

Pedagogy's Topographies of Power

Mark Jackson

ABSTRACT

The work of Michel Foucault develops a series of problematics with respect to an understanding of social and political order. From his early concerns with archaeology to those of genealogy, Foucault developed an entirely new discourse on power that broke decisively with political interventionist understandings dominated by Marxism and was equally at odds with liberal humanist concerns. From his analyses of what he termed the power-knowledge *dispositif*, and in relation to his close reading of Georges Canguilhem's philosophy of the biological sciences, Foucault opened a new horizon for understanding the political rationality of modernity in terms of what he named the bio-political. His late writings on governmentality emerged from these developments and emphasised the centrality of the human sciences in the political rationality of our modern forms of governance. This essay sets out to provide a detailed account of what Foucault understands by the notion of governmentality and how it differs fundamentally from our orthodox notions of governance that seek juridical guarantee in the legitimacy and unity of the State. This is primarily explored in the essay's first section, "Questions of Governance". In outlining this notion of governmentality, Foucault articulates three autonomous exercises of power that implicate each other but are neither reducible to one another nor isomorphic in their practices: strategies, programmes and technologies of power. This aspect of Foucault's work is examined in the central section, "Questions of Practice". The essay concludes with a discussion on the genealogy of the emergence of compulsory education as a spatial problematic of governmentality, "Questions of Control". It further suggests that our current concerns with globalisation present a political rationality of governmentality whose origin lies not in recent interventions or inventions of global mediation but rather in a problem of topographical management fundamental to the emergence of popular education itself.

Questions of Governance

In his research on the histories of rationalities of governance of the European State, Michel Foucault (1980a) makes a pertinent point. He is writing on the emergence, in France and Germany in particular, of a certain administrative body known as 'police.' From the sixteenth century until the eighteenth century, the term 'police' had a specific meaning that was quite different from how we now understand the word. Its concern was with the productive governance of individuals such that an individuated self was also productive for the State. Where the notion of 'policy' with respect to the State connoted a certain negative effect as in prohibitions, limitations and the exercise of law, 'police' was an entirely positive and productive State engagement in all aspects of the lives of individuated subjects. Referring to a 1705 text, *Traité de la police*, Foucault suggests:

I know very well that from the beginnings of political philosophy in Western countries everybody knew and said that the happiness of people had to be the permanent goal of governments, but then happiness was conceived as a result or effect of a really good government. Now happiness is not only a simple effect. Happiness 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 State strength (158).

The 'requirement' of happiness in modern forms of education will be later discussed, but firstly, I will provide some outline of Foucault's notion of governmentality as it concerns the objects and modes of our exercise of power and, secondly, to suggest that our modern forms of education, at least from the mid-nineteenth century have been formulated primarily as questions of spatial governance. If contemporary discourses of education broach a horizon we name 'global' we should see this neither as a fundamentally new arrangement in the governmentality of education nor is it suggestive of a new object of pedagogy. Rather, we should see it as a further exacerbation of the question of the State itself, as the State from the late eighteenth century has increasingly become not the site or source of governance but one of the primary objects of governmentality itself.

Foucault's work on governmentality is highly relevant for research in education: His genealogies of the political rationality of governance point to how particular administrative agencies produce their objects of knowledge, in particular the key object of governance in 'population' and the micro-instrumentality of normalising the individual. This has its correlate in education with the complexity of relations between individuated elements or sites, infrastructures and limits to the jurisdiction or definition of education itself. This infers implicitly the well-being of individuated selves and 'the community' as a social good. Foucault shows how political rationalities of governance, particularly from the late eighteenth century, increasingly separate themselves from the jurisdiction of sovereignty or State power. His emphasis is on the domain and disciplines of the human and social sciences and those discursive fields which attempt to systematise agencies of normativity with respect to population and individuated selves. Thus, increasingly during the nineteenth century, the developing sciences of the human or sciences of the social are utilised as the expertise upon which decisions will be made concerning the ordering or defining of populations and individuals. We may note, for example, the roles played by psychology and physiology in defining criminality, or the complex interactions of social medicine and legislation to define in systematic detail the necessary provisions for hygienic buildings. Foucault's argument is that the expertise addressed with respect to the human sciences increasingly becomes an expertise deferred to by the State with respect to defining and ordering populations and individuals. It is in this respect that the discipline of pedagogy and practices of education may be understood as constitutive of political rationalities that are not so much under the jurisdiction of a State, but rather are significant contributors to the complex problematic of the constituency of the State itself.

Foucault's detailed research on the emergence of 'population' and its relation to 'individual' as the primary concern of governance from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries shows this emergence to coincide with that of the city as the major locus of problems of order and good government. The major break, decisive for all modern forms of political rationality, happened in the seventeenth century, with the emergence of numerous treatises on the Art of Government (Foucault, 1979). These were intended to contest and supersede preceding notions of governance based on the imperative of territory as the foundation of principality and sovereignty. In short, the Art of Government emphasised that one governs things, not territory, that is, men and their relations: Their wealth, resources, climate, irrigation, and fertility in relation to habits, ways of doing, thinking and relations to accidents, famine, and so on (11). Here, government and sovereignty are cleaved. Sovereignty tended to mean rule for a common good that in a circular logic meant obedience to the laws of sovereignty. With the art of government, the end is the convenience for each thing to be governed as a specific finality, not by imposing law but by disposing of things, even by using law as a tactic in the specific disposition of things. Where sovereignty is transcendent to the things governed, the art of government is immanent to the specific finalities of the things

disposed. Statistics, the primary instrument in the science of the State, was developed alongside the practices of mercantilism and police. Until the emergence of this science of government, economic thought had maintained the archaic model of the household, or *oikonomia* as the model of good order. From the eighteenth century, the theme of economy develops in its modern form, taking population as its object of analysis and statistics as its major technical instrument. The family is now no longer the model object of governance but rather becomes its fundamental instrument. This shift from model to instrument in the mid-eighteenth century is absolutely fundamental. Population becomes the ultimate end of government, that is, the welfare of a population, and the improvement of wealth, longevity and health.

The city is wholly implicated in this. At once, it is the site of a series of problematics concerning welfare or good governance and the possibility for the implementation of these emerging technologies of governance. That is to say, the political instruments provided by the science of the State precisely facilitated the possibility for more complex modes of habitation, without the dangers of governance losing sight of its primary ends. Hence the city became an intensive and immanent condition of possibility for the emergence of modern forms of governmentality. One need only consider the zeal and perceived necessity in the nineteenth century for the amassing of statistics on public health and its correlations with detailed inventories of dwelling stock, water supply, privies, fenestration, occupancy per dwelling, and so on. It is in this context of statistics that we see, in the early nineteenth century, the emergence of discourses on modern forms of education. In particular, the topographical problematic of policing may be recognised as an instrument of criminal statistics coupled with the formulation of topographies of morality whose targets were the criminal and 'perishing' classes. It was around these targets that modern discourses of juvenile education first emerged.

However, the problem of sovereignty had not been done with nor superseded. Rather, it was never posed with greater force than at the end of the eighteenth century. The question in its general form became: What is the general principle of government that can be simultaneously posed as a juridical principle of sovereignty and as a set of elements through which an art of government can be defined and characterised (Foucault, 1979: 18)? What Foucault named "disciplinary regimes", emerged particularly in the nineteenth century, and were concerned primarily with activating a disciplinary and normalising gaze on individuated bodies. This was to achieve primarily what that former institution of 'police' had done. However, disciplinary procedures were increasingly severed or separated from State instrumentality and became the terrain of professional disciplines of the human sciences, including the professional discipline of teaching. Hence, as Foucault suggests, we have a kind of triangulation: Sovereignty-discipline-government, whose primary target is population.

This triangulation is complex. It implicates at once the superseding and retention of successive rationalities of governance. Sovereign law, with its efficacy derived from the virtue of the king and its circular logic of obedience to the law, is superseded by disciplinary societies whose emergence coincides with that of 'police' bureaucracies until the late eighteenth century. These are, in turn, superseded by our modern forms of governmentality that emphasise normativity and normalising procedures as productive practices of individualising the human subject. But our discourses of power and government have retained, on the one hand, a model of the virtue of sovereignty in collective and cohesive forms of power and, on the other, models of repression in a disciplined society coerced by power. Foucault suggests that these retentions signal a failure to recognise important transformations in the exercise of power in modern forms of governance, which were constitutive of the emphases in the human and social sciences on the productive capacities of relations of power. The 'social contract', which became, and in some ways maintains itself as, the guarantee of individuated right, has never ceased since its inception to be the object of governance at once most concrete and chimerical, decisive and vaporous, transparent and opaque. In short, it remained caught in a logic undecidedly transcendent and immanent.¹

Governmentality neither immediately nor necessarily implicates the State. Rather, it is an ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of a very specific and complex form of power that has, as its target, population. The State, in turn, does not have a reductionist unity, individuality or rigorous functionality. Rather, this should be considered the other way round, in terms of the governmentalisation of the State. This is both internal and external to the State, since it is the tactics or opportunism of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the State and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on. That is, the State can only be understood in its survival and limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.

Questions of Practice

In his study of the political rationalities of governance over the past four centuries, Foucault has analysed how we might understand transformations in the constitution and exercise of power, from sovereign power to disciplinary power and to what he terms contemporary forms of governmentality. In this, he takes mechanisms of power primarily to be productive rather than coercive, activated rather than possessed, and discontinuous with notions of power embodied in juridical apparatuses. The latter are primarily exercised through apparatuses whose early development correlated with the emergence, development and refinement of the human sciences. There are three modalities to the exercise of power: Strategies, technologies and programmes of power; and there are three general orders of events: Explicit rational and reflected discourse, non-discursive social and institutional practices, and effects produced within the social field. Strategies, technologies and programmes of power serve to analyse not the perfect correspondence between the orders of discourse, practice and effects but rather the manner in which they fail to correspond and the positive significance that can be attached to such discrepancies.²

Every programme articulates or presupposes knowledge of the field of reality upon which it is to intervene or that is to bring into being, which is to say it is a power that knows the objects upon which it is exercised. There develops a complex series between programmes of power and technologies of power. Technologies or techniques have a relative autonomy, an intrinsic rationality of their own over and above their links to particular rationalities of programmes. This allows the technical to act as an independent principle for the multiplication, adoption and reorganisation of effects. A technology of normalisation admits of a certain free-play with respect to any specific programmable norm. It is this free-play of the technical or technologies of power that makes possible the kinds of interdisciplinarity we encounter for example in contemporary research. The autonomous diffusion and adaptation of techniques makes it possible for programmes based on quite different normative analyses (for example, political economy, social ecology, psychology) to enter into a complex play of permutations, exchange or complementarity of technical roles.

Without a doubt, contemporary digital technologies, both those associated with communicability and scopic regimes and those associated with amassing data, form the predominant technical rationality of planners. Thus, educationalists engaged in the global education market may very well approach their object according to entrenched models of education design, considering digital technologies as instruments of documentation. Conversely, computer programmers may become the most vital resource in modelling projects capable of distance education delivery. Thus, in becoming a focus of research in education, globalisation will be activated by a geographical and territorial model that defines its object on the relative permanence of structures and infrastructures. Yet it will also become the object of temporal models of dynamic flows only now visualisable through computer generated models that require ever more refined data on change.

If we have emphasised so far the coherency of rationalised discourses of programmes and the normalising complementarity of technologies of power, we have yet to say something concerning strategies of power. While programmes have a normative logic, and technologies have their own inherent rationality, strategies are artificial, improvisational and fictitious. While programmes and technologies of power constitute the formation of the social real, strategic activity consists in the instrumentalisation of the real. Strategy is the minimum form of rationality pertaining to the exercise of power in general, a mobile set of operations determining the conditions of possibility of effects. A multiplicity of heterogeneous elements (forces, resources, features of a terrain, disposition and relation of objects in space and time) are invested with a particular functionality relative to dynamic and variable sets of objectives. Strategic logic or rationality exploits possibilities which it discerns and creates. Strategies are not coterminous with programmes. They are a non-discursive rationality. Discourse is not a medium for strategy, that is, programmes do not articulate strategies. Rather, discourse becomes a resource for strategy. Hence, we begin to recognise how programmes and technologies of power may take on a discursive regularity of rationalisable and transcendent logic with respect to an explanatory relation to practice, recognised as strategic implementation. However, from the point of view of strategy, programmes and technologies are not to be understood as the theoretical or technical conditions to practice. Although we predominantly tend to understand our practices strategically as the implementation of rational programmes and technological means, Foucault emphasises that the strategies of our practices tend to use rational programmes and technological means as partial and tactical moves in what amounts to non-discursive implementations.

The logic of strategy cannot itself entail any necessary coherence whatever. That is to say, strategy has no totalising moment nor transcendent object. The field of strategy is traversed by a multiplicity of more-or-less coordinated or uncoordinated intelligent or stupid agencies. Strategic instrumentalisation of the social terrain interacts with the very programmes and technologies of power that constitute it. Further strategic possibilities are engendered via the operations of power, providing a matrix for organising the effects of strategies. Strategy couples the production of effects with the utilisation of those effects. Its functionality does not correlate with the explicitness of a norm or normativity of programmes, nor with the normalising techniques of technologies. Rather, the functionality of strategy is with the actuality of resources at hand in their heterogeneity. Resources include, for example, the discourses of education and pedagogy and the instruments of their discipline, as well as the conflictual field of competing programmes and technologies. Strategy produces effects in the social real and accommodates these effects in the variability of its functionality. Its opportunistic utilisation of discourses of programmes and technologies of power allow for a perpetual return to these discourses and techniques as transcendent, though fictitious, moments of legitimisation for what otherwise would be wildly variant, aberrant or insubstantial strategic functioning.

We thus make a fundamental distinction between programmes, technologies and strategies of power. They are discontinuous exercises of power. With respect to the norm, modern projects of human governance persist in two broad modalities: Techniques effecting a training on the body and techniques that secure and enhance the well being of a population. If we say the field of strategies is the field of practices as a non-discursive rationality of functions, the field of strategies is a field of conflicts. This has much to do with the fact that the human material operated on by programmes and technologies is inherently a resistant material. From the point of view of programmes of normativity and technologies of normalisation, such resistant material is always subjectable to training and correction. From the point of view of strategy, this resistant material is precisely the locus or impetus for the rationalisation of disciplinary procedure, its systematisation, consolidation and transformation. Every programme caters in advance for the eventuality of its own failure. Strategy, in its immanent functionality, allows for the failure within one programme to be recouped as success within the coordinates of another. These effects belong within the domain of strategies of power. The discourses and practices of the discipline of education and its planning waver

between a discourse of incremental and instrumental progress with respect to the specific objects of normativity, and a perennial diagnosis of failure at the level of practices, with strategic return to alternative programmes and technologies for corrective adjustments to discourses of norm, and techniques of normalisation.

Having outlined in the most general way some of the disciplinary procedures in our modern form of governance, whose object is held to be the production of individuated selves and the well-being of a population, the discussion will conclude by examining more closely the question of globalisation and education in order to gain an understanding of what is actually at stake.

Questions of Control

It may seem incongruous to begin to discuss a nexus of globalisation and education by outlining the emergence of popular education in England in the nineteenth century. However, this brief genealogical digging is aiming to emphasise the extent to which the problematic of education, with respect to the global, is not so much the emergence of a new problem field for our social order, but rather the further articulation of a series of spatialising problems instigated at the emergence of our modern forms of educational governance.³ We may recognise three discursive ensembles concerning popular education throughout the nineteenth century in England. They may be seen as discontinuous rather than progressive, in the sense that the object of discourse of each is fundamentally different, and that this difference is constitutive of differing relations of programmes, technologies and strategies of power. Or, within the series norm-normalisable-normative, we recognise that from one discursive ensemble to the other, it is precisely the object of discourse constituting the normative that shifts, hence enacting differing techniques or technologies of normalisation and effecting differing strategies of practice. Yet each inheres onto a question of space and power.

Briefly, the question of popular education was in the first half of the nineteenth century itself the point of intersection of three discursive ensembles concerned primarily with the governance of the poor and criminal classes (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 63-77). First, reports on the state of the poor emphasised the expense and ineptitude of administration of poor relief and the requirements for improving the conditions of the poor through other means. Second, reports on the state of public morals emphasised the threat posed to authority by the poor and criminal classes and the requirements for moral training. And, finally, reports on criminal behaviour emphasised the rise of juvenile crime. What united these three discursive fields was not only the definition of a fundamental problem constituted in the principles and habits of a population but, also, strategies for the dissemination of true principles of conduct throughout a whole population. At the same time, statistics began to be used to correlate crime rates and educational development, making crime rate an index of the moral state of a population and relating it to levels of formal instruction. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the object of discourse had shifted from principles of conduct to those of moral topography, understood primarily as a spatial analysis of the exercise of power that attempted to correlate an ordering of populations according to a model of spatial distributions.

This shift correlated with new spatial practices of the ordering of populations, that is, with topographical analyses of towns in terms of juridical and medical discourses, and with the refinement of location and distribution of police, coupled with medical inspection of urban conditions. It was this twin exercise of order, coupled with the emergence of new practices of defining criminality that led to definitions of "classes of populations" understood as topographies of moralities. This, in turn, instigated concurrent developments in the formation of strategies for topographical management. The primary target in topographical management was the "perishing class," the urban poor at risk of sliding into the "dangerous" class of moral squalor and criminality.

The dangerous class was a second target, though the strategies applied varied from those applied to the former (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 78-96)

Two principle techniques of topographical management concerned firstly operating on the general character of topographies, in developing hygienic and sanitary spaces for dwelling. The second technique concerned the inventing of separate spaces of moral training outside of the normalcy of the moral topography of a perishing or criminal class. This presented two new series of problems at the level of techniques of power: How to move a child from one space to another, from the perceived risks of the space of their moral topography to the space of the school. The second series concerned the school itself as a space of moral training. The former discourse of training in principles of conduct understood the space of school as an ensemble that emphasised a mechanics of instruction, and the teacher was seen as the engine, in a strict hierarchy of instruction that relayed from monitoring teacher to those with some instruction to those with little or no instruction. The new problematic of moral topography allowed for the emergence of the teacher as a new figure: That of the moral subject whose own morality was to be exemplary for all students. The school becomes a machine of moralisation rather than an engine of instruction. It must be emphasised that, in the mid-nineteenth century, within the frameworks of *laissez faire* liberalism and widespread child labour, compulsory education, other than for juvenile criminals, was beyond the threshold of education's discursive formation.

A second discontinuity happened in the late nineteenth century. It suddenly turned compulsory education from a direct attack on liberalism into the very ground and guarantee of liberal democracy (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 97-104). This emergence of a new discursive ensemble constituted formative rules for the rationality of education that we clearly still recognise as those that dominated the twentieth century. In short, this was a shift from a training for a moral topography to a training in elementary skills. Here, I want to emphasise in this shift the extent to which a spatial or topographical model was retained that allows for the displacement of individuated bodies – not so much from one moral topography to another but from one institutional site of practice to another. That is to say, displacement happens at the level of access to training in techniques and technologies of power. This should be seen within widespread technical analyses of a whole range of social, political and economic institutions that emerged as the institutional sites for the exercise of democratic liberal government: Representative democracy, consumer cooperative friendly societies and mechanics' institutes. Thus education becomes that set of practices that are able to make individuals potential subjects of various institutions that formed an organic condition of existence with the sites of government – rather than with the prison or workhouse, institutions closely correlated with ragged schools or compulsory schools in factories for child labourers.

The compelling arguments against compulsory schooling were initially, on the one hand, liberalism and, on the other hand, the need for a ready supply of cheap labour. However, by the late nineteenth century, industrial manufacture in Britain found significant global competition from Germany and the United States. In this situation, the fundamental strategy for developing a workforce shifted from a supply of cheap labour to the availability of a workforce that could rapidly adapt to new and improved techniques of production. This workforce needed a technical education, and hence an elementary education that formed subjects whose horizons became the mechanics' institutes. Coincident with a reordering of competitive markets globally, there was the emergence of a new discursive ensemble with respect to liberalism itself, with its emphasis on the secular function of political discourse and the necessity for a democratic citizen to be literate in order to participate in liberal democracy. Within this register, education became an obligation of the State as a condition of individual liberty. The compulsion to education became an individual's right! We need to see this as the intersection of a liberal State's discourse, in institutions within which a political discourse on the conditions of freedom exists, and a political-economic discourse on the conditions of competition on world markets (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 100).

Even if we now regard the institutional horizons of education to be somewhat different from those that dominated the close of the nineteenth century, the primary mechanisms and rationales of topographical displacement have perhaps little changed. Jones and Williamson (1979) have suggested three basic axes along which political arguments on education have tended to develop in the twentieth century: Firstly, as a social benefit in an individual's productive life – or what Foucault might have termed the requirement for happiness; secondly, as that which enables social mobility in individuals as possible subjects of certain institutions; and, thirdly, as a means for promoting national efficiency and economic growth (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 103). As we suggested earlier, governmentality is primarily concerned with correlates in defining populations and individuated productive bodies. Further, the State is not the site or origin of governance but rather a central object or problem of a governmentality more concerned with rational discourses of programmes and techniques encountered as tactics in strategic practice. Hence, we need to recognise how education, as an ensemble of practices whose programmes and technologies concern populations and individuated bodies, maintains its relative independence from the State. The significance of this independence may be understood in terms of how education is much more closely refined to the political imperatives of governance than what we take, for example, to be the machinery of parliamentary democracy. Also, we need to stress that globalisation, as a political rationality, is a continuance of a governmentality for which the State is a problem field of definition and relevancy. In this respect, the programmes, techniques and strategies of education are able to activate the practical and theoretical rationalities of globalisation precisely as local tactics in their strategic maintenance. This is particularly the case in relation to a tactical instrumentalisation of the discourses of the State. The supposed unity or centrality of a State's discursive field comprises a strategy which we may recognise as that of an increased centrality of control correlative with the impact of globalisation. It is also correlative with an increased recognition of the strategic separation of a State's juridical apparatus from that which productively orders governmentality.

Notes

1. We may note in passing the significance of the work of Giorgio Agamben who has taken up and extended Foucault's analyses of the bio-political particularly with respect to the frameworks of the social contract (Agamben, 1998).
2. I am indebted here to the excellent exegesis, undertaken by Colin Gordon, of Foucault's development of archaeological and genealogical methods with respect to a history of the emergence of the human sciences (Gordon, 1979)
3. I am again indebted in this brief genealogy to an excellent Foucauldian analysis of the emergence of compulsory schooling in England in the 19th century, undertaken by Karen Jones and Kevin Williamson (Jones and Williamson, 1979).

References

- Agamben, G. (1988). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979). On Governmentality. *Ideology and Consciousness*, 6 (Autumn), 5-22.
- Foucault, M. (1980a). The Political Technology of Individuals. In L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: a seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 145-162). Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980b). Georges Canguilhem, Philosopher of Error. *Ideology and Consciousness*, 7 (Autumn), 51-62.
- Foucault, M. (1981). Questions of Method: an Interview. *Ideology and Consciousness*, 8 (Spring), 3-14.
- Gordon, C. (1979). Other Inquisitions. *Ideology and Consciousness*, 6 (Autumn), 23-46.
- Jones, K. & Williamson, K. (1979). The Birth of the Schoolroom. *Ideology and Consciousness*, 6 (Autumn), 59-110.