

Of 'strange synergies' and 'murky ferments': governance discourse and the taming of the Foucault effect

Jim Jose

Abstract

The paper explores the alleged links between contemporary understandings and uses of 'governance' and Foucault's ideas. Scholars working in quite diverse disciplines have asserted, with increasing frequency, their debt to Foucault for the idea of 'governance'. However, it is doubtful that Foucault ever used the word 'governance', or that he would have accepted having his ideas grouped under that term. This paper argues that positing Foucault as an intellectual progenitor of the concept of 'governance' conflates two quite different and incompatible discourses. The political effect is to undermine the emancipatory impulse embedded within Foucault's political philosophy. In effect, this serves to reposition him within a framework that de-radicalises his intellectual legacy and renders him safe for mainstream scholarship.

Biography

Jim Jose is Associate Professor in Politics at the University of Newcastle. He is the author of *Biopolitics of the subject: an introduction to the ideas of Michel Foucault* (1998) and articles on political theory, feminist theory and Australian politics. His research interests include political theory, governance and postcolonialism. Jim.jose@newcastle.edu.au