Governing Life: From Biopolitics to Governmentality in M. Foucault

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Abstract

This article forms part of the tributes to Michel Foucault's legacy in 2024, the 40th anniversary of his death, acknowledging Foucault's enduring influence on the fields of Social Sciences and Social Studies over the past five decades. This text focuses on two of his most resonant and widely used concepts and seeks to achieve a level of conceptual rigor that is often missing in contemporary Social Studies while bucking the trend of neglecting epistemological domains in theoretical and interdisciplinary constructions. The article explores the categories of biopolitics and governmentality, both of which are widely used in a range of interpretative and research frameworks, a situation that can lead to their conceptual fetishization. Rather than asserting absolute truths about these categories, the authors seek to situate them both conceptually and historically, engaging in informed and reflexive dialogues that recognize their complexity in the context of Foucauldian analytics. Finally, the article argues for dialogues that preserve epistemological definitions, generate a discursive order that respects the richness of Foucauldian categories and incorporate a critical ontology approach that seeks to deepen their meaning and relevance in contemporary discourse.

Key words:

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Gobernar la vida: De la biopolítica a la gubernamentalidad en M. Foucault

Resumen

El artículo se propone unirse a los homenajes dedicados al legado de Michel Foucault en el año 2024, marcando el cuadragésimo aniversario de su fallecimiento. Reconociendo la perdurable influencia de Foucault en las ciencias sociales y los estudios sociales durante las últimas cinco décadas. El texto se centra en dos de sus conceptos más resonantes y de amplio uso, con el objetivo de convocar rigor conceptual que a menudo se pierde de vista en los estudios sociales contemporáneos, se aborda la tendencia a desatender los dominios epistemológicos en las construcciones teóricas e interdisciplinarias. Se enfoca particularmente en las categorías de biopolítica y gubernamentalidad, ampliamente utilizadas en diversos marcos interpretativos e investigativos, destacando el peligro de su fetichización conceptual. Más que afirmar verdades absolutas sobre estas categorías, se busca situarlas en su densidad conceptual e histórica, fomentando diálogos informados y reflexivos que reconozcan su complejidad en el contexto de la analítica foucaultiana. En última instancia, el artículo aboga por diálogos que conserven su sentido epistemológico, generando un orden discursivo que respete la riqueza de las categorías foucaultianas, en línea con un enfoque de ontología crítica que busca profundizar en su significado y relevancia en el discurso contemporáneo.

Palabras clave:

Biopolítica, Gubernamentalidad, Biopoder.

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Introduction

This article adds to the tributes paid in 2024 to Michel Foucault, a year that marks the 40th anniversary of his passing on June 20, 1984 at 1:15 p.m. in Paris at La Petié Salpétriére Hospital, aged 57. Despite his premature death, Foucault had and continues to have a fundamental influence on the fields of Social Sciences and Social Studies around the world during the last five decades. His conceptual trajectories have had extraordinary degrees of resonance, use and development by academics, professors and researchers during this period.

This text aims to generate a level of conceptual rigor that needs to continue have a presence in the fields of Social Sciences and Social Studies. Of course, rigorous conceptual development still exists, however it is not always incorporated into the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary production of the social. Even though fundamental constructions of the social in emerging fields of study have been achieved with significant analytical power, sometimes, and not infrequently, dialogues have been authorized that ignore epistemological domains in the emergence of certain categories and discourses (Jaramillo-García, 2012). These dialogues are articulated with areas that are either diametrically opposed or at least far apart in their conceptions of knowledge, truth, reality, history, subject, object, limits, etc.

These types of theoretical, analytical or methodological constructions involve the use of conceptual tools that have either a general or dehistoricized use, which means that they do not involve work carried out by a conceptual genealogist who orders and auscultates each of the texts based on their origin or particular historicity. It is important to remember that texts and concepts require an itinerary in space and time as they inhabit places in which they become entangled and require an explanation of their use and abuse (Salinas, 2014).

The focus of this article is on two major categories in the area of Foucauldian production that are currently widely used in interpretative frameworks and research processes: biopolitics and governmentality. The issue with these categories is not their

potency, which is indisputable, but their conceptual fetishization (Virno, 2001). When certain categories are used to understand everything and explain everything, they lose their specificity, their interpretative potential and the force of their codification. Now, the intention of this article is not to define any "truths" regarding these categories, but instead situate them in their conceptual and historical density through an informed and reflexive reading. The authors consider these categories to be positions on a starting grid, specific moments in the history of reflections on the government-subject-truth relationship that require development and dialogue. If the goal is to engage in dialogues that can be multiple and creative, then it is very important that they do not lose their epistemological meaning and instead generate a discursive order that acknowledges the density of these categories in Foucauldian analysis, which is why this article uses an archeological approach.

In terms of the development of Michel Foucault's thought, the transition towards biopolitics represents a crucial phase in his work. This began with the publication of *Discipline and Punish* and reached a new dimension with the concept of biopower in *The History of Sexuality*. This article examines how Foucault develops his notion of power, which was originally centered on anatomopolitics, later incorporating a broader and more complex understanding that includes biopolitics, a concept that integrates biological and social phenomena within the domain of power. Through an analysis of his lectures at the Collège de France and other key texts, the authors explore how biopolitics emerges as a central axis of Foucault's thought, identifying how this notion relates to and differentiates from the concept of biopower in his later work.

Initial transit to biopolitics: Biopower

After his work in the field of anatomopolitics exploring spaces of confinement and rigid norms in *Discipline and Punish*, in 1976 Foucault published his first volume of *The History of Sexuality,* subtitled *The Will to Knowledge*. In the last chapter of this text, titled *Right of Death and Power over Life*, he begins to delineate a path in his conceptual horizon, that although brief, is fundamental in the creation of a new and powerful analytical space. The concept of biopower first appears in this chapter and was part of

his 1975-1976 Collège de France course titled *Society Must Be Defended* (Foucault, 2006a), specifically in the class delivered on March 17. Biopower is also discussed in the first class of his 1977-1978 course titled *Security, Territory, Population,* which was held on January 11.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault talks about how a step is being taken from the sovereign power of *take life and let live*[3] to a new type of power that corresponds to *make live and let die*. This is power over life, as the philosopher initially calls it, stating that this type of power manifests in two main forms. One is a type of power that has existed since the 17th century and is embodied in the anatomopolitical disciplines of the human body. The other was configured in the middle of the 18th century and preys on the species body, corresponding to the biological processes that give life to the population[4], specifically "a series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population" (Foucault, 2002, p. 168). This power based on two poles is "anatomical and biological, individualizing and speci-fying, characterizes a power whose highest function is no longer to kill but to invade life entirely" (Foucault, 2002, p. 169). Foucault declares that the 19th century was the beginning of an era of *biopower* that was consolidated as a significant technology in an articulated manner.

In his first mention of biopower in *The Will to Knowledge*, it is noticeable that Foucault refers to both anatomopolitics as well as biopolitics. The latter is mentioned in relation to the 18th century, which was when, in the midst of transformations of knowledge and power, the human life enters the space of politics, becoming

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3   "Basically, it means that, in the face of power, the subject is, by right, neither alive nor dead. From the point of view of life and death, it is neutral, and it simply corresponds to the sovereign's decision that the subject has the right to be alive or, eventually, to be dead. In any case, the life and death of subjects only become rights by effect of the sovereign will. [...] In short, the right to kill effectively possesses in itself the very essence of this right to life and death: the moment he can kill, the sovereign exercises his right over life. It is, fundamentally, a right of the sword. There is, therefore, no real symmetry in it" (Foucault, 2006, p. 218).

4   "Proliferation, births and mortality, level of health, length of life and longevity, with all the conditions that can make them vary" (Foucault, 2002, p. 168).

politicized. It is notable that in his *Society Must Be Defended (*1975-1976) Collège de France course, Foucault does not maintain this same distinction. There is a shift in his conceptualization of biopower, evident in the last class:

> What is the central interest in this new technology of power, this biopolitics, this biopower that is being established? [...] The new technology of power does not exactly deal with society [...] nor with the individual/body. It is about a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while it might be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. It is the idea of *population*. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem.[....] Beneath that great absolute power, beneath the dramatic and somber absolute power that was the power of sovereignty, and which consisted in the power to take life, we now have the emergence, with this technology of biopower, of this technology of power over "the" population as such, over men insofar as they are living beings. It is continuous, scientific, and it is the power to make live. (Foucault, 2006, pp. 221-222-223)

The variation made by Foucault implies that he no longer sees a distinction or subordination of biopolitics to biopower, but a synonymy instead. The two concepts are understood as one in this part of his work[5], or more precisely, there is no distinction between

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5   It is important to note that there is no consensus on the hypothesis proposed here. Perhaps this is a position that is close to the work of the Argentine philosopher and editor of several texts by Foucault published in Spanish, Edgardo Castro, who argues that Foucault attributed a precise meaning to the term "biopower". He recognizes that there are two conceptual understandings: a broad one that includes anatomopolitics and biopolitics; and a restricted one that is synonymous with biopolitics (Castro, 2011). This hypothesis is closer to the position of Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez (2010), who proposes that "Foucault himself never established a conceptual difference between *biopower and biopolitics.* They are terms he uses interchangeably" (p. 55). It should be noted that Foucault never specifically explains why in some texts he used the terms as one being subordinate to the other, while in other texts they are synonyms. As a result, and in opposition to Edgardo Castro's assertions, it is difficult to infer precise meanings of these terms. In his doctoral thesis, Cortés refers to

them. This is evident in his *Security, territory, population* course delivered at the Collége de France of 1977-1978. In his first class he discusses the concept of biopower in the following terms:

> This year I would like to begin studying something that I have called, somewhat vaguely, bio-power. By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is roughly what I have called bio- power. (Foucault: 2006, pp. 15-16)

Even though the word biopolitics does not appear, biopower is considered to have the same meaning, evidenced when Foucault alludes to a type of power that emerged in the 18th century, which had already been discussed in *The Will to Knowledge* using the term biopolitics. The allusion to a power that has the biological traits of the human species as its directly discusses the population without any explicit or implicit reference to anatomopolitical disciplines. It is clear that, at this point in time, Foucault does not distinguish between biopower and biopolitics in his work following the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. His last in-depth discussion using the term biopower was in the course titled *Security, territory and population 1977-1978*.

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the work of Colombian philosopher Rubén Sánchez in this area, noting that there is a difference between biopower and biopolitics: the former refers to a form of political rationality; the second involves a set of technologies deployed by it (Cortés, 2012, p. 37). This is not considered exhaustive, given that a broader review could be carried out in relation to the significant diffusion and reuse of the Foucauldian toolbox in this area (Agamben, Lazzarato, Esposito). It is important to note how Hardt and Negri use this term in their book *Empire*. The historian and the philosopher affirm that biopower refers to the way in which the lives of workers are placed at the service of the technologies of state power and global capital, while biopolitics refers to the possibilities of resistance or escape routes that people have created as a response to this type of biopower (Hardt and Negri, 2001).

Biopolitics: Power over life

After this initial mention of biopower, there is a notable shift in Foucault's thinking on this topic towards what the French philosopher understood as biopolitics[6]. In this case, he considers biopower as a predecessor to this concept and not as an equal or alternate term. Biopolitics has a central place in a number of Foucault's texts, including *History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (*Foucault, 2002), and courses he taught at the Collège de France such as *Defending Society 1975-1976, Security, Territory, Population 1977-1978* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. The term can also be found in the texts published in *Dits et Ecrits II 1976-1984* (Foucault, 2001).

Next, it must be stated that this "concept"[7] of biopolitics was developed before the notion of biopower. As far as we know[8], its first appearance in the Foucauldian lexicon was in a lecture at the State University of Rio de Janeiro in October 1974 (Castro, 2011; Esposito, 2011). Titled *Birth of Social Medicine,* Foucault demonstrates that modern medicine is not individualistic, "but it is a social medicine whose foundation is a certain technology of the social body" (Foucault, 1999a, p. 365). It was in this lecture that Foucault used the term biopolitics for the first time:

> What I maintain is that, with capitalism, we did not go from a collective medicine to a private medicine. Exactly the opposite occurred: capitalism, which developed from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, started by socializing a first object, the body, as a factor of productive force, of labor power. Society's control over individuals was accomplished not only through cons-

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6   In accordance with Esposito (2011), it is essential to clarify that the term biopolitics was not created by Foucault. The first to use it was the Swede, Rudolph Kjellen (1864-1922), who also coined the expression "geopolitics". Foucault does not cite Kjellen as the person who coined the term.

7   At this moment it had not yet been consolidated as a concept and, as shown, is transformed in later texts.

8   It is important to keep in mind that this "as far as we know" is not simply a vague assertion, it is based on the work of Edgardo Castro, who builds his arguments following a systematic and rigorous review of Foucault's published work.

ciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society, it was *biopolitics,* the biological, the somatic, the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. The body is a *biopolitical* reality; medicine is a *biopolitical* strategy. (Foucault, 1999a, pp. 365-366)

When he delivered this lecture in 1974, Foucault was *on the verge of* publishing what some consider one of his most significant works (Eribon, 2004), and what he himself called his first book, *Discipline and Punish*. It is not surprising that he associates the concept of biopolitics with the questions he later raised in the text mentioned above, which was published in 1975. At first, biopolitics appears as something that has its place in the body ruled by the disciplines. However, elements that occurred during the second half of the 70s were already appearing in Foucault's discussion. These include urbanism and the foul-smelling city, as well as clues about the living conditions experienced by populations[9] and the environments that they inhabit. In a later course titled *The Birth of Biopolitics,* this was conceptualized as the artificial environment and described using the French term *milieu*. In this text, the concept of biopolitics is not associated with these elements and only appears in the section cited above[10].

It should not be forgotten that the philosopher from Poitiers was always experimenting with his categories. One cannot expect an author to have his categories and concepts closed and defined in absolute terms from the beginning of their career, given that these are constructions that develop over time. As a result, the notion of biopolitics that we see in 1974 has different nuances in *The Will to Knowledge*, where it is subordinated, together with anatomopolitics, to biopower. In this text, biopolitics is more clearly defined:

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9 "Urban medicine is not really a medicine of man, the body, and the organism but a medicine of things-air, water, de- compositions, fermentations. It is a medicine of the living conditions of the existential milieu" (Foucault, 1999a, p. 378).

10 However, and as Esposito (2011) states, "what counts is that all the texts from those years seem to converge in a theoretical conglomerate within which no discursive segment acquires an entirely perceptible meaning if analyzed separately or outside of biopolitical semantics" (p. 46).

> One would have to speak of biopolitics to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. [...]what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (Foucault, 2002, p. 173)

Thus, biopolitics is proposed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* as a mode of regulating populations through the use of massive and statistical measures that seek to affect the whole. This is further developed in his course titled *Defending Society* (1975-1976), where, as indicated, biopolitics appears as a synonym for biopower. It is essential to note that in this context, biopolitics is intrinsically linked to the question of the "race war", a concept that Foucault uses to describe the way in which power operates through the division and hierarchization of human groups. Biopolitics is therefore not just limited to processes related to the proportion of births and deaths in a society, the reproduction rate or the fecundity of a population, but is also part of a broader strategy that includes the segregation and control of different "races" within the population. This biopolitical approach, which emerged at the end of the 18th century, involves the management of birth rates, mortality, morbidity, longevity and the effects of artificial environments created by the population, as well as problems involving political and economic order. It is in this context that biopolitics is responsible not just for the administration of life, but also the management of death, establishing who should live and who should die. This is a key component in the "race war" that underlies these dynamics (Foucault, 2006).

Biopolitics targets the population, specifically the collective phenomena that have an economic and political impact on people's lives as a whole. It does this through regulatory technologies: forecasts, statistical estimates, global measurements, and everything else that involves maintaining a balance in the

population so that it does not collapse, neither politically nor economically.

Biopolitics was later linked to a war-based power model in *Defending Society*[11] and adopts a new appearance in the first class of *Security, territory, population,* where Foucault speaks of taking up again what he had "vaguely" called biopower and declares that he will continue to treat biopower and biopolitics as synonyms[12], as previously mentioned. However, there is no specific discussion of biopolitics in this course. Instead, Foucault suggests the need to use other concepts in order to better understand this assumption, which now appears framed in the emergence of political economy and liberalism. The philosopher initially considered biopolitics as the mechanism through which the human species in the 18th century entered into a general strategy of power, its analysis requiring the construction of a history of security technologies (Foucault, 2006). In the fourth class of this course, delivered on February 1, 1978, Foucault uses biopolitics in the construction of a history of governmentality.

In his next course, *The Birth of Biopolitics (1978-1979),* Foucault finally develops the concept, given that the course uses

11 It should not be forgotten that Foucault, in the midst of his reflections on power, examines two models: the war model, that he himself called the Nietzsche hypothesis; and the model that appears as a strategic relationship between freedoms, an action on possible actions, which is framed in his work on governmentality and emerged in 1978 during his course *Security, territory, population* (1977-1978), as well as in a text published during the same year called *Governmentality*. In terms of his development of the biopolitics category, the war model still prevails in his discourse, stating that "power is war, war by other means [...] the relations of power as they function in a society such as ours, have as their anchor point a certain relation of force established at a given moment, historically identifiable, in war and by war [...] From the moment in which power is war, the power of the state is war [....] From the moment we are faced with power relations, we are neither in law nor in sovereignty (*i.e. we are in anatomopolitics and biopolitics)*; we are in domination, in that historically indefinite, indefinitely dense and multiple relation of domination (Foucault, 2006, pp. 28-29-108. Italics added).

12 "And this irruption of the naturalness of the species into the political artificiality within a power relationship is something fundamental, it seems to me. To conclude I will limit myself to a text by who was undoubtedly the first great theorist of what we could call biopolitics and biopower (Foucault, 2006, p. 42).

biopolitics as an axis for its class discussions. However, as he advances with his problematization of liberalism[13], Foucault recognizes the need for new conceptual tools, specifically the liberal technologies of government, so that he can suitably engage with this topic. In order to achieve this, he declares that he is going to place an ellipsis after the term biopolitics in his first class:

> I thought I could do a course on biopolitics this year. I will try to show how the central core of all the problems that I am presently trying to identify is what is called population. Consequently, this is the basis on which something like biopolitics could be formed. But it seems to me that the analysis of biopolitics can only get under way when we have understood the general regime of this governmental reason I have talked about, this general regime that we can call the question of truth, of economic truth in the first place, within governmental reason.

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13 It is important to understand this concept, as stated in *The Birth of Biopolitics,* using the following perspective: "What does "self-limitation of governmental reason" mean? What is this new type of rationality in the art of governing, this new type of calculation that consists in saying and making the government say: "I accept all this, I want it, I plan it, I calculate that it should not be touched"? I think that, roughly speaking, this is what we call "liberalism" (Foucault, 2008a, p. 39). Added in a footnote is something that Foucault did not state during his course but which was included in his manuscript: "It is necessary to understand that word [liberalism] in a very broad sense: 1) Acceptance of the principle that somewhere there must be a limitation of government and that it is not merely an external right; 2) Liberalism is also a practice to exactly find the principle of limitation of government and calculate the effects of that limitation; 3) Liberalism is, in a narrower sense, a solution consisting in limiting as much as possible the forms and spheres of action of government; 4) Finally, liberalism is the organization of transitional methods that are suitable for defining limitations of government practices:

- Constitution, parliament;

- Opinion, media;

- Commissions, investigations (Foucault, 2008a, p. 27).

Liberalism is a form of modern governmentality. Instead of encountering limits formalized by jurisdictions, it contains intrinsic limits formulated in terms of veridiction" (Foucault, 2008a, p. 39).

Consequently, it seems to me that it is only when we understand what is at stake in this regime of liberalism opposed to raison d'État—or rather, fundamentally modifying [it] without, perhaps, questioning its bases—only when we know what this governmental regime called liberalism was, will we be able to grasp what biopolitics is. (Foucault, 2008a, pp. 40-41)

Foucault presents here a new development of biopolitics and a new approach to governmentality. By referring to a new rationality that emerges in the 18th century, the French philosopher outlines perspectives on governmentality based on the nuance of a particular type of modern thinking regarding the art of government during the liberal and neoliberal stages of capitalism. In this course, which was focused on the history of systems of thought, Foucault adopts a conceptual approach that he himself describes as moving laterally like a crab. In the seventh class, held on March 7, he recognizes that he does not have enough time to delve into the concept of biopolitics as initially planned, stating, "I assure you that, in spite of everything, at the beginning I really intended to speak to you about biopolitics" (Foucault, 2008a, p. 218). However, he instead decides to focus more extensively on an analysis of neoliberalism, approaching it through the concept of governmentality.

This is a significant shift for Foucault as he moves towards an exploration of power relations, given that the concept of governmentality is a mechanism for analyzing these relations in the framework of human behavior, as noted by Castro-Gómez (2010):

The initial project of a genealogy of biopower ("birth of biopolitics") is postponed, even abandoned, to make way for a *history of governmentality*, which covers how liberal technologies take over the governance of life in Western societies. We can say that the concept of biopolitics is *provisional* in Foucault's work and serves as a "bridge" between the war model and the governmental model. (p. 63)

Subsequently, the biopower that was popularized by Foucault becomes nothing more than a category within Foucauldian constructions. It is notable that the courses delivered between 1976

and 1979, which include reflections on biopower, did not lead to any separate publications. This is different to his first period teaching at the Collège de France until 1975, which produced the text *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1984). It also differs from the courses taught between 1980 and 1984, which were published as the last two volumes of the History of Sexuality[14]. When Foucault was asked by Dreyfus and Rabinow in 1983 whether it would be logical for him to start writing a genealogy of biopower, he answered "I do not have the time now, but it could be done. Indeed, it is necessary for me to write it" (Foucault, 2013a, p. 127). This text was never realized due to his untimely death.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that Foucault's work on biopolitics generates important areas of inquiry and thus contributes to the development of key concepts in his work. The extensions, subordinations, transformations and conceptual assemblages that Foucault uses allow us to understand how he experiments with his concepts in his workshops and research. We see that he engages in constant reflection on his own terminology, which is then reworked and refined at each step of the problematization process. It is important to take into account the rigor and dynamics that characterize Foucault's work, given that he applies a unique kind of curiosity "that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself" (Foucault, 2003b, p. 12). He also notes that "there are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (Foucault, 2003b, p. 12).

With this experimental thinking, Foucault arrives at the concept of governmentality, which is more analytical grid than concept, and is discussed at length below. Foucault's governmentality places biopolitics as the point of transit between the conception

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14 This means that there is a gap in terms of major works published by Foucault on biopolitics and governmentality. It must be emphasized that biopower, as already mentioned, was only briefly discussed in the last chapter of the first volume of the History of Sexuality.

of power in the Nietzsche hypothesis using the war model, to a conception of power that is fully governmental and involves the conduct of men in relation to others and the subject in relation to themselves. As a result, this becomes a game of actions over actions and no longer just a relation involving some form of domination. As part of this shift in thinking, it is essential to note that governmentality and biopolitics are not synonymous, given that the latter refers to power over life while the former refers to the management of life (Castro-Gómez, 2011 in Cortés and Marín, 2011, p. 10).

Castro-Gómez expands on a number of dimensions in biopolitics so that this concept is not just considered a form of power that is only exercised at the "biological level of the species"[15]. Instead, the development of biopolitics by Castro-Gómez means that it can be used to analyze societies of control and not just disciplinary societies:

> Something quite different occurs when we no longer speak of disciplinary societies but of societies of control, in the sense indicated by authors such as Gilles Deleuze and Mauricio Lazzarato. This is particularly the case for when we want to think about the meaning of "government of life" in the framework of neoliberal policies. This type of government no longer has anything to do with the "biological" reproduction of the species through the disciplining of bodies and the state administration of variables such as birth, illness, death, etc., but is instead focused on the management of "capital". Specifically, this involves management of "human capital" through the creation of a milieu (government at a distance) in which the subjects themselves behave as "entrepreneurs of themselves". This is why Lazzarato says that the category of biopolitics no longer works for analyzing governmental practices in societies of control and proposes the concept of *noopolitics* instead (Lazzarato, 2006). Understanding that a different conceptualization of "life" is at stake in societies of

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15 This was shown in the *Will to Knowledge* and in *Defending Society,* specifically in relation to biological areas of the population such as birth rate, mortality, morbidity, longevity, etc.

control, I have suggested that the concept of biopolitics can still be useful as long as it is understood as a "*government of intimacy* in the framework of neoliberal technologies for behavioral conduct. (Castro-Gómez, 2011, in Cortés and Marín, 2011, p. 11)

Castro- Gómez proposes an understanding of the concept of biopolitics that facilitates the analysis of societies of control, which is a term first used by Deleuze in 1990[16] to describe challengers to the dominance of disciplinary societies. Societies of control continue to be discussed in the framework of new apparatuses and strategies by authors such as Lazzarato (2006; 2007) and Castro-Gómez himself (Castro-Gómez, 2011, in Cortés and Marín, 2011). When biopolitics is understood in the context of neoliberal government technologies, this goes beyond the limits of the biological and leads us to consider business management techniques that have the objective of governing the molecularity of life (Castro-Gómez, 2011, in Cortés and Marín, 2011, p. 12). This argument allows us to consider biopolitics as a government of intimacy that has already been passed through the sieve of governmentality.

Governmentality: Management of life

Governmentality, along with other concepts, is constantly refined and expanded by Foucault (Jaramillo-García, 2020). He first develops this notion in his course *Security, Territory, Population (1977-1978)* and *The Birth of Biopolitics (1978-1979),* which form what is considered to be a history of governmentality (Castro-Gómez, 2010). Instead of postponing the development of this concept, as he did with biopolitics, Foucault instead expands his work pm governmentality in other texts and extends its analytical field. After he completes teaching the course in 1979,[17] Foucault begins to refocus his gaze by incorporating ethics and forms of

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16 The text that mentions this point is *Post-scriptum on societies of control* (Deleuze, 1995).

17 Refers to the courses taught between 1979 and 1984 and the last two volumes of the History of Sexuality.

subjectivity in his problematization, a space that he continues to use to examine the art of government (Castro-Orellana, 2023).

Governmentality has an antecedent that must be taken into account, specifically the shepherd's power that becomes a source of tactics reappropriated by other governmental rationalities. As Foucault notes:

> The shepherd's power is not exercised over a territory but, by definition, over a flock, [...] The shepherd's power is essentially exercised over a multiplicity in movement.

> [...] On the one hand, the shepherd must keep his eye on all and on each, *omnes et singulatim*, which will be the great problem both of the techniques of power in Christian pastor- ship, and of the, let's say, modern techniques of power deployed in the technologies of population. (Foucault, 2006b, pp. 154-157)

This metaphor shows how the pastorate was, above all, a way of governing men, of channeling them, guiding them and taking them step-by-step collectively and individually throughout their lives (Foucault, 2006b). This goes beyond an action that is con- fined to the space of laws and territories and instead transcends the population through mass and individual techniques. Foucault sees a prelude to governmentality in the pastorate, identifying salvation, law and truth in its practices. He sees lines of power that guide particular forms of relationships between men, as well as a subject that is tied to obedience in which the extrac- tion of one's truth is facilitated through an action that a person must perform on themself. These instruments are then coupled with other new rationalities to form the Reason of State, which begins to emerge in the 16th century, as well as the economic governmental rationality that appears in the 18th century and is the example used in this text.

By considering this idea of a government that rules all, Fou- cault arrives at a meaning of modern governmentality, in which he proposes:

By "governmentality" I mean the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. 2. The tendency that, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led toward the preeminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, and so on) of this type of power-which may be termed "government"-resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of knowledges [savoirs]. 3. The process or, rather, the result of the process through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and gradually becomes "governmentalized". (Foucault, 1999b, p. 195)

This governmentality *initially emerges* as a principle of differentiation for sovereign power. It is separate from those forms of government that placed its main problem in the bond between the King and his subjects, the strongly legalistic conception of a State that wanted to emulate the administration of a family. As in feudalism, this State was more focused on the security of its territory than its people. When this configuration of governmentality is consolidated in the 18th century, after first appearing in the 15th and 16th centuries, we can see how a rationality is structured that is based on the practices of governmentality, positioning the population as one of its central political problems. Population is thought of in biopolitical terms in relation to the regime of governmental practices. Biopolitics appears as a result of the emergence of governmentalization processes that form part of the governmental relations of societies. This means that for the governance of a State to be successful, it is necessary that the population is regulated through biological processes that determine loss, gain and utility for the purposes of government.

As a second point, political economy appears as specific knowledge that "made it possible to ensure the self-limitation of governmental reason" (Foucault, 2008a, p. 30). There is a subsequent transition from the mercantilism of the 17ᵗʰ century, which involved strong control by the State over market dynamics, to the proposal developed by the physiocrats (18ᵗʰ century), which forged a path for what would first become liberalism and then neoliberalism. This political economy is installed as part of governmental practice in terms of its effects and not due to its basis in law. It associates a type of naturalness with the laws of the market that must be respected by the State. The State must intervene as far as necessary, but no further, and let the laws of the market operate freely.

It was the physiocrats who "showed that there are "natural" economic processes that escape the regulation of the State" (Castro-Gómez, 2010, p. 138). As a result, regulation doesn't benefit these processes, but instead "hinders" them by intervening in areas where it is ignorant, given that the economy does not operate based on law but instead obeys the nature of this phenomenon. As Foucault observes:

> For the State as well as for individuals, the economy must be a game: a set of regulated activities... but in which the rules are not decisions which someone takes for others. It is a set of rules that determine how everyone should play a game whose outcome is ultimately unknown to all. The economy is a game and the legal institution that frames it must be thought of as the rule of the game. The *rule of law* formalizes the action of government as a provider of rules for an economic game whose only participants, and whose only real agents, must be individuals or, let us say, if you prefer, companies. (Foucault, 2008a, pp. 208-209)

This means that we need to remove the question from the time of the physiocrats because these same parameters will operate with greater intensity in rationalities such as liberal capitalism and neoliberalism, in which there is a significant weakening of the Reason of State in favor of the economy.

Neoliberalism is understood as a set of governmental practices that are linked to and make use of the State, to a certain extent, in order to ensure the free development of its market game. The State appears in a form that can no longer have total and direct control over the market because the economy has its own logic, and the interference of the State is not seen as a good move. The State thus begins to be subjugated by the dynamics of the market and consumption. In the midst of these systems of rules, neoliberalism gives preeminence to the interests of the individual, which are supposed to be part of human nature and therefore cannot be judged morally (Zuluaga-Arboleda and Jaramillo-García, 2023). Since the market is moved by an invisible hand[18] that pulls the strings of the game, as originally proposed by Adam Smith, and because there is a natural order that ends up favoring everyone, this results in the creation of *homo œconomicus* and entrepreneurship of the self.

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18 It is important to take into account Foucault's own reflections on Adam Smith's theory of the invisible hand, which in Foucauldian analysis is of utmost importance for understanding neoliberal governmentality and the framework for homo œconomicus. Foucault (2008a) emphasizes the invisibility of the hand, considering "the idea, therefore, that there is something like an essential transparency in the economic world and that, if the totality of the process eludes each economic man, there is however a point where the whole is completely transparent to a sort of gaze of someone whose invisible hand, following the logic of this gaze and what it sees, draws together the threads of all these dispersed interest" (p. 321). In the same vein, it is important to note that "for there to be certainty of collective gain, for there to be certainty of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number of people, it is not only possible but absolutely necessary that each of the actors are blind to that totality. There must be uncertainty at the level of the collective outcome for each of them, so that a positive collective outcome can indeed be expected. Being in the dark and the blindness of all the economic agents are absolutely necessary. The collective good must not be an objective because it is not possible to calculate it, at least in the framework of an economic strategy [...] But I think the other element, invisibility, is at least as important. Invisibility is not just a fact arising from the imperfect nature of human intelligence which prevents people from realizing that there is a hand behind them which arranges or connects everything that each individual does on their own account. It is an invisibility which means that no economic agent should or can pursue the collective good " (Foucault, 2008a, p. 322).

The birth of security technologies occurs in the second half of the 18th century. Even though they do not totally eliminate other operational types of power, Foucault (2006b) observes the following:

> So, there is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear. There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security. Mechanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanisms, which would have replaced juridic-legal mechanisms. In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is (…) the system of correlation between juridic-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security. (p. 22)

The third element of this first moment of governmentality is related to the technologies that appear after those used to make die and let live, technologies employed in the name of sovereignty and those that were installed later and had the body as their object, known as the anatomopolitical disciplines. These disciplinary societies (which will later form part of Fordism and Taylorism and liberal systems, as well as the immaterial labor and outsourced sectors within neoliberalism), along with confinement, surveillance and examination, are not completely replaced but instead partially superseded due to the emergence of a new dominant force used to make power relations function.

Given that anatomopolitics, which characterized the societies of confinement, lost its privileged position as a strategic place to make power work, another operative logic took its place that makes use of resources according to needs and regulates based on its framework. This means that confinement is not used to exercise a certain type of power in societies of control. Instead, it is in the open air that this type of society seeks to influence the behavior of subjects.

Governance of behaviors

The governmentality of this security-government-population relationship, which makes the population and the biological processes that determine it emerge as a political object, creates a place of knowledge for the political economy and generates a strategy based on security technologies, is expanded on in Foucault's work after 1979, as already mentioned. During this time, Foucault sharpens his gaze and begins to conceive of power relations in the midst of governmental spaces that appear as "a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future" (Foucault, 1983 in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2001, p. 253).

This governmentality involves seizing a system of rules that has no essential significance in itself and imposing a new direction on it, either through violence or surreptitiously. This process includes submitting this system to a new will, making it enter into another game and submitting it to additional rules (Foucault, 1994), which can be observed in the field of power relations, as illustrated in the following quote:

> 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 [...] To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (Foucault, 1983, in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2001, p. 254).

This clarifies how power relations exist that are not related to violence, war or contracts renewed by mutual consent, but instead consist of government, which involve leading others through stra-

tegically designed behaviors. This includes designing a system of rules for the game that permits actions to be carried out at a distance and not directly on the body. This leads to a virtual field of actions where the other is expected to act, resulting in the generation of statistics and probabilities that evidence how certain behaviors occur as a result of specific strategies. It is important to highlight that this field of action is not a power in which it is useless to revolt, nor one in which the alternatives for reactions are simply a reflex effect of that same power, which is because it is not a total power. On the contrary, subjects who are governed by political and economic measures with strategies that cover the entire population and its multidimensional processes. These strategies involve the establishment of apparatuses that imply governmental technologies so that those involved have the possibility of responding to the actions that affect their lives, generating the appearance of freedom within the relations of power:

> 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. [...] Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are 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 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). The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot, therefore, be separated. (Foucault, 1983 in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2001, p. 254)

This reflection on power relations in the key of governmentality allows for a broader analysis compared to power wielded by some people over others. Freedom, thought of as a place that is engaged in an agonistic relationship with power, demonstrates how resistance can exist and that there is no such thing as total

government. Freedom appears as a place that can be constituted using a politics of truth, which questions power regarding its discourses of truth and questions truth regarding the effects of power (Foucault, 2003c). This problematizes what is considered necessary and creates opportunities for other practices that involve constituting subjectivity.

This means that we can problematize governmentality so that it extends to the territory of subjectivity. Foucault says that "my objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1983, in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2001, p. 241). Deleuze evokes Kant (1987) by stating that Foucault asked himself three fundamental questions regarding these forms of producing subjectivities: what can I know?; what can I do?; and who am I? Foucault questions knowledge and the way in which objectivations of the subject are produced by different discourses within the human sciences. He questions power relations and the ways of objectifying the subject through divisive practices. He also asks about how subjectivities are constituted, suggesting that while the subject may have some role in this process, they can also be subjected to this constitution through the knowledge-power-truth processes that occur in governmental spaces (Foucault, 2003a)[19]. This scenario has echoes of the individualizing techniques of Christian obedience, as well as reverberations of the aesthetics of existence that took shape in Hellenistic and Roman practices and were linked to a deliberate concern of the self by the self. This implies practices of freedom and putting the self over the self, generating alternative subjectivation processes, which are understood as an alternative to the constitution of the subject through resistance. It also alludes to subjection processes in which the discourses and modulations of power seek to stra-

19 This could also be understood as follows: "Historical ontology of ourselves in relation to the truth that constitutes us as subjects of knowledge (*Madness and Civilization, The Birth of the Clinic, The Order of Things*). -Historical ontology of ourselves in the power relations that constitute us as subjects acting on others (*Madness and Civilization, Discipline and Punish*). - Historical ontology of ourselves in ethical relations, by means of which we constitute ourselves as subjects of moral action (*Madness and Civilization, History of Sexuality*) (Morey, in Foucault, 1990, p. 25).

tegically produce the subject for specific ends (Jaramillo-García, 2015; Jaramillo-García, 2018). This evidences that a more elaborated form of governmentality has been identified in recent years, something that Foucault notes in *Hermeneutics of the subject*:

> If we take the question of power, of political power, situating it in the more general question of governmentality understood as a strategic field of power relations in the and not merely political -sense of the term, if we understand by governmentality a strategic field of power relations in their mobility, transformability, and reversibility, then I do not think that reflection on this notion of governmentality can avoid passing through, theoretically and practically, the element of a subject defined by the relation of self to self. Although the theory of political power as an institution usually refers to a juridical conception of the subject of right, it seems to me that the analysis of governmentality - that is to say, of power as a set of reversible relationships - must refer to an ethics of the subject defined by the relation of self to self. Quite simply, this means that in the type of analysis that I have been trying to advance for some time, you can see that power relations, governmentality, the government of the self and of others, and the relationship of self to self-constitute a chain, a thread, and I think it is around these notions that we should be able to connect together the question of politics and the question of ethics. (Foucault, 2008b, pp. 246-247)

This allows us to categorically state, based on Foucault's own works, that governmentality relates to the government of some people over others and the governance of a subject over themself. This means that we must consider the question of politics in terms of government, considered to be a form of action that has an impact on all and on each individual[20]. This is not just in relation to the governance of civil society, but also the arts of government. Neoliberal governmentality is particularly concerned

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20 This precept was postulated in the practice of pastoral power - *omnest et singulatim* - that is taken up again by neoliberal governmentality.

with the ways in which the "self", "individual" or "subject" relates to themself in certain discourses. It is important to note that this relation of self with self, what Foucault called ethics, and depending on the governmental framework in which it exists, can either generate the possibility of an aesthetics of existence or become part of a governmental strategy that does not consist of a desire to constitute the subject as unique and free.

Conclusions

Following this journey through key concepts that many thinkers have dedicated their lives to problematizing, either in accordance with or in spite of Foucault, it can be said that Foucauldian categories and concepts require a judicious treatment, meaning that we should place them in the domains for which they were produced. Foucault's concepts are not designed to be a type of dogma. On the contrary, this recommendation implies the need for problematizing the categories with which we work, while also recognizing the possibility of reconstituting or destroying them if the dynamics of the realities for which they were developed no longer exist. The most important point to make is that this work requires the same respect and rigor used by the original theorist in their intellectual production.

For this particular case, it is relevant that these concepts are considered a plurality, a multiplicity with local and practical value. "According to Deleuze's forceful and metaphorical expression (accepted by Foucault), the 'theory' is 'exactly like a toolbox'" (Lanceros, 1996, p. 16). This does not require a closed and defined system consisting of permanent categories for analyzing all realities but is instead an instrument that has its own logic for reading power relations. At certain points, these tools can short-circuit power relations and forms of domination. If required, this can be done through an assembly process using an epistemological background,

as well as drawing on other tools that form a "toolbox". This achieves a connection through a domain of exteriority that provides a specific importance to theory, while also resig-

ning any pretensions to place or imposing an *imago mundi.*
Together with other tools such as texts, theoretical deve-
lopments and books, these must be tested outside of their
specific contexts and in multiple, local and plural connections
with other tools (Morey, 1987, in Deleuze, 1987, pp. 12-13).

The toolbox creates possibilities for interconnection with other
reflexive techniques. It has the power to connect with other texts
that have been produced in the same vein. It does not make
a connection with just any text as there is an expectation that
the articulations achieved through categorical experimentation
are inscribed in a system of rules or logic for the production of
knowledge. Only those pieces that do not affect the possibility of
expanding this process are included in this epistemological and
creative puzzle.

This reflection on the toolbox gives meaning to this text. As we
already know, the concepts of biopolitics and governmentality did
not die with Foucault. Instead, they are powerful resources that
facilitate the creation of strong lines of thought by a wide range
of authors. However, it is important to bear in mind the scope of
the conceptual elaboration achieved by Foucault if one wishes to
follow his epistemic and categorical path.

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