

**GOVERNING THE ENTERPRISING SELF**

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In the Summer of 1989, an advertisement began to appear regularly on the front page of The Guardian newspaper. It was for a private organization called 'Self-Helpline' and offered a range of telephone numbers for people to ring for answers to some apparently troubling questions. There were 'Emotional Problems' from 'Dealing with infidelity' to 'Overcoming shyness'. There were 'Parenthood Problems' from 'My child won't sleep' to 'I feel like hitting my baby'. There were 'Work Problems' such as 'Am I in the right job' or 'Becoming a supervisor'. And there were 'Sexual Problems' from 'Impotence' to 'Better orgasms'. For the cost of a telephone call, callers could obtain 'self-help step by step answers to dealing with your problems and improving the quality of your life'. They were assured that 'all messages are provided by our professionals qualified in medicine, counselling and business'. And, of course, the calls could be made anonymously, without the fear of being traced: the problem, and its solution, was a matter entirely for one's self (Self-Helpline, 1989).

This little advertisement may seem trivial, and its concerns hardly germane to something as weighty as 'enterprise culture'. But the forms of political reason that yearn for an enterprise culture accord a vital political value to a certain image of the self. And this image of an 'enterprising self' is so potent because it is not an idiosyncratic obsession of the right of the political spectrum. On the contrary, it resonates with basic presuppositions concerning the contemporary self that are widely distributed in our present, presuppositions that are embodied in the very language that we use to make persons thinkable, and in our ideals as to what people should be. It is these presuppositions which this advertisement displays. The self is to be a subjective being, it is to aspire to autonomy, it is to strive for personal fulfilment in its earthly life, it is to interpret its reality and destiny as a matter of individual responsibility, it is to find meaning in existence by shaping its life through acts of choice. These ways of thinking about selves, and these ways of judging them, are linked to certain ways of acting upon selves. The guidance of selves is no longer dependent upon the authority of religion or traditional morality; it has been allocated to 'experts of subjectivity' who transfigure existential questions about the purpose of life and

the meaning of suffering into technical questions of the most effective ways of managing malfunction and improving 'quality of life'.

These new practices of thinking, judging and acting are not simply 'private' matters. They are linked to the ways in which persons figure in the political vocabulary of advanced liberal democracies - no longer as subjects with duties and obligations, but as individuals, with rights and freedoms. Specific styles of political discourse may be ephemeral, and the salvationist rhetoric of enterprise culture espoused by the British conservatism of the 1980s may fade away. But the presupposition of the autonomous, choosing, free self as the value, ideal and objective underpinning and legitimating political activity imbues the political mentalities of the modern West, as well as those now sweeping what used to be termed 'Eastern Europe'. How are we to evaluate it?

Notions of personhood vary greatly from culture to culture, and there are many ways of accounting for such variation, connecting personhood to religious, legal, penal and other practices bearing upon persons, and to wider social, political and economic arrangements. Recently, the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault has suggested some productive ways of thinking about these issues, by linking practices bearing on the self to forms of power. Foucault's work is instructive partly because it rejects two ways in which we habitually think about power and subjectivity. We often think of power in terms of constraints which dominate, deny and repress subjectivity. Foucault, however, analyses power not as a negation of the vitality and capacities of individuals, but as the creation, shaping and utilization of human beings as subjects. Power, that is to say, works through, and not against, subjectivity (Foucault, 1982; see Miller, 1987). Further, we think about political power largely in terms of oppositions between 'the State' and 'private life', and locate subjectivity within the latter. But Foucault conceives of power as that which traverses all practices - from the 'macro' to the 'micro' - though which persons are ruled, mastered, held in check, administered, steered, guided, by means of which they are led by others or have come to direct or regulate their own actions (Foucault, 1979a; Miller and Rose, 1988,

1990). To analyse the relations between 'the self' and power, then, is not a matter of lamenting the ways in which our autonomy is suppressed by the state, but of investigating the ways in which subjectivity has become an essential object and target for certain strategies, tactics and procedures of regulation.

To consider the terms that are accorded so high a political value in our present - autonomy, fulfilment, responsibility, choice - from this perspective is certainly to question whether they mark a kind of culmination of ethical evolution. But this does not imply that we should subject these terms to a critique, for example by claiming that the rhetoric of freedom is an ideological mask for the workings of a political system that secretly denies it. We should, rather, examine the ways in which these ideals of the self are bound up with a profoundly ambiguous set of relations between human subjects and political power. Following Foucault, we could use the term 'government' as a portmanteau notion to encompass the multiple ways in which the self has become related to power (Rabinow, ed., 1984; Gordon, 1986, 1987). Government embraces all those concerns with managing and administering social and personal existence in the attempt to introduce economy, order and virtue.

We can explore these relations along three interlinked dimensions. The first dimension, roughly 'political', Foucault termed 'governmentality', or 'mentalities of government': the complex of notions, calculations, strategies and tactics through which diverse authorities - political, military, economic, theological, medical etc. - have sought to act upon the lives and conducts of each and all in order to avert evils and achieve such desirable states as health, happiness, wealth and tranquillity (Foucault, 1979b). From at least the eighteenth century, the capacities of individuals, as subjects, as citizens, as selves, have emerged as a central target and resource for authorities. Attempts to invent and exercise different types of political rule have been intimately linked to conceptions of the nature of those who are to be ruled. The autonomous subjectivity of the modern self may seem the antithesis of political power. But Foucault's argument suggests an exploration of the ways in

which this autonomisation of the self is itself a central feature of contemporary governmentality.

The second dimension suggested by Foucault's writings is roughly 'institutional'. However it entails construing institutions in a particular 'technological' way, that is to say as 'human technologies'. Institutions from the prison, through the asylum to the workplace, the school and the home can be seen as practices which put in play certain assumptions and objectives concerning the selves that inhabit them (Foucault, 1977). These are embodied in the design of institutional space, the arrangements of institutional time and activity, procedures of reward and punishment, and the operation of systems of norms and judgments. They can be thought of as 'technological' in that they seek the calculated orchestration of the activities of selves. They attempt to simultaneously maximise certain capacities of individuals and constrain others in accordance with particular knowledges - medical, psychological, pedagogic - and towards particular ends - responsibility, discipline, diligence, and so forth. In what ways and with what consequences are our contemporary notions of subjective autonomy and enterprise embodied within the regulatory practices of distinctively 'modern' form of life?

The third dimension for investigation of the modern self corresponds to a roughly 'ethical' field, insofar as ethics is understood in a 'practical' way, as modes of evaluating and acting upon one's self that have obtained in different historical periods (Foucault, 1988; see Rabinow, ed., 1984). Foucault examined these in terms of what he called 'technologies of the self', techniques 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Ethics are thus understood as means by which individuals come to construe, decipher, act upon themselves in relation to the true and the false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable. Hence we might consider the ways in which the contemporary culture of

autonomous subjectivity is embodied in our techniques for understanding and improving our selves in relation to that which is true, permitted and desirable.

'Enterprise culture' can be understood in terms of the particular connections that it establishes between these three dimensions. For enterprise links up a seductive ethics of the self, a powerful critique of contemporary institutional and political reality, and an apparently coherent design for the radical transformation of contemporary social arrangements. In the writings of 'neo-liberals' like Hayek and Friedman, the well-being of both political and social existence is to be ensured not by centralised planning and bureaucracy, but through the 'enterprising' activities and choices of autonomous entities - businesses, organizations, persons - each striving to maximise its own advantage by inventing and promoting new projects by means of individual and local calculations of strategies and tactics, costs and benefits (Hayek, 1976; Friedman, 1982). Neo-liberalism is thus more than a phenomenon at the level of political philosophy. It constitutes a mentality of government, a conception of how authorities should use their powers in order to improve national well being, the ends they should seek, the evils they should avoid, the means they should use, and, crucially, the nature of the persons upon whom they must act.

Enterprise is such a potent language for articulating a political rationality because it can connect up these general political deliberations with the formulation of specific programmes that simultaneously problematise organizational practices in many different social locales, and provide rationales and guidelines for transforming them. The vocabulary of enterprise thus enables a political rationality to be 'translated' into attempts to govern aspects of social, economic and personal existence that have come to appear problematic. Enterprise here not only designates a kind of organizational form - individual units competing with one another on the market - but more generally provides an image of a mode of activity to be encouraged in a multitude of arenas of life - the school, the university, the hospital, the GP's surgery, the factory and business organization, the family, and the apparatus of social welfare. Organizations are problematised in terms of their lack of

enterprise, it is this which epitomizes their weaknesses and their failings. Correlatively, they are to be reconstructed by promoting and utilising the enterprising capacities of each and all, encouraging them to conduct themselves with boldness and vigour, to calculate for their own advantage, to drive themselves hard and to accept risks in the pursuit of goals. Enterprise can thus be given a 'technological' form by experts of organizational life, engineering human relations through architecture, timetabling, supervisory systems, payment schemes, curricula and the like to achieve economy, efficiency, excellence and competitiveness. Regulatory practices can be transformed to embody the presupposition of the enterprising self, striving for fulfilment, excellence and achievement.

Hence the vocabulary of enterprise links political rhetoric and regulatory programmes to the 'self-steering' capacities of subjects themselves. Along this third dimension of political rule, enterprise forges a link between the ways we are governed by others and the ways we should govern ourselves. Enterprise here designates an array of rules for the conduct of ones everyday existence: energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility. The enterprising self will make a venture of its life, project itself a future and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be. The enterprising self is thus a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that works upon itself in order to better itself. Enterprise, that is to say, designates a form of rule that is intrinsically 'ethical': good government is to be grounded in the ways in which persons govern themselves.

For many critics, this vocabulary of enterprise is obfuscating rhetoric: the apotheosis of the 'capitalist illusion' that persons are 'sovereign individuals'. Such an assessment is facile. The language of enterprise is only one way of articulating ethical presuppositions that are very widely shared; that have come to form a common ground for almost all rationalities, programmes and techniques of rule in advanced liberal democratic societies. Government in such societies is not characterised by the utopian dream of a regulative machinery that will penetrate all regions of the social body, and administer them for the common good. Rather, since at least the nineteenth century, liberal political thought has been structured by

the opposition between the constitutional limits of government on the one hand, and the desire to arrange things such that social and economic processes turn out for the best without the need for direct political intervention. Thus the formal limitations on the powers of 'the state' have entailed, as their corollary, the proliferation of a dispersed array of programmes and mechanisms, de-coupled from the direct activities of the 'public' powers, that nonetheless promise to shape events in the domains of work, the market and the family to produce such 'public' values as wealth, efficiency, health and well being.

The autonomy of the self is thus not the timeless antithesis of political power, but one of the objectives and instruments of modern mentalities of government. Liberal democracy, if understood as an art of government and a technology of rule, has long been bound up with the invention of techniques to constitute the citizens of a democratic polity with the 'personal' capacities and aspirations necessary to bear the political weight that rests on them. Governing in a liberal-democratic way means governing through the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite of them. It has been made possible by a proliferation of discourses, practices and techniques through which the self-governing capabilities of individuals can be brought into alignment with political objectives.

The problem of the regulation of 'private' spheres, produced by liberal democratic forms of government has been solved, in large part, by means of the specific powers of 'expert' knowledges the 'rationalisable' techniques deployed by medics, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and advisers. Governing in a liberal democratic way depends upon the availability of such techniques that will shape, channel, organize and direct the personal capacities and selves of individuals under the aegis of a claim to objectivity, neutrality and technical efficacy rather than one of political partiality. Through the indirect alliances established by the apparatus of expertise, the objectives of 'liberal' government can be brought into alignment with the selves of 'democratic' citizens.

## **TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF**



Many authors have commented upon the rise of a therapeutic culture of the self and sought to link this to more general political transformations. The most superficial analyses have consisted in a reprise on the familiar theme that capitalism breeds individualism, the obsession with therapy being the corollary of the illusion of atomistic self-sufficiency. More considered analyses have made similar melancholy assessments (Rieff, 1966; Lasch, 1980; MacIntyre, 1981; Bourdieu, 1984). But rather than disdaining these doomed attempts to fill the absence caused by the demise of religion, cultural solidarities or parental authority, Foucault's approach encourages us to view therapeutics as, in certain respects, continuous with these. Therapeutics, like religion, may be analyzed as techniques of the self through which human beings are urged and incited to become ethical beings, to define and regulate themselves according to a moral code, to establish precepts for conducting or judging their lives, to reject or accept moral goals.

This is not the place to trace the relations between contemporary therapeutics and earlier technologies of the self (Rose, 1990; cf. Foucault, 1985; 1986a). Let me continue to explore just one significant theme: the allocation of authority over 'the conduct of conduct' to expertise. Expertise is important in at least three respects, each distinguishing the present regime of the self from those embodied in theological injunction, moral exhortation, hygienic instruction or appeals to utilitarian calculation. First, the grounding of authority in a claim to scientificity and objectivity establishes in a unique way the distance between systems of self-regulation and the formal organs of political power that is necessary within liberal democratic rationalities of government. Second, expertise can mobilise and be mobilised within political argument in distinctive ways, producing a new relationship between knowledge and government. Expertise comes to be accorded a particular role in the formulation of programmes of government and in the technologies that seek to give them effect. Third, expertise operates through the particular relation that it has with the self-regulating capacities of subjects. For the plausibility inherent in a claim to scientificity

and rationalised efficacy binds subjectivity to truth, and subjects to experts, in new and potent ways.

The advertisement with which I began operates under a significant title: 'Self-Help'. Whilst this notion has a long history, today it signifies that the regulation of personal existence is not a question of authorities seeking to impose norms of conduct through an intrusive state bureaucracy backed with legal powers. Nor is it a matter of the imposition of moral standards under a religious mandate. Self-help, today, entails an alliance between professionals claiming to provide an objective, rational answer to the question of how one should conduct a life to ensure normality, contentment and success, and individuals seeking to shape a 'life style', not in order to conform to social conventions but in the hope of personal happiness and an 'improved quality of life'. And the mechanism of this alliance is the market, the 'free' exchange between those with a service to sell and those that have been brought to want to buy.

Contemporary individuals are incited to live as if making a project of themselves: they are to work on their emotional world, their domestic and conjugal arrangements, their relations with employment and their techniques of sexual pleasure, to develop a 'style' of living that will maximise the worth of their existence to themselves. Evidence from the United States, from Europe and the United Kingdom suggests that the implantation of such 'identity projects', characteristic of advanced liberal democracies, is constitutively linked to the rise of a new breed of spiritual directors, 'engineers of the human soul' (Rose, 1990). Whilst our subjectivity might appear our most intimate sphere of experience, its contemporary intensification as a political and ethical value is intrinsically correlated with the growth of expert languages which enable us to render our relations with our selves and others into words and into thought, and with expert techniques which promise to allow us to transform our selves in the direction of happiness and fulfilment.

The ethics of enterprise - competitiveness, strength, vigour, boldness, outwardness and the urge to succeed - may seem to be quite opposed to the domain of the therapeutic,

which is associated with hedonism and self-centredness. And indeed, contemporary culture is ethically pluralist: the differences which Max Weber examined between the 'styles of conduct' appropriate to different 'spheres of existence'-spiritual, economic, political, aesthetic, erotic - have not been abolished (Weber [1915] 1948). But despite such ethical pluralism, these diverse ethical regimes operate within a single a priori: the 'autonomisation' and 'responsibilisation' of the self, the instilling of a reflexive hermeneutics which will afford self-knowledge and self-mastery, and the operation of all of this under the authority of experts who claim that the self can achieve a better and happier life through the application of scientific knowledge and professional skill. And the triumph of expertise lies in its promise to reconcile the tensions formed across the soul of the individual who is forced concurrently to inhabit different spheres. For the new experts of the psyche promise that modes of life that appear philosophically opposed - business success and personal growth, image management and authenticity - can be brought into alignment and achieve translatability.

Freud, it will be recalled, advertised psychoanalysis thus: 'You will be able to convince yourself,' he wrote to an imaginary patient, 'that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With a mental life that has been restored to health you will be better armed against that unhappiness' (Breuer and Freud, 1895 in Freud, 1953-7, Vol.2, p.305). His successors formulate their powers rather differently. The London Centre for Psychotherapy points out that psychotherapy takes time, yet it offers 'far more fulfilling relationships and greater self expression. Family and social life, sexual partnerships and work are all likely to benefit' (London Centre for Psychotherapy, 1987). Advocates of behavioural psychotherapy hold only that 'the client's 'symptoms' can be regarded as discrete psychological entities which can be removed or altered by direct means' (Mackay, 1984, p.276). But 'therapy' is generalized to include such 'symptoms' as sexual orientation, anxiety, lack of assertiveness and the wish to increase self-control. And 'therapy' is extended to such goals as 'greater self awareness' which should not

only 'facilitate the change process but should lead the client to reappraise his life style', 'the development of problem solving skills', and increasing 'overall perceived self-efficacy'. In the more avowedly 'humanistic' and 'alternative' therapeutic systems, from Rogers' 'client centred therapy' to Perls' 'Gestalt therapy', from Berne's 'transactional analysis' to Janov's 'primal therapy', versions of the same hope are held out: you can change, you can achieve self-mastery, you can control your own destiny, you can truly be autonomous (c.f. Rose, 1990).

Become whole, become what you want, become yourself: the individual is to become, as it were, an entrepreneur of itself, seeking to maximise its own powers, its own happiness, its own quality of life, though enhancing its autonomy and then instrumentalising its autonomous choices in the service of its lifestyle. The self is to style its life through acts of choice, and when it cannot conduct its life according to this norm of choice it is to seek expert assistance. On the territory of the therapeutic, the conduct of everyday existence is recast as a series of manageable problems to be understood and resolved by technical adjustment in relation to the norm of the autonomous self aspiring to self-possession and happiness.

Therapeutics has transformed work - mental and manual - into a matter of personal fulfilment and psychological identity. The employment relationship becomes significant less for the cash reward it offers than for the subjectivity it confers or denies. An entire discourse upon jobs, careers and unemployment has taken shape, conducted in therapeutic rather than economic terms (Miller, 1986). The confident, thrusting self-images of the entrepreneur seem far from such therapeutic ethics. Yet this opposition is illusory. For therapeutics can forge alliances between the liberation of the self and the pathways to personal success, promising to break through the blockages that trap us into powerlessness and passivity, into undemanding jobs and underachievement. Hence therapeutics can appeal to both sides of the employment contract: it will make us better workers at the same time as it makes us better selves. Therapy can thus offer to free each of us from our psychic

chains. We can become enterprising, take control of our careers, transform ourselves into high fliers, achieve excellence and fulfil ourselves not in spite of work but by means of work.

Therapeutics has psychologized the mundane. Everyday life, from debt, through house purchase, childbirth, marriage and divorce is transformed into 'life events', remediable problems of coping and adjustment. Each is to be addressed by recognizing forces of a subjective order - fears, denials, repressions, lack of psycho-social skills - and similarly subjective consequences - neurosis, tension, stress, illness. The quotidian affairs of existence have become the occasion for introspection, confession and management by expertise. Whilst this may appear to entail precisely the forms of dependency to which the spirit of enterprise is opposed, this opposition is misleading. For therapeutics, here, impels the subject to 'work' on itself and to assume responsibility for its life. It seeks to equip the self with a set of tools for the management of its affairs such that it can take control of its undertakings, define its goals, and plan to achieve its needs through its own powers.

Our contemporary regime of the self is not 'anti-social'. It construes the 'relationships' of the self with lovers, family, children, friends and colleagues as central both to personal happiness and social efficacy. All kinds of social ills, from damaged children to ill health to disruption at work and frustration at home have come to be understood as emanating from remediable incapacities in our 'interactions' with others. Thus human interaction has been made amenable to therapeutic government, and therapists have sought to take charge of this domain of the interpersonal, knowing its laws, diagnosing its ills, prescribing the ways to conduct ourselves with others that are virtuous because they are both fulfilling and healthy. Yet, however 'social' this field may be, it can be turned to the account of the enterprising self: for in recognizing the dynamic nexus of interpersonal relations that it inhabits, selves can place these under conscious control and the self can learn the skills to shape its relations with others so that it will best fulfil its own destiny.

Freud, it has been argued, built psychoanalysis upon a tragic vision. Humans were unable to escape suffering; the duty of the living to tolerate life was denied and hampered by

those who promulgated illusions that the pains of existence could be transcended to ensure happiness (Rieff, 1959; Richards, 1989). But grief, frustration, disappointment and death pose dangers to the regime of the autonomous self, for they strike at the very images of sovereignty, self-possession, omnipotent powers, secular fulfilment and joy through lifestyle to which it is welded. Hence, for the new therapeutics of finitude, suffering is not to be endured but to be re-framed by expertise, to be managed as a challenge and a stimulus to the powers of the self. In transcending despair through counselling or therapy, the self can be restored to its conviction that it is master of its own existence.

Although they are heterogeneous and often originate in contexts and moralities that seem quite discrepant from the world of enterprise, each of these therapeutic systems of spiritual direction operates upon an ethical terrain which can be made entirely consonant with the imperatives of the enterprising self: work on yourself, improve the quality of your life, emancipate your true self, eliminate dependency, release your potential. The healthy self is to be 'free to choose'. But in embracing such an ethic of psychological health construed in terms of autonomy we are condemned to make a project out of our own identity and we have become bound to the powers of expertise.

### **THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE SELF**

A recent recruiting poster for the Royal Navy, on the side of a London bus, emphasised one key phrase: 'choose your way of life'. This is indicative of a transformation, probably most emphatic over the last couple of decades, in the types of self that are presupposed in practices for the institutional administration of individuals. For the power of the forms of knowledge and techniques that I have termed the 'expertise of subjectivity' lies in the new alliances that they make possible between the aspirations of selves and the direction of life in factory, office, airline, hospital, school and home. The self-steering capacities of individuals are now construed as vital resources for achieving private profit, public tranquillity and social progress, and interventions in these areas have also come to be

guided by the regulatory norm of the autonomous, responsible subject, obliged to make its life meaningful through acts of choice. Attempts to manage the enterprise to ensure productivity, competitiveness and innovation, to regulate child rearing to maximise emotional health and intellectual ability, to act upon dietary and other regimes in order to minimise disease and maximise health no longer seek to discipline, instruct, moralise or threaten subjects into compliance. Rather, they aspire to instill and use the self-directing propensities of subjects to bring them into alliance with the aspirations of authorities.

One key site has been the workplace (Rose, 1990; Miller and Rose, 1990). A new vocabulary of the employment relation has been articulated by organizational psychologists and management consultants, in which work has been re-construed, not as a constraint upon freedom and autonomy, but as a realm in which working subjects can express their autonomy. Workers are no longer imagined merely to endure the degradations and deprivations of labour in order to gain a wage. Nor are workers construed as social creatures seeking satisfaction of needs for solidarity and security in the group relations of the workplace. Rather, the prevailing image of the worker is of an individual in search of meaning and fulfilment, and work itself is interpreted as a site within which individuals represent, construct and confirm their identity, an intrinsic part of a style of life.

The world of work is re-conceptualised as a realm in which productivity is to be enhanced, quality assured and innovation fostered through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of the employee, through aligning the objectives of the organization with the desires of the self. Organizations are to get the most out of their employees, not by managing group relations to maximise contentment, or by rationalizing management to ensure efficiency, but by releasing the psychological striving of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success. It now appears that individuals will ally themselves with organizational objectives to the extent that they construe them as both dependent upon and enhancing their own skills of self-realization, self-presentation, self-direction and self-management. Expertise plays the role

of relay between objectives that are economically desirable and those that are personally seductive, teaching the arts of self-realization that will enhance employees as individuals as well as workers. Economic success, career progress and personal development intersect in this new expertise of autonomous subjectivity: work has become an essential element in the path to self-realization, and the strivings of the autonomous self have become essential allies in the path to economic success.

A second key site is consumption. Again, expertise has forged alignments between broad socio-political objectives, the goals of producers and the self-regulating propensities of individuals. Politico-economic analyses and calculations have come to stress the need for a constant expansion of consumption if economic well-being is to be maintained in the interests of the national budget, the profitability of the firm and the maintenance of levels of employment. A complex economic terrain has taken shape, in which the success of an economy is seen as dependent upon the ability of politicians, planners and manufacturers and marketers to differentiate needs, to produce products aligned to them, and to ensure the purchasing capacity to enable acts of consumption to occur. Yet political authorities can only act indirectly upon the innumerable private acts that comprise consumption, through such measures as policies on advertising, interest, credit and the like. It is the expertise of market research, of promotion and communication, underpinned by the knowledges and techniques of subjectivity, that provides the relays through which the aspirations of ministers, the ambitions of business and the dreams of consumers achieve mutual translatability.

These objectives are to be achieved by instrumentalising autonomy, and promising to promote it. Consumers are constituted as actors seeking to maximise their 'quality of life' by assembling a 'life-style' through acts of choice in a world of goods. Each commodity is imbued with a 'personal' meaning, a glow cast back upon those who purchase it, illuminating the kind of person they are, or want to come to be. Design, marketing and image construction play a vital role in the transfiguring of goods into desires and vice versa,



through the webs of meaning through which they are related, the phantasies of efficacy and the dreams of pleasure which guide both product innovation and consumer demand. Through this loose assemblage of agents, calculations, techniques, images and commodities, consumer choice can be aligned with macro-economic objectives and business advantage: economic life can be governed and entrepreneurial aspirations realized, through the choices consumers make in their quest to fulfil themselves.

The sphere of consumption, and the mechanisms of its promotion and moulding, can be extended to incorporate problems that were previously governed in other ways. Health stands as an exemplar of this transformation. Healthy bodies and hygienic homes may still be a public value and a political objective. But we no longer need state bureaucracies to enjoin healthy habits of eating, of personal hygiene, of tooth care and the like, with compulsory inspection, subsidised incentives to eat or drink correctly and so forth. In the new domain of consumption, individuals will want to be healthy, experts will instruct them on how to be so, and entrepreneurs will exploit and enhance this market for health. Health will be ensured through a combination of the market, expertise and a regulated autonomy (Rose and Miller, 1989).

Perhaps the most striking example of the complex processes through which these new networks have been constructed and operate is the regulation of 'the family'. For some two centuries, the family has been a central ideal and mechanism for the government of the social field (Donzelot, 1979) 'Familialization' was crucial to the means whereby personal capacities and conducts could be socialized, shaped and maximised in a manner which accorded with the moral and political principles of liberal society. From at least the mid-nineteenth century, diverse projects sought to use the human technology of the family for social ends: for eliminating illegality, curbing inebriety and restricting promiscuity, imposing restrictions upon the unbridled sensualities of adults and inculcating morality into children. These had to resolve the paradox that liberalism construed the family as quintessentially

private, yet simultaneously accorded it all sorts of social consequences and social duties: a concurrent 'privatization' and 'responsibilisation' of the family.

Expertise resolved this basic problem at the junction of the family mechanism and the goals of liberal government. It enabled a harmonization between the promotion of the family as a locus of private aspirations and the necessity that it become a kind of 'social machine' for the production of adjusted and responsible citizens. Initially it was the malfunctioning family that was the central concern. How could one minimise the social threat such families posed without destroying them by removing their endangered members? How could one act preventively upon those sectors of the population thought to harbour the seeds of social risk? Expertise was to ensure that the malfunctioning family would neither be lured into dependency by especially favourable treatment, nor forced into resistance by measures which were frankly repressive. Instead it would be instructed in health, hygiene and normality, encouraged to see its social duties as its own concerns, and thus returned to its obligations without compromising its autonomy and its responsibility for its own members.

During our own century, attention has gradually but decisively shifted from the prevention of maladaptation to the production of normality itself (Rose, 1985). The family now will meet its social obligations through promising to meet the personal aspirations of its members, as adults construe the maximisation of the physical and mental welfare of their offspring as the privileged path to their own happiness. Once such an ethic comes to govern family life, individuals can themselves evaluate and normalise their parental and conjugal conduct in terms of the images of normality, of parental conduct and family life, generated by expertise. Bureaucratic regulation of family life is no longer needed to ensure a harmony between social objectives and personal desires. The ethics of enterprise can infuse the 'private' domain that for so long appeared essentially resistant to the rationale of calculation and self-promotion. Through this new mechanism, the social field can be governed through an alliance between the powers of expertise and the wishes, hopes and

fears of the responsible, autonomous family, committed to maximising its quality of life and to the success of family members.

### **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SELF**

In The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, Daniel Bell suggested that there was a fundamental opposition between the calculative relation to existence that was required within industrial capitalism and the 'cult of the self', the hedonistic culture that had apparently undercut the Protestant ethic which provided an integrative moral foundation for society at the same time as it chimed with economic needs (Bell, 1979). The reflections in the present paper suggest that this analysis is misleading. In the heady days of the 1960s, cults of the self promised a liberation of the individual from all mundane social constraints. But today, the therapeutic culture of the self and its experts of subjectivity offer a different freedom, a freedom to realize our potential and our dreams through reshaping the style in which we conduct our secular existence. And, correlatively, mentalities of government and technologies of regulation operate in terms of an ethic of the self that stresses not stoicism or self denial in the service of morality and society, but the maximisation of choice and self fulfilment as the touchstone of political legitimacy and the measure of the worth of nations. For both left and right, political culture is to be reshaped to secure ways of life that are fitting for free, sovereign individuals. Neo-liberalism has been a powerful contributor to this reorganization of the problematics of government, questioning, from a particular ethic of individual sovereignty, the legitimacy and the capacity of authorities to know and administer the lives of their subjects in the name of their well being. But the vocabulary of the enterprise is only one way of articulating this more fundamental transformation in mentalities of government, in which the choices of the self have become central to the moral bases of political arguments from all parts of the political arena. Within this new political culture, the diverse and conflicting moral obligations of different spheres of life - at work, at play, in the public arena, in the family, and in sexuality - can achieve a mutual translatability,

once each is articulated in terms of a self striving to make its everyday existence meaningful through the choice of its way of life.

Mentalities of government in the first half of this century operated in terms of an image of the citizen as a social being. They sought to open a kind of contract between government and citizens articulated in the language of social responsibilities and social welfare. In these forms of political thought, the individual was a locus of needs that were to be socially met if malign consequences were to be avoided, but was reciprocally to be a being to whom political, civil and social obligations and duties were to be attached. This political rationality was translated into programmes such as social insurance, child welfare, social and mental hygiene. Pedagogic technologies from universal education to the BBC were construed as devices for forming responsible citizens. Planned and socially organized mechanisms were to weave a complex web that would bind the inhabitants of a territory into a single polity, a space of regulated freedom.

Over the past twenty five years, this rationality of government has entered a chronic crisis, manifested in the appearance of counter-discourses from all parts of the political spectrum, left and centre, as well as right. 'Welfare' is criticized as bureaucratic and inefficient, as patronising and patriarchal, as doing nothing to tackle or redress fundamental inequalities, as a usurper of private choices and freedoms, as a violation of individual rights and much more. These counter discourses are not only articulated in terms of a different vision of the respective roles of the state, the market, pluralism, civil society and the like. They are also predicated upon a different notion of the proper relations between the citizen and society. Across their manifold differences, these critiques of welfare are framed in a vocabulary of individual freedom, personal choice, self-fulfilment and initiative. Citizenship is to be active and individualistic rather than passive and dependent. The political subject is henceforth to be an individual whose citizenship is manifested through the free exercise of personal choice amongst a variety of options. The Home Secretary may argue that 'The idea of active citizenship is a necessary complement to that of the enterprise culture' (Hurd

1989, quoted in Barnett, 1989, p.9) whilst his left wing critics argue that 'there can be no such thing as an active citizen in the United Kingdom until their are actual citizens' (ibid., p.11), and clamour for a written constitution and democratic rights. But all shades of political opinion now agree that citizens should be active and not passive, that democratic government must engage the self-activating capacities of individuals in a new governmental dispensation, that it is upon the political consciousness and commitments of individual subjects that a new politics will depend.

Such a notion of the active political subject should, I suggest, be understood in terms of its consonance with the rise of regulatory technologies that enable the subject at home and at work, in acts of consumption and pleasure, to be governed 'at a distance'. We should analyse notions like 'the active citizen' not merely as rhetoric or ideology, but in terms of the ways in which contemporary political rationalities rely upon and utilise a range of technologies that install and support the civilizing project by shaping and governing subjects and enhancing their social commitment, yet are outside the formal control of the 'public powers'. To such basic nation forming devices as a common language, skills of literacy, and transportation networks, our century has added the mass media of communication, with their pedagogies through documentary and soap opera; opinion polls and other devices that provide reciprocal links between authorities and subjects; the regulation of lifestyles through advertising, marketing and the world of goods; and the experts of subjectivity (Rose, 1990). These technologies do not have their origin or principle of intelligibility in 'the State', but nonetheless have made it possible to govern in an 'advanced liberal' way, providing a plethora of indirect mechanisms that can translate the goals of political, social and economic authorities into the choices and commitments of individuals.

Not all political subjects are embraced in the new regime of the self. Those 'on the margins', literally 'outside society', are governed in other, harsher, ways where they threaten the values of the new liberal order, abandoned when they don't. Yet despite its 'dark secrets', neo-liberalism is significant, and not merely an ephemeral or corrupt

phenomenon, because it was the right, rather than the left, that succeeded in formulating a political rationality consonant with the new regime of the self. Political authorities can now rely upon a range of technologies through which citizens themselves can act upon themselves in order to avoid what they have come to consider undesirable and achieve what they have come to think will make them happy. Citizens now no longer need to be instructed by their 'political' authorities in how to conduct themselves and regulate their everyday existence. We can now be governed by the choices that we will ourselves make, under the guidance of cultural and cognitive authorities, in the space of regulated freedom, in our individual search for happiness and the fulfilment of our autonomous selves.

### **A CRITICAL ONTOLOGY OF OURSELVES**

This investigation of the forms of self that are presupposed within modern social, economic and political relations evokes a central question addressed by Max Weber. Wilhelm Hennis has suggested that Weber's work should be read as a sustained reflection on Menschentum, the history of what humans are in their nature and how human lives are conducted (Hennis, 1987). Weber thus addresses a question of enduring importance: the forms of life entailed within certain economic relations, the modes in which different religious systems and forms of religious 'association' shape and direct the practical conduct of everyday economic and vocational existence, the ways in which these and other forces, such as the modern press, mould the subjective individuality of individuals and shape their Lebenstil or life styles at particular historical moments. This interpretation of Weber has been linked, by Colin Gordon, to the concerns of Michel Foucault (Gordon, 1986; 1987). In the last period of his work, Foucault returned on a number of occasions to Kant's essay of 1784 entitled What is Enlightenment? (Foucault, 1986b). He argued that one of the central roles of philosophy since Kant's question was to describe the nature of our present and of ourselves in that present. To ask the questions 'what is enlightenment?', for Foucault, is to recognise the importance of historical investigations into the events through which we have come to

recognise ourselves and act upon ourselves as certain kinds of subject. It is to interrogate what we have become, as subjects, in our individuality, and the nature of that present in which we are.

Such an investigation would not attempt a psychological diagnosis of the modern soul. Rather, it would seek to document the categories and explanatory schemes according to which we think ourselves, the criteria and norms we use to judge ourselves, the practices through which we act upon ourselves and one another in order to make us particular kinds of being. We would, that is to say, endeavour to describe the historical a priori of our existence as subjects. And, perhaps, we should take as a starting point the notions of subjectivity, autonomy and freedom themselves.

In this paper I have suggested that subjectivity is inherently linked to certain types of knowledge, that projects of autonomy are linked to the growth of expertise, and that freedom is inextricably bound up with certain ways of exercising power. But I have not intended to imply that such notions are false and should be subjected to a critique, or to recommend a nihilism that proclaims the corruption of all values. If the faithful incantation of weary political nostrums is inadequate to the task of serious analysis of the conditions and consequences of our 'age of freedom', so too is knowing sociological relativism or fashionable 'post-modern' irony. If this point requires reinforcement, it would be amply supplied by the part played by the language of freedom, individuality and choice in the recent revolutions in Eastern Europe. Hence my aim has not been to expose or to denounce our current ethical vocabulary, but to open a space for critical reflection upon the complex practices of knowledge, power and authority that sustain the forms of life that we have come to value, and that underpin the norms of selfhood according to which we have come to regulate our existence. To claim that values are more technical than philosophical is not to denounce all values, but it is, perhaps, to suggest the limits of philosophy as the basis for a critical understanding of ethics.

From such a perspective I have tried to indicate a general change in categories of self-understanding and techniques of self-improvement which goes beyond the political dichotomy of left and right, and which forms the ethico-political terrain upon which their programmes must be articulated and legitimated. I have argued that the rationalities of liberal government have always been concerned with internalising their authority in citizens through inspiring, encouraging and inaugurating programmes and techniques that will simultaneously 'autonomise' and 'responsibilise' subjects. I have suggested that, over the last century, a complex network of experts and mechanisms has taken shape, outside 'the State', but fundamentally bound up with the government of health, wealth, tranquillity and virtue. A host of programmes and technologies have come to inculcate and sustain the ethic that individuals are free to the extent that they choose a life of responsible selfhood, and have promoted the dreams of self-fulfilment through the crafting of a lifestyle. And I have argued that the potency of a notion of an 'enterprise culture', however short-lived its particular vocabulary might prove to be, is that it embodies a political programme grounded in, and drawing upon, the new regime of the autonomous, choosing self.



**Note: Chapter 0**

The argument in this chapter draws upon evidence presented in more detail in my book Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self (Routledge, 1990), and on my work with Peter Miller presented in Rose and Miller, 1989 and Miller and Rose, 1990. My thanks to the editors of this volume for helpful comments on an earlier version.

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The bizarre self-congratulatory remarks on the Governing Body's use of technology and how this fulfils prophecy in Isaiah will also leave many scratching their heads. But frankly it all pales into insignificance when compared with the shameful preceding comments about Warwick. "Get ready for the great tribulation". A minute is allotted for the outline to be wrapped up with a reminder to pioneers that their obedience is all the more important because the end is nigh. Having spent a total of eight years pioneering, I have sat through a number of these pioneer meeting outlines. I have even helped