

## Chapter 5

### Formation(s) in Liminal Spaces: I as ‘I’(s)

*Taking seriously the ‘other’ Foucault’s transformative ethos that calls upon us “not to remain the same”, this chapter presents and performs an account of my practice of account giving: it turns back on the emergence of the narrative ‘I’ of this thesis. It first discusses the difficulties of such an attempt by invoking the Foucaultian notion of limit-experience, but then, a long story begins about how I came to reflect on my absence as a person in my discourse analyses of ‘sovereignty’ according to the conventions of IR’s ‘known’ Foucault and in relation to Anne-Marie Slaughter’s writings. This chapter is about these limit-experiences and liminal spaces in and through which this first person perspective and its characteristics have been forming. Through reconstructing these processes, the purpose, again, is to construct an experience for the both of us which allows for an active and creative engagement with the ‘I’, something that prevents it from becoming another object or fixity in our thinking, writing and other practices in everyday life.*

Foucault’s ethos of self-transformation, as it unfolds from his late lectures, is a particular practice of the care of the self that works towards changing, transforming this self through a series of gestures, exercises, experimentations that make us ‘strange’, ‘other’ to ourselves. As he once said in an interview, “the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation”, which he sought to cultivate through turning the usual practices of writing, reading, speaking into sites of possible transformations of this kind.<sup>1</sup> Foucault’s ever-emerging ‘we’ as a ‘community of

---

<sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity”, in *Foucault Live. Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 385.

action' can also be thought of in such terms, as a 'we' that is formed through a commitment to a non-identitarian, transformative ethos. Considering the implications of such an ethos and a prospective 'we' arising for IR, as Calkivik suggests, making us "uncomfortable in the cozy comfort of our convictions" and challenging the disciplinary identity of 'Foucaultian IR' is perhaps one of the most important aspects of what Foucault's presence can do *to* the discipline.<sup>2</sup> However, to work towards this sense of otherness within, to persist in making renewed attempts to produce creative and innovative relationships to ourselves, something that can then facilitate the emergence of a 'we', of a community of 'strangers' in the discipline, to use Jabri's terms, who may be strange to themselves and to others in different and diverse ways, is a very difficult task.<sup>3</sup> And although this thesis has already been written from a perspective that came about as a result of engaging with the transformative ethos of the 'other' Foucault seriously, it is the same ethos that suggests not stopping here. Albeit the narrative 'I' of thesis is already an expression of how the forgotten 'life' dimension of philosophy may be brought back to academic practice through writing the person writing back into the text, it is certainly no exception to those 'ethical substances',<sup>4</sup> those parts of ourselves that we may want to keep subjecting to the demand of "modifying one's way of being".<sup>5</sup> The narrative 'I' through which my accounts of the self keep unfolding in this thesis will have to be accounted for, too. It cannot become a new identity; it cannot become yet another form of attachment. To give an account of my practice of account-giving, however, feels like an infinitely complicated task. It requires reflecting on what this narrative 'I' has already become, of how it came to be what it is like, what it does, how it works here in this text, now.

**There is certainly no single point of origin of the first person perspective of this thesis, and perhaps no coherent story to tell about it either.**

I wish I could say that "I clearly remember the day when this narrative voice was born", something like that "one day, which started pretty much like any, I went to

---

<sup>2</sup>Asli Calkivik, "Why Not Choose a Secure 'We' in a Security-Obsessed World", *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 207-208.

<sup>3</sup>See Vivienne Jabri, "Restyling the Subject of Responsibility in International Relations," *Millennium* 27 (1998): 603-604.

<sup>4</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality Vol. 2* (London: Penguin, 2006), 26; see also Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, (New York: Continuum, 2006), 12-13.

<sup>5</sup>Michel Foucault, "An Interview with Michel Foucault by Charles Ruas", in *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 186.

work, stared at the computer screen for a few good hours and then, all of a sudden, there it was, the narrative voice, in my academic writing!” Narrative voices, in my experience at least, do not emerge just like that. Yet in any case, this narrative about the birth of this narrative ‘I’, the first person perspective of the person who is me, is bound to break down. And not only because, as Butler reminds us, “the conditions of my own emergence as a reflective being” will always escape me, and that “my story arrives belatedly, missing some of the constitutive beginnings and the preconditions of the life it seeks to narrate”.<sup>6</sup> There has been a narrative ‘I’ since I remember remembering, and to paraphrase Butler, I have been creating myself in new forms in the making of stories through the subtle and intangible work of a “narrative ‘I’ that is superadded to the ‘I’ whose past life I seek to tell.”<sup>7</sup> Just like anyone else, I tell stories and while I keep forming as a person, I am, too, “haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story”. I am haunted by “that in me and of me for which I can give no account”, of “why I have emerged in this way” and not in others.<sup>8</sup> In this way, “I am always recuperating, reconstructing, and I am left to fictionalize and fabulate origins I cannot know”.<sup>9</sup> My efforts to reconstruct how I came to be ‘I’ are always undergoing revisions; and while I am trying to tell you about this ‘I’, I am transforming yet into another ‘I’ that has its own story. It is not only the storyline that changes. ‘I’ is forming, I am forming and we both resist clear boundaries and forms of knowing that ground themselves in certainty. My narrative ‘I’ is always a bit of a mystery to me, but that’s the only way perhaps in which it can do its work, in which it can keep producing that ‘addition’ which is me in the making. And in the meantime, all I can hold on to is the *attempt* to tell, which tends to mean multiple attempts and multiple stories, always.

Yet the story (or rather, the stories) of my personal perspective in academic writing is bound to break down for other reasons, too. To tell the story of the narrative ‘I’ requires a very specific attempt to tell: neither the ‘I’, nor the attempt to give an account of it fits the usual, everyday routine of storytelling. As we both might have observed, narrative ‘I’s do not tend to pop up randomly in IR texts. And when they do, the rules and conventions of the discipline, the usual genre of the ‘omniscient social scientific prose’ and the detached scholarly persona as its narrator

---

<sup>6</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

already render the presence of a narrative, personal ‘I’ to be something different, it is already marked as something ‘other’. Within this context, the context of IR texts, the ‘I’ is much bigger than me in (everyday) discourse, and it exceeds me in ways other than the excess of the sociality of discourse over us, as Butler put it. The narrative ‘I’ in IR is already a sign of dissidence, a gesture of resistance, an act of writing against discourse. ‘I’ is neither natural, nor neutral there: it is *action*, it is an effort to try to do something differently, to try to say something different through saying it differently. As such, this ‘I’ here is not quite like the ‘I’ of my everyday life, although it certainly sounds like an everyday ‘I’. While it certainly is an expression of the person, of me in the process of writing - its ‘living space’ is also my living space - this ‘I’ is also a carefully (and in that sense, consciously) crafted discursive formation *in IR*, in a specific scientific discourse. There have been many narrative ‘I’s before mine and there is certainly a history to the ‘I’s in the ‘disciplinary life’ of IR (even if not a very long one perhaps). Among the many ‘I’s in IR this ‘I’ is *no* ‘other’: it is a choice of genre and the dominant form in which the “absence of the author’s self” in IR is usually remedied, it is the vehicle through which the ‘person’ is written back into the social scientific text that customarily writes them out.<sup>10</sup> As such, this ‘I’ has already been shaped in relation to a ‘we’ of narrative ‘I’s in IR, its life is inseparable from an emerging community of first person narratives and narrative writers. The story of the emergence of my narrative ‘I’ is haunted by the unknowns and unnarratables in me deriving not only from the social, but also from the discipline. As such, I begin and I am never even sure which ‘I’ begins, and what resists to be told at that time. It is impossible to tell where I begin as person, writer and scholar.

Yet perhaps the constant movement and unpindownability of the ‘I’, both socially and in the discipline, might not be the most challenging aspect of trying to give an account of the narrative ‘I’ of this thesis, in this thesis. There is a different sense of impossibility, too, arising in this attempt, something that relates to what Koskenniemi identified as the “question of the power of discourse that cannot be treated within discourse itself.”<sup>11</sup> This touches upon the complicated relationship of

---

<sup>10</sup>Oded Löwenheim, “The ‘I’ in IR: an Autoethnographic Account”, *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 1024.

<sup>11</sup>Martti Koskenniemi, “Conclusion: Vocabularies of Sovereignty – Powers of a Paradox,” in *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present and Future of a Contested Concept*, eds. Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 225.

narrative writing to the ‘action’ implied in a Foucaultian undefined ‘community’ of ‘we’: what narrative writing usually does, what it can do and what I might be able to do as a narrative writer both for myself and an emerging ‘we’.

From one point of view, this thesis is the very site of the formation of my disciplinary ‘I’, of my personal perspective in IR; this is where this ‘I’ tells its stories about my being a ‘knower’ in IR, my personal involvement in my *savoir* and in multiple and ever-emerging ‘wes’. In fact, it has told many stories already, it has a life of its own and as such, it is now slowly emerging as something that I can reflect on. Here I write and observe: as I write I let the ‘I’ speak for a while so that I can then pause, like here, and observe its silent work, of what it continuously reveals and unveils, paraphrasing Dillon, about ‘life as process’ in the mutual and indefinable implication of my life and the ‘disciplinary life’ of IR. Here I live my formation as a subject and a person, together with the uncertainties and the lack of control I have over the process. Narrative writing, the work of the ‘I’ in this thesis is my opportunity to try to ‘know’ otherwise and to carve out new spaces for thought within the (perhaps inescapable) Cartesian conditioning.

At the same time though, this thesis is also the site where I am trying to do other things as well in a less spontaneous and more deliberate fashion. This is where through these stories the project of the experience book is brought into life: in the writing process I engage with the process of subject formation in the discourses of IR and through re-telling my own stories, I try to make an intervention. I try to reconstruct and re-live the experience of the separation between the scholar and the person in the constitution of ourselves as ‘knowers’ in the field and through that, to construct and make available a new experience of subjectivity and the practice of science for myself, for you and others. It is here where the narrative ‘I’ seeks to act as a force for a ‘less disciplined’ IR, as Neal’s reading of Foucault suggested, and as such, to contribute to the continuous emergence of a less disciplined ‘we’ that would embrace Foucault’s transformative ethos through his ‘fallibility’ or any other aspect of his oeuvre.<sup>12</sup> Here the narrative ‘I’ asserts itself as an asset for strategic, critical,

---

<sup>12</sup>See Andrew W. Neal, “Rethinking Foucault in International Relations: Promiscuity and Unfaithfulness”, *Global Society* 23 (2009): 543.

personal and collective purposes and also as a statement, a ‘political action’ that brings about some of these aims and recognizes its contribution in them as practice.<sup>13</sup>

Most of the time, however, I don’t think about the various implications of the ‘I’, its constitution and powers in the writing process when I write and as Koskenniemi suggests, reflections of this sort perhaps could not be treated within the same discourse either. It would be nearly impossible to write if I always wanted to keep an eye on or put a finger on what my writing actually did (and what it does right now). The attempt to give an account of my practice of account-giving brings out the tension between writing in discourse as a form of being, that I live and sometimes reflect on and writing against discourse as a more wilful form of doing, a project that I have been consciously working towards since the (many) beginning(s). It brings an additional layer of reflection into the writing practice, one that requires me to narrate the origins of my narrative ‘I’ (origins that we always ‘fictionalize and fabulate’) in a form that is now also a form of being for me in the writing process.

In this sense, an account of my accounts of the self would not only change the storyline, it would also change the discourse. In Foucault’s words, it would be a ‘limit-experience’, something that “wrenches the subject from itself”, that is, something that forces me to reflect on and change my relationship to what I do, how I am and who I am when I write (and in my writing so far), and with that, to change myself in “a project of desubjectivation”.<sup>14</sup> At the same time though, the story of the constitution of the narrative ‘I’ through various and multiple ‘wes’ in the discipline can only be re-told through the perspective of the ‘I’ that emerged (and keeps emerging) through these very encounters, through the perspective of the ‘I’ that is no longer the same as back then (and perhaps not even the same as a few pages ago). The silent work of the narrative ‘I’ that comes with the choice of genre, with the practice of reflexivity in the form of the account of self is unstoppable and cannot be turned into an ‘object’ of reflection that easily. The more I think about the practice of account-giving (and an account of that), the harder it becomes to do it.

This, of course, raises the question of how I am going to negotiate all these aspects in the actual practice of accounting for the narrative ‘I’ of this thesis, since somehow and somewhere, I will have to begin. The honest answer is that I am not

---

<sup>13</sup>See Michael J. Shapiro, *Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>14</sup>Michel Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 241.

too sure yet, although perhaps this is exactly what might bring the project forward: instead of trying to resolve the *problem* between reflection about writing and the actual writing of what these reflections refer to perhaps what I could still do is to consider what all these problems – problematizations of the writing practice – might reveal about the place where I am at, from where writing an account of account-giving will have to begin. It is perhaps refocusing on the *actuality* of these problematizations, that is, on the kinds of concerns that I am considering as ‘problems’ (rather than addressing them as problems to be solved) that might express something beyond the very terms of my thinking.

**From this perspective, being at *this* juncture is already a limit-experience in many ways.**

The act, the very gesture of considering all these complexities involved in the practice of account giving, complexities that can now have come to the surface of discourse (my discourse) after multiple attempts to read differently, write differently, read back and re-write, now appears as an event in discourse. Similarly to what Foucault’s staged discourse between ‘desire’ and ‘the institution’ expresses, the consideration of these aspects, at this site, is an instance of discursive formation; in Deleuze’s words, an instance of the ‘emergence of actuality’, where ‘things’ are ‘at work’. By taking a step back from the actual thinking process about the difficulties of account giving and pausing for a moment at the edge of the practice itself is perhaps one way in which we might engage in ‘breaking things open, breaking words open’, starting with our own practices.<sup>15</sup> What we might be able to experience about ‘thinking the complexities of account giving’ is its embeddedness and with that, *our* embeddedness in discourse. What we might be able to experience is that *there is discourse* and there is *us (me, you and others), in discourse, forming*.

The limit-experience of my involvement in discourse, that I am thinking these thoughts about writing and myself in the course of writing this thesis, in an attempt to give an account of its narrative voice and that there is a growing tension between thinking and writing, feels like an important one. The encounter with the limits of both my thinking and my writing, that I think and write *in discourse* and that my

---

<sup>15</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations (1972-1990)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 86.

thoughts and words are formed in discourse brings to mind a perhaps similar experience that Foucault might have had of ‘the fact, in short, that order *exists*’ which then became that dominant experience from which *The Order of Things* grew out.<sup>16</sup> As Foucault writes, “in every culture, between the use of what one might call the ordering codes and reflections upon order itself, there is the pure experience of order and its modes of being” and as the Preface of *The Order of Things* shows, what prompted this realization in Foucault was his reader’s experience of a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in Borges’s book *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*.<sup>17</sup> As he writes, *The Order of Things*

arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the places with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs’, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long distance look like flies’. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.<sup>18</sup>

What is impossible to think in this passage, Foucault points out, is not the unusual juxtaposition, or the monstrous character of these categories of animals but rather, what shatters all the familiar landmarks of thinking, of all possible thought ‘that bears the stamp of our age and our geography’, he writes, is the *logic of enumeration*, the simplicity of ‘that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others” and orders them at impossibly narrow distances from each other.<sup>19</sup> Foucault’s laughter arises from the realization that our thoughts already follow a ‘grid’ according to which the ‘possible’ is made, defined by a set of relations between what there is and what is said, the logic in which words are

---

<sup>16</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2009), xxii.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. xxiii.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. xvi.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. xvi-xvii.



attached to things; words, which are not already meaningful in themselves in a world which is not already ordered.<sup>20</sup> What his reader experience of the ‘Chinese encyclopaedia’ unveiled was that ‘order exists’ and it does so according to particular ‘modes of being’ in which things appear to us as thinkable and in which we, ourselves think. What Foucault came to see in this moment of ‘liberation’ (in which not only ‘order’ is liberated when seen, but also the thinker in their thinking) is a ‘more confused’ and ‘more obscure’ ‘middle region’ between the “already ‘encoded’ eye” of the automatism of the everyday and the register of “scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other.”<sup>21</sup> Foucault’s laughter is what creates a distance between ourselves and that logic of thought that follows and reproduces an economy of distances that characterises the Western ‘order of things and words’, something that both everyday routines and scientific theories tend to assume. It is only from this place that Foucault can describe the limits and contours of the *possible* as it emerges from the ‘complex reality’ of scientific discourse, in terms of its ‘general space of knowledge’, its ‘configurations’ and the “mode of being of things that appear in it”, giving particular forms to empirical sciences.<sup>22</sup> Importantly, it is also in this ‘middle region’ which Foucault’s laughter opened up for him and for his readers where there is a possibility to do things otherwise and to be otherwise; it is here that

a culture, imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an initial separation from them, causes them to lose their original transparency, relinquishes its immediate and invisible powers, frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones [...]<sup>23</sup>

Foucault’s limit-experience of the fact that ‘order exists’ exposes the limits of our usual ways of thinking through an encounter with what appears to be ‘impossible’ to think and invites us to adopt the perspective of the ‘middle region’, that is, to try to distance ourselves from both everyday routines and scientific knowledge. My limit

---

<sup>20</sup>See Claire Colebrook, *Philosophy and Post-structuralist Theory: from Kant to Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 163.

<sup>21</sup>Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xii.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. xiv, xxiv, xxv.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. xxii.

experience of the being of discourse and that of my mode of being in it, the tension between thinking the problem of the account of account-giving and actual practice of it, something that inevitably implies the interrogation of the discursive constitution of the 'I' and together with that, my subjectivity as 'knower', writer and me as person not only engages with how our thinking is affected by the invisible grids of an 'order' but it also exposes some of the *effects* of our thinking on ourselves, its implications for our formation as subjects. The experience of this tension, *as* tension is certainly a moment of formation for me: it is a moment of suspense between me and my thoughts, which is also an opening to step back a bit from the thinking process and to reflect on the thoughts that I am thinking.

As I am writing this it strikes me, however, that the closest I can perhaps ever get to a genealogical account of my own narrative perspective is the exploration of those contingencies and discontinuities in my research, thinking process and academic writing where the first person perspective appeared as a rupture, as a new way of doing things and a new mode of being in discourse. As I remember, it certainly grew out from an attempt to write differently, which, as it now appears, must have been prompted by a similar limit-experience (which now I am able to identify *as such*). And this was a limit-experience that arose from my best attempts to produce a 'Foucaultian' analysis of 'sovereignty' according to what I perceived to be the standards and conventions of 'Foucaultian IR'.

**This is going to be a long story; *one* possible story though that I will just try to tell as I go along.**

Last year in May, a couple of months after my IPRS I was invited to contribute to a special issue project on Foucault and the academic discipline of International Law. I was very excited about the opportunity since it sounded like the perfect occasion to try to bring Foucault and 'sovereignty' together in my research closer than ever before, and with that, to produce what I imagined to be my personal best in performing a Foucaultian analysis of 'sovereignty'. By that time I was already thinking about my PhD project as an experience book and a different reading of Foucault that concentrated on his aesthetics, writing and critique was already present in my thinking. At that point, however, I had no idea what an experience book would look like and sound like, and whether it will only talk about how social science could

be written differently or that it will actually be written in a different style. Yet the possibility of getting a piece published turned my attention away from exploring alternative ways of writing and importantly, from considering whether *I* could perhaps write differently; I got instantly immersed in the standards and expectations of the journal, the editors, and what we might identify as that approach to mainstream social science that would still accommodate certain variants of Foucaultian scholarship.

What I proposed to do was to read a selected circle of American academic narratives on ‘sovereignty’ and to *interpret* them according to a Foucaultian framework. By this time the main focus of my PhD research on ‘sovereignty’ shifted to ‘sovereignty’ as a distinguished aspect of the practice of academic research and as such, I was no longer trying to nail down the meaning of the concept with reference to a well definable segment of ‘reality’. I was more interested in what scholarly practices *do* when they take up ‘sovereignty’ as an object of inquiry, how certain conceptualizations of ‘sovereignty’ may relate to the actual exercise of sovereign power and as such, what these connections may tell us about the complex relationship between ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ in our contemporary Western episteme. While I was already thinking about the powers and power-effects of academic practice, I still didn’t think about myself as being part of that world where the academic study of ‘sovereignty’ and the exercise of sovereign power may feed into each other. I didn’t see my own practices as potentially feeding into that world, even if at a very small scale.

Although I enjoyed thinking about those more obscure Foucaultian concepts that hardly appeared in what I used to read as ‘Foucaultian IR’, such as the experience book, the limit-attitude, or the ‘thought of the outside’, at that stage I didn’t try to do *more* than just to think them, discuss them or argue about why they *should* perhaps be given more attention in IR. My reading of American academic narratives put to use Foucault’s work as an ‘interpretative lens’ that could illuminate something about these authors’ texts that we otherwise might not be able to see. And for the special issue project I made three subsequent attempts to try to make Foucault’s notions and the texts of Anne-Marie Slaughter, Michael Ignatieff and Fernando R. Tesón, that is, the core texts of my ‘sovereignty’ research, meet in the middle.

The first version of the article departed from the notion of the experience book and in relation to that, a Foucaultian notion of ‘order’ as an effort to try to integrate these alternative Foucaultian concepts into my work on ‘sovereignty’. Unsurprisingly, since the experience book remained a concept only in my discussions, I wasn’t able to show too convincingly what it contributed to my discourse analyses of the writings of Slaughter, Tesón or Ignatieff. The most I could put forward were a few tentative suggestions regarding what an experience book *could potentially* contribute to thinking about scholarly work differently. The editors, of course, noticed this disconnect between ‘theory’ and ‘discourse’ instantly but somehow I knew, too that this enterprise, like that, was not going to work. With hindsight, perhaps it is no coincidence that I started off the article with a somewhat strange reference to the work of the conceptual artist Francis Alj’s. I wrote:

In 1997 Francis Alj’s pushed around a block of ice on the streets of Mexico City for over nine hours. In the end, the ice melted into a small puddle of water which then evaporated in a few minutes. The title of the action was ‘Paradox of Praxis 1’ with the caption ‘Sometimes doing something leads to nothing’. As the collection guide explains, ‘for more than ten years, Alj’s has tried to concoct a logical sequel to Paradox of Praxis 1, with an action that would illustrate the contrary principle “Sometimes doing nothing leads to something”’.<sup>24</sup>

Needless to say, my second attempt to perform a Foucaultian analysis of ‘sovereignty’ narratives in American social science no longer contained any trace either of the experience book, or the spirit of the work of Alj’s. The focus of the paper shifted to some of the more conventional and widely applied notions of ‘Foucaultian IR’, such as ‘governmentality’ and Foucault’s brief and scattered comments regarding the contemporary operations of the sovereign modality of power. This time I tried to embed academic practice and conceptualizations of ‘sovereignty’ within what I identified as the ‘thought’ dimension of ‘governmentality’ and the logic according to which governmental ordering relies on ‘knowledge’ about what it seeks to order. The editors seem to have liked the new version; yet again, ‘theory’ and ‘discourse’ was still not connected closely enough. I was given another chance though to make clearer what the Foucaultian framework contributed to the discourse analysis *exactly*.

---

<sup>24</sup>First version of the article draft; Mark Godfrey, Klaus Biesenbach, Kerry Greenberg eds., *Francis Alj’s: A Story of Deception* (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 82.

My third attempt added some new Foucaultian concepts from Foucault's late lecture series of *The Birth of Biopolitics* and dropped Ignatieff's discourse. My revisions focused on making the Foucaultian framework more refined so its third, final version got supplemented by the notions of 'liberal' and 'neoliberal governmentality' for analysing Slaughter's redefinitions of 'sovereignty' and Tesón's arguments for a 'liberal case for humanitarian intervention'. Although the editors liked my analysis of Slaughter's work, they thought that my discussion of Tesón's writings still wasn't tied tightly enough to the Foucaultian framework I set out, or in other words, we could say perhaps that *the analysis wasn't Foucaultian enough*. And they were right: my analysis of Tesón's work did not fit the Foucaultian framework I laid out, no matter how nuanced I was trying to make it.

The journal's rejection came as a bit of a relief. Although I never put so much effort into the polishing and sculpting of 10,000 words before, I did feel somewhat uneasy about the final product. I was at my intellectual limits after nearly a year of writing, research, rewriting and starting it over, yet somehow the paper was still half-baked and I felt as if I had hit some kind of an invisible wall. Of course, there were many substantive parts of the paper that I wasn't truly happy with either. Interestingly though, it wasn't the supposed incompleteness of the discourse analysis of Tesón's writings that bothered me the most. The more I thought about it, the more it turned out to be the 'success' of the Foucaultian analysis of Slaughter's writings and the presumably 'good fit' between 'theory' and 'discourse' that triggered discomfort in me and made me curious about the actual gains and impact of the exercise. What now appears as a limit-experience made me reflect on what I have actually achieved in trying to apply a carefully assembled theoretical framework composed of a set of Foucaultian concepts and commentaries regarding their possible scope and meaning in international politics to a set of other academic texts, texts to be 'interpreted' according to this framework. It felt that I was at the limits, too, of what a particular understanding of and relationship to Foucault's work could achieve.

What struck me as strange about my analysis of Slaughter's discourse was what I was working so hard to be able to construct: the findings of the Foucaultian analysis mirrored the very logic suggested by this framework for understanding the contemporary operations of sovereign power. What the exercise of applying this framework to 'discourse' produced was a sense of sameness: sameness between two sets of representations of two world orders derived from two sets of texts, Foucault's

and Slaughter's. I couldn't help but wonder about the kind of 'knowledge' that I ended up producing, and even more crucially, I began to question what I really have *learnt* through this endeavour.

This was the first time when I came to think about myself as a 'knower' and the first time, too, when I engaged with my academic practice as *experience*, with the lived experience of science as it was lived in my life. At the limits of the conventional ways of using Foucault in IR and the limits of myself as a detached, Cartesian, knower and a practitioner of these conventions, what appeared all of a sudden in my academic work was the subject that lives, the person, that is, *me*.

And this person needed a voice, a voice that can speak about the subjective dimension of scientific practice, that is, a voice that can speak about the *lack* of the person's voice, and at the same time, a voice that can still speak *to* science, to IR. I spent a good few weeks pondering this; there seemed to be no obvious direction to go to, I was fully and completely *in-between*. While I was trying to figure out how to go on from there, I was sure about one thing though: addressing this experience in the language and according to the objectivizing logic of the 'omniscient social scientific prose' would have been self-defeating and dangerous. What I would have lost, again, is the experience of the person whose fictitious absence is assumed in the conventional academic genre. The more I thought about it, the more it became apparent that there *needed to be an 'I', or at least something to that effect*.

My first attempt in trying to find this voice was the paper I submitted for the annual convention of the International Studies Association in April 2012. *With hindsight, this turned out to be vital*. In this paper I re-read my analysis of Slaughter's writings from this liminal place, from, as I wrote, "the point before my analysis could catch the emergence of the actuality of my subjectivity as knower", turning back on it as "an exercise in governmentality studies which notices the 'subject' yet does not engage with the subjectivity noticing it."<sup>25</sup> This paper was, in fact, two papers in one: I lifted out the Foucaultian framework and the analysis of Slaughter's writings from the final version of the article which then I turned into the site and material of the reflections of the other paper on the formation of my scholarly subjectivity as a 'knower', tracing and reconstructing the 'movement of

---

<sup>25</sup>Erzsebet Strausz, "Two Foucaults, Two Papers: Situating Knowledge as a Form of Self-reflection" (paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 1-4 April, 2012) 8. [ISA paper]

*savoir*’, of my *savoir* as I went along with my Foucaultian analysis. I introduced these self-reflections of what I did and what these moves expressed through identifying ‘two Foucaults’: one that is well recognized in IR, a ‘known’ Foucault that supplied many different concepts to the study of international politics, such as ‘biopolitics’, ‘discipline’, ‘governmentality’, or ‘security’. This ‘known’ Foucault was fully present in my attempts to construct a Foucaultian framework of analysis for the purpose of interpreting academic narratives on ‘sovereignty’. In opposition to this image, I presented an ‘other’ Foucault, who wrote experience-books from a blank space of writing as an exercise in philosophical life, with the purpose of taking care of himself. This ‘other’ Foucault was the Foucault that inspired the reflections themselves.

Yet the writing of this ISA paper did even more. This was also the first time when I made a connection between laying out and explaining Foucault’s thoughts on the ‘care of the self’ and seeing myself as a ‘self’ that could be (and perhaps should be) cared for in the same exercise. The liminality of the place from where I wrote this paper expressed that other sense of in-betweenness that came with the realization that writing about something is not the same as performing it in practice. Simplistic as it may sound, while saying something is already a form of doing, what saying actually does can be very different from what is being said and my former practice of academic writing appeared as a case in point. Talking, speaking, writing *about* Foucault’s ethos of care and self-transformation through the voice and persona of the detached, objective scientist produces nearly the opposite effect of what these notions suggest: it reinforces the scholarly subjectivity of the Cartesian knower rather than facilitates a transformation in our relationship to our knowledge, and with that, to the world and to ourselves. Yet again, coming to see the importance and implications of the relationship between form and content, between the effects of the form and genre of writing and what writing actually writes about still did not instantly result in any specific new style of writing, something that could also work as a practice of care. I no longer wanted to simply write about Foucault’s work or even to write about how we could try to *imagine* working ourselves through and around the form of knowledge that we recognize as ‘knowledge’ from what could be *described* Foucault’s radically different perspective of the philosophical life. In that moment of suspense I was asking in the paper how the spirit of the ‘other’ Foucault approach could be

turned into a similar enterprise of self-construction which also makes an experience like that possible for the reader? How can I turn this particular piece into something through which ‘knowledge’ might be re-embedded in life, in my life as a knowing subject but also as a self for whom I care? And how can I achieve this in an academically recognizable form (as Foucault remarked, an experience-book ‘can’t exactly be a novel’ either), especially when the forgetting of the philosophical life makes us neglect the ethical dimension of a series of moves in *savoir* that on the one hand, objectify the world through concepts, theories, categories, classification, etc, and on the other hand, subjectify the human being into a scientific persona, that of a detached observer, who gives narrative form to knowledge in the genre of an ‘omniscient social scientific prose’.<sup>26</sup>

Once again, asking these questions did not bring any immediate resolution to the problem of how to go on, of how to begin, of how to do things *differently*. What these questions did bring, however, was the slowly increasing presence of the ‘I’ in the writing process and with that, the strengthening of the first person perspective, even if of a very tentative one. The narrative ‘I’ at this stage was already there in my writing yet it was there by default, as one specific manifestation of that life that now recognized its exclusion from the conventional academic genre, rather than as a result of anything properly thought-through. That ‘I’ functioned as a tool of reflection, one that could turn my usual discourse into a meta-discourse on the one informed by IR’s ‘known’ Foucault. I saw myself, as I wrote, “at the limits of my thoughts which do engage with the construction of scholarly subjectivity but at this point they do not turn back on themselves *just yet*.” The purpose of the paper was to explore this liminal space without necessarily trying to go beyond it in any specific ways. At that point, this was what appeared to be perhaps the only means of going beyond it *eventually*.

**And at this point, this is where *this* story, in this narrative mode, reaches its limits.**

To be able to see and say more about the emergence of the first person perspective of this thesis I needed to re-read this paper and look back on the process of my reflections that exposed the limits of the framework of the ‘known’ Foucault and my

---

<sup>26</sup>ISA paper, 6; Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 243; Oded Löwenheim, “The ‘I’ in IR”, 1024.



subjectivity as a ‘knower’ *as* limits. So here I am going to read and write back a long excerpt from that ISA paper that reads back parts from the final version of the article. That is, I am going to reflect on how my ISA paper reflects on the some of the ‘findings’ and knowledge claims of the article draft. In this effort I am going to follow how this ISA paper re-encounters the construction of the Foucaultian framework, the connections between ‘theory’ and ‘discourse’ and the analysis of Slaughter’s writings in the article draft from the perspective of the formation of my scholarly subjectivity. Turning to the ISA paper now, after having laid out the perspective of the ‘other’ Foucault that informed these self-reflections, this is how I introduced the ‘other paper’, that is, the respective parts of the article draft that became the site and material of my first attempts to try to engage with the ethos of the ‘other’ Foucault in my own practices:

### **[the space of the other paper and the known Foucault]**

This point is the threshold of the space of the other paper [the article], where I have assembled a Foucaultian lens for studying academic problematizations of government. The conceptual framework of the known Foucault reads like this. The notions of ‘experience’, ‘thought’ and ‘governmentality’ are developed as a particular view on the world, on how the world *really* is, presenting an alternative ontology of ‘power’, ‘knowledge’ and the ‘subject’ with the aim of suggesting a way in which academic contributions can be read *differently* in international politics and international law. According to the standards of this particular mode of thinking in which Foucaultian concepts serve the function of re-presenting the world, the following conceptual discussion is my personal best.

#### 1. Problematizations of the government of the present: governmentality, sovereign power, liberalism

Foucault’s main concern lay with the question of modernity, the specificity of the ways in which ‘we’ are turned into subjects (such as ‘individuals’, ‘mad’ or ‘sane’, ‘citizens’ of a state or constituents of a ‘population’, subjects of law, subjects of social marginalization, or ‘scholars’ and ‘students’) through continuous and innumerable encounters with power and the ways in which we relate to others, ourselves and the world in what he called ‘our historical present’.<sup>27</sup> Foucault’s analyses of the contemporary Western episteme can be seen as genealogical histories of thought, where ‘thought’ appears as ‘freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detached oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects

---

<sup>27</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège the France 1982-1983* (New York: Picador, 2010), 13.

on it as a problem'.<sup>28</sup> As such, Foucault's histories of e.g. 'madness', 'sexuality', or 'criminality' are best described as analyses of different 'problematizations' in which a certain experience (such as the experience of 'madness', 'criminality', or 'sexuality') is posed as a problem to politics.<sup>29</sup> Foucault studied problematizations along three axes or 'focal points of experience', in which 'forms of a possible knowledge (*savoir*), normative frameworks of behaviour for individuals and potential modes of existence for possible subjects are linked together'.<sup>30</sup> Mapping and restoring the complexities (as events) of the joint articulations of 'knowledge', 'power' and 'ethics' in the emergence of experience *as* a political problem is what Foucault described as an 'ontology of the present', which is also an 'ontology of modernity', and 'an ontology of ourselves'.<sup>31</sup>

The question of government, in this sense, appears as one such experience: 'the government of self and others'. The dominant form of government as well as the experience of being governed and governing ourselves is captured in Foucault's oeuvre by the neologism 'governmentality'. As Lemke points out, the semantic linking of governing (*gouverner*) and modes of thought (*mentalité*) indicates that the technologies of power through which 'government' takes place cannot be studied without an analysis of political rationalities underpinning them.<sup>32</sup> Governmentality, in short, is a particular modality of power that operates at a distance through the 'conduct of conduct' of 'free' people who, in fact, regulate their own behaviour.<sup>33</sup> It has a finality on its own and follows a means-ends logic to achieve 'the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end', where 'things' with which government is concerned are 'in fact men, but men in their relations'.<sup>34</sup> The technologies of power and a set of tactics and strategies that govern everyday ways of doing and modes of being also presupposes a particular rationality, the thought-dimension of govern-mentality, which, 'defines a discursive field in which exercising power is "rationalized"' and re-presents the world as governable through 'the delineation of concepts, the specification of objects and borders, the provision of arguments and justifications', enabling certain problems and offering strategies for their solutions (as different problematizations of government).<sup>35</sup> Representation in governmental practices as a particular form and function of knowledge structures the specific forms in which different institutions, procedures, administrative and legal forms intervene into the lives and circumstances of subjects and objects to be governed. As Lemke emphasizes, the political rationality of

---

<sup>28</sup>Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations", in *Ethics: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1*, Paul Rabinow ed. (London: Penguin, 1994), 117.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.; Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 5.

<sup>30</sup>Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, Problematizations", 3. For example, Foucault sought to grasp 'madness' as a matrix of bodies of medical, psychiatric, sociological, etc knowledge, as a set of norms against which deviance and normal behaviour are established, and as the constitution of a certain mode of being of the 'normal' subject as opposed to that of the 'mad' subject.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. 21.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Lemke, "'The Birth of Bio-Politics' - Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-liberal Governmentality", *Economy and Society* 30 (2001): 191.

<sup>33</sup>Michel Foucault, "Governmentality", in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 208-209.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 208.

<sup>35</sup>Lemke, "The Birth of Bio-Politics", 191.

governmentality is not ‘pure, neutral knowledge which simply “re-presents” the governing reality; instead, it itself constitutes the intellectual processing of the reality which political technologies can then tackle.’<sup>36</sup>

As Gordon et al. assert, ‘the sense and object governmental acts do not fall from the sky or emerge ready formed from social practice. They are things which have to be – and which have been – invented’.<sup>37</sup> The mutual constitution of governmental knowledge and technologies of power, however, extend to a continuum ranging from the ‘government of others’ to ‘the government of self’.<sup>38</sup> Governmentality also requires the proxy of thought for the production of self-governing subjects: we are being governed through governing ourselves, through particular practices of subjectification.<sup>39</sup> This positions us in a particular relationship with knowledge about the world and knowledge *as* ‘truth’: we define our options and possibilities according to a ‘general politics of truth’ in our societies, the statements and discourses accepted as ‘true’, the mechanisms through which ‘true’ and ‘false’ can be distinguished, or ‘the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true’.<sup>40</sup> As Foucault remarked, ‘to govern’ means to ‘structure the possible field of action of others’ which, at the same time, is inextricably linked to regimes of ‘truth’ and procedures of self-government.<sup>41</sup>

The all-pervasive operation of governmentality, however, poses the question of the scope and exercise of more traditional modalities of power anew. From the eighteenth century onwards, explains Foucault, governmentality as the new ‘art of government’ started to background the juridico-political model of sovereign power. Sovereign power, a self-perpetuating and self-referential modality of power concerns itself with ‘things themselves’ and orders the social body into ‘sovereign/subject relationships’ through the means of law and the right to take life. Theories of sovereignty since the Middle Ages describe sovereign power’s expressions in terms of three cycles that establish relationships between subjects and the sovereign, derive the legitimacy of the multiplicity of powers in society from the unitary power of the sovereign, and found law’s political legitimacy in society through which sovereign power is exercised.<sup>42</sup> In the ‘era of governmentalization’, when life has increasingly been taken control of by distant technologies of governmentality through techniques and tactics, ‘rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics’, writes Foucault, the problem of sovereign power is ‘made more acute than ever before’.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies of Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), x.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality and Critique”, *Rethinking Marxism* 14 (2002): 50-51.

<sup>39</sup>Foucault, “Governmentality”, 208-209.

<sup>40</sup>Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power”, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 73.

<sup>41</sup>Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 341.

<sup>42</sup>Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 43-44.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. 35., Foucault, “Governmentality”, 211.

The exercise of sovereign power now emerges as a problem of governmentality and governmental knowledge: within the techniques of governmental ordering, ‘what juridical and institutional form, what foundation in the law, could be given to the sovereignty that characterizes the state’?<sup>44</sup> The problematization of the form and foundation of sovereign power becomes even in the light of the phenomenon described of ‘the governmentalization of the state’.<sup>45</sup> With the separation of sovereign power from government and from law as its characteristic instrument, and the growing elaboration and autonomy of techniques of governmentality, which ‘make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not’, the state re-emerges as an entity without essence or interior, as ‘nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities’.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, governmentality is both internal and external to the state: as Valverde elaborates, technologies of governmentality do not stop at the boundaries of state; they extend to international relations and the government of international order or more generally.<sup>47</sup>

The complex relationship between governmentality and sovereign power is further illuminated in the light of the political rationality of liberalism and contemporary technologies of neoliberal governmentality. Foucault defines liberalism as a particular ‘principle and method of the rationalization of the exercise of government’, one that seeks to govern the relations of men in terms of governing their freedom.<sup>48</sup> Liberalism in this sense presupposes the existence of a number of freedoms (such as the freedom of the market, the free exercise of rights, the freedom of discussion and expression, etc.) and at the same time, it also has to ‘produce’ the economy of freedom so ‘consumed’.<sup>49</sup> As Foucault writes, ‘liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free.’<sup>50</sup> The management of freedom is never an end in itself as it constantly oscillates between ‘not governing enough’ and ‘governing too much’, while ‘the site of verification-falsification for governmental practice has become the market’, that is, the medium that ‘tells the truth’ about the operation of government, determining what is ‘good government’.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, ‘good government’ or ‘freedom’, just like ‘madness’, ‘delinquency’, or ‘sexuality’ are things that do not exist in themselves: they have to be brought into existence as ‘reality’.<sup>52</sup> What Foucault identifies as the ‘transactional realities’ of liberal government, importantly, emerge from the coupling of a set of practices and a regime of truth that *makes*

---

<sup>44</sup>Foucault, “Governmentality”, 218.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. 221.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid, 221.; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 77.; see also Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 106-11.; See also Thomas Lemke, “An Indigestible Meal? Foucault, Governmentality and State Theory”, *Distinktion* 15 (2007): 43-64.

<sup>47</sup>Mariana Valverde, “Genealogies of European States: Foucauldian Reflections”, *Economy and Society* 36 (2007): 169-71.

<sup>48</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 318.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. 63, 318.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. 63.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. 32.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. 19.

‘something that does not exist able to become something’.<sup>53</sup> Contemporary neoliberalism represents an epistemological shift in both governmental technologies and the ‘realities’ produced: as a reaction to the debatable success in producing self-governing subjects and the ‘excesses’ of government, what can be observed is the expansion of the object of economy to the entire range of human action, inscribing an economic calculus and the logic of the market into the relations governed.<sup>54</sup>

With this move the centers of liberal government become dispersed throughout the social plane, which extend liberal strategies of government by further deterritorializing the operations of power.<sup>55</sup> The ruptures that point to the impossibility of (neo)liberal government’s fantasy of ‘the rational, self-governing neoliberal agents who always act (or learn to act) responsibly in accord with neoliberal value orientations’, argues Nadesan, ‘result in ever more invasive efforts to properly produce, manage, and discipline neoliberal subjects’.<sup>56</sup> What Hindess calls the ‘liberal government of unfreedom’ refers to the more repressive management of those ‘categories’ of subjects whose ‘capacity for autonomous conduct is thought to be insufficiently developed.’<sup>57</sup> In Nadesan’s reading, sovereign power, whose ‘right to kill’ has been transformed into the capacity to ‘disallow life’ through deciding over standards of normality and difference across society, complements neoliberal technologies of governmentality by interventions where government through the promulgation of freedom and the production of self-regulating subjects fails, maintaining a reference to ‘life’ in its expressions.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, as Nadesan suggests, the exercise of sovereign power in the international plane is characterized by the reassertion of the right to kill as an exception to government through freedom and the logic of the market as dictated by the dispersal and failure of neoliberal governmentalities in the state system.<sup>59</sup>

The question of contemporary modes of government, especially with reference to the scope of governmentality and the exercise of sovereign power under neoliberal governmental rationalities, remains, to a large extent, only partially addressed and explored. Going back to Foucault’s philosophy of the present, perhaps the most important task is not to fill the gaps in the governmentality-sovereign power puzzle, but rather, to grasp the dynamics between the actual practice of government and ‘the level of reflection in the practice government and on the practice of government’.<sup>60</sup> The aim is ‘to capture the emergence of “actuality”’, where things are ‘at work’, as Deleuze stated regarding the ambitions of his and Foucault’s generation.<sup>61</sup> The following section seeks to situate international

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid 19, 297. My emphasis.

<sup>54</sup>Lemke, “The Birth of Biopolitics”, 197.; Majia Holmer Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2008), 29.

<sup>55</sup>Nadesan, *Governmentality*, 29.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Barry Hindess, “The Liberal Government of Unfreedom”, *Alternatives* 26 (2001): 101.

<sup>58</sup>Nadesan, *Governmentality*, 38, 34.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. 183-4, 188-90.

<sup>60</sup>Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 2.

<sup>61</sup>Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 86.

legal theory and liberal anti-pluralism within the framework of Foucaultian notions of government.<sup>62</sup>

The next section of my ISA paper titled [**Thinking about thought**]<sup>63</sup> reflects on how I connected the Foucaultian framework to the actual analysis of the texts that constituted the ‘discourse’ to be analysed in the article draft. I described this part of the article as the one that “seeks to establish a bridge between the world re-presented according to some of the conventionally discussed Foucaultian concepts in ‘governmentality studies’ and scholarly contributions discussing the world from a different perspective.” What I highlighted at the point was the article’s focus on ‘thought’ in relation to what appeared to me as my own thinking in the writing process. ‘Thought’, while I discussed it in substantial length the text, when it came to my own ways of thinking, it turned out to be something that still confined me to particular ways of relating to the world, to the material I studied, and by implication, also to myself. This is how the next section of the ISA paper addresses this aspect before it moves on to present the respective passages from the article as illustration. As I wrote,

‘Thought’ is positioned as a proxy between contemporary practices of government and the ways in which we think in everyday life, connecting the big world and the small ones. In this passage I suggested that through the lens of the big [Foucaultian] world we can think about thought differently, and through that, change the ways of our thinking that could potentially lead us out of all the worlds so constructed. At the same time, this is also to suggest that the application of the Foucaultian conceptual framework will find resonances in the selected circle of scholarly writings it targets as it already explains their logic, that is, my attempt to analyse governmentality through scholarly writings was also driven by a certain govern-mentality that already assumed the existence of a reality that it hasn’t even explored yet.

## 2. The powers of international legal thought

Governmentality’s reliance on thought processes and different forms of knowledge, as Lemke suggests, allow us to engage with the performative character and truth-effects of ‘processes of theory construction and the invention of concepts’.<sup>64</sup> Governmentality’s function of representation, and especially, the reliance of neoliberal political rationality on ‘transactional realities’ in its endeavours to ‘create a social reality that it suggests already

---

<sup>62</sup>ISA paper, 9-13.

<sup>63</sup>ISA paper, 13.

<sup>64</sup>Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality and Critique”, 61.

exists' render scholarship and the processes of academic knowledge production particularly important sites for the analysis of the practice of government(ality) and its (own) reflections.<sup>65</sup> From a Foucaultian perspective, the ways in which 'problems of government' emerge in academic work as knowledge about the world also 'structure the field of possible action' in what is marked out as 'reality' or constituted as 'truth' through, for instance, different representations of 'law', 'sovereignty' or 'order'. Problematizations of government, in this sense, also perform a governing function; as Foucault emphasizes, reflection on 'the best possible way of governing' is intrinsic to government as *art*.<sup>66</sup>

From this point of view, international legal theory can be read as a rich domain of discursive practices through which knowledge relates to power. Knowledge, according to Foucault's Nietzschean model, is 'always a certain strategic relation in which man is placed', which defines the effects of knowledge as 'activity'.<sup>67</sup> International legal theory's problematizations of the question of 'order among states', in this sense, feeds into governmental technologies that target the *inter-national*, which, to the analogy of 'madness', 'sexuality', 'civil society' or even 'the state', can be considered as a transactional reality that requires the continuous 'work of thought' for cultivating the scope and conditions of its existence and 'truth'. Reflections on sovereign power as 'sovereignty' and the technologies of governmentality as 'government' in the form of representations, theories or conceptual engagement in relation to the international sphere can be seen as 'government's consciousness of itself', delineating a certain plane of 'self-awareness' that is both a point of access to the operation of the governmentality-sovereign power complex and an inherent property of it.<sup>68</sup>

International law's liberal anti-pluralist thought, of which Slaughter's [and Tesón's] account is an example, takes up the problem of regulation in the international community in an explicitly prescriptive fashion, suggesting different vistas and methods through which a particular relation of 'freedom' and 'order' should be thought of, organized and enforced among states. What is particularly intriguing in these cases are the ways in which governmental knowledge addresses the modes and conditions for the exercise of power as 'government' and 'sovereignty', creating a particular strategic nexus between representation and its object. As the following sections will illustrate, in Slaughter's account the problem of sovereignty occupy a central role, posing the question of governmentality's accommodation of sovereign power in a new light, especially in relation to contemporary developments in international politics and the imperatives of global governance. Exploring the specificities of the author's sovereignty-narratives and the logic of their discussions illuminates the subtle and nuanced connections between knowledge as problematization, representation and reflection and the exercise of power as particular *events* that work within and contribute to the constellations of an

---

<sup>65</sup>Ibid. 60.

<sup>66</sup>Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 2. My emphasis.

<sup>67</sup>Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridicial Forms", in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984*, Volume 3, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 13-14.

<sup>68</sup>Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 2.

‘era of governmentalization’. The powers of international legal thought, in this sense, besides its representations of different modalities of power, also refer to the multiplicity of the power-effect of such representations and the logics through which thought works different aspects of the experience of ‘government’ into political problems. Ultimately, the powers of international legal thought are also the powers of thought and ways of thinking that establish a certain relationship to the world known, and as such, shapes subjectivities. ‘Government’ and ‘sovereignty’, in this sense, are forms of thought in which we, scholars, may or may not choose to think.

Importantly, Foucault’s critique concentrates on thought. As he writes, critique ‘consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based.’<sup>69</sup> As he explained further, ‘there is always a little thought occurring even in the most stupid institutions’ or the most silent habits, and criticism ‘consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it’. This calls for a new form of reflexivity through which we who speak as ‘thinkers’, ‘*savants*’, ‘philosophers’, or in any function where we claim to ‘know’ not only recognize that we are part of the processes and phenomena that we examine, analyse, theorize or critique, but we also give an account of *how* it is that we have a role in them as both ‘elements’ and ‘actors’.<sup>70</sup> Besides bringing out the particular academic design and political significance of anti-pluralist accounts, in this sense, our ethical relationship to such forms of thought should be problematized as well. The following sections seek to provide pointers for uncovering and potentially, also changing some of the ways in which contemporary problems are thought.<sup>71</sup>

My reflections on the connecting passages of the article emphasized the limitations of thinking ‘thought’ in this way, especially in the light of the transformative ethos of the ‘other’ Foucault. As I wrote,

The passage above is the site where the conceptual framework of the ‘known’ Foucault reaches its descriptive limits: it takes up the ethical project of the other Foucault as a further *implication* of the analysis, pointing towards the possibility of self-transformation, but at the same time, it also re-inscribes this possibility into the approach of the known Foucault through a movement of *savoir* that is concerned with an economy of means, ends and consequences. The limits of the framework of the ‘known’ Foucault are exhausted in the description of what the ‘other’ Foucault also seeks to live, experience and perform.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup>Michel Foucault, “So is it Important to Think?” in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 456.

<sup>70</sup>Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 12.

<sup>71</sup>ISA paper, 13-15.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*



Here the perspective of Foucault's critical ethos exposes the limits of the theoretical framework constructed on the basis of what I perceived to be IR's conventional reading of Foucault *as* limits. The 'limit' emerges as limit from a place where I was able to notice in the distance and disconnect between what discourse speaks about and what it actually performs in my own text.

The next section of the ISA paper is titled [**The space of discourse**]<sup>73</sup> which presents and reflects on my Foucaultian analysis of Slaughter's writings. While 'the space of discourse' originally referred to the presence of another 'discourse' in my text, as it appears now, what the notion may also powerfully capture are my efforts to manage and minimize the distances between theory' and 'discourse' as well as a certain kind of scholarly work and the actual practices of government. As I wrote in relation to this economy of space before turning to the analysis of Slaughter's work,

This section suggests that scholarly work as a particular discourse about the world is already a form of government of that world. The analysis of the different images of sovereignty in Slaughter's work and their political significance in the light of the governmentality framework culminates in a statement about the governing function of scholarly discourses about government.

### 3. Sovereign power as an object of governmental knowledge

The world has changed and it needs a different kind of international law: a theme that has been present in Anne-Marie Slaughter's scholarly writings since the early 1990s. International law's 'problem of order among states' has become one of international law's relevance for a new international order, which demands a reworked normative framework that endorses a particular form of liberalism. In this context, regulation of membership in the international community emerges as a problem of liberal order in a normative sense and international law's capacity to embrace this normativity as a principle of governance.

The starting point of Slaughter's liberal internationalism is the empirical difference between the behaviour of 'liberal' and 'non-liberal' states and the recognition of such differences in international norms, in which case the greatest obstacle appears to be classical international law's take on sovereignty and the assumption of 'existential equality' that forbids distinctions between states based on the nature of political governance, culture or ideology.<sup>74</sup> The following paragraphs seek to reconstruct how the question of sovereignty and corresponding images of world order and

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. 15.

<sup>74</sup>See Gerry Simpson, *Great powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 53-54.

international law have been taken up and developed in Slaughter's scholarly narratives from the 1990s until her present-day contributions. It will be analysed how Slaughter's anti-pluralist account, seen as an instance of governmental knowledge, problematize the question of sovereign power from a scientific perspective in relation to international governance and the privileged position of US interests. It will be explored what styles of argumentation and logic characterize these sovereignty-narratives, and how the specific form in which they have been developed may contribute to the production of what Simpson called a 'liberalism of certainty'. Ultimately, the paper asks what these representations and conceptualizations of 'sovereignty' *do* in terms of existing and potential practices of neoliberal governmentality and the exercise of sovereign power, as well as what ethical vistas may open up for us, 'elements' and 'actors' of contemporary governmental practices, for, perhaps, thinking differently.

### 3.1. Slaughter's sovereignty-images: from strategic tool to transactional reality

From Slaughter's scholarly writings from the early 1990s to present-day international politics three images emerge that combine specific representations of the international governance, international law, and sovereignty. Based on the existing empirical differences between 'liberal' states and 'nonliberal' ones as identified by political science research, first, the image of two zones is postulated, a 'zone of law' and a 'zone of politics', delineating the zones of operation for liberal and nonliberal states. Then, extending the zone of law imaginary to the globe, a 'world of liberal states' is hypothesized as a thought-experiment and finally, a 'new world order' is envisioned, some of it 'equal parts fact and imagination'.<sup>75</sup> As the following discussion will show, what is perceived as the realities of international relations are implicitly assembled into normative understandings of international order and governance, which then translate into a problem of sovereignty and its functional or conceptual redefinition. In all cases, sovereignty is represented as a means for particular ends, defined in relation to a postulated, hypothesized or imagined 'reality', which, as characteristic of the neoliberal mode of governance, is suggested to already exist.<sup>76</sup>

Turning to Slaughter's three images, first, her 'liberal internationalist model' introduces a conceptual distinction between 'liberal' and 'nonliberal' states based on the characteristics of their domestic political institutions, breaking the 'taboo to use distinctions between different categories of sovereign states as a basis for legal analysis' and as such, departing from 'the reigning paradigm of sovereign equality'.<sup>77</sup> Such distinction fulfils 'interpretative', 'predictive', and 'normative' functions in Slaughter's model, in so far as it 'resolves and rationalizes the sovereignty paradox' in the application of the act of state doctrine before US courts.<sup>78</sup> Considering

---

<sup>75</sup>Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>76</sup>Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality and Critique", 14, 60.

<sup>77</sup>Anne-Marie Burley (Slaughter), "Law among Liberal States: Liberal Internationalism and the Act of State Doctrine", *Columbia Law Review* 92 (1992): 1909, 1910, 1914.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.* 1910, 1911.

‘aggregate patterns of factors or considerations likely to inform judicial reasoning’, Slaughter argues that ‘the act of state doctrine as a conflicts doctrine is most consistent with its application to liberal states, the political interpretation with its application to nonliberal states’.<sup>79</sup> In this understanding liberal courts demarcate the boundaries of a postulated liberal ‘zone of law’ in their refusal to ‘perform their normal function without seeming to validate the acts or laws that fundamentally contravene liberal principles’.<sup>80</sup> ‘Nonliberal’ states, states ‘outside the conception of law shared by liberal states’, therefore fall within the ‘zone of politics beyond law’, which, argues Slaughter, requires political considerations instead of legal ones in the conduct of international relations.<sup>81</sup> For Slaughter, the zone-distinction based on the decision patterns of liberal courts confirms the thesis of the ‘separate peace’ among liberal states, while normatively, it is expected to ‘help nudge nonliberal states toward the liberal side of the divide’.<sup>82</sup> As Slaughter argues, this can be accomplished by ‘making the assumptions underlying the doctrine more explicit’, in which case a revised act of state doctrine ‘would reinterpret “deference” to nonliberal sovereigns as the ostracism of an outlaw’.<sup>83</sup> However, the advantage of this approach, it is explained, is to ‘allow *states themselves* to choose whether to invoke the doctrine, and thus implicitly to locate themselves on the liberal-nonliberal spectrum’ by choosing to ‘shield their acts from U.S. judicial scrutiny, thereby salvaging their sovereign sensitivities’.<sup>84</sup> Wearing the ‘badge of alienage’, in this sense, is voluntary while bearing the ‘cost of judicial scrutiny’ is interpreted as a sign of cooperation. With regard to ‘quasi-liberal’ states, it is stated, submitting their acts to US judicial review would ‘explicitly affirm’ their liberal status and along with that, their membership in the liberal community. Sovereignty, at the same time, can no longer be used as a strategic tool in the ‘zone of law’: as Slaughter writes, ‘liberal states would see their sovereignty diminished, in the sense of subjecting their laws to the appraisal of liberal states across the zone’. However, they would ‘benefit by confirmation of their participation in the liberal international economy and an emerging political consensus on basic rights under law’.<sup>85</sup> The regulatory function of Slaughter’s postulated ‘zones’ in relation to ‘nonliberal’ states is connected to the strategic (non-)use of sovereignty as an exception to liberal law; however, it is the zone imaginary itself that turns sovereignty into such a tool, reversing the dynamics of differentiation: the postulated reality of the liberal zone and the choice of invoking sovereignty result in states *marking themselves* as ‘nonliberal’.

This instrumentalized depiction of sovereignty, which seems to serve the purpose of a governmental technology that enforces liberal governance through states’ self-government, disappears in Slaughter’s second image of a ‘hypothesised world of liberal states’, where the internal dynamics of the ‘zone of law’ are extrapolated to the globe and a model of liberal law is

---

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. 1911, 1912.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. 1987, 1921.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid. 1913.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. 1909, 1996, 1912.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid. 1913.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid. 1913, 1992.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid. 1913.

proposed for governing the transnational relations of individuals, institutions and states. Slaughter's 'thought experiment' envisions a 'transnational polity', where 'the organizing principle of this polity would mirror the organizing principle of liberal States: the limitation of State power by establishing multiple institutions designed both to overlap and complement each other'.<sup>86</sup> In this hypothetical world the state disaggregates into its components, operating through multiple centres of political authority, such as legislative, administrative, executive and judicial institutions with both representative and regulatory capacities. The image of the disaggregated state prompts a more 'flexible' notion of sovereignty, which follows the disaggregated state structure: in Slaughter's world of liberal states, hypothetically, sovereignty disaggregates, too.

The implications and significance of these disaggregating moves become clearer in Slaughter's book *A New World Order*, which postulates a reality of an emerging (but in many ways, fully existing) world order of 'global networks' that provides actors with 'the speed and flexibility necessary to function effectively in an information age'.<sup>87</sup> Besides networks of 'terrorists, arms dealers, money launderers, drug dealers, traffickers in women and children, and the modern pirates of intellectual property', argues Slaughter, government officials, such as 'police investigators, financial regulators, even judges and legislators', increasingly operate through networks, too.<sup>88</sup> To be able to 'see and appreciate' such 'government networks' as a form and 'technology of global governance', Slaughter calls for abandoning the fiction of the unitary state and directs attention to the phenomenon of 'the disaggregation of the state', which she described as follows:

The mantra of this book is that the state is not disappearing; it is disaggregating. Its component institutions – regulators, judges, and even legislators – are all reaching out beyond national borders in various ways, finding that their once "domestic" jobs have a growing international dimension. As they venture into foreign policy, they encounter their foreign counterparts – regulators, judges, and legislators – and create horizontal networks, concluding memoranda of to govern their relations, instituting regular meetings, and even creating their own transgovernmental organizations.<sup>89</sup>

The notion of government networks not only creates a new visibility of 'a world of disaggregated state institutions interacting with one another alongside unitary states and unitary state organizations' but it also opens up a possibility for their control and regulation.<sup>90</sup> As Slaughter emphasizes, 'unlike amorphous "global policy networks" championed by UN Secretary

---

<sup>86</sup>Anne-Marie Slaughter, "International Law in a World of Liberal States", *European Journal of International Law* 6 (1995): 535.

<sup>87</sup>Slaughter, *A New World Order*, 4.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.* 1.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.* 31.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.* 35.

General Kofi Annan, in which it is never clear who is exercising power on behalf of whom, these are networks composed of national government officials, either appointed by elected officials or directly elected themselves'.<sup>91</sup> In this quality, such government networks 'can perform many of the functions of a world government – legislation, administration, and adjudication - without the form'.<sup>92</sup> The image of the disaggregated state is matched, this time, with a more elaborate image of 'disaggregated sovereignty', where sovereignty's devolution 'onto ministers, legislators, and judges' reflect the changed nature of the state system characterised by connection, interaction and institutions.<sup>93</sup> The 'new sovereignty' is therefore 'relational'; it is 'status, membership, "connection to the rest of the world and the political ability to be an actor within it."' <sup>94</sup> However, the disaggregation of sovereignty is far from being a self-destructive move: as it is made clear, it means the reassertion of sovereign power and state control over trans-border processes in a form that is suitable to the new world order of 'global networks'. As Slaughter explains, granting formal capacity to disaggregated state institutions means 'harnessing' them, that is, subjecting them directly to international obligations, which 'will bolster the power of the state as the primary actor in the international system'.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, 'giving each government institution a measure of legitimate authority under international law, with accompanying duties, marks government officials as distinctive in larger policy networks and allows the state to extend its reach.'<sup>96</sup>

In Slaughter's third image of a 'new world order', sovereignty is characterized by its dispersion in global networks, subjecting them to the control of international law. While in the zone-imaginary sovereignty functioned as a strategic resource that could be used freely in state relations, in the third image sovereignty is depicted as the capacity of entering into relations at all, and as such, it becomes inscribed into the scope of agency of actors. Liberalism no longer has to be hypothesized in the third image; 'disaggregated sovereignty' functions as an emerging 'transactional reality' of liberal governance which is tailored to the structure, character, and need of liberal states, now extended to all state actors. Similarly to the neoliberal inscription of the market logic into the social field (producing the homo economicus), the liberal arrangement and understanding of politics becomes the precondition to participation in the international community, transmitted through the imagined reality of disaggregated sovereignty which now operates as a *norm*. The image of the disaggregated state invokes the phenomenon of what Foucault described as the 'governmentalization of the state'; in this case, however, when domestic technologies of government reach beyond the boundaries of the state, they become subjected to the higher logic of international law, and as such, the state is strengthened in a top-down fashion. The idea of a 'world government without the form', in this sense, indicates the continuing prevalence of the liberal internationalist assumption

---

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. 4.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. 4.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid. 267.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid. 267.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid. 270.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. 270

of state relations governed by international law as the basic structure of international order.

Slaughter's accounts, seen as governmental knowledge, take up the problem of the state and sovereign power in a fashion that the representations produced and their regulative effects coincide with particular neoliberal rationalities of governmentality. Slaughter's other writings further illuminate the relationship between the state, international law, and the practice of international governance. Similar 'transactional reality' in Slaughter's scholarly writings is the process of the 'individualization of international law', through which the black box of the state became gradually transparent and as a result, society is becoming 'a mass of individuals' to international law.<sup>97</sup> According to this logic, since in a networked world individuals can threaten international peace and security just as much as states, they have become increasingly exposed to the direct reach of international law through three shifts in subjecthood: as Slaughter writes, 'rogue regimes become rogue officials; rogue officials become criminals; and criminals, even in the eyes of international law, may be individual citizens'.<sup>98</sup> As Slaughter suggests, in this understanding terrorists should not be treated as combatants but as criminals, and in a similar logic, a proposal for a 'duty to prevent' not only seeks to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destructions but 'also people who possess them'.<sup>99</sup>

While international law's reach has been extended to the level of the individual, targeting those 'excesses' of governmentality where neoliberal self-government fails, at the same time, the US emerges as the state that could potentially benefit the most from a networked world order and turn this advantage into global leadership. As Slaughter writes, 'in the twenty-first century the United States' exceptional capacity for connection, rather than splendid isolation or hegemonic domination, will renew its power and restore its global purpose'.<sup>100</sup> In this context, however, international law is reframed as a tool for international governance, which, however, needs to be updated as a result of 'the mismatch between old rules and new threats' in the post 9/11 environment. Slaughter's writes:

we have an opportunity to lead *through* law not against it, and to build a vastly strengthened international legal order that will protect and promote our interests. If we are willing to accept minimal restraints, we can rally the rest of the world to adopt and enforce rules that will be effective in fighting scourges from terrorism to AIDS.<sup>101</sup>

While the language of 'renewing' power through the 'capacity for connection' echoes Slaughter's prediction regarding the strengthening of the state through government networks, the notion of 'leading through law' against the potential option of leading against it, invokes the image of sovereign power that stands beyond liberal law. While the ambition of

---

<sup>97</sup>Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Rogue Regimes and the Individualization of International Law", *New England Law Review* 36 (2002): 815-820.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.* 820

<sup>99</sup>Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A Duty to Prevent", *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004): 137.

<sup>100</sup>Anne-Marie Slaughter, "America's Edge", *Foreign Affairs* 88 (2009): 94.

<sup>101</sup>Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Leading through Law", *The Wilson Quarterly* 27 (2003): 42.

'leadership' invokes a certain means-end logic, and as such, maintains reference to governmentality, the image of sovereignty as a strategic tool seems to remain an open option in relation to the most powerful. The privileged position of the US, as it turns out, is another feature inscribed in the new world order. In Slaughter's words, "'world order" is not value-neutral; any actual world order will reflect the values of its architects and members.'<sup>102</sup> As such, Slaughter's redefinition of sovereignty as capacity introduces a new division between those states which are capable of (re)shaping the international order and its rules that already reflects their interests, and the members of this order, who are governed by the rules so defined. In this case, the potential exclusory effects of liberal anti-pluralist theorizing derive from the logic of Slaughter's vision of the international order itself: the capacity-based approach, similarly to the logic of the market, generates its own subject-categories in relation to the norm.

The analysis of Slaughter's scholarly writings as instances of 'governmental knowledge', that is, as forms of knowledge that perform a certain governing function in relation to what is constituted as their objects, traced the development of different representations, discursive functions and power-effects of 'sovereignty' in three distinct images of world order as unfolding in Slaughter's writings. As the above discussions illuminated, the different discursive patterns of the (re)definition, emplacement and operation of the notion of 'sovereignty' in each of these images followed a logic according to which 'facts' or 'empirical' results were implicitly assembled into normative assumptions and as such, they created 'transactional realities' with specific governing functions. In Slaughter's hypothetical 'zones' sovereignty appeared as a strategic tool, which states can choose freely to invoke in international legal relations; however, at the same time, the postulation of such zones *as reality* already determines the consequences of such acts, according to which, it would appear, states mark themselves as 'nonliberal' (instead of being marked as such by 'liberal' states), performing their own exclusion from the zone of law. The governing function of the zone-imaginary operates through a certain *illusion* of freedom, the use of which already submits states to a 'liberal government of unfreedom' by designating a certain category for them. From this juncture Slaughter's narratives move towards an image of world order where difference is already inscribed into states themselves in terms of a certain 'capacity' to network that inherently privileges liberal states. The hypothesization of a 'world of liberal states' through the extrapolation of the characteristics of liberal government into the globe permits the disaggregation of the state and the subsequent disaggregation of sovereignty, which prefigures a 'new world order' of government networks that no longer operates with the liberal-nonliberal distinction, but inscribes the dominance of liberal states, the 'architects' of such image of order, into the ordering logic of 'order' itself. Sovereignty, disaggregated in Slaughter's third image, is no longer depicted as a strategic tool but as a *norm* that not only structures but also defines 'the field of possible action' among states. In this sense, disaggregated sovereignty, 'equal parts fact and imagination' operates as a 'transactional reality' for neoliberal global governance, which inscribes an intrinsic

---

<sup>102</sup>Slaughter, *A New World Order*, 27.

characteristic into the very relations governed, which can then be both governed and normalized. ‘Disaggregated sovereignty’ as a transactional reality in this sense brings together a neoliberal governmental rationality that embeds itself in the relations it governs and at the same time, invokes the logic of what e.g. Nadesan identified as the dispersion of sovereign power under the neoliberal mode of government operating as a norm in society. Sovereignty in Slaughter’s account is dispersed in its disaggregated form in the totality of the international realm, setting the standard for international interactions that produces different subject categories on the basis of ‘capacity’ to live up to the liberal image, while at the same time, it strengthens the global position of the US as a ‘leader’ that governs through law, that is, through the medium that controls the powers of government networks in a top-down fashion.

The similarity of the logics uncovered in Slaughter’s scholarly discussions and the ways in which the Foucaultian notions of governmentality, sovereign power and their possible interactions within the governmentalized state describe the operation of contemporary forms of government expose the uncanny proximity of the practice of government and its scholarly problematizations as scientific objects of inquiry. Slaughter’s representations of sovereign power can be seen as cases in which governmental knowledge takes up the problem of sovereignty and re-presents it in a fashion that serves the rationality of neoliberal ordering that is supported by the normalizing powers of dispersed sovereignty, now transposed to the global plane, to relations between states as well as states and individuals. With the extension of international law’s global governing function to individuals as depicted in Slaughter’s discussion of the ‘individualization of international law’, a different, more robust use of sovereignty is envisioned as an instrument of the most capable: one that targets the failures of neoliberal self-government that are framed as its enemies: ‘rogue regimes’, ‘rogue officials’, ‘criminals’.

Slaughter’s problematizations of government in terms of different depictions of sovereignty and order, in this sense, construct a scientific object of government, a particular effect of truth, that reproduces the very logic that the Foucaultian notions of (neoliberal) governmentality capture in relation to contemporary modes of government. The ‘truth’ of governmental ordering in this sense mirrors the reality of governmental ordering.<sup>103</sup>

What my analysis of Slaughter’s writings produced was a sense and logic of sameness between ‘theory’, ‘discourse’ and the world studied. Slaughter’s depictions of sovereignty, especially the third image of ‘disaggregated sovereignty’ coincided with what I identified as one of the logics through which sovereign power makes its operations manifest in the contemporary ‘era of governmentality’, something that functioned as an alternative ontology of world politics for my analysis. This sense of sameness was perhaps the most important aspect that left me uneasy about the final

---

<sup>103</sup>ISA paper, 15-22.



version of the article: the two discourses had the same implications, there was a nearly perfect fit between them, what Slaughter's discourse appeared to say echoed the terms and logic of what my Foucaultian framework laid out.

Or at least this was how *I* constructed them to be. Reading back these passages from where I am at now, I immediately notice a strong resonance with how I described and lived the journey of my PhD research in terms of the subjectivity of a 'desiring subject of sovereignty'. And as a desiring subject of sovereignty, here, too, I worked hard to try to nail 'sovereignty' down, or at least to try to get closer to that beyond where the concept slips out of our hands. It was then in this relation of 'sameness' between 'theory', 'discourse', and the ontology of world politics where I located that 'fundament', that 'secure point of reference' that could serve as the 'non-threatening truth' of both the practices of contemporary government and what I do in my academic everyday life. The construction of these series of references between 'theory', 'discourse' and 'world' delimited what Koskenniemi described as the infinite regression of deferrals from one academic discipline to the other into a manageable circle of two sets of conceptualizations of particular segments of world politics and my reading of them which brought them together and kept them in a continuous motion.

As it has been stated and expressed in the text many times, my ISA paper wasn't aware of my own involvement in the construction of 'sameness', of the logic of that *savoir* that brought about and sustained these circular dynamics between two sets of texts.

**It was something almost completely unrelated that brought my attention to the missing subject and with that, to my own absence from the analysis.**

While I was trying to think through what appeared as the strange sameness of my Foucaultian analysis of Slaughter's writings, somehow it struck me that the framework I constructed made mention of Foucault's 'three focal points of experience', which also enlisted 'potential modes of existence for possible subjects'.<sup>104</sup> This made me wonder about the place of the 'subject', the missing third axis in relation to those assemblages of 'power' and 'knowledge' that I sought to

---

<sup>104</sup>Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 3.

draw out and analyse in the final version of the article. In preparation for my ISA paper I thought I would just try to add the ‘subject’ by extending the analysis to what I identified as the scholarly subjectivity unfolding from Slaughter’s writings. So I sat down and started to put these thoughts down, imagining as if I was adding another couple pages to where the article left Slaughter’s discourse. By the time I finished writing up this section I already knew that it was not what I was looking for. As I commented on it in the ISA paper in a section called **[Exploring scholarly subjectivity where the ‘known’ and the ‘other’ Foucault meet]**<sup>105</sup> that turned this new addition into another site of reflection, in the following passages “I trace the moves of *savoir* as they unfold from Slaughter’s writings yet I do not reflect on the ways in which my own *savoir* moves *when I perform an analysis like this.*” In fact, this was the realization from which the first person perspective of the ISA paper unfolded, which then re-embedded this experimentation with finding the ‘subject’ in the text into the perspective of the subject writing the text. This is what my attempt to address ‘scholarly subjectivity’ in Slaughter’s writings found:

The moves through which a particular representation of world order is assembled in Slaughter’s narratives, however, also presuppose the ‘reciprocal genesis’ of ‘the subject who knows’ as a simultaneous effect of truth, that is, of a particular scholarly subjectivity that emerges as part of the ‘production’ of the experience of government. For Foucault the production of fundamental experiences in the West “consists in engagement in a process of acquiring knowledge of a domain of objects”, and simultaneously, in the constitution of knowing subject as “subjects with a fixed and determined status”.<sup>106</sup> The emergence of scholarly subjectivity, that of the knower of the world in a particular form also means a certain involvement with one’s *savoir*, that is, with the process “by which the subject undergoes a modification through the very things that one knows [*connait*] or, rather, in the course of the work that one does in order to know.”<sup>107</sup> *Savoir*, for Foucault, is “what enables one both to modify the subject and to construct the object”, and in this sense, with the dimension of subjectivity the ‘three focal points of experience’ of government, both as science and politics, come a full circle: the scientific problematization of knowledge is not only co-constituted with the exercise of governmental power (in terms of e.g. the ‘truth-effects’ of representations), but it also presupposes the construction of a scientific subjectivity, both in a sense of the subject who knows and a subject who can be known as a subject of government. The power/knowledge nexus in this sense is inseparable from the co-articulation of subjectivity, from the specific forms in which

---

<sup>105</sup>ISA paper, 22.

<sup>106</sup>Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 257.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

knowledge is produced, through the course of ‘the work one does in order to know’.

In Slaughter’s writings this ‘work’, among other aspects, consists of subtle moves through which, for instance, ‘empirical facts’ are assembled into normative images, such as the extrapolation of aggregate (and admittedly messy) practices of American courts in relation to the act of state doctrine into the image of the zone of law and zone of politics, or in the hypothetical extrapolation of the liberal domestic structure into the global plane in a ‘world of liberal states’. The ‘new world order’ of government networks that operates on the basis of the ‘equal fact and imagination’ of disaggregated sovereignty goes one step further than the ‘let’s suppose’ of a hypothetical world, it explicitly blurs the line between what could be identified or contested as ‘fact’ and something that only exists as ‘imagination’, in its non-existence. This move also exposes the politics of differentiation between ‘real’ and ‘imagined’, and the explicitness of Slaughter’s blending of the one into the other, creating a sense of indistinction and elusiveness lays bare the mechanisms in which the world is both ‘known’ and ‘constructed’ at the same time. In Slaughter’s case the scholarly subjectivity that is formed through and also forming the logic of neoliberal governmentality connects knowledge and the world known through the work of thought that indeed, ‘create[s] a social reality that it suggests already exists’ by imaging things one step further, stretching their characteristics to fit particular governmental ends (such as strengthening the state and controlling networks), and at the same time, normalizing this move by making the ‘method’ of producing such instances of ‘scientific truth’ explicit and as such, *legitimate*. The scholarly subjectivity co-constituted with the strategic re-imagination of the world is one that knows in order to be able to govern, but the process of knowing, that of *savoir*, the ‘work that one does in order to know’ is one that is *already* imbued with the (neoliberal) governmental logic by perceiving the world from the viewpoint of governmental ordering already. In this sense, the substitution of the ‘analytical blinder’ of the ‘unitary state’ with the ‘lens’ of ‘government networks’ is a move that is celebrated as a new form of vision, which, however, at the same time, only allows for a very specific gaze: one that is already conditioned by a specific purpose and as such, it can only see what it is meant to see (e.g. the network-form) from the perspective of governmental ordering (e.g. extending state control). This scholarly gaze no longer allows for observing the world or discovering it: it relates to the world through a strategic relationship in which the world is already *known* (it only has to be uncovered) and as such, it cannot be *studied*. What needs to be done ‘in order to know’ is not more than a projection of a certain mentality onto the world, of a world that already exists within as a certain logic of thinking, a certain relationship to knowledge and what is to be known. As such, the reciprocal production of the scientific object and scholarly subjectivity gives rise to mirroring entities that refer back to each other in mutually reinforcing circles. In Slaughter’s case the problematization of government appears as a particular form of knowledge about the world which at the same time, serves the purpose of governing this world; this is matched with the production of a scholarly subjectivity, a certain mentality, that relates to the world through turning it into something else in the process of knowing, where both representations (e.g. disaggregated sovereignty) and the logic they follow

(e.g. blurring fact and imagination) resonate with the neoliberal image of the self-governing subject that constantly reproduces the rationality of neoliberal government (e.g. the sovereignty as capacity to participate in a world order designed according to the domestic structure of liberal states, or the scholarly subjectivity as a particular form of govern-mentality.) In this way, perhaps we can also begin to think about what Foucault identified as the ‘analytic of finitude’ and the figure of scientific man in contemporary scientific thinking from a different light: the circular epistemology of knowledge, that is, the finitude of knowing against what has already been known about ‘man’, can also be thought in terms of a mentality that reproduces a particular logic when studying the world, and as such, it produces a world that mirrors its knower.

The experience of government in our historical modernity, in this sense, can be seen as constituted through the problematization of government as a series of scientific objects and the ways in which a particular governing and governable (scholarly) subjectivity feeds into and shapes strategic relations and condition the field of possible action in the practice of government. Governmentality in this sense is not only a critical conceptualization of the ways in which a particular modality of power can be thought in Western societies or a critical tool through which contemporary practices of government can be exposed and interrogated, but also a reminder of the processes of subjectification involved in the experience of the practice of science, and a warning of how much these processes may be feeding into practices of government in more than one ways. As the analysis of Slaughter’s writings showed, what is of crucial importance here is the *savoir* which ‘enables one both to modify the subject and to construct the object’, the logic according to which knowledge, the subject and the world known interweave in strategic relationships of power.<sup>108</sup>

This is how I then looked back in the ISA paper on both the original article draft and my addition of an analysis of a scholarly subjectivity that still was not mine yet. The concluding section titled [**At the limits of my scholarly subjectivity – where to go from here?**]<sup>109</sup> brought my own experience of conducting a particular style of Foucaultian analysis into the scope of the reflections of the paper, where I began to think about how I could perhaps do things differently and make more of the ‘other’ Foucault’s ethos in my own work. As I wrote,

A bit like Slaughter, I already knew what I was about to find in my analyses. Studying Foucault, studying Slaughter and studying the separation between scholarship and life, just like the construction of the knowing subject and the object known, are enabled by the thought-patterns through which I relate to the texts, things, people I study. To *apply* theory to facts or discourses is one such relation. What the other Foucault encourages me to do, however, is not to apply but to *experiment*. What the care of the self could mean, for me, is to

---

<sup>108</sup>Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 256; ISA paper, 22-24.

<sup>109</sup>ISA paper, 24.

try to engage with the ways in which I usually think and to try to experiment with thinking otherwise (and through that, to cultivate an alternative subjectivity).<sup>110</sup>

In my conclusions I emphasised the importance of trying to observe how we, ourselves are involved in our *savoir*, in our everyday assumptions of how things and words hang together. The notion of Foucaultian experimentation at this stage was still very much attached to the activity of thinking and the aim of trying to think differently through changing our thoughts. The ISA paper ends with the description, or rather, an expression of a limit-experience that the encounter with ‘other’ Foucault induced and what the process of reflection on the article draft brought to light:

Looking into what I do when I turn my encounters with Slaughter’s and Foucault’s texts into knowledge about these writings and also knowledge about the world is another possible vista to observe how I am exactly engaged in the movement in my *savoir*. I was drawn to Slaughter’s and Foucault’s writings for very different reasons. Slaughter’s writings disturbed and annoyed me because of the elusiveness and simplicity through which they seem to advocate a particular politics under the guise of scholarly objectivity. The politics that arose from the ways in which facts were assembled into normative statements and stretched to fit an imagined world in Slaughter’s writings not only revealed how scholarship may become complicit in the politics it analyses but also how the detached scientific voice might work towards concealing all that. I started to read Foucault’s books exactly for the promise of an alternative ontology of the world which puts scholarly practices like Slaughter’s into a different and revelatory perspective: I have wanted to unmask the ‘real’ implications and consequences of a certain kind of liberal theorizing, and show what theory may really do in terms of its power-effects. This used to be my politics under the guise of scholarly objectivity, which never said anything about my interest in the movement of *savoir* that connected my reading of Slaughter and my own experience of the separation of the academic and its beyond in the course of practicing scholarship. It is perhaps equally dangerous to reshape the world according to particular notions of liberal order and in a seemingly neutral fashion, and to allow a separation of the scholarly and the personal, which, to a certain extent, means giving up the care of the self. My own entrapment in a particular Foucaultian theorizing epitomizes this: critique that no longer requires the knower to transform themselves is unlikely to step outside of the confines of governmentality. I had to work myself through the writings of the other Foucault and the alternative model of subjectification unfolding from his early and late works to be able to see my own involvement in governmentality. Science, practiced in this way, has indeed become a limit-experience for me: reflecting on the other paper [the article draft] in the spirit of the ‘other’ Foucault has exposed a liminal space, a place where I am at in my thinking process at the

---

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

moment. If this is the ‘blank space’, it is from here that thinking and writing can now begin.<sup>111</sup>

And this is from where thinking and writing this thesis began indeed; this is from where the idea of an experience book that not only discusses but also reconstructs and constructs experience first appeared as a possibility, as something that, inspired by the ethos of the ‘other’ Foucault *I thought I could try to do*. Nothing as dramatic as Foucault’s laughter at his encounter with the ‘order’ of the Chinese encyclopaedia, the narrative ‘I’ of this thesis emerged through a series of frustrations, discoveries and puzzlement over ‘strangeness’ as well as explorations and reflections of the liminal spaces of what it means to become a ‘knower’ of a certain kind, such as a detached, objectivizing ‘knower’, a desiring subject of sovereignty, but also something like a non-knower, the one who is no longer that embedded in their habitual ways of doing and being but doesn’t know yet where to go and how to proceed. It was only through embracing the implications of being at these limits and thresholds that it became possible to *choose* the means of further explorations and to engage in the cultivation of the ‘living space’ for the ‘I’ after its spontaneous emergence as the unreflected, default mode of a meta-discourse on ‘discourse’. It was only after this juncture that I started to define my academic work and its focus *as* narrative writing. Yet again, the form, style and content of this experience book as well as the work and the character of the narrative ‘I’ in this thesis have been shaped and formed through a number of other, simultaneous and incidental encounters, too. The next chapter turns to the two most important of these sources: Tesón’s discourse on ‘sovereignty’ and the practice of narrative writing in IR as illustrated by autoethnographic and autobiographic accounts.

\*

---

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.