

Editorial: Sycophancy

By Thomas M. Kemple

I suppose every scholar can recall a turning point in a research project where something turns up that somehow turns out to be crucial to what one was looking for all along. Often enough, such “discoveries” are arrived at by accident or in a moment of inattention, perhaps punctuating one phase of work while inaugurating another. My own finds include an old diet and exercise manual by the father of the subject of one of Freud’s case histories, displayed in the window of an antiquarian bookseller in Frankfurt, that seemed to provide the key I needed to unlock the delirium of both patient and doctor. There is also the footnote Marx appended to his economic notebooks, which I had skimmed over in several previous readings, that showed me the other side of alienated labour in idleness and unproductive work. And there is the day I found Norbert Elias’ history of the role of medieval manners in defining our senses of “civility” and “civilization,” mistakenly shelved under the “Etiquette” section of my neighbourhood used bookstore. Later on I will elaborate a bit on the particular relevance of each of these chance encounters to the present review of Alphons Silbermann’s *Grovelling and Other Vices: The Sociology of Sycophancy* (2000). For now, we might just consider Weber’s (1946: 136) reminder in “Science as a Vocation” that it is impossible to force insight or induce inspiration, and though they only see the light after long periods of disciplined study, they often come upon us as we recline on a couch with a good cigar, or take a long walk up a slowly ascending street.

Such a moment of undisciplined distraction seems to have provoked the main idea for Silbermann’s exploration of “the sociology of sycophancy,” *Grovelling and Other Vices*, or as the original German title has it, his manual “on the art of arse-crawling” (*Von der Kunst der Arschkriecherei*). One day while browsing through his messy book collection, Silbermann came upon his forgotten and unread first edition of Adolph von Knigge’s *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (*On Social Intercourse*, or somewhat more literally, *On Keeping Company with Humans*), published in 1788, which he notes is “generally regarded by Germans as the ultimate guide to etiquette” (4). The book immediately brought him back to his youth, when his parents would wield the name of Krigge like an “imperious truncheon” (without, apparently, ever having read him), whenever his naughty behaviour needed to be held against a model of good manners. Although Krigge’s treatise on the struggle between reason and passion does not seem to be preaching flattery or servility, he does invite his readers to acquire “flexibility, sociability, compliance, tolerance, self-denial at the right time, control of violent passions, guardedness, and the serenity of a constantly even temper” (Krigge, quoted in Silbermann, p. 8). As Silbermann sees it, however, by “failing to eschew corruption,” Krigge seems implicitly to embrace sycophancy as indispensable for maintaining social intercourse. His book is therefore “virtually a compendium of complaisance, a manual of grovelling” (9), and so serves as a kind of companion-piece and counter-text to Silbermann’s own.

Of course, it is one thing to hinge a scholarly thesis on a discarded or overlooked historical document while celebrating one’s happy good fortune

in rediscovering it. It is quite another to establish the foundation of one’s own argument on an *absence* in such a text, on what an author does not say, presumably because such contents (here Krigge’s supposed endorsement of grovelling and sycophancy) have either been silently suggested or deliberately suppressed. And yet, this is indeed Silbermann’s curious starting point (and frequent point of return), and the phenomenon he claims to have identified in this way goes under many names: “This corruption may be called obsequiousness, submissiveness or opportunism, sycophancy, flattery, crawling, toadying, servility, self-abasement, or indeed baseness - in the last analysis, let us say it loud and clear, it is the behavioural pattern of *grovelling* in all its facets” (9).

While German linguistic usage tends to call for “arse-crawling,” which the translator usually renders as “arse-licking,” in everyday speech in North America, we tend to use the expressions “sucking up,” “brown-nosing,” or “ass-kissing.” Unable to find an explicit source for the ordinary arts of grovelling in Krigge’s obscure treatise, Silbermann then turns to the most venerable literary classic in the history of German letters, Goethe’s *Faust*. But here it is not the “official” *Faust* of the standard editions and respectable artistic adaptations, but rather the play as Silbermann remembers it from the performances of his childhood, and as presented in Albrecht Schöne’s stage version, itself based on one of Goethe’s early drafts, in which Mephistopheles, playing the Master of Ceremonies in the Walpurgis Night scenes, displays his bare bottom to the audience:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: The gentleman is kindly requested to kiss Satan’s backside.

KNEELING MAN: That doesn’t confound me. I kiss back or front. (Satan turns around). While your nose above seems to penetrate all the worlds, down here I see a hole to swallow the universe. What odour comes from this colossal mouth! There can’t be so good a smell in Paradise, and this well-built abyss arouses the desire to crawl into it. (Breathless silence, then a frantic outcry from the crowd). What more shall I do?

SATAN (straightens himself, turns around): Vassal, thou has passed the test! Hereby I enfeof thee with millions of souls. And having praised the devil’s arse so well, though shalt never want for terms of flattery. (Goethe’s *Faust*, Schöne edition, prose translation, quoted in Silbermann, p. 20).

Silbermann’s aim is thus to uncover what has remained hidden, to speak frankly about what others pass over in silence, and to speculate on or bring to light what has been forgotten. To do so he draws on two contrasting and complementary scholarly traditions which he himself has contributed to since the 1950s. On the one hand, he explores here the “other side” of the sociology of the arts, especially of literature and music. Besides the crucial Goethe passage, there are interesting discussions of Heine’s ultimately fruitless conversion to Christianity (160-64), Gerhardt Hauptmann’s and Richard Strauss’s capitulation to the Nazi regime (151), and Wagner’s opportunistic dealings with Mathilde Wesendonk, whose rich husband Wagner courted as a patron (51-53). In each case, Silbermann keeps to the level of biography rather than attempting to illuminate the work itself or even its social and historical context, so that the reader must draw his or her own conclusions concerning the role of servility in the production of great art. Also tantalizing are the black and white sketches which preface each chapter, apparently dug up by a research assistant, but unfortunately not given any mention in the text itself. Besides the fascinating line drawings by Paul

Klee, Kafka, and A. Paul Weber, the sketch by Peter Brueghel the Elder in particular, “The man with the money bag and his flatterers” (1568/69), which precedes Chapter VIII on “Intrigue and Perfidy: Secret Machinations” and provides the frontispiece for the book, is especially suggestive: a crouching giant dispenses gold coins as a host of small men crawl up his ass. Here, too, the book does not elaborate in any detail on either the economics nor the psychology of obsequiousness which seem indispensable in illuminating this image.

Rather, Silbermann’s principal model and method is taken from the sociology of everyday life, which he draws upon even as he is discussing his favourite aesthetic examples. From this vantage point, sycophancy is treated as a “manifestation” of ordinary experience (29), as a “mode of social interaction within a system of communication” (47), and is thus understood as a habit or custom, as a strategy of concealment or purposive ideology. Ladislaus Löb’s English version of the title is therefore somewhat misleading, since] grovelling is only one aspect of ass-licking (or arse-crawling), which in turn may not always be a vice but is often a virtue or even a necessity (as the Jews learned in the concentration camps; 158-60). Indeed, Silbermann’s book is carefully constructed to amplify this discordant “counterpoint” (109) between the stratagems of self-serving opportunism, deceit, and hypocrisy (Chapters I-VIII) and the sociable vicissitudes of romantic love, family life, and social conflict (Chapters IX-XIII). For this reason, ass-kissing should be understood to be more than a skill (it must usually be learned through imitation rather than by instruction), since it often appears in sublimated form as an art:

‘Refinement’ leading to artistic perfection generally begins with a learning phase, followed by practice and repetition, till it achieves the autonomy and responsibility that we commonly call *mastery*. It is only at this point that arse-licking can be applied in a strategically astute and meaningful manner, holding its ground in difficult

Contents	Pages
Editorial: Sycophancy by Thomas M. Kemple	
Reversible Feminism by Mike Gane	
SRB Insight: Governing Unemployment by William Walters	
Web Site www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb	
Mirror Sites	
Hong Kong http://obelix.lib.hku.hk/semiotic/semiotic	
Austria www.univie.ac.at/Wissenschaftstheorie/srb	
The Netherlands www.bdk.rug.nl/onderzoek/castor/srb	
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situations, succeeding even in unfavourable circumstances, and becoming potentially pernicious (176-77).

With the field of sycophancy marked off in this exalted way, the most challenging and provocative illustrations emerge from descriptions of rather prosaic scenes of “sucking up” and “kissing ass”: Who has not bent over backwards (or forwards) to flatter a superior, to please a child or a parent, or to seduce the object of one’s desire (155-58, 128), however noble or base one’s intentions? And on a grander scale, to what extent can the post-War trend (and corporate advertising strategy) of pandering to youth culture and the cult of feminine beauty be treated as a perniciously widespread species of “arse-crawling” (134, 113)? Though Silbermann has little to say to shed light on these matters, by raising them in this context he at least invites us to deepen the study of everyday life by considering a broader vision of the sociology of sycophancy. For whatever reason, however, Silbermann has chosen to write a very thin volume which emphasizes the suggestive and scandalous nature of his subject while keeping clear of the “troublesome depths of psychological reflection” (15-16).

This weakens the intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic impact of his argument considerably, since he is anxious to avoid invoking any conceptual framework which would ask even the most obvious questions or provide the most basic answers, as did Simmel with his commonsense sketch of voluntary subordination in *Sociologie* or Nietzsche in his challenging analysis of the “servile morality” of *ressentiment* in the *Genealogy of Morals*. Instead, the phenomenon under study appears chaotic and intermittent, hard to name because hardly recognizable:

Arse-licking depends on circumstances and occurs sporadically in the life of a person, whether choleric, sanguine or of any other type. From a sociological point of view it is unintegrated, incoherent, and inconsistent, whether in its rudimentary form, its moderate form, or its highly developed intellectual form. Unlike a personal characteristic, arse-licking - seen as an interpersonal relationship based on actions, or as a pattern of behaviour - cannot be grasped in terms of properties (60).

We are not even given any crude speculations about why the *ass* (*Arsch*) should figure so prominently in ordinary speech about sycophancy, despite the observation that “the reality [of grovelling] is perceived via the symbol [of the arse]” (17). In one of Freud’s rare (and very brief) forays into “characterology” (which Silbermann too is careful to avoid: 59-60), he famously outlines that “triad of properties” which invariably seem to distinguish the “anal character,” namely, orderliness, parsimoniousness, and obstinacy. The fact that Freud was explicitly drawing on notions already available in the common culture, particularly on widely shared experiences with early childhood toilet training, and that the subsequent psychoanalytic codification of these traits as “anal” still circulates in everyday speech, could well be useful in understanding the socio-logic of humiliation and submission, or even of sadism and avarice. Even Freud’s (1977: 215) claim to find “no very marked degree of ‘anal-character’ in people who have retained the anal zone’s erotic character in adult life, as happens, for instance, with certain homosexuals,” might lead us to a consideration of “ass-licking” practices that have more to do with pleasure and love than grovelling and sycophancy. Finally, however predictable or crude we might find Freud’s suggestion that “the devil is nothing else than the personification of the repressed unconscious instinctual life” (Freud, 1977: 214), it at least provides a point of reference for examining the scene from Faust quoted above in view of its socio-symbolic significance. (Mozart’s notorious aria, “Leck mir den Arsch fein recht schön sauber,” might also be considered from this standpoint).

Although Silbermann acknowledges that he was induced to write this book by “a desire to penetrate behind the veil hiding our notions of the cor-

rect or incorrect treatment of people of our own, or of a different, class” (15), in fact he gives almost no consideration to the structural and historical dimensions of this crucial dimension of his topic. To do so would have required a much more robust conception of the sociology of everyday life than can be captured in passing comments on family and courtship, undeveloped anecdotes on the lives of great musicians, or brief discussions of the suffering of the Jews. In a footnoted passage from the *Grundrisse* notebooks that few readers have even noticed, much less considered seriously, Marx argues that the ideological justification for and social structure of capitalist surplus value production in fact requires the formation of a leisure class, if not of a stratum of idle outsiders and arse-crawlers:

The creation of surplus labour on the one side corresponds to the creation of minus-labour, relative idleness (or *not-productive* labour at best), on the other. This goes without saying as regards capital itself; but holds then also for the classes with which it shares; hence of the paupers, flunkies, lickspittles, etc. living from the surplus product, in short, the whole train of retainers (Marx, 1973: 401n).

Of course, this is not to argue that ass-kissing is a creation of capitalism; indeed, the association between feces and gold as made by Brueghel the Elder, by Freud, and occasionally by Marx himself bears witness to its pre-modern (or even infantile) sources. Rather, Marx’s point is that this pattern of behaviour comes to be stamped with a capitalist character under conditions of structurally necessary economic scarcity and chronic un(der)employment, and within a culture of repressive tolerance and enforced voluntary servitude.

Whatever puerile pleasure or intellectual teasing may be in store for anyone who encounters this book, for this reader its most serious shortcoming consists in scrupulously staying clear of “the labyrinths of a history of manners” (15), indeed, in not taking very seriously its own inspiration in Knigge’s influential book *On Social Intercourse*. In this, Silbermann may be trying desperately to ward off any charge of academic sycophancy against himself by carefully avoiding any reference to, or acknowledging any influence from, the great sociologist and historian of manners, Norbert Elias. However careful he may be not to commit any of the ass-licker’s “perceptible breaches of social norms, customs, and morality” (such as false lightheartedness, innuendo, long windedness, affected openness, oblique questions, and so on; 174-75), his own modest claims for his work’s originality are not beyond criticism. Early on in the first volume of *The Civilizing Process*, which treats an enormous variety of manuals of social etiquette as “practical instruments” for conditioning emotions and as “social models” for fashioning sensibilities, Elias cites a telling rhetorical question posed by Knigge: “Where more than here [in Germany] did the courtiers form a separate species?” (Knigge, quoted in Elias, 2000: 23). Elias’ aim in this context to point out the conflict which was becoming increasingly evident by the late 18th century between, on the one side, an emphasis among the rising middle classes on scholarship, sound education, and a preference for virtue rather than honour, and on the other, a contrasting insistence among the declining courtly nobility on compliance, courtesy, and fine manners. Knigge’s reflections thus articulate a painful tension at the heart of this emerging self-image of the middle-class intelligentsia (or, the *Bildungsbürgertum*), who held the separate life of the mind, books, scholarship, and art (*Kultur*) in higher esteem than the mundane concerns of economics and politics (*Zivilisation*). In fact, he himself was sometimes dubbed “the nobleman as bourgeois,” as Silbermann notes (6). Where Knigge waffles and “fails to condemn the corruption” of grovelling, Silbermann will hold firm and assert the moral of his story in no

uncertain terms: “As a manifestation of moral reality, arse-licking aims directly at the quasi-‘sacred’ personality of a human being. By penetrating its enclosure, arse-licking violates this personality, as it does goodness as such” (178-79). In his seductive sociology *a tergo*, with its fixed gaze on the “well-built abyss” of his own childhood, Silbermann ends up defending the anti-social fortress of *homo clausus*, Elias’ name for that magnificent creation of the modern civilizing process, and thereby misses the ordinary arts of deference and humility which are the very hallmarks of human sociability.

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Reversible Feminism

Victoria Grace, *Baudrillard’s Challenge: A Feminist Reading*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2000.

By Mike Gane

The writings of Jean Baudrillard have often elicited a strong not to say sometimes violent response from feminists. Baudrillard indeed has made a point of defining his position as hostile to the main strands of the second wave women’s movement, and to the human rights movement more generally. More, he has sometimes gone out of his way to provoke a reaction from feminists, most notably his comment that in exchange for the beauty of the desert it would be good to sacrifice a woman (referred to and discussed by Grace, p. 165). Baudrillard’s book, *Seduction*, contained a condemnation of a feminism which allied itself with the real unveiling of feminine sexuality, an unveiling which ended up, for this analyst, as an alliance with pornography and promotion. If he has identified and praised that form of the feminine which found its force in seduction, Baudrillard concludes that women were never weak subjects of men, for this was an ideology, he suggested, which emerged out of the feminist movement itself. A strand of feminist thought has grown up which has a philosophy not that far removed from this idea (most obviously represented by Camile Paglia’s works), but what precisely is the feminist response to Baudrillard? Victoria Grace, who is based in New Zealand, has accepted Baudrillard’s challenge, and her work “is not a book about Baudrillard; it is an engagement with his work” (3). Just as there was an Althusserian feminism, and a Foucauldian feminism, does Grace provide us with a Baudrillardian feminism?

Chapter one looks at Baudrillard's early work, particularly the logic of economic value. This early work on semiological logics and the 'hegemony of the code' is presented as a key theory of modern society and culture, and the failure to grasp it and "to reject it on political grounds from a feminist perspective is," she says, "a 'political' mistake" (35). It is not simply that the oppositions male/female, men/women, are patriarchal, but also more deeply that the real enemy is the code which permits these oppositions to appear in the "object form" (35). The emphasis in this first main statement of Baudrillard's ideas is thus very clearly focused on the sign/symbol and the logic of the semiological reduction of symbolic exchange. This strategy has the very unfortunate effect of ignoring the earlier analysis of consumer society which constituted Baudrillard's first concern and which entailed locating gender differences within affluent capitalist patterns of advertising and objectification.

The next chapter looks at Irigaray, Braidotti, and Butler on identity, subjectivity, power, and desire, in the light of Baudrillard's conception of the symbolic order and seduction, ideas developed in the 1970s as he deepened his theory of the anthropological alternative to modernity. Grace identifies and draws out Baudrillard's conception of how genders are situated within forms of symbolic exchange and reversibility in primitive cultures. When modern societies emerge the genders fall into place and become elements of the code of semiotic culture dominated by the phallic mark, the measure of sexual exchange (39). Here Grace makes her way carefully through the minefield of feminist critiques of Baudrillard, throwing Baudrillard's principles back at theorists like Irigaray (45-54), Braidotti (54-60), Butler (60-64). The final section of the chapter looks at Baudrillard's critiques of Foucault and Deleuze on power, returning to gender to show how, for Baudrillard, gender constructions of difference become a "simulation model" (70). This discussion is developed without an attempt to define what is meant by the feminist movement or feminism, and Grace does not sketch out the main concerns of feminism since the 1960s and its internal debates and divisions. As with the avoidance of the analysis of consumerism, this avoidance of feminist history gives the discussion an abstract character. Baudrillard's own analyses coherently connect consumerism and a concern to show how modern feminism fell into the traps set for "the feminine" and for the "female body" by consumer culture dominated by new media. Grace remains, however, somewhat at a distance, never providing concrete examples of how a Baudrillardian feminism might respond.

Chapter three looks at "difference" in the hyperreal world, the relation of "gender" to simulation, hyperreality, the silent masses, and the end of the social - well-known theses developed by Baudrillard in the 1970s. This is developed at first by reference to the theme of gender "difference" and "positive identity" as the false and impossible projects of contemporary semiotic culture. After a short section on feminism, most of the chapter takes on cultural and political critiques of Baudrillard that have little to do with feminism (83-116), the argument being that there is, in general, little understanding of Baudrillard's theory even after "more than thirty years" (116). The tendency of the earlier chapters is repeated here in a discussion that moves towards an interest in theoretical clarification rather than the direct issues of feminist struggle.

Chapter four, entitled "Hyperreal Genders," looks at simulation of gender. The attack on Judith Butler is based on the theoretical position developed by Baudrillard in his writings in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly on his theory of the transpolitical.

Butler's conception of gender performativity is exactly that specified by Baudrillard as that which traps the feminine in the contemporary code - "[t]hat which Butler advocates as democratic, Baudrillard observes happening with the operational, functional logic of the hyperreal" (125). Outlining the theory of the transpolitical Grace moves to consider the transsexual against the emerging literature of transgendering in feminist and queer literature. She notes how Baudrillard's ideas have here and there been picked up and used by feminists but shorn of their critical power, misread as positively supporting "trans" this and "trans" that (139). Here Grace is forthright in her condemnation: "Those advocating transgenderism as a radical transgression of oppressive social processes of normative gendering do not ask how it is that, contemporarily, their discourses of fluidity and multiplicity intersect with the generalised proliferation of 'trans' traversing all spheres, and how their 'politics' might be complicit with hegemonic trends" (140). But we do not find out if Grace is alone among feminists or if her position is aligned and part of a struggle within feminism, for although she debates with opponents, it is difficult to find where she has friends.

Chapter five, called "The Inevitable Seduction," looks at seduction, woman as object, exchange and sacrifice. The main theme of the chapter is to explain and apply Baudrillard's threefold division of cultures into those of the rule, the law, and the norm. Grace draws on a range of anthropological research to examine and affirm Baudrillard's notion of primal seduction, symbolic exchange and the rule (142-147), before examining the theoretical opposition between rule and law (147-150). The next sections present the problems of gender and sex in the light of this distinction in which the fundamental order of symbolic exchange does not fix femininity in the female, but permits reversibility of masculine and feminine, seduction and production (151). Then she examines the transition to a combinatorial culture in which instead of reversibility, there emerges a situation in which sexes "become interchangeable" (155) and more and more transparent, "sex is so close it merges with its representation" (156). After this presentation of Baudrillard's ideas, Grace looks at, and counters, three feminist critiques - those of Sadie Plant, Irigaray, and Louise Burchill. Then Grace tackles the notion of sacrifice and Baudrillard's comment on sacrificing a woman in the desert (165). Grace condemns the comment, since it shows "little respect for the tragedy" of the widespread violence against women in modern societies (165). But then Grace does try to explain, in the light of Baudrillard's theory, how such a sacrifice could be seen in terms of an accursed share, a sacrificial victim which is "valued above all else." There follows a long discussion of the anthropological debate on the exchange of women, after which Grace concludes that Baudrillard is right to stress that underlying practices of sacrifice and exchange is a reversibility fundamental to human culture, and she advocates with Baudrillard the principle of seduction for "[r]eversion traverses all 'sexes' in their non-essentialist appearance and disappearance" (171). Her argument at this point takes Baudrillard into the heart of feminist positions, for she suggests that:

If women are associated with seduction, and seduction is annihilated (along with the possibility of sacrifice to ensure reversion), then men are relentlessly consigned to 'identity' with no relief, exposed on all sides, fully positivised, a kind of pornography of masculinity that has erased its only possibility of transformation and death. This must engender its own form of madness (171).

At the beginning of the book the reader is informed that chapter six, entitled "Feminism and the Power of Dissolution," looks at the implication of Baudrillard's theory of symbolic exchange and seduction for feminism and poses the question

anew: What is the nature of patriarchy? But in fact it begins with a long presentation of Baudrillard first on Saussure's analysis of anagrams (172-178), then on his consideration of Freud (178-180), showing the effectiveness of reversibility in language and in the theory of the unconscious. In the last few pages of the book, (180-192), Grace finishes with a look at Baudrillard's notion of cool seduction, "shadowing the object" (Sophie Calle), and what she calls the "dissolution of power and meaning in the illusion of the real" entailing a critical reading of the work of Donna Haraway (188-190). The conclusion Grace reaches is to reject all (feminist) positions which rest on "identities" and she suggests that the great force of feminism is to be able to "dissolve power and meaning through the reversion of their illusion" and this "is to dissolve ontology of any essence; to return it to the symbolic order of appearances" (192).

The way Grace has developed her ideas around Baudrillard could be said to reduce Baudrillard's position to a rather formal and theoretical point about reversibility, symbolic exchange, and identity. This would, against Grace's own intention, rather reduce also the significance of Baudrillard's challenge which is probably more profound and more difficult to deal with. At the heart of this challenge is Baudrillard's thesis of the fundamental significance of radical alterity to human culture. Whereas for example Simone de Beauvoir saw in radical alterity the main weapon used to humble women into the status of the "second sex," Baudrillard sees in the annihilation of radical alterity a far more insidious form of control and subordination, and as Grace shows has disastrous effects on traditional patriarchy. For Baudrillard there is incompatibility between a movement based on consumer liberation and human rights, and one based on otherness. The former is consistent and complicit with modern society, the latter is the genuinely radical alternative. The problem with Baudrillard's position is that his model for gender alterity is anthropological, and as Grace shows, there is considerable evidence to show that in primitive societies, powers of feminine seduction are dangerous and effective. Even in the aristocratic courts of Europe strong and dangerous forms of seduction were in evidence. Baudrillard's contempt is for the romantic bourgeois ethic of woman as mirror image of man. Feminism in this perspective is a product of "male hysteria," not a genuine movement of emancipation. Baudrillard prefers the primitive, the age-old pattern of radical otherness and cruel forms of seduction, of fatal strategy, and the genuine action of destiny. Grace does not really attempt to push this line of thinking to the point of articulating a specific form of feminism based on radical alterity, for it would mean opposition to all efforts for social equality. In truth this is virtually unthinkable as a form of feminism.

Baudrillard is an extreme thinker, but he has never claimed his thought is "feminist" or shown interest in a reconstruction of traditional masculinity, indeed he has evinced horror at the thought of projects to create a "new man." He opposes, as Grace shows, democratisation as a dictatorial form, one which eliminates symbolic forms more surely and consistently than any holocaust, and in so doing also creates sexism, sexual discrimination, harassment, etc., for these simply do not exist where radical otherness is the dominant form of symbolic order. They are among the problems of modernity to which Baudrillard responds by looking for friends who are allied with the fatal, the pure object. Grace's book dresses up these ideas as attractive theses for feminists to think about, but she stops short of formulating a symbolic practice that puts them into the extreme, and cruel, manifesto they would have to have. Probably this is a wise course for Baudrillard's notion of the place of women in

society is modelled on Hindu, Islamic, or eighteenth-century European cultures, but what the equivalent of these ritual and ceremonial forms might be neither Baudrillard nor Grace have yet told us. Baudrillardian feminism here is still-born.

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SRB Insight: Governing Unemployment

By William Walters

Governance became something of a 'keyword' during the 1990s. Political economists applied the term to the regulation of economic affairs (Jessop 1995). Political scientists used notions of governance to analyze political systems which, in an age of 'globalization' and political fragmentation, seem to be increasingly polycentric and multilevelled (Marks et al 1996). Studies of public policy also took up the concept to make sense of new, sometimes looser systems of regulation - brought into being by privatization and new management techniques - where public objectives were often pursued through 'partnerships' and other arrangements with private actors (Dale 1997). While these and many other literatures no doubt understand governance in diverse ways, one preoccupation they share is in understanding contemporary *transformations* in governance.

This *SRB Insight* explores the kind of contribution which the governmentality literature can make to our understanding of mutations in (and in some cases away from) 'social' government, a notion that is defined in the first section. There are several conceptual emphases which distinguish the governmentality perspective on governance from other theories of governance. These include a stress on *programmatic* aspects of governing, the *liberal* character of dominant strategies of government (ie, their will to govern in terms of, and through the regulated autonomy of their subjects (eg, Foucault 1983), and the *practical* dimension of rule (ie, the technical methods of inscription, calculation and influence on which this conduct of 'distant' and relatively autonomous actors depends) (Barry et al 1996; Rose and Miller 1992). But the one that is emphasized in this paper is the *discursive* character of government. The governmentality literature is valuable for drawing our attention to some of the differing languages that political authorities have used historically to imagine their task, to picture the objects and the processes they have sought to govern. Governmentality does not employ as *a priori* categories of analysis the economic, the social, the psychological, the public and the private etc, as the social science disciplines tend to. Instead, it is interested in the manner in which governing mentalities and frameworks involve a characterization of processes and variables as 'economic', 'social', etc.

This essay examines some of the different conceptual 'territories' in terms of which the problem of unemployment has been posed, and acted on. It begins with a discussion of the 'social' government of unemployment which has been politically influential for much of this century. The second section then analyzes a number of different strategies for governing unemployment today, each of which challenge the 'social' approach. What is highlighted is the different

ways in which unemployment is imagined within neoliberal, neo-social democratic, communitarian strategies of government, as well as in terms of the strategy of criminalizing the poor. In this way, the paper seeks to suggest the possibility of a more nuanced, and less reductionist account of shifts in governance.

Unemployment and Social Government

As a concept, 'the social' has a quite specific significance within the governmentality literature. It is not the eternal or necessary antithesis of 'the economic'. Neither is it a reference to the social world of human interactions and relationships, that exists apart from, but in relation to, the natural world. Instead, 'the social' refers to a particular style or ethos of governing societies and their problems, but also a 'territory' of government (Rose 1996), which is not transhistorical, but only comes into being in Western countries sometime in the nineteenth century on a piecemeal and *ad hoc* basis. Today it is undergoing profound mutations. Pat O'Malley (1996: 2) makes sense of the social in the following terms. Under the regime of the social:

the principal objects of rule and the ways of engaging with them were constituted in terms of a collective entity with emergent properties that could not be reduced to the individual constituents, that could not be tackled adequately at the level of individuals, and that for these reasons required the intervention of the state. Social services, social insurances, social security, the social wage were constituted to deal with social problems, social forces, social injustices and social pathologies through various forms of social intervention, social work, social medicine and social engineering.

Understood in this way, the social is useful for the purposes of this paper, namely analyzing and historicizing the government of unemployment in the twentieth century. The 'social' nature of its regulation can be appreciated on at least two levels.

First, we can inquire how it was that unemployment came to be constituted as a 'social' object within governmental thought. In the nineteenth century and before, the condition of the unemployed was understood either as an issue of overpopulation (Malthus), or ascribed to factors exogenous to the market system (i.e., a severe winter, sun spots [Jevons], Napoleonic wars). It was, of course, also ascribed to the moral failings of workers. Within political cultures dominated by liberal political economy it was not possible to conceptualize worklessness as a systemic and impersonal phenomenon.

But a number of developments towards the end of the century changed matters, so that by the 1890s, at least, 'unemployment' was discovered (Harris 1972; Walters 1994). These developments included the rise of social-survey based research which quantified the sheer scale of poverty and irregular employment in countries like Britain (Jones 1984); changes in political and social thought which repudiated the atomistic assumptions of liberal political economy in favour of a more holistic conception of society (Collini 1979); and the political activity of the labour movement and of poor people who began to make political demands in the name of the unemployed (Flanahan 1991). One result of this was that unemployment came to be officially recognized as an outcome of the functioning of a larger socio-economic system, or as William Beveridge (1909) put it, a "problem of industry." Henceforth, unemployment could be understood as a normal, albeit regrettable and deleterious,

consequence of industrial life. Just like the various other dimensions of the social (suicide, crime, poverty, etc.) that were revealed through the statistical work of social experts and emerging social ministries, unemployment was seen to have its own regularity, its cycles, its social and geographical distribution.

Not only was unemployment now being conceptualized at a social level. The first six decades of this century also saw the development of a host of techniques for *acting* on it at the level of population and national economy. With the advent of unemployment insurance to socialize the wage, a labour exchange system to distribute the labour force more rationally, regional policy to distribute industrial activity geographically (Parsons 1988) and, by the end of WWII, a political technology of national economic management influenced by Keynes' formalization of macroeconomics (but, as Thompson [1992] has argued, by other economic rationalities in countries like France), more and more aspects of the problem of unemployment could be tackled at a national-aggregate, rather than an individual or local level.

Giddens (1994) provides a useful way of understanding the form in which social problems like unemployment, poverty and public health were constituted within regimes of social government. They become "external risks," phenomena which are not so much the property of eternal social groups (the poor, the residuum), but hazards which threaten whole populations. They are 'external' in the sense that, understood as risks which traverse populations, these hazards become primarily the responsibility of systems of technocratic macromanagement, of national health services, social security agencies, planning offices etc.

However, to understand the place of unemployment within the strategy of social government solely in terms of 'external risk' is itself risky. For it implies that the responsibility for the government of this, and other social problems, was somehow fully taken over by states and expert systems. It implies an overly linear and total shift from moralizing and disciplinary techniques of governance to social-aggregative ones (O'Malley 1992). It also supports the argument made by neoliberal critics of the welfare state, namely that the development of the latter demoralizes and de-responsibilizes the individual. With the understanding of modern power which it takes from Foucault and Latour - as relational, as always working through the regulated and calculated autonomy of subjects and agents - the governmentality literature points to a different view. It is true that welfarist modes of government centre upon the aggregative, the collective pole, as it were. But by no means do they eclipse the role as self-governing entities which individuals, families, and autonomous groups like the professions, trade unions, employers and their representatives are to play in strategies of welfarist government. This much is nicely captured by Beveridge. In discussing the social obligations proper to social actors in societies of managed full employment, he clearly sees the connection between their self-discipline and their enjoyment of liberties:

If the people of Britain generally under full employment become undisciplined in industry, that will show that they are not sufficiently civilized to be led by anything but fear of unemployment and are unworthy of freedom, or that control of industry must be changed (Beveridge 1944; cf. Williams and Williams 1987: 34)

Governing Unemployment Today: Four Strategies

This brief overview of some of the ways in which the government of unemployment could be considered social this century is necessary to the main purpose of this essay. For it allows us to now consider contemporary strategies for governing unemployment in terms of how they improve upon, transform, or reject the presuppositions and techniques of social government. It should be stressed that what follows does not aspire to offer any sort of structural or political explanation of the crisis of welfarism, nor the forces which contest it. There is a vast literature on this (Scharpf 1991; Pierson 1994). Nor does this very schematic summary of different governmental strategies claim to be comprehensive. The objective is somewhat more restricted: to capture something of the diversity of languages which are being used by authorities to make sense of contemporary social problems, and the different ways in which social relations are now imagined.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a widely and loosely employed term within the social sciences and in public debate. For the purposes of this paper I am defining it somewhat heuristically in terms of its difference from neo-social democracy (which is discussed in the following section). However, as strategies both should be seen as positions along a continuum. Both positions are loosely and pragmatically assembled.

Both neoliberalism and neo-social democracy are typified at a most general level by the privileged role they accord to 'markets' over 'bureaucracies' within their programmes. 'Markets' are held to be superior to 'bureaucracies' not just as allocative and regulatory mechanisms, but also as devices for maximizing the scope for individual freedoms and personal choice. Neoliberalism and neo-social democracy both generally endorse certain core policies, most notably a limited role for the public sector, liberal trading regimes, price stability as a cardinal rule in monetary matters, and economic competitiveness as a key objective. However, they differ in terms of their hierarchy of political concerns and objectives. Neoliberalism has little to say on questions of social justice, social inequality or discrimination. Its interest in social policy is largely connected with the contribution it is to make to economic objectives. This is not the case for many neo-social democrats: while they recognize that economic competitiveness is key, they also seek to address the widening inequality associated with market liberalization, social justice, and related issues. They are also more keen to build 'partnerships' with a range of social actors. Quite how is something we address in the next section. Here we are interested in the neoliberalism and the government of unemployment.

There are several levels at which we can consider the significance of neoliberalism for a genealogy of the government of unemployment. But in order to take up this matter, we need to briefly mention the manner in which Keynes had socialized economic theories of unemployment. For Keynes (1936), unemployment was the emergent property of the national economic system, and could not be reduced to the economic behaviour or choices of workers. The most serious component of unemployment was involuntary: the outcome of inadequate aggregate demand in the system. This view of unemployment was challenged by the neoclassical and neoliberal theories which had become powerful within

policy-making circles, at least in the USA and the UK, by the early 1980s (Minford 1991; Brittan 1975). These approaches turned Keynes on his head. There were strict limits to a strategy of reducing the jobless rate by manipulating aggregate demand in the economy, it was argued, since this did not improve the factors of supply, and risked aggravating inflation. The only way to effect a lasting solution to unemployment was to act on the factors which determine an economy's "natural rate of unemployment," factors located on the 'supply side' of the economy – its institutional matrix of benefits, taxation, training etc. Consequently, while the Left sees deregulation of the labour market and the retrenchment of social security as an attack on the working class, and the reassertion of capital's power over the production process, the neoliberal right can claim it as a method of 'job creation'.

What is significant for our purposes is the following. These theories reinstate a view of unemployment as voluntary. It is no more than an aggregation of the countless preferences and choices individuals make, under a given set of circumstances, between work and 'leisure' (Minford 1991: 22). This is one way in which unemployment ceases to be 'external' - out there in the system - and moves closer to the choice-making individual of liberal discourse.

There is a correspondence between this reconstruction of theories of unemployment in terms of individual choices, and the second level at which neoliberalism is significant for a genealogy of governance. Neoliberalism has made a lasting impression on public administration, introducing an ethos, and mechanisms of 'enterprise' into its workings (Hood 1991). The management of employment policy has not been exempt from this trend. For instance, in Britain the administration of training has been devolved to a series of quasi-autonomous agencies, the Training and Enterprise Councils (King 1993). And there is now a flourishing private sector providing job counselling and training services. But also the task of regional and urban policy has been recast as one of stimulating 'local economies', and fostering the entrepreneurial capacities of disadvantaged communities, with economic development and enterprise agencies set up within, and outside local government to this end (Deakin and Edwards 1993). The ethos of enterprise is also evident in the way in which employment programmes encourage the unemployed to become active and motivated 'jobseekers' (Novak 1997), but also in all those programmes which encourage self-employment as an alternative to unemployment.

Neo-social democracy

In an important sense, neo-social democracy wants to affirm the social. Whereas neoliberalism is characterized by its neglect of, and in some cases contempt for social questions, neo-social democracy seeks to keep problems of racism, sexism, unemployment, social inequality and deprivation in the foreground of the political agenda. Yet neo-social democrats evince little enthusiasm for the old technologies of the social – social insurance, social work, even trade unionism. Here they agree with the neoliberals that these types of intervention are today counter-productive, fostering dependency amongst people, and doing little to 'integrate' the 'socially excluded' populations which the whirlwind of marketization and globalization has left in its wake. Jacques Donzelot (1991) has characterized the neoliberal and neo-social democratic logics as being about "the mobilization of society." This seems an especially apt description of

the neo-social democratic position. It works in terms of an 'animator-state' that no longer positions itself as a manager who can solve society's problems. Instead, it deflects them back onto society, engaging it in a new form of social government in which the full gamut of societal actors and institutions – citizens, families, firms, communities, cities, schools, professions – are to be mobilized, resourced and steered towards the solution of social problems.

This logic is apparent in a series of high-level policy documents that emerged since the early 1990s concerning unemployment (EC 1994; ILO 1996). Here I shall focus on just one, the OECD's Jobs Strategy (OECD 1994). While the OECD's enthusiasm for market-oriented strategies has earned it a neoliberal reputation, the considerable attention it has paid in recent times to the positive reconstruction of social policy qualifies it here as neo-social democratic.

The Jobs Strategy, as with neoliberalism, rejects the Keynesian conception of unemployment. Unemployment is first and foremost a 'structural' problem, the symptom and expression of social and economic systems which are failing to adapt to the new global world.

There appears to be a growing gap between the need to adjust and the capacity of OECD economies to adjust.

This adjustment gap has arisen from practices that have made the economy rigid. Motivated to protect people from at least the worst vicissitudes of economic life, governments, unions and businesses have progressively introduced labour market and social policy measures which, in achieving their intended ends, also have had the unintended but more important side-effect of decreasing the economy's ability, and sometimes also society's will, to adapt. (OECD 1994: 29).

There are several points that need to be made on the strategy for governing unemployment proposed here. First, the mobilization of society it calls for is permanent. Restructuring is no longer a once-off or periodic adjustment, as it was perhaps imagined to be in the 1970s when mass unemployment and inflation signalled the end of the post-war boom. Flexibility is a constant imperative; "structural reform should be seen as a continuous process responding to evolving constraints and opportunities, rather than being perceived as crisis management" (OECD 1990: 15).

The fact that the OECD, like so many organizations today, prefers the notion of 'strategy' to 'policy' is significant in this respect. It speaks to the changed conception of social and economic order, and of the task of political action, which is now associated with unemployment. In his historical overview of managerial thought, Charles Maier links this preference for 'strategy' to a particular view of the economic world as somewhat 'Hobbesian', a world marked by "the constant presence of uncertainty, and the existence of constraints." This is quite different from the 'homeostatic vision' of their environments which managers of public, private and personal affairs took for much of this century, where the task of management was "to preserve or restore a high-level equilibrium" (Maier 1987: 69). The presupposition of the Jobs Strategy *qua* strategy is that economies and societies are no longer self-contained unities; the solution to unemployment is not the attainment of a managed 'equilibrium' of full employment, as Keynes imagined it. Instead, it is about being adept at the game of "constant adaptation to a moving environment" (Carnoy and Castells 1997: 12).

The second point to note about the Jobs Strategy is that the causes of unemployment are

no longer centred in one place, i.e., in a deficiency of aggregate demand (Keynes) or friction within the labour market (Beveridge). Instead, the 'jobs crisis' becomes the occasion for a sort of wide-ranging audit of social and economic institutions in terms of their flexibility. "Every part of the social and economic policy spectrum offers answers" (OECD 1994: 41). Accordingly, the Jobs Strategy contains more than 60 different recommendations for measures states can pursue to boost 'job creation', including tax and benefits reform, the encouragement of entrepreneurship, the strengthening of the research and innovation base of the economy, and support for lifelong learning. There is a clear sense that society is being implicated in this campaign. "The recommendations do not apply to governments alone. In many cases responsibility for action to improve employment performance lies most directly with employers, trade unions and individual workers" (OECD 1994: 43).

A third point can be made about the Jobs Strategy, and the neo-social democratic strategy, if we consider the Jobs Strategy in the light of the historic commitment to full employment which most Western states made following WWII. It has been noted for some time that the rise of neoliberalism signalled the demise of the full employment objective. The Jobs Strategy does not restore this objective, but it does indicate the existence of a new, positive objective which states can use to replace it. This is 'job creation' which has emerged not just as a political objective, but a new empirical *object* of regulation: something to be counted, compared, theorized as to which methods best achieve this end. But if job creation is replacing full employment as a policy goal and object, this is accompanied by a new relationship to the citizen around employment issues. In the past the guarantee of full employment suggested that the state would provide for the security of the individual in part by exercising a certain 'external' control over her or his socio-economic environment. Neo-social democracy no longer conceives security in these terms. "A more realistic and positive approach is to accept the present world of employment instability, and to help citizens learn to deal with it as a permanent state of affairs" (OECD 1997: 5). A generalized state of insecurity is made the norm (Beck 1992). Hence neo-social democracy looks to recast the social contract around 'employability', a notion for which the 'skills' of the individual becomes a key instrument and technology of government. The skills of the individual are to be governed and harnessed through a proliferation of new technologies including various new systems of accreditation and assessment which are to make them visible; compacts with employers about training; the provision of financial and tax incentives for individuals to 'invest' in their own 'human capital'; and the recasting of education systems under the auspices of 'lifelong learning'. In these and other ways individuals are to be supported, encouraged, and steered towards a norm of constantly updating their marketable skills.

Finally, we should note that the neo-social democratic approach to unemployment, at least as exemplified by the OECD and its intellectuals, entails a novel kind of specification of the family as a site of human capital formation and economic partnership, and an attempt to re-deploy it as a site of government. This is worth noting since, again, it illustrates the lines of continuity and rupture in relation to our earlier discussion of social government. For architects of the welfare state like Beveridge (1909), the family is seen as a *social* machine. The management of unemployment through political action and

administrative means is crucial: only when the livelihood of the 'breadwinner' is secured will the family be capable of meeting its 'private' responsibilities and 'social' obligations, especially towards the care and social development of children.

Within the neo-social democratic imaginary, the family is still accorded certain 'developmental' responsibilities. However, it is now also more akin to a small business, and node within a larger training and retraining system.

Communitarianism

The third strategy we consider here is communitarianism. This is a well-established theoretical position within political philosophy where it has served as a foil to liberalism. However, in recent years there has been a flourishing of debate around this theme at the level of public policy and political rhetoric. This has been most pronounced in the US where President Clinton keenly adopted communitarian themes. However, communitarian arguments have also been espoused in the UK. Tony Blair's New Labour government has enthusiastically endorsed communitarian principles as part of its bid to chart a 'third way' between the statism and technocracy of social democracy, and the uncaring, antisocial and individualistic excesses of neoliberalism (Driver and Martell 1997). It is in the name of community much more than class that Labour now governs.

A consideration of communitarian logics is relevant for this discussion of mutations in social government since it seems that communitarians put forward a non-sociological account of social problems. This is a criticism that has been well made by Low (1999) of Amitai Etzioni, one of the most prominent voices of this new communitarianism.

Etzioni's communitarianism embodies a particular diagnosis of the present ills of the US. In short, it is held to be suffering from a fraying of community. In a manner not dissimilar from neoconservatism, the finger is pointed at the 1960s and 1970s, to the growth of 'special interests', 'individual rights' and moral narcissism. While the Reagan agenda of the 1980s defined itself against the moral drift of the 1960s, at the same time its pro-market emphasis only heightened a sense of individualism and contempt for communal values which in many ways made the situation worse. Hence for Etzioni and other communitarians a whole host of morbid symptoms stem from, and attest to, this weakening of community spirit, this dissolution of common core values. Among them are rising divorce rates, escalating crime and urban chaos, welfare dependency, economic insecurity, cultural conflict, a political system ridden with corruption and cynicism, and easily-available pornography. Any improvement will hinge upon a reawakening of a sense of individual and community responsibility.

Neoliberalism and neo-social democracy might have reversed dominant understandings of unemployment. But they still situate it on a socio-economic plane. What is interesting about the communitarian strategy is that it displaces unemployment onto a space of community, of moral and ethical relations. Along with poor housing conditions, irregular work, family violence, it becomes one of a series of forms of 'social malaise' (Low 1999: 95), a symptom of a deficit of civic activism and individual responsibility. Unemployment becomes a tear in the so-

cial fabric, a site for a social and political campaign modelled along the lines of moral regeneration and repair. The unemployed must bear their responsibilities. According to the logic of community, society is no longer imagined as a space of interdependence or social determination (Rose 1996). Instead, it becomes a delicate environment which we must nurture.

Etzioni doesn't write much directly about unemployment. He devotes more space to education, the need to 'clean up' the polity, and to restore the socially-responsive family. But on the occasions where the issue does come up, it tends to confirm this argument. For instance, at one point Etzioni (1993: 127) observes that the closure of industrial plants which are the mainstay of communities cannot always be avoided. However, he goes on, the communities in question should be afforded the opportunity to help the corporation solve its economic problems, or to explore the opportunity of alternatives like some sort of buy-out. Employees should also be given time, and perhaps financial assistance, to help them and their communities adjust. There is no sense here of plant closure as a economic issue, structured by economic forces or dynamics. Instead, we have an essentially moral appeal to employers for better treatment of their employees. Elsewhere, the subject of unemployment is broached in terms of subsidiarist principles: "We start with our responsibility to ourselves and to members of our community; we expand the reach of our moral claims and duties from there" (Etzioni 1993: 147). In the case of the unemployed, this could mean "continuing to look for a job following several rejections." The individual should only look to the nation – the "community of communities" – when other communities are incapable of helping. Hence, federal unemployment insurance only seems to be justified under *particular* circumstances, as a form of 'intercommunity' assistance. Etzioni gives the example of an economic recession which strikes a particular town or community: "it is futile and unfair to expect that only members of those towns should bear the full brunt of resulting dislocations, which were caused by the federal government to benefit the nationwide economy" (Etzioni 1993: 146).

What is interesting here is that Etzioni's position reverses the assumptions of social government. For the social liberalism typified by Beveridge and Churchill (1973), state action was to be the foundation, the substructure that guaranteed a basic and universal standard of living and security across society. 'Voluntary action' (Beveridge) would then build on this. But universal provision had to come first so that poorer citizens had a stake in the social order, grounds for hope, a reason to strive to improve their situation. For the communitarian position set out by Etzioni, state provision is a measure of last resort, a back up when all else fails. This view of the welfare state is also implicit in contemporary political discussions whenever 'social programmes' are referred to as 'social safety nets' – as though the social existed solely to prevent the free-fall of the poorer sections of society who, unlike the majority, have no private means to secure themselves.

We noted that 'New' Labour has assimilated certain communitarian themes into its programme for governing Britain. The New Deal is its flagship policy to deal with long-term and youth unemployment, as well as the integration of other categories (i.e., single mothers) into the employment system (Finn 1997). For some commentators the New Deal would, no doubt, be in-

terpreted as 'productivist' social policy, as a further step in the transition from the Fordist welfare state to a postfordist workfare state (Jessop 1994). However, the New Deal also seems to embody communitarian motifs. For one thing it eschews a sociological or economic understanding of unemployment. This much is demonstrated by the fact that the New Deal is funded by a one-off 'windfall tax' on 'greedy' former public enterprises. It does not assume that unemployment is a systemic or necessary feature of the social system mandating continuous supervision and a constant stream of public funds. Instead, it is more like an environmental disaster which can be redressed through a one-off public campaign.

But the New Deal is communitarian in other ways. It grasps the principle of 'responsibility' in a bid to reestablish a social contract between the unemployed and the rest of society, to reverse the neglect for the disadvantaged, and to counter the social disintegration spawned by the Thatcher years.

Too many people in Britain have slipped through the labour market.... We have a responsibility to offer people decent employment or training opportunities and these will be available under the New Deal. But it is a two way deal. In return people must take responsibility for their own development and their part of the bargain will be to make a positive contribution to society (Blunkett 1997).

The responsibility of the unemployed, in this case, is to seize the 'opportunities' which the New Deal offers them. These include subsidized work placements in the private and third sectors, involvement in the government's 'environmental task force', and education or training. The Employment Service is to keep a watchful eye that such responsibilities are observed. But also, through its 'gateway' counselling process, it implicates the unemployed in a regime in which they exercise the responsibility of thinking strategically about their futures. Gateway does this by constituting the allocation of the unemployed between different retraining options in terms of a strategic 'career choice'. This choice is to be made by the subject in consultation with the Gateway's job counsellors.

This emphasis on the responsibilities of the unemployed, rather than their social rights, is a feature of many social reforms which have been analyzed as 'workfare'. It marks a direction in policy which has been advocated by conservative critics of welfare such as Lawrence Mead (1986). Less well noted in the literature is the discursive repositioning of the employer within these new types of welfare arrangement. A prominent feature of the New Deal has been its appeal to employers to form "a new partnership with the Government and young people, to attack the waste of unemployment." Through a high-profile media campaign, and various government consultations, major businesses have been exhorted to recognize their "corporate social responsibility," to 'pledge' themselves to the objectives of the New Deal by offering work placements and other forms of assistance to the unemployed. It is significant that their involvement is to be voluntary: this reflects the communitarian theme that social action should be first and foremost morally driven if it is to be sustainable.

My sense is that this appeal to the employer is more than just rhetorical. It reflects a broader reconstruction of the relationship of the firm to social issues according to the logic of community. For today we see a multitude of ways in which businesses are becoming involved in 'their'

communities. Whether it's supermarkets pledging a dollar towards computers for schools for every 50 you spend on their merchandise, banks offering scholarships for disadvantaged young people, or local businesses offering managerial and marketing advice to help charities become more effective 'social entrepreneurs', the forms by which the business world is becoming involved in social problems extends well beyond what used to be called business philanthropy.

This new governmental relationship of the employer stands in contrast to that which we observed under social-democratic and Keynesian forms of welfare government. Then the employer featured prominently as a partner, and a social actor alongside the union, in what was structured as a 'corporatist' project of macromanaging of the economy. Now the idea that welfare can be managed in this way has passed. Today it is as a business 'community', which partners other communities, that firms are to be enlisted in the promotion of the social good.

Criminalization

One of the positive features of governmentality research into social government is that it takes a broad and deeply historicist view. Unlike a great deal of work within political science and social policy, it does not take the social as self-evident or eternal, but a particular way of governing. It is therefore sensitive to the existence of other ways of governing issues of security and population that have existed as competitors to social government, and that were, in some cases, subordinated by social insurance systems, social work, social justice etc., as these became dominant elements of our present. Relevant to the present discussion, and an illustration of a competing strategy, is what Garland (1985) describes as a 'penal' solution to the 'social question' at the end of the nineteenth century. It accorded a much greater role for carceral and repressive technologies than the social security strategy which, it transpires, successfully outflanked it (though not, perhaps, without drawing from it). Had the penal strategy been more successful, the space of unemployment would, presumably, have been constituted more as a law and order issue, and the proper target for such measures as labour colonies, anti-vagabondage measures, and a continuation of the logic of the Poor Law in assistance matters.

There are certain respects in which the present is marked by a revival of penal and criminological approaches to the government of population. As Stan Cohen, among many criminologists, has noted: "the crime problem has come to dominate the contemporary political rhetoric of Western democracies" (1996: 7). At least within the English-speaking democracies, one can speak of a 'new punitiveness' which seeks to engage certain 'problem' sections of the population in terms of a plethora of disciplinary measures, including boot camps, 'tougher' sentencing, curfews, and 'zero tolerance'. Society is mobilized around the theme of a 'war on crime'.

It seems this tendency cannot be explained in purely realist terms, i.e., in terms of a public reaction to a secular rise in crime. For Garland (1996) these various wars on crime are a somewhat hysterical display of state sovereignty. By taking a 'tough' stand on crime, politicians can reassert the symbolic power of the state at a time when its actual capacity to control the social and economic environment seems to be waning (something similar could be said about nationalist reactions to European integration). For Wacquant (1999) the explanation is more political-instrumental. If a 'moral panic' is now well-

ing across Europe around themes of 'urban violence', disorder and juvenile delinquency, this has much to do with the dominant flows of ideas from the United States. In this respect he identifies what is now an international network that has come to link the interests of prestigious think-tanks, media commentators, academics, police departments, justice and home affairs ministries. Its core is in the US, but its message and many of its instruments reach into Europe, with the UK serving as a relay station and a testing ground. This network has been instrumental in reconstituting social issues as questions of 'order' and 'security'. It is tied in with "the withering away of the economic state, diminution of the social state, expansion of the penal state" (Wacquant 1999: 1). The emergent penal-industrial complex also has interests that converge with this network. This network which has formed around the criminalization strategy has also been instrumental in reviving the idea of 'the underclass' (Lister 1996). This concept does important bridging work in the sense that it links the question of the long-term unemployed to narratives of violent crime, single parenthood, drug abuse, racial alienation, welfare dependency. It shifts the place of unemployment within governmental imaginings so that it is no longer a systemic socio-economic condition which explains and underpins a host of other ills, but rather part of a congeries of forms of immoral, irresponsible and anti-social behaviour. It associates unemployment with an alien 'culture' which has formed on the margins of society in which the work ethic and social values of mainstream society are absent. As such, the underclass idea legitimates a more repressive approach to social problems. It suggests that people without work can be conceptualized, and governed in other ways besides as 'unemployed'.

That intensive (public and private) policing, and ultimately incarceration, presents an alternative way of governing poor populations to the unemployment/social security strategy is a conclusion that is implicit in one of the explanations given for the comparatively low rate of long-term unemployment in the USA. The latter is partly explained by the stinginess of the US social security system, and by the higher rates of job creation achieved by the US economy. But it is also related, it seems, to the high numbers of men – and disproportionately young black men – imprisoned in the USA.

Discussion

The substantive core of this essay concerned the regulation of unemployment, understood here as a point of focus for a wider discussion of 'the social' and its mutation. The paper has sought to analyze this mutation in terms of four, schematic strategies. The presumption is that such an approach makes for a better appreciation of the complexity of governance. I do not claim for a moment to have offered a comprehensive overview of all the possible strategies for governing unemployment. For instance, I have said nothing about those who would revive a more Keynesian approach, perhaps through better systems of international policy coordination, and govern in terms of a kind of a reregulation of the market (Eatwell 1995). Indeed the Group of Seven industrial nations observed in October 1998 that the present threat to the world economy was not inflation but lack of demand (Elliot and Milne 1999). Nevertheless, through the somewhat abbreviated overview above, I have hinted at something of the hybridity and multiple logics of governance. This is in contrast to those who seek to interpret diverse phenomena in terms of a macrologic – the transi-

tion to postfordism, the globalization of the state, or late modernization.

There is another way that the concept of strategy has proved useful for thinking about governance. Many writers have observed that conservative, authoritarian approaches to law and social issues are frequently being twinned with the global resurgence of liberal economics and the retreat of the social state (Wacquant 1999). What Gamble (1994), among others, identified as a trademark of 'Thatcherism' seems to be a more general phenomenon. At some level it might seem logical to assert that the introduction of market logics into more and more sections of social life necessitates an intensification of policing and repression. By presenting matters in terms of different strategies, however, I want to leave open the question of the connection between the neoliberal and the conservative-authoritarian poles. Strategies compete with one another to hegemonize the social space. For instance, one cannot say deductively the extent to which a neo-social democratic strategy might be able to provide governmental solutions on an extensive basis, and relegate the criminalization strategy to the margins. Much depends on political determinations.

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