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To cite this article: Maarten Simons (2006) Learning as Investment: Notes on governmentality and biopolitics, Educational Philosophy and Theory, 38:4, 523-540, DOI: [10.1111/j.1469-5812.2006.00209.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2006.00209.x)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2006.00209.x>



Published online: 09 Jan 2013.



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Learning as Investment: Notes on governmentality and biopolitics

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Abstract

The 'European Space of Higher Education' could be mapped as an infrastructure for entrepreneurship and a place where the distinction between the social and the economic becomes obsolete. Using Foucault's understanding of biopolitics and discussing the analyses of Agamben and Negri/Hardt it is argued that the actual governmental configuration, i.e. the economisation of the social, also has a biopolitical dimension. Focusing on the intersection between a politicisation and economisation of human life allows us to discuss a kind of 'bio-economisation' (cf. Bröckling), a regime of economic terror and learning as investment. Finally it is argued how fostering learning, i.e. fostering life (as a learning process) could turn into 'let die' and even into 'make die'.

Keywords: governmentality, biopolitics, Europe and higher education

Human beings are unique among all living organisms in that their primary adaptive specialization lies not in some particular physical form or skill or fit in an ecological niche, but rather in identification with the process of adaptation itself—in the process of learning. We are thus the learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds.

(Kolb, 1984, p. 1)

Introduction

Europe is in need of space. Some initiatives at least point in that direction. With regard to the Lisbon-strategy and the European knowledge society the importance of a 'European research area' is stressed. Another project is the creation of a 'European space of lifelong learning'. The most famous area, at least in educational circles, is the 'European space of higher education'. This space should be focused on international competitiveness, mobility and employability.

An analysis based upon Foucault, and more specifically inspired by studies of governmentality, has pointed at the specific type of inhabitants of this space. Entrepreneurial selves and institutions need a global network environment or infrastructure (Masschelein & Simons, 2002; 2003). The infrastructure is needed in order to be able to employ one's human capital, to make choices taking into account information about the added value or quality, to make investments in additional human capital and to use one's learning force in a productive way. As a result, the European space of higher education can be described as an infrastructure for entrepreneurial selves and institutions that look in an investing way towards the future. And as far as we look at ourselves (as students, teachers, and organisations) and our future in this way, the European infrastructure is not just an option but a necessity.

The European space for higher education is a concrete illustration of what Bröckling *et al.* have described as an 'economisation of the social' (Bröckling *et al.*, 2000). This formula refers to a main characteristic of advanced liberalism as a governmental regime. The term economic should be understood here in a rather specific way, i.e. it refers to entrepreneurship or a kind of freedom guaranteed through a submission to a 'permanent economic tribunal' (Foucault, 2004a, p. 253). Thus, the formula does not refer to the colonisation of the social by the economic (presupposing that the notions refer to two different domains), but to a governmental regime in which the economic has changed itself. In short, within this configuration of entrepreneurial government and self-government the distinction between the social and the economic (as two different domains, each requiring their own government) becomes obsolete.

This cartography of the present will be elaborated below by focusing on Foucault's notion of biopolitics. Foucault introduces the term in the middle of the 1970s to argue that the 'regulation of the population' (besides disciplining the body) is an important pillar of power relations within the modern nation state. Although recently the concept of biopolitics has been used in different places, with regard to studies of governmentality the concept has been of rather minor importance. Foucault's own use of the concept could help to explain this. Although the course at the *Collège de France* of 1978–1979 has the title *Naissance de la biopolitique*, he focuses mainly on the birth of liberal and neo-liberal forms of governmentality (Foucault, 2004a). Thus biopolitical issues are not extensively dealt with in his analysis of these economic regimes of government. However, according to us it is interesting to focus explicitly on the relation between political economy and biopolitics and to explore, using Bröckling's terminology and perspective, the 'intersection between a politicisation and economisation of human life' (Bröckling, 2003, p. 6). This exploration will give us the opportunity to argue that the 'economisation of the social' has a biopolitical dimension and that what is at stake is a 'bio-economisation'. The first part of this paper is limited to a general process of overview of the concept of biopolitics as used by Foucault and authors after him, in order to explore in the following parts—at a very general level—some biopolitical dimensions of the present and more specifically of the European space of higher education.

1. Ideas on Biopolitics

The notion biopolitics, used in accordance with Foucault, is not at all well defined. Nancy refers on this point to a kind of confusion due to a notion such as ‘bio-ethics’ (Nancy, 2000, p. 137). Bio-ethics is often used to talk about the ethical problems and moral decisions generated through new developments and possibilities of biotechnology. In this sense, it is not an ‘ethics’ that is completely determined or formed by ‘bios’ (a kind of vital ethics). Instead, it is a kind of ethical reflection about the consequences of new possibilities of biotechnology. The notion ‘biopolitics’—in accordance with Foucault at least—should be understood in another way, i.e. it does not refer to a political reflection about biotechnology, but to a politics determined and steered by life.¹ Or to use Foucault’s well known description: ‘For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question’. (Foucault, 1976/1979, p. 143)

Thus, with the term biopolitics Foucault tries to articulate how from the nineteenth century onwards politics understand itself not anymore (or only) in relation to subjects (in a juridical sense) or to a territory, but in relation to the life of an individual or species. This rather ‘epochal’ statement concerning the ‘threshold of biological modernity’ and the biopolitical era implies that politics and political forms of the exercise of power have changed in their essence (Donnelly, 1992, p. 200). In the following we will take a look at how Foucault looks at this global political change. Then, we will show how Agamben and Negri/Hardt take up and elaborate the term in their own, rather specific, framework. A short discussion of their use of the term biopolitics will enable us to explore how the term can be reintroduced with regard to studies of governmentality.

1.1 ‘The Threshold of Biological Modernity’

In order to explore the main features of biopower, Foucault contrasts this term with the features of sovereign power (Foucault, 1976/1979; 1997). The sovereign is someone who can decide upon life and death. The right to kill can be used in an indirect way to hold power over life. The following formula expresses very well what is at stake in biopower: ‘(...) the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live is replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death’. (Foucault, 1976/1979, p. 138) Thus, biopower is a kind of power directly focused on life, while death falls out of its scope. Moreover, in this power over life by taking life itself as a point of reference two poles are to be distinguished: an anatomo-politics of the human body (being shaped throughout the eighteenth century) in which the body is disciplined and a biopolitics of the human species (established at the end of the eighteenth century) and directed towards a regulation of the population. The notion biopolitics, thus, is reserved for the pole of biopower directed towards the collective body and operating through regulating the processes at the level of a population. In other words, problems such as the birth and death rates, health and aspects of economic production have an immediate political dimension. Biopolitics is about governing

life, governing ways of life and regulating for example danger and accidents at the level of the individual and the species. What is at stake therefore, is to secure normality and order at the level of the population. And in order to achieve this, biopolitics can develop central mechanisms of control (campaigns on public health or central medical care) or can try to establish throughout disciplinary power a relation to the self (hygiene, frugality, providence) that promotes order at the level of the collective or population.

Within this configuration the family for example obtains a biopolitical dimension. The family does not refer any longer to a kind of governmental model, but is regarded as an important segment of the population. Foucault refers to this development as an 'instrumentalisation' of the family for the regulation of the population (Foucault, 1978a, p. 651). Closely related to this is the problematisation of childhood in biopolitical terms: it is regarded as a phase in life in need of a physical and moral environment to secure an optimal and healthy development (cf. Foucault, 1979a, p. 11). Donzelot has examined in detail how the family environment increasingly becomes the object of 'moralising' (providence, order) and 'normalising' (medicalisation of the family) interventions (Donzelot, 1978, p. 58). This concern for an optimal, educational environment does not only contribute to the individual child (a preparation for an optimal functioning as adult) but is regarded at the same time as a guarantee for order and prosperity at the level of the population. The family, thus, is functioning as a kind of intersection between the anatomo-political and the bio-political pole of biopower. Furthermore, this biopolitical problematisation and valuation of the family pictures very well how biopower is related to economical interests. Later on, we will deal with the relation between biopolitics and the economic in more detail. At this point, it is sufficient to state that an investment in a healthy population through acting upon the family is not only a condition for societal order and security, but at the same time for economic welfare.

This short contextualisation explains that what is at stake with the coming into existence of biopolitics (or the regulation of processes at the level of the population) is a kind of 'étatisation of the biological' (Foucault, 1997, p. 213). And this understanding of a collective of people as a population in need of regulation is, according to Foucault, a decisive step in the history of Western politics. In order to point at its importance we have to focus on a significant implication of this political turn.

Although Foucault distinguishes between classical sovereign power on the one hand and modern biopower and biopolitics on the other hand, he does not claim that sovereign power disappears. Instead, he indicates that sovereign power ('take life') is recoded in a specific way within modern biopower as 'state racism' (Foucault, 1997, p. 227). Modern racism makes distinctions within the biological continuum, i.e. it divides the population into subgroups or races and it places within the population groups against each other. Within this configuration 'take life' or 'make die' can be introduced as acts that follows a bio-logic: to make die inferior, dangerous or life threatening groups or individuals guarantees the life of a population. State-racism thus allows that a state that understands its role against a

biopolitical horizon and thus that is focused on fostering life has given itself the right to eliminate others in the name of that life. In other words, after the biopolitical turn the state is only able to take a sovereign decision about life and death when racism is at stake. And this 'take life', according to Foucault, should be understood in a broad sense: the direct, physical death, but also exposure to death or enlarging the risk to die and even the political death, the negation or exclusion (Foucault, 1997, p. 228). The principle that the death of others is strengthening oneself in a biological sense, allows racism to assure the function of death within the economy of biopower.

This discussion of some features of biopolitical modernity helps us to understand in which way the term 'biopolitics' recently has been elaborated in a philosophical context by Agamben and by Negri and Hardt.

1.2 'Bare Life' and 'Empire'

A main theme in the (later) work of Agamben is biopolitics and more specifically the argument that politics has from the very beginning biopolitical roots (Agamben, 1998). Agamben reminds us that in Greek antiquity two notions were used to refer to life: *zoè* or naked life (common to all living beings, i.e. animals, human beings and gods) on the one hand and *bios* or a form of life (typical for an individual or group). The constitution of the polis, and more generally a juridical and institutional order, implies exclusion, 'ex-ception' or the banning of naked life: naked life is being included throughout an exclusion. *Homo sacer*, Agamben argues, is the name for someone whose life is reduced to naked life. It is the figure of someone who cannot be sacrificed and who can be killed without committing a murder. In short, the sovereign constitution of a political and juridical order is from the very beginning linked up with an exception and thus the production of naked life.

Against this background, Agamben argues that biopower does not succeed classical sovereign power (as Foucault seems to put it). Sovereign power instead has from the very start a biopolitical dimension. Agamben, therefore, claims that what is at stake from modernity onwards and within the modern nation state is the growing politicisation of naked life. Using the terminology of Benjamin he claims that the exception ('bare, naked life') is becoming the rule. The implication of this is that naked life being handed over to sovereign power potentially inhabits all citizens and that every one could be positioned in a state of exception. And that we, from modernity onwards, only have one notion for life and that this notion is often looked at from a biological perspective is, according to Agamben, exactly pointing at this state of exception (Agamben, 1995).

This challenging and in different respects 'fundamental' approach of politics as sovereign power over naked life, helps us to understand some 'exceptional' phenomena: the position of refugees, naked life in the camps of totalitarian regimes (Mesnard & Kahan, 2001). However, stressing the original relation between sovereignty and naked life makes it difficult to focus on new, modern conceptions about life (Larsen, 2003). In other words, it seems that Agamben is not only dehistoricising sovereign power but also biopolitics. And in relation to this approach

it is difficult to analyse how modern biopolitics for example has been developed in relation to populational reasoning and is embedded within governmental technologies. And furthermore, Agamben's analysis seems to be too 'fundamental' for a genealogical examination of how the political interest for the life of a population is related to the political interest for the economy (Lemke, 2002). Exactly this relation between biopolitics and political economy, as will be explored later, helps us to address some actual developments (Bröckling, 2003). However, Agamben does help us to see that sovereignty in nation states did not at all disappear and that it has (the production of) naked life as its correlate.

While in Agamben's approach the modern relation between biopolitics and economy is not discussed in detail, this relation is in a rather specific way of central interest for Hardt and Negri (Hardt & Negri, 2000). These authors discuss how the global market and the global production-circuits have installed a new global order. This global order, related to a new global form of sovereignty, is referred to as 'Empire': an immanent order without borders, without history and with transversal social relations. The structure of this global sovereignty is being described with two elements: biopower (Foucault) and the control-society (Foucault-Deleuze).² We limit ourselves to a short exploration of how the term biopower is being used here in reference to 'biopolitical production'.

'Biopolitical production' refers to processes of production and reproduction of life in all its forms (economical, social, cultural). These global networks of biopolitical production inaugurate, according to Hardt and Negri, the new, postmodern phase of capitalism. Essential for this phase is that not only is the labour force extracted from life (the disciplined body) and used for the economic production, but that life as a whole and in its totality is part of processes of production and reproduction. The result is that our social order, our body and affects and our subjectivity are always already the outcome of (material and immaterial) processes of production. And exactly the global networks of biopolitical production result in a situation in which life as a whole could become the object of (an immanent) regulation. To put it otherwise: '(...) Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. (...) Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself' (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. xv & 24).

This analysis brings to the foreground the relation between biopolitics and the economic (and social) order and points at its functioning on a global scale. However, it is important to mention that the neo-Marxist focus does not allow us to make a distinction between economic power/exploitation and biopower. Power over life, here, is a power that immediately submits life to the capitalist process of production (Rabinow & Rose, 2003; Lemke, 2002). In this approach the spreading of power over life is regarded as a function of the further development of capitalism. Therefore it is difficult to analyse the coming into being (in a genealogical sense) of the relation between biopolitical and economic regulation. And more generally, the epochal statement on the disappearance of borders between life, politics and economy does not allow us to deal with concrete forms of self-guidance that are expected from us today. Certainly, Negri pays attention to this level of self-guidance when he refers for example to the 'biopolitical entrepreneur'.

According to him, this entrepreneur is a (first) kind of resistance within and towards 'Empire'. It is an entrepreneurial militant transforming power over life into a vital critique.³ Our aim however is to focus on the emerging relation between entrepreneurship and biopolitics, i.e. on how an entrepreneurial relation to the self implies a specific attitude towards and objectification of life and how this attitude is part of a governmental regime. In short, since Foucault's notion of biopolitics is situated at the level of a form of production and since it is used to point at the underlying principle of the capitalistic world order, the concept loses its analytical force.

In the previous paragraphs we mentioned two (fundamental) philosophical elaborations of the notion of biopolitics. Both elaborations however, seem to introduce the concept into a framework that is somehow strange to Foucault's genealogical perspective—although Foucault may have caused this himself in his statement about the 'threshold of biological modernity' and the epochal reversal of the Aristotelian definition of politics (Rancière, 2000). Agamben introduces the term biopolitics in a kind of 'onto-theologico-political domain' (Heidegger, Arendt, Bataille) and argues that the original relation between sovereignty and bare life is what remains un-thought in Western philosophy (and thus also in Foucault's own work). Hardt and Negri put the concept in an economic framework (and inspired by a kind of Marxist anthropology). Due to their 'ontologisation' of life (bios), however, the notion biopolitics loses its analytical potential.

Based upon these elaborations and revisions of the notion biopolitics we can take a step towards another line of thinking and study in which attention has been paid to biopolitics. This line of thinking is inspired by Foucault's ideas about governmentality. It is a perspective that could be fruitful to reintroduce the notion of biopolitics as well as to re-introduce some ideas of Agamben with regard to sovereignty.

1.3 Governmentality and Biopolitics

The course of lectures in which Foucault discusses in detail liberal and neoliberal forms of governmentality is titled 'The birth of biopolitics'. In the summary of the course he explains that he has not dealt in detail with the 'regulation of the population' (as suggested in the title) but with liberal and neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 1979b, p. 818). The question coming to the foreground from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards is: how can government that wishes to govern by paying attention to the rights and (economic) liberties of citizens take into account the phenomenon of the population (and problems that arise at this collective level)? Although Foucault formulates this question as a starting point, he will focus mainly on (neo-)liberalism as economic forms of governmentality. A short elaboration however will help us to understand that biopolitics play a role in this economic government.

Government in accordance with the reason of state used 'the police' as a general apparatus focused on the population and aimed at enforcing the state through detailed regulation (Foucault, 1978, 2004b; Gordon, 1991). The early-liberal form of governmentality becomes an economic government in a double sense. On the one hand, this kind of government discovers economy (and more general civil

society) as an autonomous, natural domain, organising itself and asking for a rather specific kind of intervention (in accordance with the nature of the domain governed and inspired by political economy). On the other hand this kind of government is economic since it takes into account its own governmental costs. It is important to stress here that in this liberal configuration of government a rather specific form of freedom is required, i.e. it is a kind of freedom or self-government that is able to assure both individual and collective welfare (cf. Gordon, 1991, pp. 19–20; Rose, 1999, p. 63). An implication is that mechanisms are being used to assure this kind of freedom. At this point schooling, i.e. a disciplinarian-pedagogical milieu with its own historical roots and development, becomes of strategic importance at a governmental level. This milieu was thought to bring about the kind of freedom or self-government that is required for civil society; it assures the right form of freedom (cf. Hunter, 1994). However, liberal government should also bring about security at the level of the population in the name of freedom. Hence, ‘social’ intervention is possible and required with regard to social risks that transcend individual responsibility and harm order and welfare (Ewald, 1986, p. 185). What is required is a kind of ‘vital politics’ that is focused on the life conditions of the whole population and of subgroups within the population (children, workers, women, the unemployed ...) and that is intervening in the name of general health and hygiene, reproduction and ecological problems (Osborne, 1996). In short, the liberal form of government can develop a biopolitics in the name of economic freedom and welfare and later on in the name of social security.

Within this governmental configuration, and in the beginning of the twentieth century, the population is becoming problematised in terms of race-hygiene and eugenics can become an active political intervention. As far as education is becoming part of these techniques of security, also children and parents become regarded from the perspective of ‘biological selection’ and ‘eugenic selection’ (Meyer-Drawe, 2000). In this regard, the educational milieu is a main domain of biopolitical intervention. Furthermore, it is important to stress that within this governmental configuration also the relation between the economic and the biologic can be reflected upon in a rather specific way.⁴ Life, for example, can be seen in its totality as a function of economic development.

With regard to this Bröckling discusses the ‘Menschenökonomie’ as formulated in the beginning of twentieth century by Goldscheid: ‘While the race hygienists reduce people biologically to their inheritance, Goldscheid reduces them economically to their economic value’. (Bröckling, 2003, pp. 8–9, my translation). Life is understood here as a kind capital (‘organic capital’), it should be approached in a developmental-economic way and it should be regulated accordingly. As a result, the qualification of human life as a kind of capital and as a resource turns it into a governmental concern. Goldscheid argues for example for a general biopolitical administration. Investment in health and education, according to him, should be regarded as an investment in ‘organic capital’ and as a necessity in order to satisfy individual as well as social needs. And finally, it is within such a configuration (although not argued in this way by Goldscheid) that it is possible to think about the option of sacrificing life that is not worth living: ‘Who is for a long period of

time in need of care of others, without by herself being able to produce value throughout own work, is overloading the budget and has lost her right to existence'. (Bröckling, 2003, p. 16, my translation). The economic concern for life and the optimisation of organic capital here is being transformed into a sovereign power that 'makes die' or 'takes life'. Or to put it otherwise, when life is totally approached in economic terms, an economic calculation could question life itself.

This illustration of options within a liberal governmental regime illustrates that a biopolitical intervention is legitimised if life and conditions of life have an immediate economic value. However, there is not only room for central interventions directed towards the population and its conditions of life. Also each member of a population is addressed at an individual level to understand its freedom, rights and responsibilities in 'bio-social' and 'bio-economic' terms (Rose, 1999, p. 78). People are asked for instance to think about themselves as 'social individuals', i.e. to admit that their freedom is only guaranteed within society and that their autonomy is not only a juridical matter but is linked up with social normality. In this regime of self-government, practicing freedom is from the very beginning a submission to what is normal within society and possibly to the biological fundamentals of this normality. And furthermore against this background of social submission guaranteeing freedom and the relation between individuality and sociality, the connection between 'education' and 'society' can become a main governmental issue.⁵ The same background is a condition to look at schooling as an instrument to bring about a social form of individuality, to bring about a self-understanding in which people see themselves as being part of a broader bio-social and bio-economic totality. This makes it also possible to start thinking about the reproduction of the order and norms of society (through education) or about its optimisation through biological and/or economic selection. Whatever option is taken, the horizon and governmental configuration remains the same, i.e. schooling appears as a kind of hinge point between (a specific kind of) freedom and security.

This sketch of biopolitical government and self-government in liberalism shows to what extent the 'regulation of the population' has a history. Furthermore, it indicates that an interesting element of this history is the way in which a politicisation of life is related with a economisation of life. Thus, the assurance and optimisation of processes of life is part of a political economy and life becomes a matter of investment and something to be judged upon using the criteria of economic return. To use the notion biopolitics in this way enables us to analyse the concrete mechanisms of biopolitical regulation and its relations with for example 'economic government'. Instead of regarding the growing 'power over life' as a phase in the 'logic of capital' (and as a prehistory of Empire, as Hardt and Negri seem to do), a governmental approach clarifies which specific forms of government and self-government are implied in this power over life (and its developments). Moreover, the introduction of biopolitical elements in the analysis of forms of government also enables us to reintroduce the problem of sovereignty (Dean, 2002; Bröckling, 2003). According to Foucault, the transformation of 'fostering life' into 'take life' (and to a certain extent within totalitarian regimes) is related to racist decisions/distinctions within the biological continuum. But as far as this 'fostering life' within

liberal government has an economic function, it is an economic calculation that inaugurates the transition towards 'make die'.

In what follows, we will try to describe in a rather general way the actual governmental configuration in order to deal with some biopolitical elements and to point at some economic manifestations of sovereign power (over life and death).

2. Government and Self-Government: The Permanent Economic Tribunal

The 'capitalisation of life' and biopolitics is developing in a specific way in the present, European regime of government and self-government. However, it is not our intention to present a detailed description of this regime.⁶ Instead we will focus on the relation between education, biopolitics and economy and more specifically on how 'learning', 'living' and 'investment' are connected within the figure of the entrepreneurial self. An entrepreneurial relation to the self implies that who we are and who we will become is always the result of the informed choices we make and of the goods we produce in order to meet our own needs. The entrepreneurial relation to the self is a main component of the actual regime of the self, i.e. a regime in which we are asked to judge what we are doing on the basis of a 'permanent economic tribunal' and to see in the submission to this tribunal the condition of our freedom (as self-realisation or self-development). A small cartography of this regime elaborated in detail elsewhere helps to illustrate this.⁷

An entrepreneurial attitude towards ourselves and others permits the appearance of some qualities of human beings as a form of capital or human capital. It is something for which investment was/is necessary, it represents a specific value and is the source of future income. As a consequence, since in education this form of capital is being produced, the choice for education is a deliberate, entrepreneurial choice: one expects that the choice will be a valuable investment and that there will a high return. But this 'capitalization of life' is also at issue in social life. An entrepreneurial attitude places someone into a position in which she thinks about norms, relations and networks as social capital that could contribute to the development of human capital or that could enlarge the productivity of someone's knowledge and skills.

This entrepreneurial, investing attitude towards oneself (and others) is related to a new way of thinking about time and space. The horizon is not longer the modern organisation of time and space in closed settings (factory, school, family ...), with their rigid channels of interaction and in which human beings are positioned as individuals. The entrepreneurial self is not *positioned* in this space, but is *moving* in 'networks'. A network is an environment in which someone lives, in which someone confronts needs and in which human capital can be employed, circulate and become productive. Or to put it the other way round: a network environment asks to mobilise knowledge and skills. And mobilisation is about bringing knowledge and skills into a condition in which they can be 'putted at work'. It is about the employability of the reserve of human capital or potential. Paying attention to this (level of) employability is a permanent task of the entrepreneurial self.

This task of self-mobilisation is related to a specific meaning of risk. In the social state, risk is regarded as something that should be reduced. The entrepreneurial

self in a market environment, however, thinks about risk as the condition for profit. Risk is not immediately understood as the chance that some problems will arise, but is instead a chance or opportunity (involving speculation): it is the condition for entrepreneurship, innovation and personal wellbeing. Certainly, the implication is not that the entrepreneurial self sees in every risk an opportunity. There is still a concern for the prevention of specific risks, but also with regard to this prevention an entrepreneurial attitude is required. To live an entrepreneurial life means that investment in health and security (and one's own responsibility with regard to this) is important because, and as long as, there is some profit. Risk-management, therefore, is part of managing one's entrepreneurial life.

But the figure of the entrepreneurial self, who is managing its own capitalised life, is not only part of a regime of self-government. At the same time, this new kind of self-government is the point of application for new governmental interventions. The 'social state' positioned itself towards an economic domain on the one hand and a bio-social domain on the other hand and it saw its task as governing in the name of bio-social welfare. Actual governmental relations, and the 'enabling state', correlate with entrepreneurship. Of course, entrepreneurship can have social dimensions. However, the entrepreneurial self, and not the state, is regarded to be having the first responsibility for social inclusion. Therefore, what is occurring today is not a disappearance of central government but a changed configuration of governmental relations and a new understanding of the state. The example of schooling is interesting here.

For central government schooling is no longer problematised against the general background 'education and society'. The background to reflect in a governmental way about schooling is the 'network-environment' in which schools operate in an autonomous entrepreneurial way, i.e. following the laws of the economic tribunal. It is this background that allows to formulate rather specific problems (e.g. quality, performance) and to introduce new governmental instruments (e.g. audit). Therefore, we could say that central government sees it as her task to assure that there is a adequate infrastructure and environment for entrepreneurship and for its investing attitude. Or the other way around: entrepreneurship (at the level of schools, students, parents) asks central government to create an infrastructure to promote entrepreneurial freedom and informed choices.

Based on the features of this new governmental regime, supposed it actually is operational and supposed our relation to ourselves is an entrepreneurial one, we can take a closer look at what is at stake in 'life' and 'learning' today. We will argue below that the 'permanent economic tribunal' asks for an investing attitude towards 'life' and 'learning'. Or more precisely, it asks for an attitude for which the ideas of life and learning have a rather specific meaning. Moreover, this tribunal and the attitude of investment also imply a sovereignty through which the regime of (self) government can turn into a regime of economic terror.

3. Investment, Learning and Life

Both the enabling, entrepreneurial state and the entrepreneurial self can approach and problematise something in terms of its 'bio-value'. Originally, this term referred

to the way bodies and organs of dead people can be used again to optimise or sustain the condition of the living. The dead body thus is regarded as a source for added value. In discussing 'biological citizenship' Rose and Novas elaborate the term (Rose & Novas, 2003, p. 30). With the introduction of entrepreneurship and the possibilities of genetic technology, bio-medicine and the neurosciences, 'biological citizenship' is not just about belonging to a 'race'. Instead, it refers for example to knowledge about the genetic characteristics of a population and about how these characteristics are related to the production of wealth and health. For central government these insights in genetic and vital characteristics of the population imply that they have insights in new sources for economic growth or in new risks. The genetic make-up of a population is approached here in terms of economic qualities and added value.

At this point it is interesting to refer briefly to Corning and his ideas about a 'bio-economy' or 'biopolitical economy' (Corning, 1997). According to him, this is a scientific discipline that can be very useful today. Bio-economy reflects upon the relation between economic activities and the satisfaction of our basic needs. These basic needs are termed 'basic survival needs'. Corning's point of departure is that society is a 'collective survival enterprise' and that it is possible and useful to make a list of 'survival indicators' and more specifically to construct profiles concerning 'personal fitness' and 'population fitness'. According to Corning this scientific discipline does not only offer theoretical opportunities, but he claims also: '(...) at this critical juncture in our evolution as a species, it is also an increasingly urgent moral imperative' (Corning, 2000, p. 77). Biopolitical economy therefore, does not only imply biopolitics in the name of the economic but also an economic politics in the name of survival.

However, in the actual governmental regime it is not just central government but foremost the entrepreneurial self that has to be concerned with its bio-value. The condition of the body and mental and physical health for example are being problematised in terms of investment, i.e. they are the source for added value and for the optimisation of entrepreneurial life. Habits, diet and lifestyle have a bio-economical dimension. Taking care of it is a matter of investment, it is the responsibility of the entrepreneurial citizen and it should be judged according to the value it adds. Furthermore, this attitude of investment can also be directed towards the bio-medical (neurological) condition or to the genetic pre-condition. Entrepreneurial citizens can organise themselves (in communities) on the basis of scientific insights in (the risks of) their common genetic make-up. These forms of 'bio-sociality' can invest for themselves in medical care or treatment, they can ask government to invest in them or they can organise a resistance to medical treatment itself (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). What these examples indicate is that what we regard as matters of life (dead, disease, genetic or neurological dysfunctions ...) is from the very beginning a correlate of an investing, entrepreneurial attitude. An interesting illustration is the capitalisation of procreation and how children are becoming the correlate of an attitude of investment.

Some time ago, the theory of human capital taught us to look at marriage and the choice for (and investment in) children as an economic activity (Becker, 1976,

p. 172).⁸ For entrepreneurial parents the ‘production’ of children is a well-considered choice. Children could be an enduring consumption good (and in this sense children produce satisfaction) or they can be an enduring production good (since children—even the ‘rotten kid’—take care of additional income). Furthermore, the submission to the economic tribunal obliges us to regard children in terms of costs and prices: children have a (shadow-) price. Therefore a scarce item such as time and income play a role in the choice for children—children are a time intensive good. Additionally, Becker claims, what should be taken into account is the investment in human capital of children. Education, clothing and medical care are future costs and will determine the prize of children. Investment in human capital of children will also imply that parents have to invest their own time and also with regard to this the entrepreneurial parent is calculating the added value for herself and for the child. In this perspective, ‘quality time’ refers to using the scarce time in such a way that it is an optimal (given other needs) investment (in the human capital of the child). But entrepreneurial selves also know that investment in children (because one expects it is somehow an income) is always at the same time a risky business. Disabled children are more expensive; the gender as well can have an influence on the prize. From an economic entrepreneurial attitude pre-natal detection could be welcomed in order to minimise these risks. Thus with regard to children the entrepreneurial self is looking for an optimal investment and production and at this level genetic technology can become a productive instrument (Meyer-Drawe, 2000). Of course, as long as using genetic technology is a risky ‘business’ itself, it will not survive the economic tribunal and it will not be chosen and applied.

These illustrations explain that and how life (even at the genetic level) could become a correlate of an attitude of investment. All this often causes a kind of ‘genetic unrest’ and one often tries to point at the dangers with a warning reference to modern eugenics, modern racism and modern social hygiene (Foucault, 2004a). Although we will not claim there is no danger involved, we think it is important to frame the present dangers as precise as possible. Since biopolitics of the entrepreneurial self (and of the entrepreneurial central government) is governed by the economic tribunal it is *this* tribunal that can establish a regime of economic terror with regard to capitalised life. When life has an economic function, then ‘let die’, as Bröckling formulates clearly, is a consequence of ‘disinvestment’ (Bröckling, 2003). Or to put it otherwise: when ‘fostering life’ is guaranteed by an investment, then no longer investing disallows life to the point of death. Moreover dead itself can become the correlate of an investing attitude. Becker for example claims that most deaths—‘if not all’—are in fact suicides for death could be postponed if there would have been more investment in life and in activities that could make it longer (Becker, 1976, p. 11). Thus if the entrepreneurial self (and entrepreneurial central government) is submitting everything to a permanent economic tribunal then it is exactly this entrepreneurship that has a sovereign force.

An enterprise invests in something if it expects it will produce an income. From this perspective, children, knowledge and genes exist because there has been investment in them. If the expectation of possible incomes disappears, their very existence

and survival is at stake. Entrepreneurship therefore, since it can decide upon investment, has a sovereign position: not only towards others, but maybe foremost and first of all towards itself. The existence of the entrepreneurial self is at stake if she does not want or is not able anymore to invest in her own human capital and therefore if she is not able to produce her own satisfaction. Thus one is entering the domain of ‘letting die’ (and even that of ‘taking life’) if the costs are higher than the expected incomes. At this point, and confronted with ‘excluded’ individuals or individuals that have excluded themselves, central government can see investment and fostering life as its aim. Government for example can make a contract with people who are unemployed for a long time, with someone with a life that is not capitalised enough or with someone without an investing attitude (Dean, 2002, p. 133). But by doing this sovereignty is being reinstalled at the level of central government. In these kinds of contracts obligations are being enforced against the background of ‘let live’.

4. Bio-Economisation of Europe?

Although it needs further research to establish whether a European bio-economical regime is being built, we will mention in conclusion some elements that point in this direction.

The European space of higher education can be regarded as a public infrastructure for entrepreneurial higher education. This infrastructure offers human capital to the entrepreneurial student in order to invest in. The student chooses training and invests in training if she expects future income. As a result, entrepreneurial institutions for higher education will do everything they can to offer human capital with an added value, they will strive for excellence and will make this value (quality) public in order to allow optimal choice. With regard to their internal organisation, these institutions will invest in the research and education for which they expect they will have customers. Researchers and teachers thus end up in a position in which their very existence (as researchers and teachers) depends upon this investment. A system of comparable degrees and a general system of quality assurance—components of the European space of higher education—could facilitate this turn towards a regime of economic terror: entrepreneurial higher education will only invest in training or in research centres if these have an added value on a European scale and in relation to the performance of comparable training and research centres. Of course, in such a regime one could search oneself (as a teacher or researcher) for sufficient means and thus one could ask the customer (business, students) for direct finance. The regime of economic terror, however, remains the same.

In entrepreneurial higher education in the European space of higher education it is up to each training and research centre to prove that education and training has its customers, that it is excellent or that it has an added value. In short, it is up to them to legitimate their existence. What is installed is a kind of regime of terror that, to paraphrase Lyotard, claims: ‘take care of investment in yourself, or disappear’ (Lyotard, 1979, p. 8).

But if learning is understood as the production of human capital, as the investment in competencies and as the construction of productive knowledge (in a knowledge society), it is also at this level that the economic tribunal can turn into a regime of economic terror. Learning, it is argued, has to enable us to develop the competencies in order to realise ourselves and to satisfy our needs in different environments. The permanent economic tribunal is decisive: we have to renew our human capital and competencies on a permanent basis. But it is not enough to keep them up-to-date. It is a necessity to compare oneself with others and to ask whether one has a better portfolio. The submission to a permanent economic tribunal therefore does not only condemn the entrepreneurial self to productive learning but also to a competitive process of lifelong learning. The learning process here is the condition for necessary added value and learning is investment in human capital (Masschelein, 2001). At this point, who we are and what we are is the result of what has been constructed throughout learning and is the result of a calculated investment.

One could reformulate this mode of reasoning as follows: being or what exists is a hypostasis of becoming and becoming is a learning process fed by a learning force. Learning is regarded as a fundamental process and force, as a kind of life force underlying everything that is. In other words, being or what is, is the result of a learning force. And this implies that who or what someone is, is the result of what has been learned. Against this entrepreneurial background it becomes a virtue to deal in a pro-active way with the learning process and the underlying learning force. One should orient the learning force towards the creation of the knowledge and skills that are expected to produce an income or to have an added value. Learning moreover is not just a process of production, it is always also a risky business. Thus from an entrepreneurial perspective, what is, has an added value and is as long as it has this value. Without this attitude of investment towards oneself and without a productive and pro-active use of one own learning force the existence of an entrepreneurial self is at stake. Finally, since that, who and what we are depends upon what has been learned and ultimately upon an investment, it becomes a necessary condition that we learn to learn and learn to orient our learning in order to be someone or something. As a result, schooling gradually defines her function in terms of 'learning to learn'.

Finally we could reformulate the citation of Kolb in the beginning of the article as follows: it is the entrepreneurial self (and the entrepreneurial society) that is identifying herself with the learning process and that is able to anticipate the demands of the environment. But we should add here: the entrepreneurial self is at the same time someone who decides upon the added value of the learning process. When the balance is negative, 'fostering life' turns into 'disinvestment', 'let die' and even 'to make die'.⁹

Notes

1. This is not to say that the notion biopolitics has no other meanings. There is for example the 'Journal for Biopolitics' focusing on the social and political consequences and

dimensions of biology and biotechnology. In the USA the idea of biopolitics is related to a relatively autonomous discipline within political sciences (linked up with socio-biology, evolution-theory and aiming at a biological understanding of politics) (cf. Somit & Peterson, 1998). These usages of the term are not related to Foucault's use.

2. It is important to mention at this point that the term sovereignty, as being used by Hardt and Negri, is different from Agamben's use of the term. According to Nancy, it could be more exact to use in reference to 'empire' the notion 'domination' as the problem of sovereignty is exactly what is un-thought here. And thus Nancy asks: '*Et si la révolte du peuple était la souveraineté?*' (Nancy, 2002, pp. 170–173).
3. At this level, however, there seems to be a kind of ambivalence. On the one hand, Hardt and Negri try to argue that life as a whole is being captured within 'Empire' while on the other hand (and being inspired by a specific kind of vitalism of Deleuze) they look at life and the un-ordered multitude of (auto-affirmative) forces of life ('multitude') as the condition for new forms of political subjectivity. In short: the notion 'life' seems to have in their analyses a kind of ontological meaning while at the same time being a product (Rancière, 2000; Lemke, 2002).
4. The governmental problematisation of the relation between the population and the economy is already articulated in the work of Malthus: 'Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ration. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ration' (Malthus, 1798, I, p.18). What is at stake here is the necessity to bring about a kind of balance between subsistence and the number of population.
5. Dewey, for example, states in 'My pedagogic creed': 'I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. (...) I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself' (Dewey, 1897, p. 49).
6. An overview of studies of the actual regime of governmentality or so-called 'advanced liberalism': Barry *et al.*, 1996; Rose, 1999; Bröckling *et al.*, 2000.
7. For a more detailed cartography and especially focused on education: Masschelein & Simons, 2002, 2003, Peters, 2001.
8. We do not claim that the economic theory of Becker is a theory of the figure of the entrepreneurial self. It can be regarded as one component in the assemblage of the actual regime of governmentality. This paragraph therefore is not a detailed discussion of his theory but a sketch of a way of thinking. At this point we could also mention that 'entrepreneurship' has been elaborated explicitly by other economists. In order to understand 'entrepreneurship' Kirzner for example (and referring to von Mises) criticises the mechanic model of preferences and maximalisation since it does not deal with '*the very perception of the ends-mean framework* within which allocations and economizing is to take place' (Kirzner, 1973, p. 33). He claims that elements of alertness (and speculation) are essential for entrepreneurship.
9. This is an adapted version of the German article 'Lernen, Leben und Investieren: Anmerkungen zur Biopolitik' in Ricken & Rieger-Ladich, 2004.

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