

# Governing Evil

MA-Level

**Modernity and the temptation of  
unlimited government**

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# Agenda

## 1 | Perspectives

## 2 | Foucault

2.1 | Brief introduction

2.2 | Show of force

2.3 | The body as a resource

2.4 | Self-government

## 3 | Conclusion

## 4 | Reading

# 1 | Perspectives

Learning from the History of Ideas?

# “Cambridge School” (1)

“[W]hen we use language for purposes of communication, we are always doing something as well as saying something”.

— Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1 (2002).

# “Cambridge School” (2)

**History of Ideas as a source for understanding how politics was done in the past.**

# Governing Evil? (1)

“Today, however, we have to say that **a state** is a **human community** that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”

“We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an ‘ethic of ultimate ends’ or to an ‘**ethic of responsibility.**’”

— Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (1919)

# Governing Evil? (2)

**Political Theory looks into collective entities dealing with challenges undermining the existence of these entities (=the State).**

# 2 | Foucault

Three stages of government



# Overview

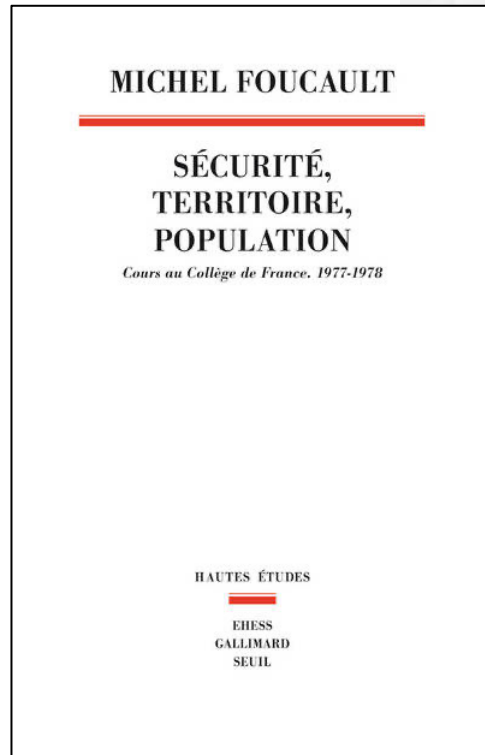
2.1 | Brief Introduction

2.2 | Show of force

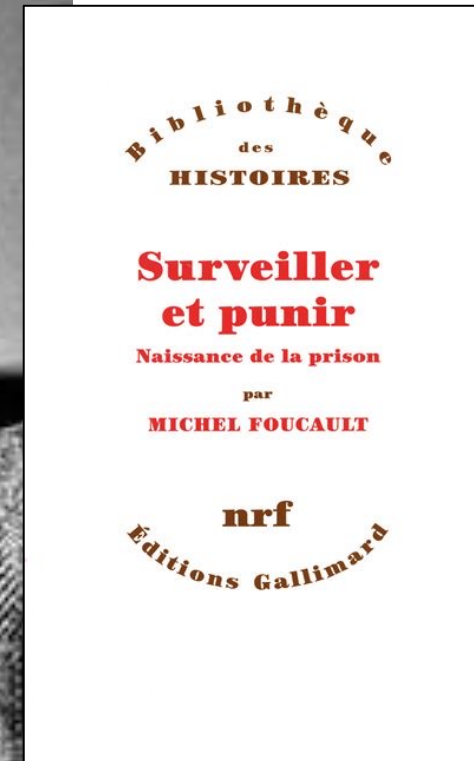
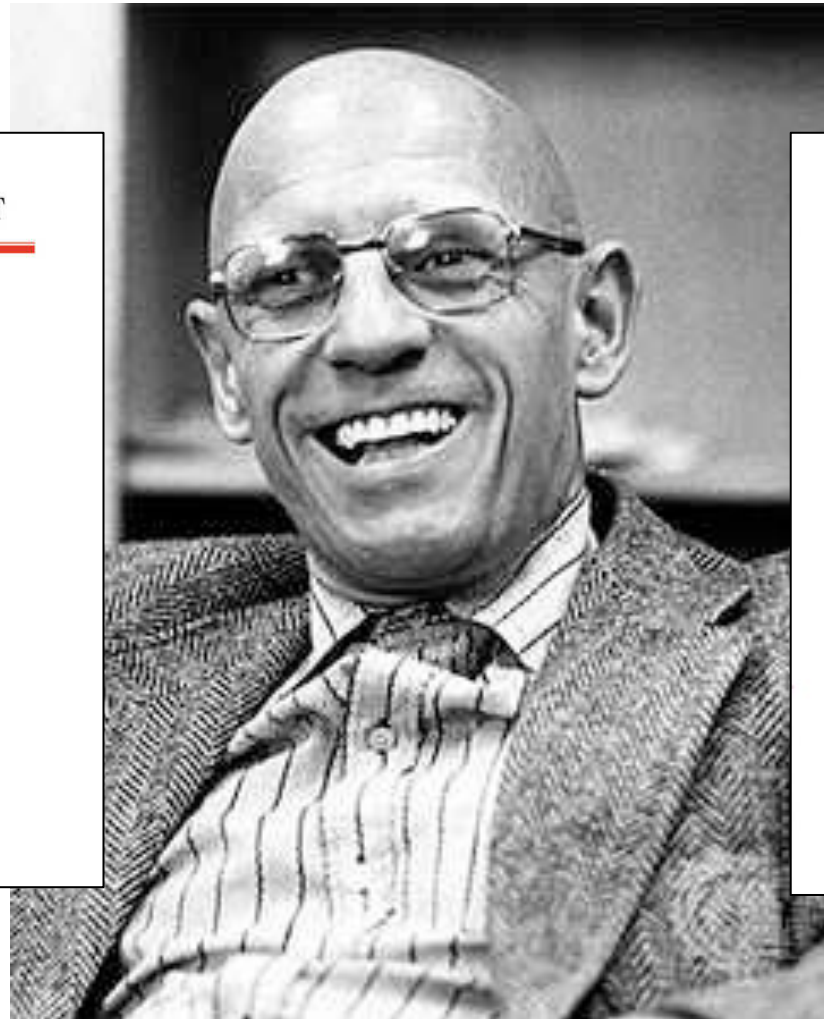
2.3 | The body as a resource

2.4 | Self-government

## 2.1 | Michel Foucault (1926–1984)



1977



1975

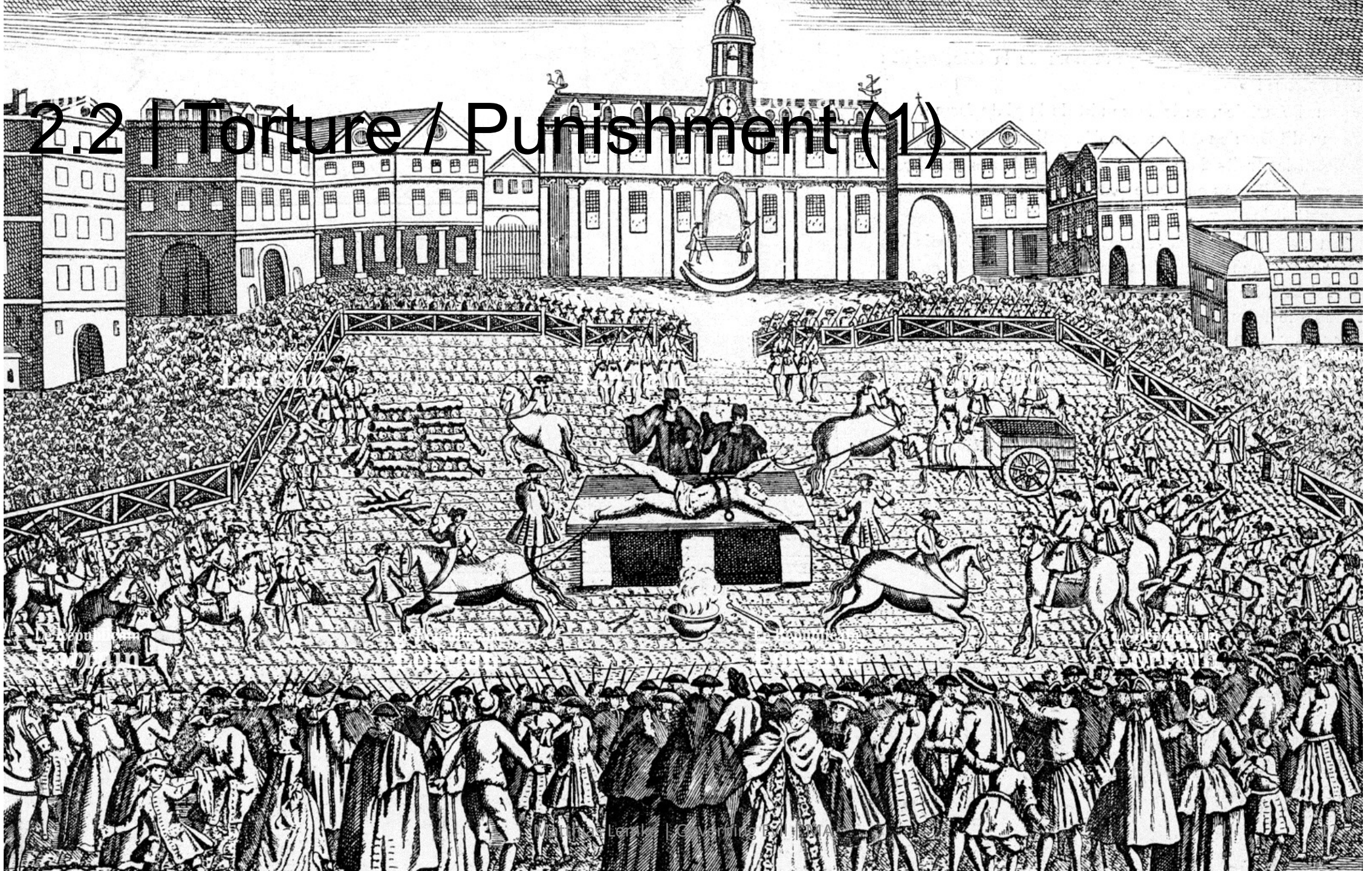
## 2.1 | Three stages of governing evil

**Force**

**Education**

**Self-government**

## 2.2 | Torture / Punishment (1)



# Research task (1): Damiens

Do a brief internet research on what happened to Robert-François Damiens on March 28, 1757 and why?

Time: 15 Minutes.



## 2.3 | Discipline / Prison

COLONIE DE METTRAY



A Thierry del.

Imp. Lemercier

Sauve et Faisre lith.

Matthias Lemke | Governing Evil | MA <sup>Vue générale de la Colonie</sup>

# Research task (2): Mettray

Do a brief internet research on what a regular day of an inmate of the Colonie de Mettray looked like?

Time: 15 Minutes.

## 2.4 | Biopower (*le biopouvoir*) (1)

“By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower.”

— Michel Foucault, *State, Territory, Population* (1977).



## 2.4 | Biopower (*le biopouvoir*) (2)

“Where discipline is the technology deployed to make individuals behave, to be efficient and productive workers, biopolitics is deployed to manage population; for example, to ensure a healthy workforce.”

— Michel Foucault, *State, Territory, Population* (1977).



## 2.4 | Panopticum





# Research task (3): Bentham

What were the architectural principles of the 'Panopticum' proposed by Jeremy Bentham?

Time: 15 Minutes

## 2.4 | Neoliberal era

The Entrepreneur of the self.



# 3 | Conclusion

Self-Government

# Comparing the three stages

## **Damiens – 1757**

The body of the perpetrator physically destroyed

The State (i.e. the King) has the power to take life

Dealing with “evil”: using destructive force publicly

## **Colonie de Mettray – 1839**

Bodies perceived as a resource

The State has the power to form life

Dealing with “evil”: using educational force hidden from the public

## **Neoliberal era – approx. 1980 sq.**

Implementing government techniques into the body of the citizens.

The State (seemingly) fades out.

# For discussion

- Self-government as an 'invisible' government technique: what might be the advantages / drawbacks? In other words: Is 'biopower' good or evil?
- If 'biopower' is a form of unlimited government, what may come beyond the era of neoliberal 'biopower'?

# 4 | Reading

Some texts ...



# Texts that might be worth reading ...

Foucault, Michel (2007), *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*. Edited by Michel Senelart. Translated by Graham Burchell, London.

Gutting, Gary (2019), *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Oxford.