to be
involved in the training of civil servants, to undertake the review and evaluation of existing
programmes, etc. The government of the unemployed is undertaken by the complex linking of
agencies and authorities within and without the boundaries of the state, the use of legal, financial
and regulatory powers and resources, and the employment of myriad means of rule...]

The example of ‘employment services’ illustrates that, from the governmentality
perspective, neo-liberal government is not simply about ‘rolling back the welfare state,’
privatisation, contracting-out and so forth. It is, in Burchell’s words, ‘a question of
constructing the legal, institutional and cultural conditions that will enable an artificial
competitive game of entrepreneurial conduct to be played to best effect.’ For, as the
analyses presented in this section of the chapter aim to show, while liberal rationalities of
government attempt to govern through the freedom and autonomy of individuals, this
requires that it also ensures that the individuals have the requisite capacities for exercising
that freedom. In Dean’s example the case manager is one of the ‘experts’ whose task it is
to provide the unemployed individual with the informational, psychological and other
resources necessary for her ‘to become the active subject of his or her own destiny at
least as far as the labour-market is concerned.’

At least one commentator has pointed out, furthermore, that governmental techniques that
promote certain forms of self-government in one sphere, for example in the labour

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81 Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 576.
82 Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 571.
83 Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 573-4; note the ‘active’ connotation of this term, as opposed
to the ‘passive’ terms of ‘welfare’ and ‘unemployment benefits.’
84 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 27.
85 Dean ‘Governing the unemployed self,’ 576.
market, can be connected to attempts to foster similar types of behaviour in other spheres. This is the sense in which a certain consistency seems evident in terms of the promotion of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ discussed earlier in this part of the chapter. Hindess explains that liberal thinkers favour market interaction precisely because it

serves to reward certain types of behaviour and to penalise others and also, in the longer term, to promote corresponding habits of self-government. In this latter respect, interaction functions not only as a decentralised regulator of behaviour in market settings but also as a means of promoting the more general virtues of personal autonomy.86

Hindess’s observation brings us to the final point to be made regarding the techniques of neo-liberal government. The techniques of neo-liberalism build upon, and are only possible because of, the success of previous, particularly welfare, technologies. Hindess gives the example of ‘the great nineteenth- and twentieth-century social policy regimes,’ some of which have been discussed in this chapter. He points out that, in the conditions in which they were put in place, particularly regarding the self-governing capacities of individuals, they ‘could plausibly be represented as promoting autonomy.’ He goes on:

> [a]gainst a very different contemporary background in which, at least in the more advanced Western societies, the existence of a suitably calculable population is easily taken for granted, these same programmes can be seen as undermining autonomy. Neo-liberalism is a liberal response to the achievements of the liberal mode of government.87

As a way of introducing my critical discussion of the governmentality literature in the next part of the chapter, I now want to make some concluding remarks about the preceding account of liberal government.

The governmentality literature aims to highlight two aspects of the ‘transmutations’ and consistencies within liberal governmental reason since its inception. First, the changing technical forms of liberal government can be understood as attempts to find the

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86 Hindess ‘A society governed by contract,’ 25.
87 Hindess ‘Liberalism, socialism and democracy,’ 311; see also Rose ‘Towards a critical sociology,’ 24 and ‘Government, authority and expertise,’ 296.
appropriate technical mechanisms that will provide the security in which economic and social processes can function with minimal direct involvement by the state. Liberal rationality can thus be understood as fundamentally inventive because it gives rise to a diffuse range of techniques of government that nevertheless fulfil the liberal precept of economic government, in the dual sense noted above of government in the interests of the economy, or wealth, and frugal government.

Liberalism's very inventiveness, however, can result in new problems of government that require further technical solutions - hence the changing forms of liberal government over the last one hundred and fifty years. As Foucault puts it, 'one can discover liberalism, under different but simultaneous forms, both as a schema for the regulation of governmental practice and as a theme for sometimes radical opposition to such practice.'\textsuperscript{88} This leads to a seemingly paradoxical feature of liberal politics. That is, liberal governmental reason invites a continuing suspicion of the state's intervention in individuals' lives, at the same time that it generates an expectation, or demand, that the state take responsibility for securing the environment in which the conditions and quality of the lives of individuals and the nation will improve. Burchell provides an idea of the spheres in which this occurs.

\begin{quote}
[I]t is in the name of forms of existence which have been shaped by political technologies of government that we, as individuals and groups, make claims on or against the state. It is in the name of our governed existence as individual living beings, in the name of our health, of the development of our capabilities, of our membership of particular communities, of our ethnicity, of our gender, of our forms of insertion into social and economic life, of our age, of our environment, of particular risks we may face and so on, that we both revile and invoke the power of the state.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

This leads on to the second point that must be made concerning forms of liberal governmental reason: its two defining traits. Burchell writes that individual and group 'forms of existence' have been shaped by political technologies of government, and it is

\textsuperscript{88} Foucault 'A course summary ii,' 356.  
\textsuperscript{89} Burchell 'Peculiar interests,' 145.
in the name of these forms of existence that demands are made on or against the state. The implication of this statement is that forms of self-conduct are shaped such that they can be integrated into the practices through which individuals and populations are then governed. Hence one very real sense in which liberal government can be called ‘economic’ is that it attempts to economise on the activity and necessity of direct government by enabling individuals to govern themselves, in other words, through their freedom. In Dean’s words:

The distinctive features of any liberal mode of government is that it seeks to prevent the collapse of types of rule into mere domination by invoking the capacities and powers of the self-governing individual, while at the same time undertaking to foster, shape, and use those same capacities and powers.\(^{90}\)

The second trait of liberal government, which follows on from the first, is that it attempts to shape and regulate the self-conduct of individuals from a distance. Various techniques are employed in the attempt to accomplish this, some involving a greater or lesser degree of state direction than others, as indicated in the above accounts of different forms of liberal government. All such techniques, however, aim to produce in individuals and groups forms of existence that allow them to be governed through their freedom. Burchell again:

Liberalism, particularly its modern versions, constructs a relationship between government and the governed that increasingly depends upon ways in which individuals are required to assume the status of being the subjects of their lives, upon the ways in which they fashion themselves as certain kinds of subjects, upon the ways in which they practise their freedom. Government increasingly impinges upon individuals in their very individuality, in their practical relationships to themselves in the conduct of their lives; it concerns them at the very heart of themselves by making its rationality the condition of their active freedom.\(^{91}\)

Here Burchell argues that ‘[g]overnment increasingly impinges upon individuals in their very individuality...’ He seems to suggest that techniques of government that mobilise

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90 Dean "'A social structure,'" 163.
91 Burchell 'Liberal government,' 29-30 (emphasis in the original).
individuality as an object of government are more sinister or threatening to subjects than are those more 'obvious' techniques of government that rely on, for example, physical capacities and bodily functions. But the types of governmental activity that characterise pastoral power, including the techniques of police, however, seem to involve no less an impingement on individuals' lives than do the techniques of liberal government. That is unless one regards 'individuality,' as Burchell does, as an object of governmental regulation that is more constricting of subjectivities than are, for example, techniques that target bodily functions and physical capacities. What such a claim misses is that the very category of 'individuality' is itself an effect of governmental techniques, as I argued in the previous chapter. We see the same problem in Rose's work. He argues that 'we have been bound into relationship with new authorities, which are more profoundly subjectifying because they appear to emanate from our individual desires...''92 But if the desiring individual is just as much an effect of governmental techniques as, for example, the individual who is constituted as the 'docile subject' of a sovereign, it is not a question of 'more' or 'less' subjectification, but of different forms and targets of subjectification.

In making these criticisms I do not want to suggest that the work of Rose, Burchell and other governmentality writers should be disregarded, however. Their evaluations of the degree to which individuals are subjected to government in contemporary liberal societies can be dissociated from their incisive analyses of the techniques themselves. It is through these analyses of contemporary techniques of political subjectification that these writers believe it is possible to begin to understand the processes that enable, and restrict, current ways of being. Foucault's work on government suggests that these ways of being can be considered in terms of their relation to three axes or dimensions of power: truth; ethics; and politics. In the first section of the next part of the chapter I show that there is a tendency within the governmentality literature to look at ways of being, and techniques of governing these ways of being, primarily in terms of politics, the field of power that Foucault associates with techniques for the government of others. This, I argue, limits the ways in which governmentality writers can conceive of the possibilities

92 Rose 'Towards a critical sociology,' 30 (emphasis added).
of resistance to liberal techniques of power. For, as I demonstrate by returning to Foucault’s notion of ethics, an active and programmatic conception of resistance emerges from looking at the ways in which subjects govern their own behaviour. The second section introduces Burchell’s and Dean’s work which, I suggest, goes some way toward using Foucault’s notion of ethics to investigate the possibilities of different forms of resistance to liberal government.
PART II
Where There Is Power, There Is Resistance

In this part of the chapter I am concerned to highlight the difference between the way in which resistance is conceptualised in Foucault’s work, on the one hand, and the ways in which it is discussed in the governmentality literature, on the other hand. As we have seen, Foucault’s work on government is weighted towards the dimension he calls ethics. I argued that this emphasis stems from an explicit concern to contribute to the process of creating possibilities for new or different ways of being; in other words, to open up space for the exercise of resistance and freedom. The governmentality literature tends to focus on the dimensions that Foucault calls ‘truth’ and ‘politics,’ and especially the latter. We see in the first section below that this emphasis in the governmentality literature produces an account of resistance that is reactive; individuals are conscripted into governmental programs that ascribe to them ways of being that conflict with the ways of being ascribed to them in other governmental programs. This account of resistance contrasts with the notion of programmatic resistance that emerges from Foucault’s analyses. In the second section of the chapter I highlight the work of two writers who focus on ethics in order to introduce the notion of programmatic resistance into analyses of liberal government.

A 1996 publication entitled *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, and edited by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose, begins with an introduction by the editors that exemplifies the lack of attention given to ethics in much of the governmentality literature. The book contains a collection of articles that are inspired by Foucault’s work on government and, more specifically, on liberal forms of government. While *Foucault and Political Reason* does not represent the definitive position of all writers in the governmentality vein, the Introduction raises certain problems associated with many of the attempts to take up Foucault’s notions of government and governmental rationality. Thus I begin this
section with a discussion of the book’s introduction, written by the editors, which sets out what is described as the ‘common approaches’ of the contributors.

The essays in the volume, the editors point out, are concerned with elaborating and using Foucault’s notion of political reason. The editors write: ‘The essays in this book propose some new ways of anatomizing political reason, ways that may operate upon and through history, but which do so in order to gain a purchase upon our present and its politics.’ What these researches point towards, the editors continue, is the development of a new kind of politics ‘which emphasizes the crucial political value of the mobilization and shaping of individual capacities and conduct.’ They, like Foucault, are concerned with shedding new light on the nature of the present through a particular kind of historical research that is very much informed by the present.

The editors point out that the contributors to the book are interested in exploring ‘the development of a new kind of politics.’ Ethics is rarely mentioned as an important site of investigation, let alone as a fruitful avenue along which to explore questions of resistance. As I have argued, it is his notion of ethics that allows Foucault to explore the ways in which individuals deliberately resist governmental programs that attempt to mobilise and shape them. The editors do present an argument that allows them to introduce some notion of resistance; they stress that the relations between various kinds of expert knowledge and programs of government do not imply ‘functionality’ or ‘co-optation.’ Here the editors could point to the many ways in which individuals and groups constantly hinder ‘rational’ programs of government and the implementation of specific governmental techniques. This would lead to an investigation of how this occurs, which might in turn lead to a kind of ‘bottom-up’ analysis of governmental techniques and programs, that is, one that begins with lines of fracture or dissent, or with the ways in which individuals force changes in the implementation of various techniques.

93 Barry, Osborne and Rose ‘Introduction.’ In Foucault and Political Reason, 3.
94 Barry, Osborne and Rose ‘Introduction,’ 1.
95 Where ethics is mentioned, only a paragraph of the Introduction is given to its importance in Foucault’s thought (on p.4), let alone its centrality to the notion of government as a whole.
and programs. Instead, the editors remain on what might be called the ‘macro’ terrain of political rationalities and political institutions:

the relations established, although ‘functionalizable,’ are contingent... the discipline of architecture acquired particular political significance in relation to the political rationality of police as it did for Jeremy Bentham in proposing a practice of reformatory incarceration.\(^6\)

And a little further on:

Likewise, if particular technologies such as auditing and accountancy have a particular utility to neo-liberalism, this does not mean that there is an intrinsic relation between the techniques and the politics, such that they must be discarded by those who seek an alternative art of government.\(^7\)

The point being made by the editors in these two passages is that the relations that exist between expert knowledge and particular programs of government are never intrinsic; there is no necessary relation between, say, the discipline of architecture and the institution of the prison. Rather, knowledges and techniques can be and are transferred and adapted across different governmental programs that have more or less disciplinary aims (for example, the architectural figure of the Panopticon is used, as we have seen, in prisons, schools, the military, hospitals and so on). I do not wish to argue that the point the editors make in these passages is erroneous; in fact one of the strengths of governmental analyses is precisely that they demonstrate the transferability of techniques and programs across governmental regimes, for example from punishment, to schooling, to the military and so on. My point is that the relations between expert knowledge and political programs are contingent, for all the reasons the editors describe, but also because resistance by individuals and groups make them so. And, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Foucault’s analyses suggest that this resistance often takes the form of the creation of new techniques of the self on what might be called the ‘micro’ terrain - new ways of being, that provoke a response on the part of those who would govern

\(^{96}\) Barry, Osborne and Rose ‘Introduction,’ 15.

\(^{97}\) Barry, Osborne and Rose ‘Introduction,’ 15.
them. In other words, in Foucault’s analyses, politics, and transformations at the level of politics or technologies for the government of others, follow from ethics, or changes in the ways in which individuals govern themselves.

In the governmentality literature, by contrast, the lack of attention to the dimension of ethics, in favour of a focus on politics, implies a passive subject whose acts of resistance can only be reactive. For we saw that the governmentality literature presents the transmutations within liberal government over the last one hundred and fifty years in terms of responses to unexpected effects within the governed population (the atomised and potentially insurrectional pauper of the nineteenth century; the dependent welfare recipient of the mid-twentieth century) that threatened liberal government itself. ‘Whilst we live in a world of programmes, that world is not itself programmed,’ write Rose and Miller. On the whole, however, the literature, and Rose’s work in particular, does not give an account of where these failures originate. In one passage in which they address the failures of liberal governmental techniques, Rose and Miller simply write that ‘[t]hings, persons or events always appear to escape’ the knowledges that guide governmental programs, ‘refusing to respond’ in the ways in which governmental logic would have them.

In his article entitled ‘Indigenous governance,’ Pat O’Malley also identifies the tendency in the governmentality literature to only look at one dimension of government. He argues that the governmentality literature pays more attention to ‘official discourses’ of liberal government than it does to ‘subterranean’ practices that destabilize rule. O’Malley points out, as I will do in more detail shortly, that this attention to ‘official discourses’ gives the impression that the destabilisation of governmental programs is the result of failures in the implementation of these programs; ‘failure is not an intrinsic property of an event so much as it is a property of a programme.’

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98 Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 191.
99 Rose and Miller ‘Political power beyond the state,’ 190.
101 O’Malley ‘Indigenous governance,’ 311.
O’Malley goes on to argue that resistance needs to be seen in a ‘constitutive’ relation to rule. To illustrate this argument he examines aspects of Australian policies of self-determination for Aboriginal peoples, attempting to demonstrate the complex ways in which ‘indigenous’ forms of government meet with, intersect, contradict and disrupt liberal attempts at governing Aboriginal populations. My purpose in the first of the two sections that follow is similar to O’Malley’s, in that I explore the moves by which a notion of programmatic resistance is elided in key governmentality texts. The sections below, however, diverge from O’Malley’s text, because the latter does not make reference to Foucault’s notion of ethics. I argue explicitly that this notion is central to an understanding of ‘bottom-up’ practices of resistance. I turn first to the work of Rose.

**Obliged To Resist**

In Part I of this chapter we saw that Rose’s analyses are extremely fruitful in terms of identifying rationalities and techniques in contemporary liberal societies that seek, in his words, ‘to shape our ways of understanding and enacting our existence as human beings in the name of certain objectives - manliness, femininity, honour, modesty, propriety, civility, discipline, efficiency, harmony, fulfillment, virtue, pleasure...’102 Yet the passage just quoted reveals a tendency in his approach to present human beings as malleable entities with little capacity for resistance. Or rather, resistance is less a capacity that individuals may exercise than it is the inevitable product of conflicts between different ways of being across different governmental regimes.

Rose looks at both objectifying practices (which target the human body primarily as one with physical capacities) and subjectifying practices (which seek to establish and work through a kind of psychological interiority), but the latter are discussed in terms of subjects who have been ‘enjoined’ to do so by some authority or expert or other. For example, he writes that analysing power relations from the perspective of government directs attention to ‘the ways in which strategies for the conduct of conduct so frequently

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operate through *trying to shape* what Foucault also termed “technologies of the self.”’

No mention is made here of directing attention to the ways in which technologies of the self are and can be used creatively and intentionally to disrupt strategies for the conduct of conduct.

In another chapter, published earlier, and entitled ‘Authority and the genealogy of subjectivity,’ Rose presents a similar view of ethics. It is one that differs significantly from Foucault’s. Whereas Foucault is concerned with the exploration of particular techniques of the self that might constitute resistance, Rose is more concerned with the ways in which techniques of the self are used by ‘authorities’ for various governmental objectives. Rose writes that: ‘Techniques of the intellect, of display and of the body are frequently *enjoined, utilised, deployed in the service of* programmes for the moral formation and re-formation of human beings...’

There is no suggestion here that techniques of the intellect, of display, and so on, can be used in ways which disrupt governmental programs. I am not arguing that this possibility is ruled out in Rose’s account. I do suggest, however, that he presents ethics and, as we see also resistance, as the result of certain governmental techniques and programs rather than as practices that can be analysed in their own right, and as practices in which subjects can engage with the intention of reversing or altering certain governmental techniques and programs. In other words, techniques of the self are, for Rose, yet another means of governing others; they are not accorded their own rationality, if you like, as they are in Foucault’s work. Thus he cannot, as Foucault does, analyse ethics as an actual or potential site at which individuals practise resistance.

Brief comments by Rose might at first suggest more of a similarity with Foucault’s position, such as when Rose discusses resistance in terms of ‘opposition to a particular regime for the conduct of one’s conduct.’ Accounting for resistance in this way, he argues, ‘requires no theory of agency.’ A closer reading of Rose’s work, however,

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103 Rose ‘Identity,’ 135 (emphasis added).
105 Rose ‘Identity,’ 140.
shows instead that resistance is presented as the correlate of practices of government. More precisely, in Rose's account resistance is seen as the inevitable effect of different practices of government:

Within these different practices, persons are addressed as different sorts of human being, presupposed to be different sorts of human being, acted upon as if they were different sorts of human being. Techniques of relating to oneself as a subject of unique capacities worthy of respect run up against practices of relating to oneself as the target of discipline, duty and docility. The humanist demand that one decipher oneself in terms of the authenticity of one's actions runs up against the political or institutional demand that one abides by the collective responsibility of organizational decision-making even when one is personally opposed to it.¹⁰⁶

Rose sums up his notion of resistance like this: 'One way of relating to oneself comes into conflict with others.' Here he implies that individuals can and do choose (and refuse) to exercise certain practices over others with regard to themselves, in that when there is an apparent conflict between ways of being a choice is made with regard to which is pursued. For example, a choice might need to be made between, on the one hand, being a good citizen of a university community in the sense of working to further goals of excellence in teaching, research and pastoral care, as well as representation on committees and, on the other hand, assuming a more entrepreneurial role for oneself in order to further one's career. This might and probably does require minimising teaching and committee work in order to spend more time on conferencing, research and writing.

What Rose does not consider is how choices between such alternatives might be made. We saw in Chapter 2 that Foucault's dissection of ethics involves four dimensions: the aspect of oneself to be governed (the drive to succeed, a desire for job recognition); the reason for governing this aspect (balancing this with other desires or drives, eliminating the drive); how the aspect is to be governed (success might be pursued by spending more time at work, moderation might be exercised by restricting the hours spent at work); and finally the telos or goal of the ethical work (living a life of balance and moderation, dedicating one's life to cerebral pursuits). Analysing ethical practices in this way enables

¹⁰⁶ Rose 'Identity,' 141.
Foucault to discuss how subjects exercise choice with regard to ways of being. In terms of the example above, I might choose not to be a good university citizen and instead opt to advance my career through individual achievements. This would probably involve spending less time in committees, teaching and on students' pastoral care, and more time attending conferences and writing books and articles for publication in well-known journals.

My point in drawing out this example is that Rose's analyses of contemporary liberal government tend not to regard ethics as a dimension that needs to be considered in analyses of power and resistance. As a consequence, Rose presents resistance as something that occurs purely as a result of top-down processes of power; his analyses leave no room to consider instances of resistance that are deliberately disruptive of specific governmental programs and that are engaged in with a programmatic intent.

**Ethical Transgressions**

The work of two contributors to the literature on government - Dean and Burchell - offer examples as to how to overcome some of the limitations of the ways in which resistance is presented in Rose's work. In the sections below I show how Burchell and Dean consider the dimensions of truth, ethics and politics in their analyses of how power operates in liberal societies. One of their main concerns is to explore possibilities of resistance to liberal rationalities and techniques of government. Below I argue that, for both writers, as for Foucault, the greatest possibilities for resistance are located in the ways in which individuals relate to and govern themselves - the dimension of ethics. I consider Burchell's work first.

Burchell's analyses of liberal government draw on Foucault's three-level schema consisting of truth, ethics and politics, as is indicated in the following formulation:

The historian of the present **reproblematizes**, that is to say engages in an activity that dismantles the co-ordinates of his or her starting point and indicates the possibility of a different experience,
of a change in his or her way of being a subject or in his or her relation to self - and so also, of course, of a change in others’ selves. \(^{107}\)

What Burchell calls the ‘coordinates of his or her starting point’ can be thought of as corresponding to Foucault’s notion of truth, while the possibility of a ‘change in his or her way of being a subject’ corresponds to the ethical dimension. Finally the ‘change in others’ selves’ represents what Foucault calls politics. We also see in this formulation the sketch of Foucault’s conceptions of resistance and transformation, which leads from politics to a questioning of truth, through a change in ethical practices and finally back to politics. I take this up shortly.

The piece of Burchell’s work on which I focus here differs from that of Rose, in that Burchell states he is interested in exploring the ‘interconnections, continuities and interactions between techniques of domination and techniques of the self.’ \(^{108}\) This statement appears in a chapter entitled ‘Liberal government and techniques of the self.’ The chapter is divided in two sections, the first of which consists of a general analysis of the techniques and rationalities of liberal government. Burchell’s understanding of Foucault’s notion of government in this section leaves him in a similar position to that of Rose, in that neither writer can explain why resistance occurs except in terms of failures of governmental programs or techniques. One of the reasons why the first section of Burchell’s chapter lacks this fuller conception of resistance is that he does not integrate his analysis of liberal government with his work on ethics. This is despite stating in the chapter’s introduction that he understands Foucault’s notion of government to refer to the point at which techniques for the government of others (Burchell refers to these as ‘techniques of domination’) connect with techniques for the government of the self. \(^{109}\) Yet when it comes to discussing a specific mode of government - liberal government - Burchell focuses on techniques of domination, or the ways in which individuals are ‘required,’ ‘encouraged,’ ‘consciously contrived’ to act, and to act on, themselves in

\(^{107}\) Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 31.  
\(^{108}\) Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 21.  
\(^{109}\) Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 20.
particular ways. The government of the self is discussed in this context in a way that suggests that individuals, singly or collectively, simply await and are open to each successive governmental directive. This impression is reinforced when Burchell argues that ‘increasingly’ government ‘impinges upon individuals in their very individuality... by making its rationality the condition of their active freedom.’ 110 Freedom, in this account, is a capacity individuals exercise only insofar as, and in the directions, intended by governmental rationalities. This does not contradict my reading of Foucault’s account of government, according to which freedom is indeed a capacity that can only be exercised in the context of relationships of power. Where my reading of Foucault differs from Burchell’s account, however, is in the emphasis placed on the ways in which individuals in a sense co-opt the techniques ‘provided’ them for their ‘appropriate’ self-government with the aim of disrupting or challenging particular programs of government.

The second section of Burchell’s chapter elaborates on Foucault’s notion of techniques of the self or ethics, and particularly its relation to his notion of freedom. It is in the second section that we find Burchell departing from the line of research undertaken by Rose. There we see that, analysing ethics as a dimension in its own right, as Foucault does, Burchell presents a picture in which individuals participate in acts of resistance that have a programmatic nature, in that they aim at changing themselves, as well as their relations with others, in specific ways. In this sense, Burchell analyses ethical practices as a dimension of their own, that is, as distinct from the dimensions of truth and of politics. He can then go on to explain how techniques of the self interact with and, more significantly, resist techniques aimed at governing others. Like Foucault, Burchell suggests that histories of the present produce ‘critical’ and ‘positive’ effects by clearing space for subjects to think and be otherwise, to consider ‘the conditions for a real transformation of what we are.’ 111 For Burchell, as for Foucault, this transformation begins with an investigation into the status of certain truths, leads from individual to collective ways of thought and being (ethical practices), and finally on to the dimension

110 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 30 (emphasis in the original).
111 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 33.
It is by modifying their own and others’ relation to the present through a modification of their relation to truth that historians of the present ‘play their part,’ reshaping the space of public debate... This makes possible the introduction of new players into the game, the elaboration of new rules of the game, existing players finding new parts to play, new relationships between the players, and new stakes of the game.112

Whether or not a modification in the ways in which individuals relate to ‘the present’ and ‘to truth’ can impact on the political sphere so as to ‘reshape the space of public debate’ is an issue I take up in the next chapter. The important point to note for the moment is that Burchell recognises that ethics is an important dimension to consider when discussing the possibilities of resistance to liberal techniques of power. Burchell’s writing, however, gives the appearance that his interest in the realm of ethics is in its early stages; he does not venture far from the language used by Foucault to explain the notions of ethics, subjects’ relations to different dimensions of power and so on. Dean’s writing, on the other hand, gives the impression of a stronger grasp on Foucault’s notion of ethics. Dean’s work gives this impression partly because it demonstrates how the concept of ethics can be used to think about freedom and resistance in contemporary liberal societies. I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of this dimension of his work.

Throughout a 1994 article entitled ‘“A social structure of many souls”: moral regulation, government, and self-formation,’ Dean emphasises the centrality of the ethical dimension (or techniques of self government) to analyses of practices of government, and particularly those practices that play a part in the constitution of political subjects (Dean’s account of the formation of the ‘job seeker’ that I discussed in the previous part of the chapter is an example of such a political subject). That Dean wants to demonstrate the importance of ethics to governmental programs is illustrated by the following quotations: ‘the problem of government cannot be dissociated from a reflection on the relation of individuals to themselves’; ‘governmentality implies... a domain of the investigation of

112 Burchell ‘Liberal government,’ 33.
the relation between the government of the self by the self, of one's own existence, and other agencies and spheres of the government of conduct'; and '[t]he relation between practices of government and practices of self is an open one: these are simply two relatively independent, but interdependent, domains.'\textsuperscript{113}

In a later article, published in 1995 and entitled 'Governing the unemployed self in an active society,' Dean goes on to explicate the approach he outlined in the article just discussed, but he does so in the contemporary Australian context of a discussion of how unemployed persons are governed and govern themselves. Dean states that he follows closely Foucault's definition of government, which I set out in the previous chapter, as 'a form of power defined by the existence of some degree of calculation and conduct implies [sic] the possibility of acting otherwise, an observation that leads to a consideration of questions of freedom.'\textsuperscript{114} Dean thinks about government, then, in terms of its intrinsic relation to freedom; but he also thinks about government in terms of the possibilities it entails for individuals to practise their freedom in a programmatic manner. In other words, he draws on Foucault's notion of ethics or self-government to explore the possibilities of using practices of freedom to avoid relationships of domination and coercion, and thereby to open space for broad social transformation. As Dean writes, he wants his work to contribute to renewed efforts at 'social reform' and 'social invention.'\textsuperscript{115} He articulates the connection between freedom and programmatic resistance in the following way. Practices of freedom, Dean writes,

operate, or can operate, to provide individuals with the capacities and resources to act in such a way as to prevent the exercise of forms of power from becoming coercion, domination, and submission. In other words, they open spaces where the individual's life is at least partially a function of her or his conduct and not a reflex to forms of political and economic domination. In short, they open spaces of resistance.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} Dean "'A social structure,' 162; 160; 163.
\textsuperscript{114} Dean 'Governing the unemployed self,' 561.
\textsuperscript{115} Dean 'A liberal dose.' Australian Left Review, no.145, 1992, 20.
\textsuperscript{116} Dean 'Free thinking.' Australian Left Review, no.138, 1992, 15 (emphasis added).
In Dean’s and Burchell’s analyses, then, resistance is located primarily in the dimension Foucault calls ethics; what, following Foucault, Dean also refers to as the practise of freedom. It is also clear that, for Burchell as well as for Foucault, ethical practices of resistance lead to transformations in other techniques of power, particularly those that are directed at the government of others, the techniques that Foucault closely associates with the dimension of politics. I take issue with the politically limiting implications of this formulation in the remaining chapters. Before I move on to these, however, let me summarise the main points raised in this chapter.

First, we saw that the governmentality literature continues the study of the form of power Foucault calls government. Building on Foucault’s studies in this way, the literature presents a governmental account of the operation of power in contemporary liberal societies. This governmental account is characterised by its focus on the rationalities and techniques involved in the government of individuals and groups. The second point to be made is that most of the accounts of liberal rule presented in the governmentality literature do not pay much attention to specific techniques of self-government, instead focusing on techniques for the government of others, or politics. What emerges is a conception of resistance as an inevitable counterpart to governmental practices. We saw that Rose presents resistance at the individual level in terms of conflict between different ways of being in different governmental practices: ‘Techniques of relating to oneself as a subject of unique capacities worthy of respect run up against practices of relating to oneself as the target of discipline, duty and docility.’117 As we have seen, Rose’s analyses of government lead to a different, or more limited, consideration of freedom. He discusses freedom exclusively in terms of how it is used within practices of government; more precisely, Rose talks about freedom as a tool or device for government. While he acknowledges that such an approach suggests the possibility of practising freedom in different ways, this point constitutes a gestural ending, characteristic of much of his writing.118

117 Rose ‘Identity,’ 141.
118 See for example ‘Authority and the genealogy of subjectivity’, ‘Towards a critical sociology’ and ‘Identity.’
Rose correctly points out that this conception of resistance needs no theory of agency. What I argued in this chapter, however, and I used Dean’s and Burchell’s work to illustrate my point, is that a notion of programmatic resistance emerges from a focus on techniques of the self, a notion that involves consideration of how these techniques are and might be used in strategic attempts to disrupt governmental programs. I do not wish to claim that Rose’s and other governmentality writers’ understanding of resistance is wrong. My point is that a different, and fuller, notion of resistance emerges through a focus on ethics or forms of self-government. I have distinguished the two conceptions with the terms ‘reactive’ and ‘programmatic’ resistance.

The final point to be made in this summary is that, although I have identified significant limitations in the governmentality literature’s treatment of resistance, it provides valuable sources for those wanting to identify and challenge the technologies and forms of knowledge through which individuals and populations are governed in liberal states. These analyses also prompt the question of the extent to which the notion of the territorial state (perhaps we could say the rationality according to which the world is divided into territories, each with a distinguishable population usually assumed to constitute a culture or society) is tied to the rationality of liberal government. For, as I mentioned in this chapter, the totalising dimension of liberal government is only ever discussed in terms of its operation within bounded states and over the populations within these borders. If the two forms of rationality - liberal governmental rationality and the rationality of the international state system - are closely linked, it follows that attacking the roots of political rationality, as Foucault urged, must involve attacking the thinking which assumes that it is natural and/or rational to divide the world into territorial states, with corresponding conceptions of citizen and foreigner.119

119 Hindess explores this in ‘Divide and rule.’
techniques of the self. An important implication of this emphasis, in terms of the concerns of this thesis, is that the governmentality literature does not account for different forms of resistance. Governmentality writers clearly demonstrate the reciprocal relations that exist between power and resistance, particularly in the context of liberal governmental techniques, a reciprocity that suggests that resistance is a permanent feature of all attempts to govern. In this sense, as Rose argues, resistance requires no theory of agency; it simply will occur, regardless of the intentions of the subject.

I argued that, while this position depicts one dimension of Foucault’s way of thinking about power and resistance, his notion of ethics opens another dimension. This is one that goes some way to theorising resistance in terms of agency, in the sense that Foucault’s notion of ethics aims, firstly, to describe why it is that subjects might resist certain relations of power, and secondly, that, by practising different techniques of the self, subjects can choose to behave in ways that do not conform to the behaviours anticipated or intended by governmental programs. Viewing resistance and, in turn, the failure of governmental programs, in this way allows Foucault to conceive of resistance as something that can occur in a programmatic or deliberate, rather than simply a reactive, fashion.
What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion.¹

¹ Oscar Wilde De Profundis, in Selected Letters, 1979, 194.
Like Oscar Wilde, queer theorists argue that a productive relationship can exist between thought and sex. Where Wilde uses 'paradox' in thought, though, queer theorists use critical history; and where Wilde embraces the deviant label of 'perversity,' queer theorists question the categorisation of sexual practices into 'normal' and 'perverse.' In this respect queer theory elaborates and extends Foucault's history of sexuality, in which he explores the processes that generate the division of sexual practices into categories of 'normal' and 'deviant.' Some queer theorists follow Foucault's work in other ways that I demonstrate in this chapter. In the first section of Part I, 'Against heterotruths,' I show that their analyses of the production of categories of sexual identities rest on Foucault's claim that power is not only repressive, but is intrinsically enabling and productive; power produces constructs, not only of homosexuality and other marginal sexualities, but also of heterosexuality. Queer theorists also make use of Foucault's formulation that power produces resistance; or, rather, that power and resistance exist in a mutual relationship, each providing for the other limits to, and possibilities of, action. In the second section of Part I, 'From intellectual work to politics,' I suggest that the distinctions Foucault makes between truth, ethics and politics operate in a similar manner in queer texts. The analyses conducted by some queer theorists draw on these distinctions to expose the forms of knowledge and the techniques of government that produce and regulate subjects in terms of categories of sexuality.

In Parts II and III, respectively, I discuss the work of two prominent queer theorists, David Halperin and Judith Butler. The aims of this discussion are threefold. Firstly, I aim to explore how Halperin and Butler use Foucault's notion of self-government in their accounts of the regulation of sexual identities. Second, I want to analyse critically the ways in which these writers discuss resistance. Halperin's work, I suggest, epitomises central problems with the treatment of resistance in queer theory. While Butler is not immune to similar criticisms, she provides us with the conceptual tools with which these problems can begin to be overcome. Thirdly, through this discussion I aim to assess Foucault's contribution to thinking about ethics, politics and resistance. I begin this chapter with an explanation of the origins and meaning of the term 'queer theory.'
The term ‘queer theory’ was coined by Teresa de Lauretis for a conference on theorising lesbian and gay sexualities, the title and papers from which subsequently were presented in a 1991 issue of the feminist journal *differences*. In these contexts, de Lauretis writes, ‘queer theory’ refers to both ‘the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse production’ and ‘the necessary critical work of deconstructing our own discourses and their constructed silences.’ The first point to make about queer theory, then, is that it is primarily about problematising the production of knowledge and, more specifically, problematising the knowledges and discourses that in part constitute lesbian and gay sexualities. The guiding critical principle of queer theory is thus very similar to that of Foucault’s critical histories. I explained in Chapter One that Foucault’s histories of the present are described by him as attempts to ‘grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is’ In other words, historians of the present aim to open up spaces of possible transformation by pointing to the contingency of truths and of ways of being in the present. In Volume I of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault uses this approach to shed light on ‘why and how’ individuals who engage in same-sex sexual practices became labelled ‘homosexual.’ While he also discusses the emergence in the nineteenth century of other types, such as ‘the pervert,’ ‘the sodomite’ and ‘the hysterical woman,’ his main concern is to uncover the processes involved in the construction of a homo/heterosexual divide.

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2 De Lauretis ‘Queer theory: lesbian and gay sexualities. An introduction.’ *differences*, 3 (2), 1991, iv. De Lauretis has since distanced herself from the term queer because it has ‘become a conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry.’ (Quoted in Annamarie Jagose *Queer Theory*, 9.) ‘Queer’ as a term of self-definition began to be widely adopted in the late 1980s and was commonly associated with the activist group Queer Nation. (For more on the origins of queer see Lisa Duggan ‘Making it perfectly queer.’ In *Sex Wars*, 1995, 155-72.) My use of the terms ‘queer’ and ‘queer theory’ is in the sense described by De Lauretis in the body of the text.

3 Foucault ‘Structuralism and post-structuralism,’ 206.
In order to introduce the scope of the project undertaken by Foucault and queer theorists, it is useful to point to some obvious parallels, as well as important differences between, on the one hand, Foucault’s work and that of queer theorists, and on the other, theories of ‘social construction’ in the field of sexualities. Sociology was an early and important area in which this work was carried out in the 1960s and 1970s. Steven Epstein, a queer sociologist, writes:

[a]gainst naturalized conceptions of sexuality as a biological given, against Freudian models of the sexual drive, and against the Kinseyan obsession with the tabulation of behaviour, sociologists asserted that sexual meanings, identities, and categories were intersubjectively negotiated social and historical products - that sexuality was, in a word, constructed.  

Epstein suggests that the publication of Volume I of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* marks a significant expansion of this constructionist approach. Foucault’s version of constructionism, ‘the history of the present,’ aims to undermine the normalising processes that produce not only homosexuality but also heterosexuality. He aims to demonstrate that these categories are the products or effects of a form of power that is intimately connected to certain kinds of knowledge. In Chapter Two we saw that, according to Foucault, these knowledges are produced within disciplines such as pedagogy, criminal justice and medicine. They take as their object, and target of intervention, the sexual conduct of individuals and populations, conduct that includes physical, mental and psychological functions and pathologies. Foucault argues that this multiplicity of discourses concerning sexuality has been circulating since the mid-nineteenth century. It constitutes an intricate and connected web of knowledges, methods and programs that incite, limit and discipline the production of sexualities.

This aspect of Foucault’s work, which is taken up by queer theorists, distinguishes it

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5 Epstein ‘A queer encounter,’ 192.
from earlier constructionist approaches. Seidman explains the distinction.

[Queer theory] shift[s] the debate somewhat away from explaining the modern homosexual to questions of the operation of the hetero/homosexual binary, from an exclusive preoccupation with homosexuality to a focus on heterosexuality as a social and political organizing principle, and from a politics of minority interest to a politics of knowledge and difference.7

In other words, according to Seidman, conventional constructionist approaches tend to focus on the construction only of *homo*sexuality, thus reinforcing the hetero/homosexual divide; this, in turn, reinforces the dominant term, heterosexuality. He argues that a fundamental tenet of queer theory is that the hetero/homo binarism is a product and an effect of a 'heteronormative sexual code.'8 Thus one of the aims of queer theory is not merely to challenge the marginalisation of homosexualities with regard to the dominant and ‘normal’ heterosexual order (a challenge that rests on the claim that lesbians and gay men are ‘normal’ too), but to expose and question strategies of normalisation themselves, revealing the contingency of contemporary morals and norms surrounding sexual practices and ways of being. As Michael Warner comments, queer theory attempts to set ‘a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual.’9 David Halperin agrees. He says in an interview:

I don’t think it makes any sense to ask what ‘causes’ homosexuality while ignoring heterosexuality, and any account that purports to ‘explain’ homosexuality in isolation from heterosexuality is bound to be inadequate and should arouse immediate suspicion on political grounds - as a maneuver designed to reassert the ‘normativity’ of heterosexuality. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are part of the same system; they are equally problematic, and each stands in just as much need of analysis and understanding as the other.10

10 Halperin “‘Homosexuality’: a cultural construct. An exchange with Richard Schneider.’ In Halperin *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 45.
Queer theory’s challenge to both sexual identity categories and to techniques of normalisation extends to the forms of knowledge produced within medico-scientific discourses. As I explained in Chapter Two, Foucault argues that the identification of categories and identities of sexuality by medico-scientific discourses is a powerful means of social regulation and control. Queer theorists find this argument convincing, and this is another reason why the term ‘queer’ is used in preference to more conventional terms such as ‘homosexual.’ ‘Queer,’ then, is partly an attempt to escape the medical categorisations and assumptions that are embroiled in terms such as ‘bi-sexual,’ ‘transsexual’ and so on (as well as the psychiatric categories that often accompany these, for example ‘deviant,’ ‘pervert,’ ‘invert’ and ‘degenerate’).

A clear example of this use of the term queer is found in Halperin’s work. In an essay entitled ‘The queer politics of Michel Foucault’ (one of two essays that constitute his book *Saint Foucault*, which I discuss in more detail later), he writes:

> Unlike gay identity, which, though deliberately proclaimed in an act of affirmation, is nonetheless rooted in the positive fact of homosexual object-choice, queer identity need not be grounded in any positive truth or in any stable reality. As the very word implies, ‘queer’ does not name some natural kind or refer to some determinate object; it acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm.

A strong critic of queer theory, Sheila Jeffreys, takes comments such as these to mean that ‘sexual minorities’ such as paedophiles, sadomasochists and transsexuals, can all be included more or less unproblematically by the term ‘queer.’ Jeffreys’s objection reveals just the kind of move, documented by Foucault in his *History of Sexuality*, Volume I, that queer theorists rail against. As we have seen, Foucault argues that the emergence of categories of sexual identities goes hand in hand with the development of new forms of knowledge and procedures of normalisation and of discipline. One result, he claims, is the conceptual movement that leads from sexual act to sexual persona or

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11 Chauncey provides a succinct overview of changing medical and psychiatric models of homosexuality in ‘From sexual inversion to homosexuality,’ 87-117.
sexual identity. Jeffreys reproduces this movement in a series of steps. First, she equates sexual act with sexual identity; second, she labels certain identities - sadomasochists, paedophiles and transsexuals - as ‘minorities’ because they are distinct from the ‘normal’; finally, these minorities are judged as deviant, perverse, or otherwise dangerous to the community. More needs to be said about Jeffreys’s objections to these categories of persons, not to mention the sexual acts she singles out. Especially problematic is the implication in her work that transsexuals pose a threat of the same order to the community as do paedophiles. This is not the place to engage with her position in detail. It is sufficient to note that her work epitomises the kind of thinking that queer theorists want to challenge.

Jeffreys’s work is nevertheless useful here because it highlights a central aspect of queer theory, and that is to demonstrate that sexual acts need to be distinguished from sexual identities. Because queer theorists see sexual identities and techniques of normalisation in a mutually productive relationship, the term ‘queer’ is not intended to be yet another, this time more inclusive, label of sexual identity. Queer refers, instead, to an oppositional position in relation to whatever is normal. Queer theory, by extension, presents a challenge to the processes of sexual normalisation, a challenge that is about a constant questioning of the knowledges and techniques through which sexualities and genders are produced in close connection with notions of the ‘normal.’ This is not to suggest that queer theorists advocate adoption of the term queer as a generic term that replaces ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay’ and so on. Judith Butler, for example, argues that she is not against the use of ‘identity categories’ such as lesbian and gay, but that their use has attendant risks that should be acknowledged.14 Those risks concern who has the power of such naming, the uses to which such names are put and the conditions under which the names are put.

14 Much of the published material on queer theory - both supportive and hostile - concerns its implications for identity politics. Several points I raise touch on this question but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage with the arguments in any depth. Some useful texts on queer theory and identity politics are: Dennis Altman ‘On global queering.’ http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au:80/AHR/home.html (responses to this piece are found at the same website); Mark Blasius Gay and Lesbian Politics, 1994; Ed Cohen ‘Who are “we”?’ In Inside/Out, Diana Fuss (ed.), 1991, 71-92; Joshua Gamson ‘Must identity movements self-destruct?’. In Queer Theory/Sociology, 395-420; Robert Reynolds ‘Postmodernism and gay/queer identities.’ In Gay Perspectives II, Robert Aldrich (ed.), 1994, 245-74; Fear of a Queer Planet, esp. the essays in Part II, ‘The New Queer Politics’. 
Risks that are attendant upon the use of identity categories include the marginalisation of, discrimination against and violence perpetrated upon those identified (or ‘accused’) as lesbian/gay/queer by individuals and groups within the general population, as well as by the law and by members of the medical and psychiatric establishments in the name of ‘science.’ Le Vay documents a whole series of experiments that has been used in the attempt to force those identified as homosexual to practise heterosexual sex and to form heterosexual partnerships (or at least to desist from same-sex sexual practices). These range from suggestive techniques, as in ‘learning theory,’ in which a ‘patient’ is advised to avoid homosexual fantasies during masturbation and substitute them with heterosexual fantasies, to the far less innocuous aversion therapy, common in the 1960s. In this form of therapy the patient is exposed to ‘homosexual images’ and, in a common experiment, given an injection of the drug, apomorphine, that induces nausea and vomiting. Other forms of aversion therapy involved electric shocks and, in extreme cases, the inducement of epileptic seizures, either through electric shocks to the brain or administration of a drug, metrazol. Few long-lasting successes were reported.16

Perhaps with such examples in mind, Butler suggests using the term queer, not as another identity category, but as:

a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings... never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes...17

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15 Usually these were of naked men; most experiments to find a ‘cure’ for homosexuality were carried out on gay men.
16 Le Vay Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality, 1996, esp. 86-107. It should not be assumed that because of the proliferation of the kind of research grouped under the banner of ‘queer’ that the kinds of experiments documented by Le Vay here are considered ‘old fashioned’ or suspect. A documentary produced in 1995 and screened in early 1998 interviewed psychiatrists who are engaged in research into the causes of ‘paraphilia,’ a ‘condition’ in which individuals compulsively engage in ‘perverted’ sexual acts such as auto-asphyxiation (strangling or otherwise asphyxiating oneself in order to become sexually aroused), necrophilia and bondage. One of the ‘treatments’ for this is to remove the part of the brain researchers have ‘discovered’ is responsible for ‘sexual drives.’ In the case in question a man had become obsessed with safety pins; after surgery ‘he had no interest in safety pins at all.’ The narrator did not mention whether the man had any sexual, or for that matter non-sexual, interests post-surgery. (Beyond Love, Screened SBS, 15 Jan 1998)
17 Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 19.
In other words, Butler suggests a strategic understanding of the term queer. One aim of this critical deployment of the term queer is to throw into question the conflation of sexual act with sexual identity. Fundamental to this project is to question the definition, in terms of sexual act, of heterosexual identities. Many queer theorists who are influenced by Foucault’s account of the construction of sexualities incorporate philosophical and/or psychoanalytic approaches into their analyses in order to highlight the exclusionary character of theories and politics that assume the existence of bi-polar identities (hetero/homosexual, man/woman, male/female). Sedgwick, for example, takes as ‘axiomatic’ Foucault’s ‘demonstration’ that in ‘modern Western culture’ sexuality occupies a ‘privileged’ position in our constructs of ‘individual identity, truth, and knowledge.’ From around the turn of the century, she writes,

> every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence.

In this passage Sedgwick uses the term ‘binarized identity,’ which is more commonly associated with philosophical deconstructive texts than with Foucault’s history of the present. The term ‘binarized identity’ is central to Sedgwick’s textual analyses, which attempt to demonstrate how certain texts contribute to the creation of, and resistance to, binary identities. Her textual readings rely partly on a deconstructive technique that is based on the assumption that, in her words, ‘categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions - heterosexual/homosexual, in this case, actually subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation...’ In this relation, according to Sedgwick, ‘term B’ (homosexual) is subordinate to term A; the meaning of term A results from the ‘simultaneous subsumption and exclusion’ of term B; hence the priority attached to the supposed centrality and marginality of each term is in fact an open question.

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18 For example, see Fuss ‘Inside Out.’ In Inside/Out, 1-12; Cohen ‘Who are “we”?’; 71-92; Elizabeth Grosz ‘Experimental desire: rethinking queer subjectivity.’ In Supposing the Subject, Joan Copjec (ed.), 1994, 133-57; Linda Singer Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of Epidemic, 1993.
19 Sedgwick Epistemology, 2.
20 Sedgwick Epistemology, 10.
21 Sedgwick Epistemology, 10.
Halperin comments on the significance of understanding the opposition as an unstable one. First, he explains, the ‘unmarked’ term, the one to which everyone is supposed to belong, in this case heterosexuality, is shown to be dependent on the marked term, in this case homosexuality, that something differentiates from the unmarked term. Second, Halperin writes, ‘the marked term turns out to be structurally and logically prior to the unmarked one.’ He adds: ‘In the case of heterosexuality and homosexuality, the marked term’s priority to the unmarked term is not only structural or logical but historical as well: the invention of the term and the concept of homosexuality preceded by some years the invention of the term and concept of heterosexuality - which was originally the name of a perversion [what we now call bisexuality] and only gradually came to occupy its familiar place as the polar opposite of homosexuality.’\(^{22}\) Butler adds to and highlights an important implication of this kind of reversal. In her conceptualisation the ‘unmarked’ term corresponds to the ‘original’ (or heterosexuality) while the ‘marked’ term corresponds to the ‘copy’ (homosexuality):

But simple inversions are not really possible. For it is only as a copy that homosexuality can be argued to precede heterosexuality as the origin. In other words, the entire framework of copy and origin proves radically unstable as each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal or logical priority of either term.\(^{23}\)

By deploying a deconstructive technique in relation to texts that contain representations of sexuality, Sedgwick writes,

I am trying to make the strongest possible introductory case for a hypothesis about the centrality of this nominally marginal, conceptually intractable set of definitional issues to the important knowledges and understandings of twentieth-century Western culture as a whole.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\) Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 45. (See also Jonathan Katz *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary*, 1983, 147-50.)

\(^{23}\) Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination.’ In *Inside/Out*, 313. I discuss Butler’s ideas about camp, parody and politics in Part III of this chapter.

\(^{24}\) Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 2; see also *Tendencies*, 1993.
Sedgwick’s aim is to show how, with regard to sexualities, the unfamiliar and unconsidered is central to what is often regarded as unremarkable, even unchallengeable - heterosexuality. Like that of other queer theorists, Sedgwick’s work is thus intended to function in a manner similar to Foucault’s histories as he describes them. As was noted earlier, part of the aim of Foucault’s histories is to show that what today counts as ‘normal’ and ‘self-evident’ is in fact the result of an often long history of exclusions. For example, the category of ‘normal’ heterosexuality is the product or effect of a series of strategies that relies on the ‘other’ (in this case the homosexual, the pervert and so on) for it to have any meaning.

Sedgwick’s deconstructions also aim to contribute to ‘an understanding of sexuality that will respect a certain irreducibility in it to the terms and relations of gender.’ She argues that ‘in this century’ sexuality ‘as a whole’ has been narrowed down to a binary notion of sexuality. (In this construction of sexuality, gender is presumed to line up with chromosomal sex, such that male or XY chromosomes correspond to man, while female, or XX, chromosomes correspond to woman.) One result, Sedgwick argues, is that sexuality is determined exclusively on the basis of the gender of one’s sexual object choice (homosexuality equals same-gender sexual object choice, while heterosexuality equals opposite-gender sexual object choice). Deconstructing these configurations, Sedgwick argues that ‘sexuality extends along so many dimensions that aren’t well described in terms of gender of object-choice at all... human/animal, adult/child, singular/plural, autoerotic/alloerotic,’ or dimensions that are not even about object-choice: ‘orgasmic/nonorgasmic, noncommercial/commercial, using bodies only/using manufactured objects, in private/in public, spontaneous/scripted.’

25 Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 16.
26 There is more to be said about the meanings of the terms ‘sex,’ ‘sexuality’ and ‘gender’ but this is not central to my purpose here. For a lucid unravelling of these terms see Butler ‘Against proper objects.’ In Feminism Meets Queer Theory, Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (eds), 1997, 1-30.
27 Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 27-35. She also suggests that queer can also refer to ‘criss-crossings’ of identity that neither sexuality nor gender subsume: for example recent explorations of the ways in which sexualities and gender meet and intersect with language, ethnicity, migration, colour and so on. (Tendencies, 8-9)
This brief introduction to the work of Sedgwick and other queer theorists has shown that queer theory challenges the processes through which categories of sexuality and gender are constructed and reproduced. I have also introduced important parallels between queer theory and Foucault's work, especially those that concern power and resistance. In the remainder of this chapter I want to pursue these themes further.

From Intellectual Work to Politics

Queer theorists understand the production of sexual identities in terms of a form of power that works in three dimensions: the truths according to which sexualities are conceived (predominantly medico-scientific but also moral and religious); techniques that individuals exercise in relation to themselves and through which they position themselves in relation to dominant and alternative truths (for example the technique in learning therapy mentioned above, in which the individual is taught, during masturbation and just prior to orgasm, to fantasise about hetero- rather than homosexual sex; this might be called a technique of the imagination); and techniques that aim at the government of others and whose function is often more totalising, such as laws, company policies (for example discriminatory hiring and firing practices) and television, advertisements and other means of disseminating cultural codes and practices on a mass scale.

The work of Halperin, de Lauretis, Butler and others is thus intended to serve a function similar to Foucault's histories. That is, queer studies aim to contribute to a movement that questions certain truth claims, thereby opening space to think about and to practise new or different ethical techniques that, finally, results in different practices of politics. What is less evident from the discussion above is the way in which queer theorists conceive of resistance, the crucial step in this series of movements. We can glean a preliminary sense of what resistance might mean for queer theorists by looking at the kinds of resistance about which they are suspicious. As I pointed out earlier, the main targets of queer theory in this regard are lesbian and gay movements that are based on notions of (and claims to) stable and/or essential categories of identity.
Arguments for identity politics that stem from other constructionist approaches are also viewed with suspicion by queer theorists. For example, Jeffrey Weeks, a writer known for his constructionist histories of sexuality, writes that 'lesbian and gay identities are both constructed and essential, constructed in the sense that they are historically moulded and therefore subject to change, essential in the particular sense that they are necessary and in the end inescapable.' In contrast to positions like this, queer theorists reject the suggestion that lesbian and gay identities are, or should be, 'inescapable.' Their political project is partly concerned with contesting the rationalities according to which (sexual) identities are seen as 'necessary' and, through this, pointing to ways in which individuals and groups can and do undermine the knowledges and techniques that contribute to the construction of normalised sexualities. That is, queer theorists object to the notion that lesbian and gay identities are 'inescapable.' Instead, they insist on their ability to, and the necessity of, twisting, questioning and queering identities, with the aim of creating as great a space as possible within which individuals can practise their freedom.

The queer theorists on whom I focus in this chapter are particularly interested in this second aspect of the project; that is, in investigating the ways in which individuals work on themselves to create themselves as certain kinds of (sexual) subjects. This reflects the conviction, again very similar to Foucault's, that modern power, particularly in its liberal governmental forms, operates partly by producing and affirming an intimate connection between sexuality and identity, and that forms of politics that mobilise around categories of sexual identities reinforces the connection. Queer theorists question sexual identity politics on the grounds that it reinforces the very operations of power it is intended to resist. Their alternative strategy, of emphasising queer sexual practices rather than, for example, lesbian or gay identities, has two aims. Firstly, the intention is to contest the notion that sexual identities can be defined primarily in terms of sexual practices, but also in terms of the sex and gender of sexual object choice. Sedgwick's list of sexual objects

and practices that cannot be subsumed under the binary labels, hetero- or homosexuality and man or woman, is an example of this kind of contestation.

Secondly, the focus on queer sexual practices in the work of some queer theorists concerns the effects of these practices on the ethical and political dimensions of power. As I show in the following two parts of the chapter, queer sexual practices are presented as techniques of the self, or as means by which individuals practise their freedom. Engaging in these practices is thus a form of resistance against normalising sexual discourses that attempt to endow individuals with fixed ideas regarding the sex and gender of sexual object choice, and the ways this sex should be done. But queer theorists clearly hope that this form of queer resistance will produce effects beyond the level of the individual. Images of a queer world in which polymorphous pleasures and desires abound are implicit in many queer texts.
Halperin is unhesitating in his agreement with Foucault's assertion that sexuality is an 'historical construct,' although he adds that 'more is required to establish the historicity of sexuality than the mere weight of Foucault's authority.' Halperin introduces his own research on ancient Greek sexual practices in order to accomplish this task. His approach to establishing the historical and constructed nature of contemporary notions of sexuality involves the use of records from classical antiquity that, Halperin argues, confront modern readers with:

'a radically unfamiliar set of values, behaviours, and social practices, by ways of organizing and articulating experience that challenge modern notions about what life is like, and that call into question the supposed universality of 'human nature' as we currently understand it.'

According to Halperin, one thing the 'ancient sexual attitudes and behaviours' teach us is that 'we need to de-centre sexuality from the focus of the cultural interpretation of sexual experience.' 'Sexuality' here refers, he explains, 'to a positive, distinct, and constitutive feature of the human personality, to the characterological seat from which all sexual expression proceeds.' Sexuality, Halperin continues, is also a concept that 'generates sexual identity: it endows each of us with an individual sexual nature, with a personal essence defined (at least in part) in specifically sexual terms.' But, he argues, as Foucault does, that this notion of sexuality only emerged - could only emerge - through the conjunction of two important developments in knowledge. The first was what Halperin describes as 'the eighteenth-century discovery and definition of sexuality as the total ensemble of physiological and psychological mechanisms governing the

29 Halperin 'Is there a history of sexuality?'. In The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, Abelove et al. (eds), 1993, 417.
30 Halperin 'Is there a history of sexuality?', 417.
31 Halperin 'Is there a history of sexuality?', 424.
32 Halperin 'Is there a history of sexuality?', 417.
individual’s genital functions and concomitant identification of that ensemble with a specially developed part of the brain and nervous system.’ The second development was the nineteenth century interpretation of sexuality as an ‘instinct’ or force that determines, in part at least, our personality and character.33

Halperin wants to demonstrate the relatively recent emergence of the notion of sexuality in order to contribute to the project of ‘de-centring’ sexuality from the focus of sexual experience. In doing so, he does not argue that sexual categories and identities are ‘false or unreal, merely that they are not positive, natural, or essential features of the world, outside of history and culture.’34 Sexuality, then, is what has to be resisted, according to Halperin. For, he argues, sexuality ‘amalgamates desire and identity into a unitary and stable feature of the individual person and thereby imparts to the subject a “true self” - a self that constitutes the “truth” of the person and functions as an object both of social regulation and of personal administration.’35 According to Halperin, sexuality is fundamental to the government of individuals. Resistance to specific practices of government, including those that individuals practise on themselves, he argues, therefore depends crucially upon refusing the sexual identities through which subjects are governed and govern themselves. Halperin thus uses the term ‘queer’ to describe a critical position, one that aims to contribute to the project of ‘de-centring’ sexuality. He writes:

I want to keep open a possibility that may remain, for all I know, largely potential, that may indeed already be foreclosed, but that represents one of the important possibilities that some of its earlier advocates saw in the term ‘queer’ and that may yet constitute one of its crucial uses: namely, the ability of ‘queer’ to define (homo)sexual identity oppositionally and relationally but not necessarily substantively, not as a positivity but as a positionality, not as a thing but as a resistance to the norm... It is by resisting the discursive and institutional practices which, in their scattered and diffuse functioning, contribute to the operation of heteronormativity that queer identities can open a social space for the construction of different identities, for the elaboration of various types of relationships, for the development of new cultural forms.36

33 Halperin One Hundred Years of Homosexuality, 26. On sexuality as instinct, see Chauncey ‘From sexual inversion to homosexuality.’
34 Halperin One Hundred Years of Homosexuality, 28.
35 Halperin Saint Foucault, 95.
36 Halperin Saint Foucault, 66-7.
The Use of Pleasure

Partly as an intervention in the process whereby different kinds of subjects might begin to be constructed, in *Saint Foucault* Halperin discusses various ‘queer sexual practices’ such as fist-fucking and sadomasochism. He presents them as practices through which individuals can enter into new relationships with themselves, relationships that disrupt the normalised relations that subjects have with their sexualities. Halperin suggests, in other words, that queer sexual practices ‘disrupt normative sexual identities’ according to which sexual acts are, first, driven by a heteronormative notion of desire and, second, focused on the genitals. The effect of this disruption, according to Halperin, is to bring to the centre of experiences around sexuality the notion of pleasure, or what Foucault refers to as ‘bodies and pleasures.’37 Halperin explains the distinction between pleasure and desire like this:

Unlike desire, which expresses the subject’s individuality, history, and identity as a subject, pleasure is desubjectivating, impersonal: it shatters identity, subjectivity, and dissolves the subject, however fleetingly, into the sensorial continuum of the body, into the unconscious dreaming of the mind.38

Here Halperin draws on Foucault’s comments to the gay media regarding new and creative possibilities for ways of being gay. Foucault said that the gay movement needs ‘more the art of life than a science or scientific knowledge (or pseudo-scientific knowledge) of what sexuality is... We have to understand that with our desires, through our desires, go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation. Sex is not a fatality: it’s a possibility for creative life.’39 For Halperin the term ‘queer’ signifies such a position. He sees queer as ‘an identity without an essence, not a given condition but a horizon of possibility, an opportunity for self-transformation, a queer potential.’40

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38 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 95.
39 Foucault ‘Sex and the politics of identity,’ 28.
40 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 79.
Both Foucault and Halperin advocate the adoption of new or different forms of self-government regarding sexualities. A starting point here is avoiding techniques of decipherment (such as those used in psychoanalysis) or subjecting oneself to medical examinations in order to discover one’s ‘true’ sexuality. Instead, Foucault argues, ‘[s]exuality is something that we ourselves create... We don’t have to discover that we are homosexuals... Rather, we have to create a gay life. To become.’ Halperin agrees with Foucault, but suggests that Foucault’s remark makes sense only if his use of ‘homosexual’ and ‘gay’ is understood according to Halperin’s use of the term ‘queer.’ Halperin argues that homosexuality is something, strictly speaking, that one is or is not; queer, by contrast, is a way of transforming oneself, marginalising oneself, of becoming. Cast in these terms, neither Foucault’s nor Halperin’s comments give much guidance as to the possibilities of a queer becoming. Elsewhere, however, Halperin uses sado-masochism as an example of a sexual practice that has transformative potential, both in terms of individual ways of being and in terms of politics. Foucault, similarly, says that S/M is ‘a kind of creation, a creative enterprise, which has as one of its main features what I call the desexualization of pleasure.’ He goes on to explain what he means by the phrase ‘the desexualization of pleasure’: ‘[t]he idea that bodily pleasure should always come from sexual pleasure, and the idea that sexual pleasure is the root of all our possible pleasure - I think that’s something quite wrong... The possibility of using our bodies as a possible source of very numerous pleasures is something that is very important.’

Halperin provides an explanation for the way in which S/M can transform one’s relation with oneself, as well as contributing to a broader project of undermining a regime of heterosexuality. He writes of S/M as well as of fist-fucking and various other ‘queer sexual practices’:

through the invention of novel, intense, and scattered bodily pleasures, queer culture brings about a tactical reversal of the mechanisms of sexuality, making strategic use of power differentials,

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41 Foucault ‘Sex and the politics of identity,’ 28.
42 Halperin Saint Foucault, 79.
43 Foucault ‘Sex and the politics of identity,’ 30-1.
physical sensations, and sexual identity-categories in order to create a queer praxis that ultimately
dispenses with ‘sexuality’ and destabilizes the very constitution of identity itself.44

Halperin emphasises that such practices are not engaged in ‘for the sake of politics but
purely for the sake of pleasure... in short, a technique of ascesis [work on the self].’ The
transformative potential of these practices in relation to the self stems from their effect
which, Halperin writes, is that of ‘shattering the subject of sexuality... [thereby opening]
up the possibility for the cultivation of a more impersonal self, a self that can function as
the substance of ongoing ethical elaboration - and thus as the site of future
transformation.’45 For Foucault (and, it seems, also for Halperin), Halperin explains
what is perhaps ‘most interesting’ about queer sexual practices is their ‘integration into
“homosexual ways of life,”’46 and, through this, their potential to produce political
effects. Halperin provides an example of a community built around fist-fucking and S/M
by gay leathermen in San Francisco in the 1970s. Halperin explains that this community
initially formed around sexual practices,

but became linked to other expressions of subcultural development, including dress, patterns of
life and work, the transformation of neighborhoods, the growth of community organizations, the
provision of public services, the staging of athletic events, and ultimately the emergence of
locally based and funded social and political groups.47

The point Halperin wants to make here is that queer sexual practices can and do produce
new kinds of relations or of social organisation, relations that are transferable to
heterosexuals.48 In other words, political transformations will flow from new ethical
practices. However, it should be noted that, throughout a long discussion in *Saint
Foucault* of ‘queer sexual practices’ such as fist-fucking and sadomasochism, Halperin
gives just one example of a community that has been formed around one of these
practices; and he does not discuss the nature of the ‘political groups’ that emerged from

44 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 96-7.
45 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 97.
46 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 99.
47 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 99.
48 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 100.
the community - their political goals, strategies and so on. Halperin’s point would be stronger if he provided examples of the kinds of transformations undergone by the community, such as what new ethical practices and values emerged, what sorts of politics were practised, whether or not the development of this community incorporated the notion of queer, as Halperin understands it, and, perhaps more pertinently, an indication from Halperin of how these kinds of ‘subcultural development’ impact on, or challenge, widespread or institutionalised relations of power that are guided by heteronormative assumptions. It is as if engagement in certain practices and ways of life automatically constitutes resistance, as well as being forms of action that address the political dimension of power.

Continuing his line of argument, this time in the context of a defence of gay male bodybuilding, Halperin argues that it is both a ‘utopian political practice’ and a form of ‘homosexual ascesis in Foucault’s sense.’49 He goes on to write that, in ‘visibly inscribing their erotic desires on the surfaces of their bodies,’ gay male bodybuilders:

have not only exposed themselves to considerable social risks in the course of pursuing their ethical projects but have also performed a valuable political service on behalf of everyone, insofar as they have issued a challenge of defiance to the very mechanisms of modern discipline.50

The claim that gay male bodybuilding constitutes ‘a valuable political service on behalf of everyone’ is Halperin’s attempt to put a social or political gloss on what is otherwise an essentially individual enterprise, ‘political’ here referring to Foucault’s understanding of it as a form of power which works on the actions of others. This is not to say that gay male bodybuilding is not a form of resistance in an important sense. Indeed, my point is that such techniques of the self embody the dimension Foucault calls ‘ethics.’ At the individual level, practices such as this might constitute a form of resistance to the kinds of discipline involved in attempts to produce bodies of certain kinds. Ultimately, however, Halperin’s claim that this works ‘on behalf of everyone’ - a claim that introduces a

49 Halperin Saint Foucault, 115.
50 Halperin Saint Foucault, 117.
political dimension to these practices - is not convincing. As Halperin admits several pages earlier, fist-fucking and S/M may be engaged in ‘not for the sake of politics but purely for the sake of pleasure.’51

This statement highlights an issue I take up shortly, and that is central to the development of my argument. The issue is the difference between acts of resistance that are undertaken with a programmatic intent, and acts that are performed with no oppositional strategy or effects in mind. I explore this issue in the next section of the present chapter, where I show that the kinds of incidental political effects of engagement in the pleasures that Halperin describes can be contrasted with the effects of more deliberate forms of political engagement, such as those undertaken by the AIDS activist organisation ACT UP. Before moving on to this, however, another point must be made concerning Halperin’s veneration of queer ethical practices. A humorous example from Saint Foucault introduces my point. Early in the text Halperin asks,

what book do we imagine the more reflective members of ACT UP to carry about with them in their leather jackets? What is the single most important intellectual source of political inspiration for contemporary AIDS activists - at least for the more theoretically-minded or better-outfitted among them?52

Halperin’s use of phrases like ‘more reflective,’ ‘more theoretically-minded’ and ‘better-outfitted’ (does this refer to their minds or to their leather jackets?) is in part playful hyperbole, but it contains a strong judgment in favour of certain kinds of action over other styles of lesbian and gay activism. This in itself is not the problem that concerns me here, however. The problem arises towards the end of the essay when he states that:

[t]he last thing we should want to do, then, is to devise and distribute a kind of cultural resistance meter, a test to determine how radically transformative, or truly queer one practice or another really is.53

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51 Halperin Saint Foucault, 97.
52 Halperin Saint Foucault, 15-6.
53 Halperin Saint Foucault, 115.
Yet this is exactly what Halperin does when he holds up Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, Volume I, as the source of political inspiration for those whom he obviously considers to be the more progressive lesbian and gay activists. Referring to Foucault’s notion of politics as ‘work on the self,’ Halperin writes,

[w]ithout advancing a notion of political ascesis so minimal and empty that it might include shopping for the right outfit, in other words, what we really need to do is to avoid formulating a set of criteria for resistance so rigorous and systematic that they would absolutely exclude the possibility that resistance could ever take the form of shopping for the right outfit.\(^54\)

Earlier in the text he cautions, “‘[q]ueer,’ in any case, does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions; rather, it describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance.”\(^55\) But Halperin’s examples - of fist-fucking, gay male bodybuilding and S/M - and his dismissal of more traditional styles of lesbian and gay activism, betray him here. His warnings against constructing a ‘cultural resistance meter,’ are more a defence of queer politics against charges of empty aestheticism (‘shopping for the right outfit’) than a genuine defence of different forms of resistance, for Halperin clearly believes that some practices are ‘more transformative’ and ‘more queer’ than others. For example, despite occasional gestures towards ‘collective transformation,’ as in the passage below, Halperin envisages queer as primarily being about ongoing self-transformation.

Foucault’s approach also opens up, correspondingly, the possibility of a *queer politics* defined not by the struggle to liberate a common, repressed, preexisting nature but by an ongoing process of self-constitution and self-transformation - a queer politics anchored in the shifting sands of non-identity, positionality, discursive reversibility, and collective self-invention.\(^56\)

The emphasis in this passage on ethical practices of self-constitution and self-transformation show that these form the core of Halperin’s notion of resistance. In this, Halperin seems to follow Foucault, whose thoughts on the relationship between ethics

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54 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 115.
55 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 62.
56 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 122.
and politics, as I have argued, display a certain individualism. For example, Halperin 
cites a 1980 manifesto that Foucault helped to draft and that reads in part: 'It is not up to 
us to take responsibility for institutions which need to be reformed. It is up to us to 
defend ourselves so well that the institutions will be forced to reform themselves.'\(^{57}\) The 
key phrase here is 'to defend ourselves.'\(^{58}\) The onus appears to be on individuals to use 
or acquire the capacities to defend themselves - although Foucault does acknowledge that 
‘liberation is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of liberty.’\(^{59}\) 
Ultimately, however, Foucault’s is an individual ethic, emphasising practices of self-
transformation, and the invention of new pleasures, as against collective practices of 
politics. We have also seen that, for Foucault, Halperin and other queer writers, 
resistance is not only conceived primarily as an exercise of the self; it is also an ongoing 
practise. Queer is understood as a permanently critical, or oppositional, stance - hence 
Halperin’s caution against laying down criteria for measuring how queer one practice or 
another really is. I have argued, however, that Halperin advocates certain ways of being 
queer such as practising S/M, fist-fucking and so on and, perhaps to a lesser extent, 
queer cultures such as communities of gay leathermen, whilst dismissing as somehow 
‘less queer’ other ways of being lesbian, gay and so on. This understanding of queer 
involves a prescriptive dimension, in a move which parallels that in Foucault’s work. As 
we saw in earlier chapters, this move involves shifting from description of power 
relations, to advocacy of certain kinds of power relations and of ethical practices. 

In both Halperin’s and in Foucault’s work, then, there is a tension or an ambivalence. 
On the one hand, queer is presented in terms of what Foucault describes as ‘an attitude, 
an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same 
time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the

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\(^{57}\) Halperin takes this quote from David Macey *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 1993, 418. 
\(^{58}\) This seems to correspond to a distinction in his thinking between 'liberation' - whereby individuals 
are ‘freed’ or try to free themselves from power - and ‘resistance’ - a term that Foucault understands in 
much more singular and local terms. ‘Defend ourselves’ seems consistent with a notion of individual 
practices of resistance in a way that liberation is not.

\(^{59}\) Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom,’ 3. Foucault’s comment leaves scope 
for arguing that political action to liberate others is sometimes the condition for individuals to practise 
their freedom. I take this up in the concluding chapter.
possibility of going beyond them.' In other words, queer is undefined, open-ended and permanently critical, of itself and of other constructions of sexualities. On the other hand, Halperin and Foucault suggest queer directions in which they believe it is desirable to move, such as their advocacy of S/M and of fist-fucking as practices that experiment with new forms of pleasure and new kinds of relations. As I have demonstrated, both writers argue that this experimentation will lead to the development of a ‘queer culture’; that is, they believe that queer practices of the self, as practices of resistance to normalising power, will lead to changes in practices of power in the dimensions that Foucault calls ‘truth’ and ‘politics.’ S/M, fist-fucking and other ‘queer sexual practices’ attempt to combat the operation of governmental techniques which primarily work through individuals - their bodies, subjectivities and so on - but as Foucault’s distinction between ethics and politics suggests, government also operates at other levels, for example, through techniques, such as laws and disciplinary techniques, that are more clearly aimed at directing the actions of others. This suggests that different kinds of resistance might be appropriate, depending on the kind of technique and level of power being resisted.

**Acting Up**

Halperin discusses a kind of movement that, he argues, is consistent with his definition of queer. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), he writes, is ‘genuinely queer insofar as it is broadly oppositional’; that is, ACT UP is queer because it is not so much a movement defined by sexual orientation (whose members fight for those with HIV/AIDS) but more defined by its opposition and challenge to certain regulatory and disciplinary strategies undertaken by doctors, drug companies, government legislators, landlords and so on. Opposition to these strategies is mounted not only at the point at which they affect people with HIV/AIDS, but also at the points at which they touch other communities, such as the homeless, people fighting for access to banned or expensive medicines, and so on.
drug treatments of various kinds, schoolchildren who need ‘safer sex’ education in their schools and so on.

Joshua Gamson, however, offers a slightly different perspective to Halperin’s on the role of identity in ACT UP. He points out that AIDS politics and ‘gay politics’ (here we can assume that Gamson means lesbian and gay) are ‘simultaneously associated and dissociated.’ He writes:

ACT UP is an AIDS activist organisation built and run by gay people... AIDS activists find themselves simultaneously attempting to dispel the notion that AIDS is a ‘gay disease’ (which it is not) while, through their activity and leadership treating AIDS as a gay problem (which, among other things, it is).

Hence, Gamson notes, we see actions such as the following.

Gay campiness, raunchy safe-sex songs in front of the Department of Health and Human Services, straight-looking men in skirts wearing ‘Fuck Me Safe’ t-shirts, lesbians and gay men staging ‘kiss-ins,’ a general outrageousness that ‘keeps the edge’ - these actions simultaneously accept the gay label, build a positive gay identity, challenge the conventional ‘deviant’ label, connect stigmatization to AIDS deaths, and challenge the very process of categorization.

These actions accept the lesbian/gay label at the same time as rejecting the negative association of these labels with ‘deviant.’ Actions such as these aim partly at forging a ‘positive’ lesbian/gay identity. So unlike Halperin, Gamson asserts that ACT UP is involved in ‘actively forging a gay identity while challenging the process through which it is formed for gay people.’ A gay identity, then, but stable and more or less self-defined, as opposed to other-ascribed. As Gamson points out, and as we saw in the

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63 Gamson ‘Silence, death, and the invisible enemy,’ 42.
64 Gamson ‘Silence, death, and the invisible enemy,’ 50. Halperin says this about AIDS politics: ‘however complex the politics of AIDS may be, we should not ignore or underrate the element of homophobia that pervades and shapes virtually every part of it.’ (195, n.) I do not suggest, therefore, that Halperin does not believe that lesbian/gay issues are central to AIDS politics, but that he tends to downplay the role that these identities play in AIDS politics, and particularly in ACT UP.
65 Gamson ‘Silence, death, and the invisible enemy,’ 44 (emphasis added).
passage above, ACT UP uses 'stigmas and identity markers as tools against the normalization process.'

Through this example of ACT UP, Gamson argues that sexual identity categories such as 'lesbian' and 'gay' can be 'reclaimed' in such a way that they can take on self-defined meanings, perhaps as well as (if not always instead of) their wider discursive meanings. This has similarities with one dimension of Halperin’s understanding of queer - a term that designates a space in which individuals can create for themselves their own identity or, for that matter, non-identity. Thus it might be difficult to see why the term queer is preferred over lesbian, gay, sadomasochist and so on, if all of these identities can be thought of, not in terms of some objective essence, but rather in terms of how their bearers want to understand them (with the qualification, of course, that no such self-understanding can be reached in isolation from the various other forms of government to which we are subject, and that contribute to our constitution as subjects of certain kinds.) But Halperin and other queer writers use ‘queer’ because it does more work than is encompassed by Gamson’s idea of self-definition. First, the critical and reflexive principle behind the adoption of the term ‘queer’ means that it may not be as susceptible to essentialist connotations as are terms such as ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay,’ ‘bisexual’ and so on. Queer theorists hope that, by deploying this critical principle, the term will escape attempts to define what it ‘means’ to be queer. Halperin’s understanding of ‘queer’ is differentiated from Gamson’s subjective understanding of ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay’ and so on, in a second sense. Whereas Gamson wants to see homosexual identities as self-defined, but nevertheless more or less fixed or stable, Halperin wants to maintain an understanding of queer as an oppositional relation to whatever is classified as ‘normal’ in relation to sexualities. ‘[O]ne of its crucial uses,’ Halperin writes about queer, is its ability ‘to define (homo)sexual identity... not as a thing but as a resistance to the norm.’

Butler’s understanding of queer has significant similarities with Halperin’s. Before I move on to discuss these, as well as the important differences, however, it is useful to

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66 Gamson ‘Silence, death, and the invisible enemy,’ 44.
67 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 67.
draw out the points made in this and the first part of the chapter. In Part I, ‘Queering Identities,’ I demonstrated that queer theorists look for resistance in techniques and practices not associated with the kinds of action that traditionally are termed ‘political’ (marches, rallies, petitions and legal challenges are a few examples) for the following two reasons: first, because of problems associated with mobilising around identity categories such as lesbian and gay; and second, because of a conviction that power operates on and through individuals - their bodies and their subjectivities - in modern societies. Queer theorists argue that, given these observations, techniques of power that target or implicate sexualities are resisted most effectively at the level of the individual, in the techniques that individuals employ on themselves to govern their own behaviour and to make them into certain kinds of subjects.

In Part II, ‘Halperin’s Queer Ethics,’ I argued that Halperin appears to have ambivalent attitudes towards a total abandonment of sexual identities and political mobilisations based on these identities. On the one hand, queer is presented as a position of marginality and oppositionality in relation to the norm, and is a position that entails perpetual reinvention and experimentation. On the other hand, Halperin seems to have clear ideas about the kinds of practices, and the forms of resistance, that queer is seen to stand for and best accommodate. That is, while the experimental impulse behind queer would seem to work against the construction of blueprints - of ways of being, forms of political action and resistance, for instance - Halperin has strong views about what kinds of practices are truly queer, or at least more queer than others. He argues that it is through these queer practices of the self that individuals can resist the normalising power of sexuality and of gender. Sadomasochism, fistfucking and other sexual practices that involve neither the genitals nor necessarily orgasm are examples of ethical practices, or techniques of self, that, for Halperin, constitute such creative work. I argued that, like Foucault, Halperin often suggests that political transformation will flow from changes in these ethical practices. While I find Halperin’s account of the self-transformative potential of queer convincing, his claims for the wider effectiveness of queer are problematic, for two reasons. First, Halperin’s examples do not demonstrate any
necessary connection between ethics and politics. Queer can indeed be useful, both as a
critical analytical tool and as a ‘positionality,’ but this utility by no means necessarily
extends to the political dimension. The examples Halperin uses to demonstrate the
political uses of queer do not do the work he wants them to. His example of ACT UP
demonstrates that effective activity in the political dimension draws upon ‘traditional’
forms of organisation such as those centred around lesbians and gays. The role, if any,
that queer notions might play in ACT UP mobilisations is unclear. Nor is it clear from
his example of a community that has been built around queer sexual practices - a
community of gay leathermen who practise S/M and fist-fucking - that these practices are
forms of resistance to techniques and rationalities of power that operate predominantly in
the political dimension.

The second problem associated with Halperin’s claim about the political effectiveness of
queer sexual practices results from his conflation of resistance with subversion. Halperin
suggests that queer sexual practices that are engaged in ‘purely for the sake of pleasure’
are acts of resistance to normalising techniques of power that take sexualities and genders
as their objects. His claim that these are acts of resistance is based on the subversive
effects that, according to him, are produced by these acts. Halperin’s work represents a
significant advancement on the governmentality literature in an important respect, in that
he recognises the centrality of Foucault’s notion of ethical practices to analyses of power
and resistance. Halperin’s lack of distinction between resistance and subversion,
however, means that subversive effects determine what constitutes an act of resistance,
rather than this being determined by the decision on the part of individuals to resist
particular constructions of subjectivity, or to resist techniques that work on such
constructions. While queer sexual practices might resist normalising techniques,
individuals do not need a conscious oppositional strategy to practise this kind of
resistance. Halperin does not, therefore, pursue the line of thinking in Foucault’s work
on ethics that points toward a notion of programmatic resistance, where specific
techniques and relations of power are targeted with the intention of transforming them.
Butler, whose work I turn to below, offers a way of conceiving of this kind of resistance through her notion of performativity.
PART III
Queer Trouble

Performing Queer

Butler focuses on the processes through which both sexualities and genders are produced and subverted. She characterises her work as a ‘critical genealogy of the naturalization of sex and of bodies in general.’ Although Butler points to differences in the ways in which she and Foucault construct their respective critical histories,68 these differences are not my concern here. Instead, as a way of introducing Butler’s work I want to highlight some similarities between her ‘critical genealogy’ of sexualities, genders ‘and of bodies in general’ and Foucault’s methods and aims. Foucault explains his project like this:

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.69

Analogously, Butler is concerned to understand the processes by which bodies with sexualities and genders are produced, constrained, marginalised, and so on. Like Foucault, she argues that subjects are constructed, a process she explains in the following way.

Crucially, then, construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that

which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the deconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilized, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis.70

Butler’s claim about the transformative possibilities of this kind of constructionist or genealogical project strongly resonates with Foucault’s claims about his work. In an interview Foucault argued that ‘the critical question today,’ and to which his work is aimed, is ‘wearing away certain self-evidentnesses and commonplaces... to bring it about... that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly performed...’71 Similarly, Butler writes that ‘[t]he critical task’ is, through showing how gender and sex are constructed through the repetition of norms,

to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.72

‘Performativity’ is the name Butler gives to the process through which genders and sexualities are constructed. As the term ‘performativity’ suggests, this process occurs through repetition, in this case the repetition of norms. In an article published after the appearance of Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, her first lengthy discussion of the notion of performativity, Butler responds to some critical reactions provoked by the first book. Gender performativity, she explains, is not a role, a choice, or ‘a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning... This is a voluntarist account of gender which presumes a subject, intact, prior to its gendering.’73 Butler argues that such an account of gender performativity is not what she intended to convey in her earlier work. According to Butler, ‘a regulatory regime of gender differences’ produces gendered subjects who, because they are not gendered

70 Butler Bodies That Matter, 1993, 10.
71 Foucault ‘Questions of method,’ 12.
72 Butler Gender Trouble, 147.
73 Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 21.
before being ‘interpellated’ into this regime of gender differences, perform their gendered roles through the ‘repetition of norms.’ She writes,

> [p]erformativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of a gendered self. It is a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject, and which are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, displacement are to be forged. The practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production, but not for that reason fully determining.\(^74\)

We can see that Butler’s notion of performativity involves analysing relations between truth (implied in her reference to the existence of norms), ethics (in the sense that subjects enact and subvert these norms) and politics (the processes through which norms are produced, deployed, enforced and resisted). What Butler has to say about the performance of gender also goes for sexuality: ‘it is through the repeated play of this [lesbian] sexuality that the “I” is insistently reconstituted as a lesbian “I.”’\(^75\) In other words, the performance of lesbian sexuality (a performance that, of course, assumes many different forms) produces the lesbian subject, not the other way around. According to Butler, in this performance, as the quote above suggests, this repetition produces a fundamental instability of the category it produces. She argues that the same is true for heterosexual identities (encompassing both sexualities and gender, although in the following passage Butler focuses on gender):

> gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself. In other words, the naturalistic effects of heterosexualized genders are produced through imitative strategies; what they imitate is a phantasmatic \([sic]\) ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect.\(^76\)

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\(^{74}\) Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 22.

\(^{75}\) Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 311.

\(^{76}\) Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 313 (emphasis in the original).
That is to say that performance constitutes the appearance of a ‘subject,’ whether it be a subject of sexuality or of gender. And, in an assertion that in an important sense expands Foucault’s thesis about the centrality of sexuality to modern power, Butler writes: ‘the very possibility of becoming a viable subject requires that a certain gender mime be already underway. It is a compulsory performance in the sense that acting out of line with heterosexual norms brings with it ostracism, punishment, and violence...’ That is, genders, and not just sexualities, are central to the construction and regulation of identities.

Butler uses the notion of performativity to account for, not only the construction of identity categories, but also the subversion of these categories. When she discusses the subversive potential in performativity she refers to techniques or performances that highlight the constructed and indeed imitative nature of homo- and heterosexual identities. She writes:

> The parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called original [heterosexual identity], but it shows that heterosexuality only constitutes itself as the original through a convincing act of repetition. The more that ‘act’ is expropriated, the more the heterosexual claim to originality is exposed as illusory.

This is the reasoning behind Butler’s claim that ‘drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities’ are subversive of notions of original, primary and stable sexual and gender identities. She notes that some perspectives within feminist theory view these practices as, in her words, ‘an uncritical appropriation of sex-role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality, especially in the case of butch-femme lesbian identities.’ Butler argues, however, that this view ‘assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that “masculine” belongs to “male” and “feminine” belongs to “female.” There is no “proper” gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another,

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77 Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 314-5.
78 Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 314.
79 Butler Gender Trouble, 137.
which is in some sense that sex’s cultural property.’ If there is no ‘original,’ in other words, there can only be appropriations. Her argument, briefly put, is that ‘[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself - as well as its contingency.’ Thus parodies of the ‘original’ ‘denaturalise’ and ‘mobilise’ gender and sexual meanings, displacing the original meaning and imitating ‘the myth of originality itself.’

An important qualification to her claim about the subversive character of drag, however, concerns the contexts in which drag, cross-dressing and butch/femme lesbian stylisations are performed. Butler acknowledges that ‘[p]arody by itself is not subversive... [because some] repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony.’ The ‘context and reception’ of various parodic actions are important because any subversive effects cannot be guaranteed. Butler’s argument that drag is ‘implicitly’ subversive of gender suggests that any subversive effects may be limited to those who are in a position to appreciate the subtlety of the performance (even though subtlety is not often a term associated with drag). Like Halperin’s account of gay male bodybuilding, drag and other stylisations make certain kinds of statements to those who know how to ‘read the signs.’ This is perhaps necessary when more overt statements attract homophobic (verbal and physical) abuse. Care needs to be exercised, however, when presenting these kinds of performances as somehow more politically sophisticated, perhaps because of their subtlety, than more ‘traditional’ kinds of action, such as street rallies or demonstrations, as we saw that Halperin tends to.

While Butler does not make this kind of comparison between the two styles of political action, it is not clear what drag and other such performances are subverting. Undoubtedly, camp styles, butch lesbians, drag, gay male gym bodies and so on can be acts of resistance to normative gender (and, to a lesser extent in these examples, sexual) styles. It is questionable, however, whether drag performs a subversion of the ‘structure

80 Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 312.
81 Butler Gender Trouble, 137 (emphasis in the original).
82 Butler Gender Trouble, 138.
83 Butler Gender Trouble, 139.
of gender itself,’ especially given that Butler points to the importance of ‘context and reception’ when attempting to predict or to assess the effects of performance. The effects of drag and of other queer practices, in other words, can be neither predicted (nor delimited) in advance. This is because it is equally possible that drag can effect a reinforcement of sex- and gender-role stereotyping, as Butler is aware. ‘Heterosexuality can augment its hegemony through its denaturalization, as when we see denaturalizing parodies which reidealize heterosexual norms without calling them into question.’\textsuperscript{84} Her counter to this argument echoes the point I made in the previous part of the chapter in relation to Halperin’s evaluation of queer versus more traditional styles of activism. We saw that Halperin presents the former as a more sophisticated form of action. Likewise, Butler argues that ‘the relation between the “imitation” and the “original” is, I think, more complicated than [the] critique generally allows.’\textsuperscript{85} The very fact that the critique does not recognise the ‘complexity’ involved in the performance of drag and other practices reinforces my point that these practices ‘do’ many things, one of which may be to highlight and subvert the imitative structure of gender, just as they may ‘do’ other things, such as expose the performer to homophobic abuse or reinforce stereotypical perceptions about queers.

Further to this point, Butler emphasises that gendered and sexual subjects are produced within a ‘matrix of power’ through the repetition of regulatory norms of sexuality and gender. By ‘matrix of power’ Butler seems to refer to the dominant heterosexual matrix of power, with all of its conventions, regulatory impulses and disciplining tactics, such as those elaborated by Foucault in \textit{The History of Sexuality}. I want to suggest, however, that the contexts in which stylisations, such as drag, camp and so on, occur are very much structured by, but by no means coextensive with, this heterosexual matrix. In other words, it is possible to identify homosexual matrices of power that have (often equally) regulatory and disciplining tendencies. Thus butch-femme, cross-dressing, drag and so on can be seen as entirely hegemonic performances, repeating (or imitating) homo/transsexual norms of gender. From this perspective perhaps such stylisations can

\textsuperscript{84} Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 22.
\textsuperscript{85} Butler \textit{Gender Trouble}, 137.
not even be regarded as subversive (unless they are performed in predominantly ‘straight’ contexts, and even then, as I suggest elsewhere, there is no guarantee that they will be either performed or received as subversive parody).

Performance, Parody and Politics

Nevertheless, despite these qualifications, Butler’s work furthers our understanding of the relations amongst ethics, politics and resistance in three important ways. First, she emphasises, in a way Halperin does not, the importance of context in attempting to determine the subversive effects of particular actions or practices. In doing this she does not compare the politics of drag, cross-dressing and so on to more ‘traditional’ styles of lesbian and gay activism, finding the latter lacking as Halperin seems to. She argues that these kinds of action continue to have their uses. The temporary mobilisation of identity categories such as ‘women,’ ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ is necessary, according to her, because firstly, these terms ‘lay their claim on us prior to our full knowing’ (and are, hence, extremely difficult to escape) and secondly, because claiming these terms ‘in reverse’ makes it possible to refute ‘homophobic deployments’ of the terms in public discourse. In Butler’s words, ‘it is in this sense that the temporary totalization performed by identity categories is a necessary error. And if identity is a necessary error, then the assertion of “queer” will be necessary as a term of affiliation, but it will not fully describe those it purports to represent.’

Butler thus recognises the risks attendant upon mobilising around categories of identity, especially where those identities are already subject to various kinds of discrimination and assault. A more detailed perspective on what is entailed by those risks is offered by Cindy Patton. Patton argues that identity politics tends to reinforce the very processes against which resistance is targeted, as illustrated by the following excerpt from her book *Inventing AIDS*:

An attack on ‘one’ becomes a symbolic threat to all others in that identity group. This is the basis of calls for legal intervention, but what is ignored here is the way in which the law as

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86 The same arguments can be made against Halperin’s claims about the subversive nature of practices such as fist-fucking and gay male bodybuilding.
87 Butler *Bodies That Matter*, 230.
public discourse organizes repressive institutions which actually incite, define, and legitimate hate/identity-based violence. Where identity categories are obvious (black, female) or presumed (gay), laws in fact create patterned social control over the subordinate group, through such practices as selective enforcement (the prosecution of assault by blacks on whites, but not whites on blacks; the prosecution of sex workers, but not pimps; charges of libel, but not prosecution of racist name-calling), or the mitigation of criminal charges according to the type of person assaulted (largely un- or under-prosecuted are wife battering, gay- or black-bashing, and rape).  

Patton goes on to explain that marginalised individuals confront these forms of social control and, instead of experiencing them as one-off or individualised occurrences, this social control is seen as systematic repression ‘common to a class of persons.’ Members of that class then ‘come to see in themselves an identity.’ The once hidden and covert discrimination and repression in turn is transformed into ‘the overt systematic controls associated with colonial administration - police raids on community meeting places, arson, bashing.’ Patton concludes that ‘[i]dentity politics are a resistance to and at the same time a reinstatement of the underground side of a public politics grounded in the threat of sheer coercion.’ Here Patton refers to a process whereby political mobilisations around identity categories such as ‘lesbian and gay’ often result in a reinforcement of the techniques of power that provoked their initial resistance. This is what Butler’s assertion of queer aims to avoid. Queer, she writes, is ‘never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage...’; to emphasise a point I made earlier in this section, Butler does not intend queer to become another identity category.

Butler maintains a consistent view of the relation between queer politics and traditional styles of lesbian and gay activism. In this respect she provides a more developed account than Halperin of the possibilities of queer politics. For Halperin argues that, while he does not wish to develop a ‘cultural resistance meter,’ he does believe that Foucault’s queer politics is for ‘the more theoretically-minded’ and ‘better-outfitted’ of activists.

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88 Cindy Patton *Inventing AIDS*, 1990, 123.
89 Patton *Inventing AIDS*, 123.
90 Patton *Inventing AIDS*, 124 (emphasis added).
91 Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 19.
92 Halperin *Saint Foucault*, 115; see also 15-6.
So Butler gives the impression that she takes seriously traditional styles of lesbian and gay activism, whereas Halperin displays towards them a condescending attitude.

The second contribution Butler’s work makes to this thesis is her accounts of the construction and regulation of gender. Butler argues that neither gender nor sexuality can be understood without the other, but she is careful to emphasise that there are no determining or causal connections between them. She writes, ‘a non-causal and non-reductive connection between sexuality and gender is nevertheless crucial to maintain.’

Here Butler distances herself from what she sees as Sedgwick’s claim that, as Butler puts it, ‘certain kinds of sexual practices link people more strongly than gender affiliation.’ Sedgwick suggests that sexuality is a primary identifier to which gender is secondary. Her argument is based on an essentialism of gender, according to which gender is considered by her to be fixed in a way that sexual object-choice is not. Sedgwick writes that ‘the most dramatic difference between gender and sexual orientation [is] that virtually all people are publicly and unalterably assigned to one or the other gender, and from birth.’ Sedgwick uses this claim to argue for the ‘distinctness’ of sexual orientation from gender, as well as to argue that ‘sexual orientation, with its far greater potential for rearrangement, ambiguity, and representational doubleness [offers] the apter deconstructive object.’ Butler is critical of the implications of this statement for analyses of gender and sexuality. She argues that Sedgwick’s position divorces gender from inquiries into the construction of sexualities. Butler’s own position defends ‘the irreducibility of sexuality to gender or gender to sexuality,’ but still insists on ‘the necessity of their interrelationship.’

If gender is more than a ‘stigmata,’ a ‘tag’ that one wears, but is, rather, a normative institution which seeks to regulate those expressions of sexuality that contest the normative boundaries of gender, then gender is one of the normative means by which the regulation of sexuality takes place.

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93 Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 27.
94 Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 34.
95 Sedgwick *Epistemology*, 34.
96 Butler ‘Against proper objects,’ 26-7.
Butler’s argument that sexuality and gender can only be thought in non-reductive connection to each other is also used by her to criticise theories in which sexual relations, or sexual subordination, are viewed as establishing gender categories. As an example, Butler refers to Catharine MacKinnon’s work, in which, as Butler explains, “men” are those defined in a sexually dominating social position, and “women” are those defined in subordination.\(^97\) But, she argues, such a ‘deterministic’ account leaves no room for theorising, for example, ‘forms of sexual regulation that do not take gender as their primary objects (i.e. the prohibition of sodomy, public sex, consensual homosexuality).’\(^98\) In short, Butler insists that sexuality and gender must be thought in ‘dynamic relation to one another.’ For Butler, this rethinking of the opposition sexuality/gender serves as a launching pad for reconceptualising notions of subversion and politics. Feminism and queer theory, she suggests, need to be approached, not as the linking of two ‘separate enterprises,’ but as constitutively interrelated.\(^99\)

The third aspect of Butler’s work that is productive for the aims of this thesis is her notion of performativity. As an account of the process through which norms of gender and of sexuality are constructed and reiterated, it allows Butler to emphasise the limits and constraints imposed by these norms, as well as to argue that, because these norms have to be reiterated, there is always room for resistance and subversion. ‘[I]f repetition is the way in which power works to construct the illusion of a seamless heterosexual identity, if heterosexuality is compelled to repeat itself in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity, then this is an identity permanently at risk...’\(^100\) The critical work she undertakes thus aims ‘to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions... [and] present the immanent possibility of contesting them.’\(^101\)

\(^{97}\) Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 27.
\(^{98}\) Butler ‘Critically queer,’ 27. The ideas to which Butler refers here can be found in Catharine MacKinnon’s *Feminism Unmodified*, 1987 and *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, 1989.
\(^{100}\) Butler ‘Imitation and gender insubordination,’ 315.
\(^{101}\) Butler *Gender Trouble*, 147. Butler also presents a lucid account of the subversive potential of performativity in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, 1997.
Butler's notion of performativity also carries with it a recognition that parody of, or 'failure to approximate,' norms of gender, of sexuality, and so on, are not necessarily subversive. She writes, 'there is no promise that subversion will follow from the reiteration of constitutive norms; there is no guarantee that exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion.'

The potential for resistance to norms of genders and of sexualities is exactly that: a potential, but Butler wants to emphasise that this potential exists in all acts of repetition. For example, she writes that, because heterosexuality 'is always in the act of elaborating itself' and is thus always at risk, 'it can become an occasion for a subversive and proliferating parody of gender norms'; and in another essay she writes, 'the subject who is “queered” into public discourse through homophobic interpellations of various kinds takes up or cites that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition.' Butler suggests, in other words, that subjects perform constructions of gender and sexuality in strategic ways in order to resist attempts to interpellate and regulate them as subjects with particular genders and sexualities.

Intrinsic to this formulation of resistance is the idea that subjects identify certain constructions as oppressive or intolerably constraining, and perform actions that contest or resist these constructions. This formulation of resistance should be distinguished from reactive resistance that requires no theory of agency on the part of the subject(s) involved, such as we found in the governmentality literature. It also should be distinguished from the conception of resistance that Halperin's work illustrates. I argued that, according to Halperin's conception of resistance, subjects are agents insofar as they choose to practise certain acts. His reason for calling some acts acts of resistance, however, is more because they might produce subversive effects than because they are calculated attempts to disrupt particular programs of government; these acts are not necessarily performed as part of an oppositional strategy. By contrast, Butler's notion of performativity allows her to think about resistance in isolation from any effects resistance might produce. She

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102 Butler 'Critically queer,' 22.
103 Butler 'Imitation and gender insubordination,' 314 (emphasis added).
104 Butler 'Critically queer,' 23 (emphasis in the original).
describes resistance as something that occurs, or can occur, in a deliberate and programmatic fashion. Butler's notion of performativity, therefore, furthers the possibilities for thinking about resistance because it allows us to conceive of subjects who choose, not merely to act, but to resist.
CONCLUSION

Philosophy is precisely the challenging of all phenomena of domination at whatever level or under whatever form they present themselves - political, economic, sexual, institutional, and so on. This critical function of philosophy, up to a certain point, emerges right from the Socratic imperative: 'Be concerned with yourself, i.e., ground yourself in liberty, through the mastery of the self.'

1 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 20.
Be concerned with yourself,' Foucault urges, 'ground yourself in liberty,' for he argues that, with the appropriate techniques of self-government, individuals can avoid domination and simultaneously transform themselves. As this thesis has shown, Foucault argues that resistance and transformation are the inevitable counterparts of government and freedom. In the first section of this concluding chapter, I want briefly to recount my presentation in Chapters One and Two of Foucault's account of the relationship between these notions. I also make some concluding remarks about the treatment of government, freedom and resistance in the governmentality and the queer literatures. The second section contains my final remarks concerning Foucault's position.

As noted in the Introduction, my approach to this topic differs from the two most common approaches used in commentaries and critiques of Foucault's thought published to date. The first, epitomised by Habermas and Fraser, is marked by judgments about Foucault's work that are not based on a careful reading of the material. The result is a misinterpretation of this work. Habermas and Fraser argue, for example, that Foucault lacks a normative basis for his thought, an assessment that is made on the basis of their own criteria of what normative political theory and philosophy should be. The exegetical approach adopted in this thesis, in contrast, has allowed me to disinter and to foreground the political and ethical preferences that are inscribed in Foucault's work. At the same time, the thesis also performs a critical function. It highlights difficulties that emerge from Foucault's ethical and political positions. This critical dimension distinguishes the present work from the second alternative approach to Foucault's work, which I suggested is evident in Scott's and Rajchman's commentaries. While Scott and Rajchman approach Foucault's work from a sympathetic perspective, their uncritical positions mean they do not look beyond the seemingly descriptive character of the material presented by Foucault, and they therefore miss the underlying prescriptive dimension in his work. My criticisms of Foucault address this dimension, critically engaging with the political implications of Foucault's formulations of ethics and resistance.
Foucault's analyses of particular regimes of power (such as the prison, psychiatric institutions, the government of sexualities) involves making distinctions amongst three dimensions of power. He refers to these as truth, politics and ethics. The first is associated with the knowledges and rationalities that to a certain extent delimit the conceptual space in which power relations operate. The second, politics, is a term Foucault often uses to describe the operation of power as it affects, or aims to affect, populations. Ethics, finally, refers to the techniques of power that individuals practise upon themselves.

Foucault’s distinctions between these dimensions are partly analytical, because they are designed to draw attention to the particular practices that are fundamental to different kinds of power relations. But he argues that these analytical distinctions also correspond to differences in practices of power in specific fields, for example madness, sexuality and punishment. Foucault does not suggest, however, that the dimensions of truth, ethics and politics are unrelated. He argues that the analysis of one dimension also involves looking at the others, just as practices in one dimension always implicate practices in the other dimensions.2 For example, he traces the construction of the homosexual along these three dimensions of power, while at the same time paying attention to the ways in which each dimension interacts with the others. He begins by looking at the development of a medico-scientific knowledge of sexuality (the dimension he calls 'truth') and the simultaneous emergence of categories of sexuality that enable the identification and management of particular groups such as inverts, sodomites and fetishists (the dimension of politics). He also looks at the means by which individuals participate in, and resist, the construction and government of their own sexualities (the dimension of ethics).

I suggested in Chapter One that it is useful to view Foucault’s notion of government in terms of these three dimensions. That is, we saw that governmental rationalities can be

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2 See, for example, his discussion in 'Polemics, politics and problematizations,' esp. 386-8.
thought of as a kind of ‘truth’; techniques for the government of the self are exercises in what Foucault calls ‘ethics’; while techniques for the government of others participate in the operation of power referred to throughout this thesis as ‘politics.’ As a result, I argued, much of Foucault’s work suggests that ethics should be the starting point for resistance to modern techniques of power.

In making these arguments, I pursued two areas of investigation of Foucault’s work. The first was his analysis of liberal government. According to him, this is a form of political rule that relies upon freedom. He means by this that individuals practise techniques of the self, thereby directing their behaviour in particular ways at the same time as they participate in the operation of government. While the practise of specific techniques of the self is itself an effect of government, the point Foucault emphasises is that liberal governmental programs rely less on discipline and coercion - political techniques - and more on the volition and capacity of individuals to govern their own behaviour - ethical practices.

The second area of investigation I pursued was Foucault’s work on sexuality. Sexuality is used by Foucault to demonstrate the ways in which individuals govern their own conduct, through ethical practices, in relation to a set of prescriptions or moral codes. But sexuality should not therefore be regarded simply as a convenient example of a field in which ethics operates; Foucault argues that sexuality is the pivot around which power revolves, because sexuality is ‘a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species.’ This formulation suggests that the deployment of sexuality rests on both totalising and individualising techniques of power. That is, sexuality constructs totalising categories or identities - homosexuals, perverts, sodomites and so on - and, simultaneously, works through techniques by which individuals enact or perform, and resist, these identities.

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These forms of government - the government of others and the government of the self - often directly imply and rely on each other. But, while directing the conduct of others can be attempted in a range of ways (from spiritual guidance, to schooling, to physical coercion), the essence of governing in a liberal vein means that individuals are incited to participate in their own government. It is therefore through the practise of techniques of the self, or ethics, that individuals conform to and, importantly, disrupt attempts to regulate their behaviour. This is where Foucault’s analyses of liberal government joins with his investigations into the government of sexualities. Liberal governmental rationalities dictate that individuals can and should govern their own conduct, and that the use of other, more coercive, governmental technologies should be kept to a minimum. Through techniques of self-government, individuals make themselves into particular kinds of subjects, or subjects with particular identities. For Foucault, because sexuality is constructed as perhaps the most intimate, personal and revealing dimension of our identities, it is a useful domain in which to elaborate his notions of identities and ethics. Through this elaboration he aims to show, firstly, that it is through their identities that individuals can resist power, and secondly, that ethics, the practise of the self by which individuals construct and govern their identities, should be the starting point for resistance.

Foucault’s investigations into the possibilities of resisting techniques of power involve looking at how ethics works, or what happens when individuals conduct themselves in one manner or another. He looks at what it is the individual wishes to govern; why the individual wishes to practise a particular mode of conduct; the specific practices an individual performs or engages in, or how this mode of conduct is practised; and the goal of these actions, the way of being an individual aims to enact or to perform.4 Foucault thus discusses the kinds of calculations involved in practising certain techniques of the self and performing certain identities. This allows him to suggest that individuals can engage in resistance through creating and practising novel techniques of the self. That is

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4 I discussed this schema in Chapter Two, Part II, ‘On self-fashioning.’ See also Foucault The Use of Pleasure, 25-32.
resistance is conceived by Foucault in strategic and tactical terms, as calculated action in an ongoing struggle of freedom.⁵

This construction of programmatic resistance, as strategic and calculated action, is distinct from, and additional to, a more basic understanding of resistance we found in Foucault’s work: reactive resistance - the idea that resistance simply will occur, often regardless of whether oppositional effects are intended. This view of resistance stems from the ‘thin’ notion of human being that I discussed in Chapter One. We saw that it entails what Foucault calls ‘the intransigence of freedom,’ the permanent capacity for action in human beings that the exercise of power relies upon. As Foucault puts it, ‘[t]he relationship between power and freedom’s refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated.’⁶

In much of the governmentality literature, I argued, reactive resistance is the only form of resistance that is discussed. In this literature the focus is on techniques for the government of others, techniques which thus participate in the operation of the dimension of power Foucault calls politics. One result of this emphasis is that the failure of, or disruption to, governmental programs is explained primarily in terms of conflicts between governmental directives, rather than in terms of calculated acts of resistance on the part of those who would be governed. Rose’s work, I argued, provided a clear illustration of this approach. Constructing resistance in the way that Rose does - as something that simply will occur as a result of conflicting pressures on individuals to behave in certain ways - does have a basis in Foucault’s work, as I have shown. But to present a conception of resistance in purely reactive terms is to misconstrue the main thrust of Foucault’s work on government and freedom. For I argued that Foucault wants to develop an account of the relation between government and freedom in which individuals have the capacity to make strategic choices as to whether they participate in, or resist, governmental programs. I also argued that, for Foucault, ethics is the key to this form of ‘programmatic’ resistance.

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⁶ Foucault ‘The subject and power,’ 221.
Two governmentality writers, Dean and Burchell, recognise the utility of Foucault’s notion of ethics to analyses of liberal government. This, I explained, means that they begin the work of building into governmental analyses of liberal government an account of resistance in which individuals engage in acts that have calculated or intended oppositional effects. However, their accounts of the importance of ethics to liberal government, and of the possibilities for resistance contained in practices of ethics, are essentially introductory. This may be because ethics is largely neglected in the literature, so some backgrounding is necessary. In terms of the ground covered in this thesis, however, their analyses do not significantly further our understanding of the practices with which individuals can and do resist particular techniques and effects of power.

It was partly with the aim of teasing out such possibilities of resistance that I turned to the work of queer theorists. Queer theorists, like Foucault, argue that categories of sexual identity are constructed, and that these identities both constrain, and provide individuals with possibilities for, ways of being. Sexualities, in other words, are a means of governing; it is in relation to norms of sexuality that individuals govern their own actions in particular ways (whether or not they reiterate those norms), and it is also in relation to norms of sexuality that the government of others’ sexualities is effected. Sexuality can thus be understood as a field of power that revolves around the construction and maintenance of categories of sexuality and sexual identities. The nexus between sexuality, as such a field of power, and liberal government, as an exercise of power that relies to a great extent on individuals’ self-government, means that identity categories are central to techniques for the government of others and to techniques for the government of the self. It is often in terms of the identity categories to which they are assigned or that they take on - as a long-term unemployed, an Aboriginal Australian, a person living with HIV/AIDS, a lesbian parent and so on - that individuals are caught up in programs and techniques for their regulation and discipline; and it is also in terms of such categories that individuals relate to themselves and govern their own behaviour.
Queer theorists are particularly interested in exploring possibilities for resistance to the operation of forms of power that work through normalisation. Like Foucault, they want to argue that subjects can engage in programmatic resistance - resistance that involves calculation about the aims and the means of resisting intolerable or objectionable forms of government. I used Halperin’s work to illustrate one such attempt to formulate a conception of programmatic resistance. For Halperin, as for Foucault, resistance to norms of sexuality is represented by ‘queer sexual practices’ such as fist-fucking and sadomasochism. Fist-fucking, according to Halperin, is a technique that resists the normalised construct that sexual relations revolve around genitally-focused desire. This not only transforms individuals, according to Halperin; it also undermines norms around sexuality in spheres beyond the individual, for example medical discourse, criminal codes and so on. Here Halperin makes explicit an argument that is left undeveloped in Foucault’s work on sexualities - that political transformation flows from queer ethical practices.

I argued in Chapter Four that, while these practices might have oppositional or subversive effects, as well as being transformative for the individuals concerned, they are not necessarily acts of resistance in the programmatic sense discussed above. The claim that certain practices are acts of resistance rests on a slippage from subversion to resistance, where the actual or potential oppositional effects of particular acts or practices are projected on to the acts themselves. Halperin and Foucault then label these acts of resistance, whether or not they are undertaken with an oppositional aim.

Halperin’s discussions of queer sexual practices deepen our understanding of Foucault’s claim that techniques of the self can be used to resist and to disrupt techniques of government. They leave undeveloped, however, the element of calculation and programming involved in many forms of resistance. As a result, resistance often appears in Halperin’s work as something that is undertaken purely for pleasure and with no political intent. Foucault’s work on queer sexual practices is similarly limited, but I have
argued that his more general work on ethics provides the conceptual tools with which to think about individuals engaging in programs of resistance.

Like Foucault and Halperin, Butler argues that queer practices, such as drag, are techniques of the self that are often forms of resistance to normalised constructs of sexuality and gender. She emphasises, however, in a way that neither Halperin nor Foucault do, that the ‘context and reception’ of these acts will help to determine their political effects. This formulation contains a recognition of a distinction between individual acts of resistance, on the one hand, and political transformation, on the other. This distinction is not clear in Halperin’s work, although I have argued that it is implicit in Foucault’s work. So, while Butler asserts that drag can be an act of resistance on the part of an individual, she also recognises that the political effects of the performance are not guaranteed. She therefore helps to focus attention on the political dimension of queer ethical practices, and in the process she highlights one of the ways in which Halperin’s claims about the political utility of queer ethical practices needs to be qualified.

My discussion of Butler’s work suggests that more thinking needs to be done on two further issues. First, Butler demonstrates the interdependence of constructs of sexuality and of gender. This suggests that Foucault’s project of a history of sexuality would benefit from looking to the ways in which gender functions alongside sexuality in the government of subjects. Second, Butler’s notion of performativity introduces a complex account of the ways in which norms of gender and sexuality are constructed, reiterated and, on occasion, refused and subverted. In her account, unlike in Halperin’s, there is no necessary relation between acts of resistance and any subversive effects these acts might produce. Thus, rather than attempting to think about resistance in terms of the effects it produces, as Halperin does, Butler turns her attention to exploring the kinds of calculation that might be involved in acts of resistance such as cross-dressing. Her attention to the ethical dimension of resistance involves Butler in an analysis of the techniques of self-government through which individuals make themselves into ethical and political subjects, in conformity with, and sometimes in opposition to, particular
governmental programs. She therefore considers the ethical and political reasoning behind acts of resistance, in an analysis that closely resembles Foucault’s accounts of the formation of ethical subjects. She therefore considers the ethical and political reasoning behind acts of resistance, in an analysis that closely resembles Foucault’s accounts of the formation of ethical subjects. Both Foucault and Butler, then, posit a subject who is capable of making strategic choices regarding the kind of subject they aim to be, both ethically, in relation to themselves, and politically, in relation to others.

As the discussion above demonstrates, each chapter in this thesis contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between government and freedom in Foucault’s work. The chapters also shed light on the different understandings of resistance that emerge from studying the relationship of government to freedom in various fields of power, including sexuality, punishment, liberal government and so on. I now want to make some final comments regarding Foucault’s subject of resistance.

_Fore for Self and Care for Others_

‘The problem is,’ Foucault explains, ‘to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games [of power] to be played with a minimum of domination.’ Care for self, or the practise of ethics, is therefore a condition for avoiding domination, according to Foucault. This formulation presupposes the existence of particular configurations of power that are characterised by reversible or fluid power relations. Within relationships of this nature, individuals have the space to practise various techniques of the self, and to be experimental with these techniques and with their ways of being. Practising such ethical experimentation, according to Foucault, is to engage in ‘the undefined work of freedom.’

But Foucault recognises that within some configurations of power, the practise of ethics and participating in ‘the undefined work of freedom’ are impossibilities. When he says,  

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7 See ‘Imitation and gender insubordination’ for an example of Butler’s work in this area.
8 Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 18.
for example, ‘a slave has no ethics,’\textsuperscript{9} he means that where individuals are subject to physical determination or domination there is little or no room for the exercise of ethics or of freedom. ‘Liberty is the condition of ethics...’\textsuperscript{10} This suggests that liberation from some forms of power or of domination is sometimes necessary for individuals to be in a position to practise ethics. The practise of ethics, which allows individuals to participate in the undefined work of freedom, is, therefore, not only or not always an individual question; it also has a dimension that might be characterised as ‘care for others.’ For Foucault, care for others implies that individuals are involved in social or political relations. He explains that, for the ancient Greeks, for example, ‘[e]thos implies also a relation with others to the extent that care for self renders one competent to occupy a place in the city, in the community or in interindividual relationships...’\textsuperscript{11} Foucault draws on this aspect of Greek life because he sees his task as provoking, or at least contributing to, transformations in the spheres of politics and truth, as well as the transformation of ethics. He says of his own work, ‘it is necessary to clear the way for a transformation, a metamorphosis which isn’t simply individual but which has a character accessible to others: that is, this experience must be linkable, to a certain extent, to a collective practice and to a way of thinking.’\textsuperscript{12}

Nonetheless, this social or political dimension deserves more attention than it is given in Foucault’s texts. Consequently, we are often left with the impression that Foucault’s is an ethics for the privileged - for those who are in situations where domination is at a minimum. Power relations - among individuals as well as in the relationship of self to self - are such that the space exists in which individuals can practise different techniques and ways of being. Foucault’s is also an ethics for those who have capacities, or the means to develop the capacities, that allow them to practise creative and transformative techniques of self-government. Foucault’s account of resistance - one that is grounded in individual ethics - is not, therefore, accessible to everyone.

\textsuperscript{9} Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 6.
\textsuperscript{10} Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 4.
\textsuperscript{11} Foucault ‘The ethic of care for the self,’ 7.
\textsuperscript{12} Foucault \textit{Remarks on Marx}, 38-9.
If a weakness in Foucault’s work is that he sometimes forgets that it is far more difficult for some than it is for others to change their ways of thinking about and being certain kinds of subjects, his contribution to thinking about ethics lies in his argument that we are obliged to carry out this transformative work on ourselves. The ethos behind this work on the self is, according to Foucault, a central aspect of modernity and one he would like to see strengthened. ‘To be modern,’ he writes, ‘is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration... This modernity does not “liberate man in his own being”; it compels him to face the task of producing himself.’

Foucault sees this task, not as a burden, but rather as a project from which to take delight and great satisfaction. ‘[T]he relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation.’

Perhaps more important than its contribution to ethics, though, Foucault’s work on the relation between government and freedom gives us a sense of the prevalence of possibilities for transformation. For, gaps and fissures always exist between programs of government and their implementation. It is in these spaces that the practise of freedom produces its most critical effects.

And if I don’t ever say what must be done, it isn’t because I believe that there’s nothing to be done; on the contrary, it is because I think that there are a thousand things to do, to invent, to forge, on the part of those who, recognizing the relations of power in which they’re implicated, have decided to resist or escape them. From this point of view all of my investigations rest on a postulate of absolute optimism. I do not conduct my analyses in order to say: this is how things are, look how trapped you are. I say certain things only to the extent to which I see them as capable of permitting the transformation of reality.

13 Foucault ‘What is enlightenment?’, 41-2.
14 Foucault ‘Sex and the politics of identity,’ 31.
15 Foucault Remarks on Marx, 174.


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