

‘A Critical Examination of Michel Foucault’s Concept of Moral Self-Constitution in Dialogue with Charles Taylor’

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Abstract

French philosopher Michel Foucault takes a very specific *aesthetic* interpretation in his proposal for the constitution of the moral self in his late work on ethics, work that is located in the ancient world of Greece and Rome. The thesis writer examines the contours of that approach, and brings it to the level of a critical reflection with the aid of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor and three theologians. Foucault’s construction of the moral self is rooted in autonomous *aesthetic-freedom*, which calls into question norms, rules or codes, and especially prohibitions, focusing on a positive elaboration of the self. It marshals certain *technologies of self* for self-creation to produce a certain beautiful style of self or an *aesthetics of existence*. The analysis focuses on the triangular relationship between power relations, truth games and subjectivity. It is a bold and imaginative proposal for ethics in late modernity.

Taylor responds to this approach with an appreciation of its creativity, but he begins to question why Foucault takes the extreme view of avoiding *the good* in his ethics of self. Furthermore, he brings a critique to Foucault’s view of freedom as an *ontology*. On Taylor’s view, Foucault’s self and his doctrine of *aesthetic-freedom* lack a relationship with the good; this makes the self vulnerable to amorality and nihilism. Foucault lacks the element of critique in his practices of the self. Taylor also notes that the heavy emphasis on aesthetics as an interpretative grid on the self has the potential to lead to narcissism and even violence, or to loss of the self, and loss of relationship with the Other. The key issue that he raises for Foucault’s view of freedom is its lack of *situatedness*, the lack of definition of the context and the content of freedom. Taylor offers a moral horizon of the good as an alternative.

The three-way dialogue is picked up late in the thesis by three trinitarian theologians, Long, Schwöbel and McFadyen, responding to Foucault, and yet their contribution is mediated through Taylor’s critical dialogue and follows his suggestion of the merits of a *transcendent turn* towards Judeo-Christian *agape* love. In its own way, it adds to the contextualization of the self and definition of freedom; it also offers a response to the crisis of affirmation that emerges in the Foucault-Taylor dialogue. This view articulates a constitution of the moral self from within a paradigm of trinitarian *goodness-freedom*, which suggests a trajectory of a *communion of love* where the self discerns the possibility of complementary relationships.

The three paradigms explored in the thesis involve firstly an analysis of the character of the *Post-Romantic turn* in Foucault’s self, secondly a critical engagement with Taylor’s idea of the moral horizon, and finally into creative dialogue with the plausibility structure of *trinitarian goodness-freedom*. The thesis writer concludes with three propositions for a *redeemed freedom* (a contrast to Foucault’s autonomous freedom) which revisits the interpretation of the moral self from within a horizon of fecund and significant relationships to the good, the neighbour and trinitarian divine goodness.

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Self-Constitution in Dialogue with Charles Taylor’**

by

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DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been received in substance for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes and footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my patient and faithful wife, Ute Carkner, who endured the whole process and supported me through it all, and to our two daughters Kierianne and Hannah who are both treasures and signs of grace.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This project is an analysis and critique of Foucault's concept of moral self-constitution, employing Charles Taylor as a key to the critique and three theologians to flesh out a Christian conception of transcendent goodness. Thus, there are three moves made in the thesis. It is an interdisciplinary discussion, engaging moral philosophy with trinitarian theology. It is not a full philosophical anthropology, or a Christian ethics, nor is it a theological treatise on the Trinity. It does not offer a full account of Foucault's intellectual setting, nor does it give a full account of his influence on modern thought. Its restricted purpose is the critical examination of certain aspects of Foucault's ethics.

Foucault was born in 1926 in Poitiers, France, and died in 1984. He was educated in France's elite schools such as École Normale Supérieure, and completed his doctorate in 1961, which was published as his first book. After teaching in a number of different institutions in various countries, in 1970 he rose to the prestigious position as Professor of History of Systems of Thought at Collège de France in Paris, an institution committed to academic innovation. He was celebrated as *the great mind* of Paris during the mid to late twentieth century, taking over this position from Jean Paul Sartre. His work has wide influence, on the disciplines of philosophy, history, sociology, psychiatry, economics, medicine, law, linguistics, architecture, African post-colonial studies and literary theory to name only a few. Since his death, he has emerged as a modern cultural icon (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 1). As a major proponent of post-structuralism, he is one of the most quoted intellectuals in the twentieth century.

The thesis writer's interest in Foucault began as part of a quest to understand better the *crisis of self* in late modernity, which was impacting the university students with which he was working at the time. Although Foucault is known for his strong critique of Western humanisms, he was one of the first, among his French post-structuralist colleagues, to return to the idea of subjectivity; the *author* or subject has been eliminated from this

discourse for some twenty-five years. Foucault also offers his ethical work as a response to the crisis in moral philosophy, and with it the crisis of self, in the late twentieth century. This crisis is articulated by A. MacIntyre (Hauerwas & MacIntyre, 1983, pp. 1-15) as a loss of common moral parameters. Moral philosophy has fragmented due to the 'absence of an integrating view of the nature of reality and a corresponding view of the nature of moral obligation which was supplied by a belief in a *summum bonum* that shaped the theistic world of European morality' (Schwöbel, 1992, p. 64). In this post-Christian and post-theist context, where there was no moral consensus, Foucault offered his ethics as aesthetics for the individual, not as a structure for society.

The thesis writer has chosen to focus on the writings and interviews of the late Foucault, his *ethical* period, which occurs roughly in the late 1970s and early 1980s with its emphasis on the self as acting subject in the context of the various forces of *governmentality*. It is in this corpus that he deals with the constitution of the moral self, rooting his study in antiquity; he tries to recover a language of subjectivity and agency. The writer deems it significant and very fruitful to the critical reception of the late Foucault and his ethics to bring his views into dialogue and under scrutiny with an eminent Canadian philosopher of the self, Charles Taylor. Taylor adds much to the discussion; he has a different stance on the nature of morality although there is sufficient overlap between Taylor and Foucault for the purpose of dialogue and constructive critique. Charles Taylor is one of the most influential and prolific writers in the English-speaking world. He has gained the reputation as one of the premier philosophers of modernity, with a strong interest in philosophical anthropology and ethics, as well as aesthetics and poetics. Taylor is very familiar with the philosophical location and direction of Foucault because he is someone who is studied in both Continental and Anglo-American philosophy and therefore able to take some critical distance from both schools of thought. He understands the tradition out of which Foucault emerges, has interviewed him personally, is well read in Foucault's outlook on the moral self, and appreciates much in his work. This three way

dialogue is deemed fruitful because there are insights to be gained by comparing and contrasting a minimalist moral ontology (Foucault) with a more complex one (Taylor), a *constructivist* with a moderate *moral realist* and a dialogue between this conversation (Foucault with Taylor) and trinitarian goodness (Long, Schwöbel and McFadyen) .

As a basic overview, Chapters Two to Four, Part 1 offer an exposition of Foucault's idea of moral self-constitution, examining various aspects of that complex idea. The chapters each focus on an important strand in this interwoven concept of ethics as aesthetics. Chapter Two opens the investigation with a look at what Foucault means by freedom as an ontology and a practice, introducing his three axes of analysis: power, truth and the subject. Chapter Three examines the concept of technologies of the self (Greek, Roman, early Christian and contemporary) which are involved in self-formation and transformation. Chapter Four, Part 1 looks at the whole impact of the aesthetic in Foucault's interpretation of the self and self-creation, particularly focusing on the important issues of style and the care of self. Taylor enters the discussion in Part 2 of Chapter Four with a diagnostics applied to Foucault's aesthetic self-constitution. Chapter Five takes Taylor's critique of Foucault a step further by suggesting that he is missing the dimension of the good in his threefold interpretation of the self. He also examines the kind of definition of freedom that Foucault offers and suggests that it needs to be contextualized within the horizon of the good. In Chapter Six, the argument follows a suggestion by Taylor that a *transcendent turn* in philosophy would also help put in perspective some of the problems in Foucault's ethics and develop some of Taylor's concepts further; it employs three theologians to flesh out what this *turn* might look like from a perspective of trinitarian goodness. Therefore, three different moves are made in the thesis implicating three different paradigms of the self. This will be elaborated further in the methodology below.

Methodology

The thesis writer has gained a good familiarity with Foucault, by reading an overview of his writing on archaeology of knowledge, genealogy of power and genealogy of the subject (his ethical period). It is strategic to invest the research of this thesis in the third sector of his *oeuvre*, which is rooted in the ancient Greco-Roman pagan and early Christian world, and focuses on the constitution of the self, its relationship to truth games and power relations. This area of his research has had less attention and commentary by scholars than the earlier works and no one else has brought together the deeper dialogue with Charles Taylor in this way and to this depth, or the specific trinitarian theological reflection in this dialogue. It has required the thesis writer to become very familiar with the ethical stance of both philosophers and the theology of goodness, in order to produce a serious and substantial engagement between these three ways of mapping the moral self. The dissertation draws on a close reading of Foucault's second and third volumes of *History of Sexuality* (1984a; 1984b) as well as courses he gave at Collège de France, interviews with other scholars, seminars he gave in America and on the continent of Europe. It covers his thought roughly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the last five or six years of his life. Much of this material is included in Volume IV of *Dits et Écrits* (Defert, Ewald & Lagrange, 1994) which has been translated by R. Hurley et al and edited by P. Rabinow in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, subjectivity and truth, Volume I*. (Rabinow, 1997). Foucault died in 1984 the year that his last two volumes were published. In the spirit of Bernauer (1991), Rajchman (1985; 1986), O'Leary (2002), Lamb (1995), and Han (2002), the writer has attempted a serious and generous examination of Foucault's views on the re-emergence of the self and a subjectivity which is not a mere victim of power. It is an affirmative and critical reading of Foucault. The study situates Foucault's ethics in the context of his earlier investigations of the way institutions and practices of power/knowledge construct and impose forms of individuality on the self (Foucault, 1976; 1977b).

It is impossible to address all the legitimate concerns that could be raised about Foucault's late work. The writer (not a classics scholar) chose not to critique Foucault's reading of ancient history or his use of the ancients' ethics, but instead to examine the picture of the moral self which he proposes for late modernity. It is taken at face value and then critiqued from there, except for some important nuances revealed by his colleague Pierre Hadot (1992; 1995). The focus of the dissertation is on individual personal ethics and not politics as such. The writer has also avoided the worthy discussion from feminist critiques of *gender-blindness* in Foucault such as L. McNay (1992). This is also the case for a deep analysis of the implications of Foucault's work for queer theory or gay-lesbian culture. This has been done by other scholars such as D. Halperin (1995) and L. McWhorter (1999). Thus, this is not a complete critical appraisal of his ethics. Rather, it focuses on the significance of freedom, the play of aesthetics in interpreting or discerning the self, and the language of the technologies of self in forming oneself. In particular, it attempts to give a coherent interpretation of Foucault's appeal to the *aesthetic* in his ethics. The writer has also valued biographers such as D. Macey (1993) and J. Miller (1993) who are helpful in understanding the social and historical context of Foucault. In analyzing Foucault's understanding of the moral self, the thesis writer draws on his interlocutors in the secondary literature for their contributions to the debate.

As to the architecture of this work, three ways are undertaken in addressing the fundamental issue of the constitution of the moral self. This entails an exploration in three ways of mapping or interpreting the constitution of the moral self. At one level, it is a vital three-way conversation, with a common desire to recover moral subjectivity and agency in late modernity. The conversation represents three plausibility structures or paradigms of the moral self. There are three different ways of interpreting key elements of the moral self: freedom, the place of aesthetics, the role of the good, transcendence, and divine goodness. Foucault emphasizes the language of the aesthetic, while Taylor chooses the language of relationship to the good, and the theologians articulate the self within the

language of transcendent trinitarian goodness. Each of these mappings has impact on the way one sees the constitution of the moral self, and each offers a different infrastructure for the self and its agency. Finally, each way embodies a different *hypergood*, the dominant or shaping good. Foucault embraces *aesthetic-freedom*; Taylor attends to the strongest good within a moral horizon; the theologians promote divine *goodness-freedom* as the most significant concern for the self.

Each way of mapping the moral self has its power or strengths, and also its limitations or weaknesses; no way is perfect. There are also other moves that could have been made but were not for reasons of focus and coherence in the discussion. Each way of reading the self both includes and/or excludes certain possible dimensions of the moral self; this is an important insight. Each way also imports new metaphors into ethical discourse. We learn something important from each, and in the end, each adds something vital to the conversation and debate, something that can be absent, underemphasized or obscured in the other paradigms. The third way has the advantage of benefiting from the dialogue between Taylor and Foucault and in fact depends on it; it extends that debate into the theological realm with some good results; it also begins to resolve some issues that emerge in that dialogue with Taylor such as the *crisis of affirmation*. The three forms of interface with the self are as follows.

1. Interface with the Aesthetic: The first way of mapping the constitution of the moral self (Chapters Two to Four, Part 1) operates within Foucault's emphasis on the ontology of freedom; it emphasizes choice, self-control and one's responsibility for one's own self-constitution, or the shaping of one's identity. It reveals important dimensions of moral agency in some innovative ways that respond to the loss of moral agency in his previous work on genealogy of power. His focused emphasis is on the ethics of the individual self, not the ethics of a group. The thesis begins with an exposition of the full power of Foucault's moral self as an *aesthetic* self-shaping experience. In this exposition, the thesis writer reveals both the attractive and controversial aspects of this approach. The emphasis

on the place of the aesthetic, where one's trajectory is to become a beautiful work of art, is provocative food for thought and reflection, raising some good questions about how one's controls and involvement with the shaping of one's moral identity. He heralds the virtues of the artistic life of the aesthete who creates his or her own unique style. He also shows the power of the aesthetic in engaging in the politics of the self amidst the various power relations and truth games operative within a free society. It offers an excellent opening of this three-way conversation, setting out some categories for the discussion. Foucault's work has had a big impact on moral self-consciousness in the West, and it gets to the heart of some important issues; it especially offers an alternative to the *scientifically-oriented* paradigms for the anthropology and ethics. Jacques Derrida is a later example of such attempts to make an *ethical turn* in his philosophy, but Foucault was the pioneer for the ethical task among post-structuralists.

The first half of the thesis is involved in showing how Foucault writes this aesthetic story of the self, *an aesthetic that goes all the way down*, that interprets the moral self to a deep level. The aesthetic rethinks everything about the self, especially its ethical way of being in the world. The thesis shows how this subject position gets articulated through his definition of freedom, the choice of various options in the technologies of the self, and a stylization or shaping of self which is dominated by the theme of *care of self*. Freedom is articulated as *aesthetic-freedom*: freedom to accomplish a new and continuous work on the self. It is a freedom to use an eclectic variety of resources from the cultural archives of technologies of self (Chapter Three). It is the freedom as praxis of giving unique and original style to one's life (Chapter Four, Part 1). This praxis is also a powerful political tool to release oneself from oppressive or stereotypic identities. It is also finally a freedom to explore the potential of the erotic, of *bodies and pleasures*. It is overall a freedom to interpret oneself, to choose the definition of self, and to chart one's own moral path, over against those templates offered by religion, society, law and science.

The most significant limitation of this interface between the self and the aesthetic is that it focuses on the individual to the exclusion of the corporate dimensions of ethics. This moves the self towards a radical form of autonomy, and constitutes a weak sense of accountability to the Other and justice. The power of the aesthetic in freeing the self from oppression of power-knowledge domination inadvertently constitutes an important limitation, a *hegemony of the aesthetic* in Foucault's moral self. This limitation is revealed through dialogue with Taylor and also that with the three theologians. There are also the limitations of philosophical naturalism built into this way of mapping the self; it lacks a horizon of meaning outside of the parameters of the self. Foucault shuts out the possibility of certain vital moral sources and motivations—especially transcendent ones. Finally, it lacks a critical perspective when it comes to action, as long as action is free and artistic; all pleasure, for instance, seems possible and desirable. In his analysis of Christian technology of self, he doesn't give Christian spirituality and moral self-constitution a fair hearing, thus preventing its fruitful contribution to his thought. In combining the ethical with the aesthetic, he weakens the potential of the ethical, by setting up an animosity towards the social-moral and the normative. Social articulations of ethics are set up as the enemy of individual ethical freedom, creating normative confusion.

2. Interface with the Good and Community: The second way of mapping the moral self affirms aspects of Foucault's thought, but also involves some contrasts, especially in Taylor's articulation of the good as a key focus for self-constitution (Chapter Four, Part 2 and Chapter Five). He recovers the ancient language of the quality of the moral will (qualitative discriminations), moral frameworks, hypergood and sources of the self. It's content resonates with great influence on many Westerners. The relationship of the self to the good (which has integrity apart from the self and its choices) is a vital one for Taylor, one which includes a strong subjective as well as objective pole. Taylor sees the relationship between the self and the good within an overall *horizon* or framework of the good, which is defined by its *hypergood*. Taylor identifies this *hypergood* as *aesthetic-*

freedom in Foucault. The contrast rests in the importance of free individual choice as a key factor in healthy ethics by Foucault, over against the power of the good in shaping the self by Taylor.

Taylor's language of the good adds something significant and new to the discussion and debate of the moral self which is absent, or at least deeply buried, in Foucault. Foucault tends to buy into one good (*aesthetic-freedom*) which eliminates all the rest. It shows Foucault's work in both an affirmative and critical light. Taylor also promotes strongly the communal and narrative dimensions of this relationship to the good, elements which are distinctive by their absence in Foucault's paradigm of *aesthetic-freedom*. It has the effect of opening up the discussion to a broader horizon of investigation, whether one agrees with it or not. Although not as well known as Foucault, Taylor is one of the Western world's greatest philosophical minds of the twentieth century; he displays broad knowledge of the history of the Western philosophy of self (anthropological and ethical). Foucault and Taylor add insight to each other's mapping of the self, through this contrast and mutual challenge. Other useful dialogue partners could have been chosen: A. MacIntyre (1984; 1990), P. Ricoeur (1992), or E. Lévinas (1987). Taylor is unique in his understanding of both Continental and Anglo-American philosophy and particularly helpful is raising once again the ancient and robust question of the *quality of the will*. He combines many of the best insights of these other philosophers in this discussion. Dialogue and difference of view are welcomed by Foucault's generously open position on self-articulation; Taylor takes Foucault seriously, and at the same time, uses his approach to challenge the aesthetic limits which may prevent Foucault's paradigm from reaching its full potential and maturity.

When applied in dialogue with Foucault, Taylor's way of mapping the self contributes a contrast to Foucault's main emphasis on the primacy of *aesthetic-freedom*. It reads the element of freedom in ethics, not as a dominant category, but as a sub-category of the ontology of the good; freedom in Taylor's paradigm or way of reading the moral self

is qualified by the good; the free will is harnessed and shaped, or mentored, by the good. One does not have to be religious or believe in God for the application of the good to ethics (I. Murdoch, 1997). Taylor's approach is very sophisticated, and offers a bold attempt to promote the idea that every self (regardless of ultimate beliefs) has a profound and potentially fruitful relationship with the good, and that this good can empower and energize the self. It cannot be absorbed into, or explained away, by Foucault's analysis. It also reveals Foucault's most vulnerable side and its limitations (unqualified will, uncritical action). It offers a vantage point from which to critically examine the concept of the moral self as a work of art or the pursuit of pleasure as an end in itself without restrictions.

The limits in this second way of mapping are as follows. Although its strength is the retrieval of the language of the good, it is lacking criteria for arbitration on various convictions and commitments to the good, even while he says that some goods are higher or more valued than others. He does not show why we should believe this and not all philosophers accept such a hierarchy. His other weakness is that he is possibly too generous to various views in the spectrum of goods. In dialogue, Foucault points out that Taylor's position underemphasizes the potential abuses and oppressive uses of the good, even while he is strong on the danger of overemphasizing one good at the expense of all the rest. Some philosophers do not buy the idea of a hypergood ideal that is separate from a belief in God (Q. Skinner, in J. Tully (Ed.), 1994, pp. 37-48); I. Murdoch (1997) is one who does. His idea of the good does make more sense within a theistic perspective as shown in the third interface, even though he does not require it and attempts an articulation of the good for a pluralistic philosophical audience. Taylor argues that God is only one source of the good, but should not be eliminated as a possible source. Taylor's vulnerability lies in the fact that his infrastructure of the moral self collapses if one does not accept the language and grammar of the good, an ethics of the noble life.

3. Interface between Self, the Good and Transcendent Trinitarian Goodness: The third way of proceeding with respect to the moral self in this thesis involves a Christian theological

reflection on trinitarian goodness, a paradigm of *strong transcendence* with contributions from C. Taylor (1979; 1984; 1985a; 1989; 1991; 1994; 1999), C. Schwöbel (1992; 1995), D. S. Long (2001) and A. McFadyen (1995). It benefits from the dialogue and the issues raised for consideration by both Foucault and Taylor, although it cannot claim to answer fully all their vital concerns in such a short space. It is therefore not the final word but a contribution to the discussion at hand. Although it does not address the issue of the aesthetic directly, it focuses on the self's relationship with the good and the concept of freedom, and their larger context, as a link to the conversation between Taylor and Foucault. There are certain advantages over either of these other two ways of mapping the self, which largely operate within the restrictions of a naturalistic philosophical interpretative schema. Furthermore, it invests new metaphors in the dialogue, with language like *agape*, *grace*, *radical alterity*, *strong transcendence*, *communion of love*, and *theonomous goodness-freedom*.

Responding to Foucault, this paradigm picks up on his priority of freedom and rethinks it in context of divine goodness and trinitarian freedom. Instead of *aesthetic-freedom* operating as the ultimate category of morality as in Foucault's way, *divine goodness-freedom* takes that priority of place in moral reflection and accountability. This theological paradigm stands in tension with Foucault's resistance to *strong* forms of moral transcendence, and offers a reflective moral horizon larger than the self's relationship with itself, and larger than the human claims and commitments to the good. It challenges Foucault's stance of an aesthetic self-justifying stylization of self with an accountability to the human and divine Other (open to their critique). It also raises questions for Foucault regarding his perceived need to kill the *moral* in order to preserve *ethical freedom*. Concerning Taylor, it extends his category of *hypergood* to include *agape* love, which is ultimately rooted in trinitarian communion of love. It also responds to the Western crisis of affirmation identified by Taylor and it releases the self from the dilemma of either moral

lobotomy or self-hatred. This is a significant contribution to one's identity, and sense of self and the world.

It is, on the whole, more of an extension of Taylor's work than Foucault's, in that with Taylor, there is a resistance to reductionism or over-simplification in ethics, and a search for these broader and more self-transcendent dimensions of the self. With Taylor, it longs to reconcile freedom to the good, and to bring it into dialogue with transcendent trinitarian goodness and freedom. With Taylor, it is compatible with a communal understanding of the self and ethics, seeing a fruitful, inspiring and energizing relationship between the mutuality among the Persons of the Trinity and the human possibilities for moral sociality. It also offers some helpful insights into and perspective on the tension between individuality and the communal self, with the possibility of complementarity. It offers philosophical assistance to Taylor's secular concept of the good (especially the hierarchy of goods), as an arbiter of human convictions about the good, and a posture for discerning the value of one particular good relative to others.

This way of mapping the self also heightens awareness of a special dimension of, and dynamic within the moral self—the fecundity of a relationship to divine personal goodness. Many secular moral philosophers will resist this proposal but it nevertheless deserves serious consideration as a third way in this exploration. The thesis writer does not argue for the existence of a trinitarian God at this point; there are top world philosophers who argue well for the credibility and coherence of theism: A. Plantinga *God and Other Minds* (1990), and R. Swinburne, *Coherence of Theism* (1993). Christianity is the only trinitarian faith of the three major world theisms, which include Judaism and Islam.¹

There are good reasons for choosing a Christian trinitarian approach in this move, although no final proof is given in this section of the thesis. Firstly, Foucault himself has initiated the discussion of early Christian constructions of the moral self as part of his

¹ Jews and Muslims accept divine impact on moral self-consciousness and identity, with nuances of difference in its impact. The thesis writer feels that it is a much bigger intellectual stretch to relate Foucault's work to either Judaism or Islam, although remaining open to the possibility that someone else may show that this is a fruitful dialogue in future academic work.

exploration of ethics. He has a background in French Catholicism, which has influenced his search for recovering the moral self, despite the fact that he has abandoned such religion personally and philosophically. It at least influences him as something he is trying to get free from. Secondly, Taylor has pointed in this direction of a *transcendent turn* towards *agape* love as a boon for ethical philosophy (1989; 1999). Thirdly, within trinitarian theological understandings of the self, fresh thought is initiated as it engages the issues raised, and categories of thought introduced, by Taylor and Foucault. Finally, the thesis writer is a Christian desiring to show his theological and philosophical voice in this third paradigm.

This way of mapping the self is uniquely positioned to make increased sense of, and to fortify the move that Taylor makes regarding the place of the good in moral self-constitution, and the important qualification and contextualization of freedom. Foucault also has a concept of the good (aesthetic-freedom) and a strong quest for personal transformation in his ethics; this finds some resonance with the theology of *agape* and goodness. It can also help resolve some of the normative confusion in Foucault.

The limitations of this third paradigm are the following. As one shorter chapter, it is quite limited by the space to develop the perspective, which could actually use a whole thesis or book. It does not address directly the aesthetic in Foucault's analysis, so it is dependent on Taylor's critique of Foucault on this point. It only addresses the possibilities of the language of good or goodness, freedom and the relationality of the moral self. It is also interdependent with Taylor on the language of the good and goodness.

Three lesser-known theologians are chosen as interlocutors for Taylor and Foucault, and so there is contrast in the weight of their views. Trinitarian theology as a discipline itself has room to grow in grappling with these issues, so there are some limits to its metaphors. Despite the fact that they are not necessarily the big names in theology, Schwöbel, Long and McFadyen are of the generation that grew up under the philosophical and cultural influence of late modernity and are engaged in working on responses within

this environment. Thus, they are more relevant to the discussion at hand than the great trinitarian theologians such as Pannenberg or Barth. They also have profound things to say on the topic of the self, the good, freedom and divine goodness. The thesis writer holds that they have a very articulate grasp of the debate and its history, and help to shape the discussion in fruitful ways.

The idea of epiphanies of transcendence resonates with Foucault up to a point, but he wouldn't be happy about bringing God into this discussion, that is, he would reject any notion of *strong* transcendence. He has however opened up the discussion of the Christian self and this tension with Foucault on this point can produce fruitful dialogue. Some philosophers with a more naturalistic perspective will resist the move towards trinitarian theological dimensions of this approach. There is also the complex philosophical challenge of making the epistemic connection between divine and human goodness, which would require a more extensive argument to offer warrant. So the perspective is limited to a positive thought experiment to be reflected upon for its own merit. It is not the final or normative position, but a position for active dialogue with Taylor and Foucault.

Chapter Two: The Place of Freedom in Michel Foucault's Concept of Moral Self-constitution

Introduction

In his late work, Foucault gives freedom a fundamental role and a central place in the constitution of the moral self. Freedom acts as both the condition of possibility (ontological condition of space for freedom), and its ethical *telos* or teleological aim (the expansion of freedom's horizon). Space for freedom is a necessary condition of the possibility of ethics. Foucault's major ethical concern is to expand the horizons of one's individual freedom. Freedom is not assumed as a *given*, but cultivated at the same time that one cultivates the self, one's subjectivity; it is a requisite for subjectivity. His ethical project is a strong *valorization* of autonomy; there is a preoccupation with the Enlightenment values of freedom and autonomy. This is a surprising, dramatic turn in Foucault; the great *unmasker* of the Enlightenment ideals of reason, humanity and autonomy. He has made a turn to Foucault the *champion of freedom* as the condition of the possibility of ethical practice.

This chapter explores Michel Foucault's assumptions about, and understanding of, freedom as a practice and as a factor in the constitution of the moral self. As a complex concept interwoven with a nominalist anthropology and a scepticism about moral universals, the *practice of freedom* involves a *transgressive* attitude towards moral limits. This practice of freedom also has a strong proactive force, engaging the dynamics of power relations and the understanding of the relationship between truth and subjectivity. His analysis of freedom for ethics speaks into the contemporary *crisis in subjectivation*.

According to a famous essay by Isaiah Berlin (1969, pp.118-172.), there are both *positive* and *negative* theories of freedom. Both dimensions are revealed in Foucault, but they are not necessarily of equal strength. This chapter begins with three negative elements, that is, what the subject aspires to be *free from*, issuing into a discussion of the following: A. Nominalist philosophical anthropology, B. Scepticism concerning moral

universals or norms, and C. Freedom as transgression of limits. Given these three working attitudes or assumptions, there is an emergence into three positive or proactive aspects of freedom, that is, what this philosopher hopes to promote as a freedom towards life-enhancement through self-crafting: D. Freedom as a practice of self care, E. Freedom, subjectivity and power, and F. Freedom, the subject and truth. All aspects are captured in Foucault's (1984e, p. 4) key statement, 'Freedom is the ontological condition of our ethics; but ethics is the deliberate form assumed by freedom.' Freedom is taken both as the foundation or condition and the trajectory or aim of ethics. John Rajchman (1985) comments on the priority of freedom for Foucault:

Freedom was the concept Sartre placed at the centre of his philosophy; it was his cardinal principle in the ethic of the intellectual. Foucault's philosophy ... by historicizing the problem of knowledge and of the subject, introduced a new concept of freedom, and thus transforms the role of the philosophical-intellectual ... It is the question of this freedom that is crucial in Foucault's philosophy. This is what is at issue in the storm of accusations of irrationalism, anarchism and nihilism, which his philosophy has occasioned (pp. 102-3).

As Rajchman (1985, p. 103) suggests, freedom is the spine or beam that runs through the whole project of ethical self-constitution; it is both a quest and a requirement for ethics. Everything else hangs from it and is structured around it. The discussion now turns to the details of Foucault's postulation of freedom.

A. Nominalist Philosophical Anthropology

Foundational to his position on freedom, Foucault follows a persistent anthropological nominalism—a particular kind of nominalism. He rejects the idea of pre-given self or subject identity with its attendant assumptions. Foucault (1984i, p. 334) spoke of his project of studying forms of ethical experience as entailing two negative tasks, 'first a "nominalist" reduction of philosophical anthropology and the notions which it serves to support, and second, a shift of domain to the concepts and methods of the history of societies.' Part of the art of freedom is a refusal of the self as a *given*, a refusal to accept one's identity from society, any professional, government or religion. The experience of freedom is not an experience of an identity or a natural pre-given state. Rather freedom

consists in one's historically conditioned singularity or uniqueness. It acts as an anti-universalizing, anti-normalizing move, an interrogation of universal interpretations of subjectivity; it is a refusal of any *essentialist* definitions of *human nature* or *man*, that is, a rejection of common anthropological assumptions. These pre-given identities or templates are read as a trap or prison and there is a high price, thinks Foucault, for accepting or being tied to a certain type of identity. Since on this assumption, there is no pre-given self or subject identity, the job is to create oneself, to shape and re-shape one's own unique subjectivity—leading to many new innovative possible subjectivities or forms of subjecthood. It will be demonstrated that the defining and shaping ethical principle for Foucault is *freedom*; his ethics is rooted in *freedom*; it entails a methodology of suspicion towards all universal anthropologies. The project of *The History of Sexuality, Volumes 2 and 3*, (1984a; 1984b) is oriented to introduce the practical question of freedom into the heart of modern moral experience, with a view to placing it at the forefront of ethics (Foucault, 1984e).

Nominalism, in the ethics of Foucault, begins with a direct questioning of essentialist characteristics of being human. It is a *refusal* of received anthropological truth, and in the pluralism of forms of self (Greek, Roman and Christian) in his study, he tries to demonstrate this. Foucault's (1983a, p. 351) art of freedom means that, 'From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.'

His historical study of the ancient world questions an essentialist definition of *human being*. 'The first rule of method in this type of work is therefore this: to dispense with universals as much as possible in order to interrogate their historical constitution', writes commentator B. Han (2002, p. 162). Universals are not absolutes for Foucault; they are constructs. This nominalist stance offers Foucault the power to deconstruct current definitions of human nature that are often taken for granted in Western thought. This is his process of *negative theology of man* (J. Bernauer, 2004, p. 88). Essentialism, the doctrine

that things have an essence or ideal nature that is independent or prior to their existence, he feels, can lead to exclusions, normalization and therefore oppression. Nominalism, on the opposite end of the spectrum, welcomes different forms of subjectivity and promotes individual freedom concerning identity.

Men have never ceased to construct themselves, i.e. to continually displace their subjectivity, to constitute themselves in a multiple and infinite series of different subjectivities, which will have no end, and will never place us in front of something which would be man. (Han, 2002, p.163).

Thus, there is a two-sided dynamic of both a deconstruction (refusal) and creation of self that work together.

It is quite striking that the nominalist assumptions lay the groundwork for a fluid and dynamic personal form of ethics. The constitution of the self is presented as a reflective experience through which the subject seeks to stabilize an autointerpretative activity. This is captured in one of his key statements in *Use of Pleasure* (Foucault, 1984a).

As for what motivated me, it is quite simple ... It was curiosity—the only kind of curiosity ... that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. (p. 8)

Herein lies freedom: subjectivity moves under one's individual control and away from the pre-given identity of a power/knowledge regime or disciplinary practices, controlling a passive subject, away from *subjugation*. This idea of *getting free of oneself* is a recurrent theme in his ethics. Foucault rejects the idea of *finding* oneself within any given ontological or moral order, or some grand transcendental *ought*. The basis of freedom is not to be found in anything which a cosmology (nature), theology (divine description), psychology (Freudian psychoanalysis) or legality (state-determined definition of normalcy or deviancy), says that one is. He rejects the theory of a self as *substance*, which presupposes a static nature, and welcomes instead a theory of *form*, a set of characteristics that are more indeterminate, flexible, oriented to change, and open to artistic creativity. '[The subject] is not a substance; it is a form and this form is not above all identical with itself' (Foucault, 1984e, p. 10). Freedom is foundational.

Andrew Lamb (1995) offers some insight into the limits of the nominalist Foucauldian self, and explains how it relates to freedom.

Foucault opposes the view that there is an absolute, unchanging essence of human nature that must be released from restrictions in order to be free. He argues against the reality of a constant, irreducible human soul. Foucault maintains that the soul (or subjective essence), rather than being an absolute given, is actually formed by the experience of various kinds of "limits". Experiences of those limits that we might refer to as "concrete barriers"—principally the boundaries fixed by our finitude—would seem to be foundational in the development of the self. These limits are definitive of a human life from its inception, and human experience is *bound* by them. (p.452)

Foucault's nominalism respects some basic limits, but resists, or calls into question, certain *absolute* moral limits that are socially constructed. It is not always clear which limits are malleable in his writing. The individual comes to adapt to these limits and ultimately takes them on as definitive of the self. For Foucault, it is at the boundary of these limits that one can begin to work on one's self. These limits are referred to in more detail in the following section C. on transgression. 'So, while on the one hand Foucault holds to the non-essentiality, or the "basic unlimitedness" *underlying* ... certain human ways of being, on the other hand he emphasizes the roles of limits in human experience' (Lamb, 1995, p. 452). This concept of malleable limits is very important. In effect, Foucault is calling into question many of the fundamental anthropological assumptions or *givens* which set limits, in modern Western thought, which tend to lay down the definition of self. In seeking to rethink freedom, he wanted to *break free* from these assumptions calling them contingent, local and singular, not definitive.

Thus he is announcing the *post-identity* status of the self (identity meaning here unchangeable, received identity); one does not find freedom and identity according to a pre-given nature or essence, but in recognizing these cultural limits on the self and learning how to move beyond them. In conclusion, moral self-construction involves transgressing the limits on the self, a resistance to limits. There can be no moral system based on a universal philosophical anthropology that produces firm foundations concerning the nature

of *man*², and thereby a basis for human action. It is a deep hermeneutic of suspicion. What fascinates Foucault in Classical Greek thought is that there the practices of self-care, self-formation and auto-poesis appear not to be thought in terms of a pre-given self, or subject, which must be either deciphered or validated.

Secondly, as T. O’Leary (2002) notes, Foucault’s nominalism involves a refusal of the *philosophy of the subject*, that is, any philosophy of humanity which gives the individual subject a fundamental role in the construction of meaning. This elaborates on Foucault’s rejection of definitions of the subject as *substance* in favour of a view of the subject as *forms* in the plural, forms that are contingent and malleable. ‘Subjectivity is a discursive formation’ (K. Atkins, 2005, p. 207). Foucault comments in an interview (1984e’, p. 290): ‘I had to reject *a priori* theories of the subject in order to analyse the relationships that may exist between the constitution of the subject and games of truth, practices of power and so on.’ The self does not exist by itself, apart from the various forms it takes in politics, sex, or economics; the *form* of the self is constituted through various practices. ‘This involves the rejection of a modern philosophical tradition—from Descartes and Kant to Husserl and Sartre—a tradition for which the individual subject is a constant, ahistorical ground and source of human knowledge, meaning and values’ (O’Leary 2002, p. 108). It is unlike existentialism or phenomenology, the movements which immediately precede Foucault. The *foundational* self of *substance* is replaced by a more *historical* and contingent self of *form*. Foucault is hostile to the philosophical theory that behind or beyond historical phenomena, there lies a transcendent substratum. Foucault (1984c, p. 50) writes: ‘I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign or founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere.’ The subject in Foucault’s definition is not a transcendental condition of the possibility of experience—neither a necessary

² Foucault is often not sensitive to inclusive language in his writing. This is obvious in a number of his quotes to follow. *Man* refers to a modern Western humanist anthropology, especially in the social sciences.

condition or a *given* (a *cogito ergo sum*). It is rather an achievement, a construction, which emerges at the intersection between power, truth and self. O’Leary (2002) notes:

When the subject is treated as a phenomenon with a history in which complex interplay between relations of truth, power and self is evident, then the subject loses its fundamental status. As soon as the subject becomes a natural, as opposed to a metaphysical or a transcendental, phenomenon, it is not only given a history but crucially for ethics and politics—it is given a future ... And if today, it is the case that the self is no longer given to us—that identity, whether cultural, political or sensual, is a hard-won effect rather than a pre-given reality—then the playful creation and recreation of the self is no longer an impossibility or a luxury ... It is an ethical imperative ... The self, understood as the more or less homogenous coming together of our modes of subjectivity, has become the material, the substance of our ethical reflection and practice. (pp. 108, 120)

What Foucault espouses is the general principle that *behind* the moral behaviour of the individual, there is no substantial self, no centre that grounds and makes possible moral behaviour. In regards to Foucault’s subject, the human animal is a potentially chaotic complex of forces, powers and capacities waiting to be shaped within the context of its historical moment.

So the first significant point about freedom is that it is heavily informed by an anthropological nominalism; it is freedom from anthropological proscription or *givenness*—assumed throughout his project of self. Freedom is not an essential feature of a transcendently grounded human nature; rather, it must be achieved as the self negotiates and manipulates the dynamics of power relations (section E) and truth games (section F). Freedom is not a universal historical constant; it is a historically conditioned possibility, which arises only in the context of given power relations. It takes effort and courage to give form to one’s freedom and thereby form to oneself. The next point is that freedom is characterized by a general attitude, an *ethos* or outlook, not a normatively grounded code of behaviour. The moral self in Foucault is *post-normative*.

B. Scepticism about the Normative

A second key working assumption, within a set of conditions for self-constitution in Foucault’s definition of freedom, is the scepticism towards universally binding norms. There is a logical flow from the previous discussion on anthropological nominalism. Foucault (1984e, p. 4) is strategic in his focus on human practices, rather than ideology or

code: 'What is morality if not the practice of liberty, the deliberate practice of liberty?' If ethics is rethought as particular practices, which evolve and change through various stages in history, then no present historical determination of one's moral being or obligations can be absolute or binding. Therefore, one is free, unbound from the necessity of current social convention and definitions of moral law; current social norms are taken as merely the ones that are culturally dominant. The aspect of Greek ethical practice that Foucault found most interesting and therefore to be the most suitable for a contemporary reappropriation was the idea of a non-normalizing ethics based upon personal choice rather than social or legal imperatives. He experiments with an ethics based on a relationship to self (positive) rather than a relationship of obedience to code (restrictive and subservient).

He fully recognizes the existence of such norms and codes of behaviour as part of ethical discourse, and he sees their impact on people's moral constitution throughout history. He, however, generally rejects the binding hold of established social conventions and beliefs, especially those of morality, religion and law; there is here a rethinking of the value and status of prior moral structures, a re-evaluation of currently accepted values. In his position, there exists no *true* universal moral code or set of norms, only a genealogical record of a variety of ethical structures and biases used to control people, and a variety of ways in which people relate to such codes. Since the relationship to self is so central, it makes one's relationship to code more a question of *choice* rather than obligation; one could choose to shape one's self apart from or against the social code of the moment. He notes for instance the influence of early Greek ethics on Christian morality, indicating that there is no pure ethics in any culture. He wants to emphasize that Christianity did not invent ethics, but only represents one form of ethics and one form of relationship with self. Norms are mere social constructions, the material for *problematization* (reflective critique) of the directives that are impacting the self. Foucault (1984a, p. 63) writes:

The evolution that occurred—quite slowly at that—between paganism and Christianity did not consist in a gradual interiorization of rules, acts, and transgressions; rather, it carried out a restructuration of the forms of self-relationship and a transformation of the practices and techniques on which this relationship was based.

As a non-essentialist regarding human nature, he draws a further implication: it is quite appropriate to deconstruct or marginalize (demote) moral norms as binding authority over the self. This is true for both Christian and Kantian (religious or secular) universals. Norms are reduced to material available for one's self-constitution, if one chooses to assimilate them. One could also discard them or surpass them. He claims that the Enlightenment ideal of universal ethical norms and a transcendental rational subject (attributed especially to Immanuel Kant) are a form of *philosophical blackmail* (Foucault 1984f, p. 42), by which he means being trapped by the agenda of the Enlightenment whether one is for or against it. He elevates the historical relativism, the difference or change in these norms through four major periods—Greek, Roman, Christian and modern—as argument for his position of non-obligation. He subordinates them by moving them to the background of the practices of the self, creating new space for freedom. These practices and technologies of self will be further elaborated in Chapter Three. Moral law gives way to freedom of self-expression as a central priority in Foucault's ethics; it is the enemy of freedom.

How does his argument develop? Firstly, he makes a distinction between three aspects of morality for analysis: *moral code* and the *morality of behaviours* and *one's reflexive relationship with self* (Foucault 1984a, p. 26). Code-morality is composed of interdictions or prohibitions and codes that can be analysed formally and independently of any effective action. The morality of behaviours focuses on the actual behavioural practices of individuals, and can only be evaluated *a posteriori*, in response to the prescriptions of a code. The first two tend to work together. Foucault focuses his attention on the third aspect: one's relationship with oneself. As Beatrice Han (2002) notes, for Foucault 'morality must be defined, not through the conformity of the action with the codes, but in reference to the intention and freedom of the subject, and thus, ultimately, to the way in which the will determines itself' (p.158) apart from moral law, or with obedience to the moral law as one option.

This is why he focuses on the practices of the ancient Greeks who had very few codes and prohibitions. What mattered to them was not the relationship with law, but the necessity of the subject determining and expressing, not only its will, but also its mode of being through action. He proposes an *agent-centred* ethics as opposed to an *act-centered* morality, an ethics defined by the *conduct* of the individual. The kind of ethics that emphasizes the agent attaches little importance to *duty* and defines virtue³ from the conduct that a virtuous self adopts. There is a dialectic between the action of such an individual and the determination of the moral self—the kind of relationship one ought to have with oneself, or form of *subjectivation*—as an identity. ‘Foucault affirms the impossibility that the Greeks would have understood morality independently of the quality of the moral subject and have defined this quality independent of his actions’ (Han, 2002, p. 159). This is a unique interpretation of what it means to be *moral*. Foucault (1984a) writes:

A moral action tends towards its own accomplishment; but it also aims beyond the latter, to the establishing of a moral conduct that commits an individual, not only to other actions always in conformity with values and rules, but to a certain mode of being, a mode of being characteristic of the ethical subject. (p. 28)

One’s relationship to self is essential to the shaping of one’s character, ethos or decorum of being; within that context, that self can determine what other content it desires, or what principles it wants to follow.

For Foucault, the desired experience of freedom is not the experience of law or principle, but freedom from moral law, a withdrawal from the power of law over the self. The condition of freedom is not a regulative ideal one must exemplify. It is *post-nomian*: a condition of *undefined work*, one that exposes the *presumed necessity* of inherited laws. In the disenchanted world of Foucault, there is no absolute moral order, horizon or principles, no transcendent ought, no philosophical or religious first principle, no God’s will for all humans. The codes of Christianity and modernity are presented as restrictive and

³ This is not what is known as virtue ethics in the sense of A. MacIntyre (1984). The comparison is beyond the scope of this thesis.

normalizing, a way of controlling or coercing people through a *power/knowledge regime*. The Greeks and Romans operated within a different posture, according to Foucault, one that he calls a *stylization of self*. Claire O'Farrell (1989) commenting on Foucault's later writing says, 'Freedom is not a goal we work towards or an object we struggle to possess; it is the capacity for choosing one of several possibilities of action' (p.125). Moral limits or interdictions are to be discovered, brought into the light and then resisted, thereby expanding the horizon of further choice (see section C).

In his interpretation of the ancient world, Foucault tends to *valorize* freedom from normalization, particularly in the Hellenic period, the most liberal culture he studies. Normalization is a strategy that he sees as pervasive in eighteenth and nineteenth century European societies and still quite alive in the twentieth. He associates this normalization with the heritage of Christian ethics where moral conduct is directed toward the pursuit of *other-worldly* goals. The afterlife for the Greeks was focused on the reputation that one would leave behind in this world. Following in the spirit of Nietzsche's material, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1969), he rejects both Christian and Kantian subordination of moral conduct to external principles (heteronomy). With Kant, the individual must constitute himself as a free, universal, rational subject, conforming to universal rules, living life for everyone. For Foucault, moral systems calculate as a negative feature; over against this posture, he suggests that one must constitute oneself as an autonomous, free subject conforming to one's own unique style. Foucault celebrates pagan techniques of the self where moral action is taken as an end in itself, immanent, and free from normalization. Greek ethics resonates with Foucault (1984i): 'Most of us no longer believe that ethics are founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life' (p. 343). He wanted to rethink inherited ethical traditions (especially Christian) in terms of a freedom. Based on this assumption of *freedom as resistance*, freedom *from* restrictive rules or prohibitions entails freedom *for* creative self-constitution.

His philosophy of freedom leads not to a timeless, but a time-sensitive, moral language or discourse. He rather highlights the different ways that people stylize their freedom under varying historical and cultural circumstances. The mark of Foucault, according to J. Rajchman (1986, p.195), is that ‘his “modern practical philosophy” proposes a freedom of choosing possible experience outside a prior knowledge or truth about ourselves’; this includes knowledge of a moral truth.

Foucault identifies and juxtaposes two types of moral system. One emphasizes moral code; the other emphasizes practices of the self—*etho-poetics*. This becomes a term which one is able to fill with non-traditional, innovative content; the *ethical* becomes defined by the characteristics of one’s *individual ethos*. Prescriptive code obliges one to follow, on the threat of internal or external pain of sanction. The centre of power and authority, as it relates to moral conduct, shifts from the external code to the individual’s internal and autonomous control over self.

How does this control exhibit itself? To give an example, in regard to managing one’s pleasures, the ethical shows that truth is drawn from desire and pleasure in itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience. Pleasure is truth (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 229-246); it is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, but first and foremost in relation to itself. It is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberation in the body and the soul. Pleasure emerges as a truth, not something to be judged by a state law, religious code, or societal norm. The last two volumes in his *History of Sexuality* series (1984a; 1984b), and the attendant interviews and lectures focus their analysis on how people of different eras managed *aphrodisia*: (sexual *desires-acts-pleasures*), and how they problematized (held up for examination) their sexual practices.

Foucault poses three questions about the stylization of freedom, which works to crystallize the thrust of his ethics as release from codes and prohibitions. This summarizes what has been argued thus far.

(a) The question of an ethic in which freedom would be modelled not on transgressive acts or on the liberation of repressed truths, but on “choosing possible forms of existence”: forming ourselves not based on a prior knowledge of our nature.

(b) The question of the description under which our sexual experience would matter in such an ethic: the question of a conception of sexual experience based neither in science nor in a religion of guilt, neither sexological nor puritanical.

(c) The question of what kinds of sexual experience are possible for us other than the ones based on the virile model of penetration and status, the Christian model of sin and confession or therapeutic model of hidden emotions and desires. (Rajchman 1986, p. 202)

So clearly, there is at work a radical rethinking of the language of *ethics*. Modern moral theory has structured itself around some combination of laws, rules, rights and goods; Foucault is calling this into question. He is deconstructing or attempting to transcend both Christian and modern secular views of ethics by his return to the ancients. The whole enterprise of freedom *from* moral codes and universals opens up the possibilities of what Foucault (1984a) calls an *aesthetics of existence*, ethics as an art of life.

What I mean by this is a way of life whose moral value did not depend either on one’s being in conformity with a code of behaviour or on an effort of purification, but on certain formal principles in the use of pleasures ... in the way one distributed them, in the limits one observed, in the hierarchy one respected. (Foucault, 1984a, p. 89)

It entails a different form of moral management. The trajectory and character of the aesthetic factor in this ethics will be explored in depth in Chapter Three, Part I. This leads to the final working assumption in Foucault’s negative side of freedom, *agonisme* (struggle or resistance), also known as the *transgression of limits*.

C. Freedom and the Transgression of Limits

Given the backdrop of a nominalist philosophical anthropology and a demotion of moral norms, one anticipates innovation, or crossing of boundaries, as a major feature of Foucault’s moral self. Andrew Lamb (1995) astutely notes that:

It is with respect to this nominal “self” that freedom and transgression properly apply. Freedom consists in the ability to transgress the limits of one’s “self” and ultimately to change the ways in which one defines one’s “self” within power relations; freedom is thus also the ability to reform one’s power relations. (p. 453)

Power, knowledge and self (coercion, truth and subjectivity) are three key axes that are mutually interrelated in the work of the late Foucault. The focus of attention is in on the third axis, the self or subjectivity. In the constitution of the moral self, negotiations of power relations and truth games are also required; discussion of this negotiation will follow in sections D, E and F below. The pursuit of liberty involves the transgression of limits, a third feature of the negative aspect of freedom. In this process, one questions the ways in which one has been formed as a subject, and the moral boundaries to which one has been made subject. The ethics of freedom involves a study of limits imposed by one's culture, historical circumstances, institutions or parenting, and then moves into a process of calling these limits (boundaries) into question. This is called a *limit-attitude*,⁴ something that does not set limits, but instead involves an attitude that makes possible the transgression of limits. Since the limits are not absolute but constructed by someone at sometime, they can be resisted or made unacceptable. One need only respect them for their power over the self. O'Leary (2002, p. 166) notes that one of the key features of Foucault's ethics is the conviction that the task is to 'question, criticize and transform fundamental features of the reality one inhabits'. These changes are part of constructing an ethical position for the self in the absence of belief in a revealed truth through a tradition which all can respect (for instance post-theism).

Foucault (1984f, p. 45-47) raises the issue of transgression in his essay 'What is Enlightenment?', a critical interaction with Kant's document of the same name. Foucault saw Kant as the philosopher who set the limits of the Enlightenment, 'within the bounds of reason'; he is suggesting a philosophy that is one of transgressing these limits, as part of a critique of modernity staged from within modernity. He promotes the idea of a critique of the present as an *exit* or escape from limits. 'What is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory ... [becomes] what is singular, contingent and the product of arbitrary constraints' (Foucault 1984f, p. 45). The boundaries are transformed into an opportunity

⁴ J. Miller (1993) makes this metaphor of *limit-attitude* the major theme in his analysis of Foucault.

for transgression; it first illuminates limits, because one's being depends on limits for definition as Lamb has suggested above, and then challenges them. Foucault (1984f) comments:

I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings. (p. 47)

Thus, freedom lies in the proposed contingency of one's historical determination and to one's present existence always belongs the possibility of new forms of being, of *transformation*. 'From the contingency that has made us what we are, [comes] the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think' (Foucault 1984f, p. 46). This is a theme at the heart of his work of freedom.

Present limitations of truth games and power relations become the thought material, the parameters for the possibility of resistance and future transgression; they propose the battle lines for resistance. Foucault offers a philosophy that would *free* experience of oneself and one's present subjectivity, one's present *construct*. If one's form or way of being, or one's moral code, is considered timeless, universal, *given*, Foucault calls it into question and attempts to depart from it, resist it, complicate it, show it to be temporary. It is a strategy of moral dissonance. He looks at how human beings order themselves and are ordered by others as subjects. He refers to the subject of transgressive activity as an *agonisme* (struggle), a *permanent provocation* to the power relations at hand, and its *subjections*. Freedom exists only in the concrete capacity of individuals to *refuse*, to say *Mais non.*, no to being governed in a certain way, no to cooperation with a regime in governing oneself in a way that follows its agenda. It is an unwillingness to comply, and also a commitment to finding alternatives to the particular discourses that define one's identity. It is a refusal of various forms of subjectivity, those which *subjugate*. Foucault assumes that this energy, this *will to resist* is always present.

Transgression, however, is a work of only partial change; it is not a revolution. He has left Marxism behind at this stage. This model of resistance is local, partial, somewhat

pessimistic and often contradictory as a strategy for change; it is not a grand utopian prescription. It involves no blueprint for a new self or a new social order or vision, but rather a *set of tools* for those who are involved in a struggle or resistance against overpowering forms of domination. Foucault's strategy is to bring about change at the local level; it is a *micro-politics* of the self amidst a *micro-physics* of power relations. His modest idea of the political task is to work out forms of social relations that minimize the effects of domination and maximize personal freedom. Freedom as transgression is a challenge from within power relations and forms of domination. These terms are explained in sections E and F below. The ethical task is, according to O'Leary (2002), to 'formulate an ethos, a mode of self-relation and a practice of the self which could contribute to an opening up, rather than a closing down, of the space for freedom' (p. 158). John Rajchman (1985) in reading Foucault as the philosopher of freedom, has an articulate grasp of the scope of Foucault's critical philosophy of transgression.

The question of freedom is found in his displacement of Kantian foundationalist questions ... For every instituted conception of freedom we apply a nominalist reversal ... Thus our real freedom does not consist either in telling our true stories and finding our place within some tradition or ethical code, in completely determining our actions in accordance with universal principles, or in accepting our existential limitation in authentic self-relation. We are ... really free because we can identify and change those procedures or forms through which our stories become true, because we can question and modify those systems which make (only) particular kinds of action possible, and because there is no "authentic" self-relation we must conform to. (pp. 121-24)⁵

The key phrase in this quote is: 'We are really free because we can change those procedures or forms through which our stories become true.' This changing relationship between subjectivity and truth is vital to the project, as pointed out by Beatrice Han (2002,

⁵ Andrew Lamb (1995, p. 453-54) expands on this: 'In speaking of limits, Foucault refers to what defines one's self, the various "directions" according to which one constitutes "oneself". Transgression, however, is an act by which human beings intentionally shatter such boundaries and move to redefine their "selves" or "exchange their beings"... It is an active overcoming that leads to the recreation of one's self ... an act leading to reformulation or re-formation. It leads to a reconstitution of the dispositions of thought and to some expression that manifests the reality of the transgression. Foucault seems to think that a transgression primarily consists in the embracing of new dispositions of thought, of attitudes concerning who one is and what one can do. (E.g. The change that might take place when one ceases to believe in God, creating a new outlook and new limits to oneself as per one's sexuality). Any recreation of self leads to new expressions of self ... By transgression one moves to re-establish one's actual, experiential limits, and this means that one moves in a new way of acting with respect to one's limits. The change of behaviour can be more or less radical.'

pp. 152-173) and explored later in section F of this chapter. It opens up the possibility of new forms of subjectivity and new relations with truth. This is transgression, a challenge to received definitions and discourses of the self, plus a robust will to change them, or to move beyond them.

Definitions of transgression may come from a particular micro or macro regime of various ideological persuasions. In the essay, 'What is Enlightenment?', Foucault talks about three key values that should lead towards maturity, the claimed trajectory of his project on the self, that is, taking responsibility for the shape of oneself. These values revise the thought of Immanuel Kant; Foucault is influenced by Kant, but believes that the Enlightenment humanism has not led the West towards maturity and true freedom. Humanisms have offered slavery instead. His revised vision of the Enlightenment involves the following:

(a) The courage or audacity to know: a characteristic that leads one to uphold the possibility of transgression even in the face of power ploys that mask dominating limits and negatively portray those who would challenge them. Philosophy is important in championing the cause of freedom, one that transforms the Kantian critique conducted in the form of a necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a transgression. (Foucault, 1984f, p. 45)

(b) Will to transgress: the mature artist's continual valuation supporting the will to transgress that compels him to face the ongoing task of producing himself. Foucault (1984f) writes: 'Not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is ... modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it.' (p. 41) Respect for limits also means that one should break out of their grasp in the constitution of self.

(c) Values of the Enlightenment: including respect for the free and public use of reason. In valuing such a use of reason a person upholds the responsibility of others to redefine themselves as well towards new ways of being. This upholds a certain range of freedom for all persons. [Secondly] it favours the achievement of desirable changes as determined by the artist's eye. Foucault (1984f): 'I do not know whether we will ever reach mature adulthood ... [but] I continue to think that this task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor [sic] giving form to our impatience for liberty.' (pp. 49,50)

The limit-awareness, this *impatience for liberty*, is therefore fundamental to the task of moral self-constitution on the trajectory of aesthetic-freedom. Foucault adopts the perspective of both the refusal and creation of the self by defining the creation of new forms of self as the deconstruction (calling into question) of what we are or have been, and the creation of something totally new. 'Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover who we are, but to refuse what we are' (Foucault, 1982b, p. 216). It is a certain attitude, a

critique, towards the present, which refuses to view it as eternal, that both respects it, and yet seeks to surpass or transform it.

In conclusion of this point, the real quest for Foucault is how and to what extent one can think and act differently, overcome oneself and transform oneself from current definitions (truth forms of the subject) or current regimes of subjection (domination), instead of legitimating what is already established. Freedom, rooted in a nominalist anthropology, and following a deconstructive transcendence of moral law, paves the way for carrying out transgression (violation), which ushers in and is ultimately realized by the reformation of one's limits. This is a more or less radical stance with respect to present form of the self; that is up to the individual. This transformation of self, in turn, gives rise to new expressions of thought and action, with new possibilities for freedom. The realization and enjoyment of freedom is never complete, but an ongoing experiment, a struggle and a dynamic work; it begins as a negative register of resistance, and moves towards a positive definition of freedom as a practice of care of self. O'Leary (2002, p. 170) captures it: 'If the aim of critical philosophy is to untie the knots of our identity, then the aim of ethics is to work out ways of retying them in new and less constraining ways.' This is philosophical optimism interwoven with deep scepticism. Thus, for Foucault, his ontology of freedom offers a certain stance, necessary as a position from which to practise self-formation.

D. The Practice of Freedom

This moves the exposition of Foucault's concept of freedom for the moral self to the positive side of the coin, the retying of the knots within the practices of freedom. His project is deeply committed to the ethics of self-governance, attained through an exercise of the practical will. For Foucault, the top ethical issue is the deliberate, determined, proactive practice of liberty, not the quest for truth, especially not truth deep within the self. Foucault (1984e', p. 284) says: 'What is ethics if not the practice of freedom, the

conscious [*réfléchie*] practice of freedom?’ Freedom must be practised ethically, which means reflectively; it is a self-conscious practice. Furthermore, this practice of freedom is deeply connected to the care of self. ‘In the Greco-Roman world, the care of self was the mode in which individual freedom—or civic liberty, up to a point—was reflected as an ethics’ (Foucault 1984e’, p. 284). Ancient ethics, as Foucault saw it, revolved around the *care of self*. He recognized that individual freedom was very important to the Greeks and Romans, ‘The concern with freedom was an essential and permanent problem for eight full centuries’ (1984e’, p. 284). Jeremy Carrette (2000, p. 132) astutely claims that: ‘Foucault mentioned at Stanford University, in October 1979, that it is both a tactic and a methodological choice to start with the “practice” rather than the “ideology”.’ This strategy reveals itself as one reads Foucault’s analysis of ethics as art. He is highly attentive towards both the conditions for freedom, the process of attaining freedom and the expansion of individual freedom as a goal or *telos*. In sections A through C of this chapter, the exposition has considered the necessary, but not sufficient, conditions of freedom (its ontology). At this juncture, the examination covers freedom as an exercise, a praxis, a dynamic life choice. The work one does on self, the kind of relationship one has to self, and the practices of self, have the goal of freedom in mind. Ethics is a conscious, deliberate, reflective work of giving form to freedom.

To repeat the important formulaic statement, ‘Freedom is the ontological condition of our ethics; but ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection’ (Foucault, 1984e’, p. 284). Ethics is freedom articulated as practice. In Foucault’s positioning of the moral self, traditional moral systems, such as one might find in Christianity, Marxism or liberal humanism, no longer provide an acceptable practice of freedom. He is sceptical of regime-driven or ideological practices of freedom; he suspects them of wanting to control, *totalize* and dominate rather than set the individual free. He became disillusioned with too many utopian ideologies of the Left which ended in regimes of oppression on the Right (A.D. Schrift, 1994, p. 186).

So what does Foucault specifically mean by freedom as a practice? Perhaps his clearest explanation of freedom in this regard is found in an interview with some colleagues, called ‘The Care of Self as a Practice of Freedom, in 1984 just before he died. (Foucault, 1984e’),

What is ethics if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [*réfléchie*] practice of freedom? ... In the Greco-Roman world, the care of self was the mode in which individual freedom—or civic liberty, up to a point—was reflected [*se réfléchie*] as an ethics. If you take a whole series of texts going from the first Platonic dialogues up to the major texts of late Stoicism—Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and so on—you will see that the theme of the care of self thoroughly permeated moral reflection. (p. 284)

One notices immediately that the ‘practice of freedom’ is closely linked to the concept, ‘care of self’. The theme of ‘caring for oneself’ is there in the ancient world, but Foucault regrets that it is later lost, called into question or marginalized during the Christian era. The thesis elaborates the concept in much greater detail in section C of Chapter Four as an important aspect of aesthetics of self. Foucault enters into tremendous detail in his study of a vast variety of ancient writers and texts on this issue. Caring for oneself involved a broad management of one’s household, one’s health, one’s pleasures, and one’s public leadership. It was a vigilant practice to protect oneself and nurture one’s potential.

I believe that among the Greeks and Romans—especially the Greeks—concern with the self and care for the self were required for right conduct and proper practice of freedom, in order to know oneself [*se connaître*—the familiar aspect of *gnothi seauton*—as well as to form oneself, to surpass oneself, to master the appetites that threaten to overwhelm one ... Not to be a slave (of another city, of the people around you, of those governing you, of your own passions) was an absolutely fundamental theme ... What we have here is an entire ethics revolving around the care of self; this is what gives ancient culture its particular form. (Foucault 1984e’, p. 285)

To care for oneself was a mandate that preceded the Platonic encouragement: *Know thyself*. ‘Extensive work by the self on the self is required for the practice of freedom to take shape in an *ethos* that is good, beautiful, honourable, estimable, memorable and exemplary’ (Foucault 1984e’, p. 286). He is referring to the *ethos* or mode of being that results from a proper practice of freedom. *Ethos* was the appropriate deportment of self, the way to behave: it included one’s dress, one’s bearing, one’s gait, and the poise with which one reacts to events. For the Greeks, that is the concrete expression of liberty.⁶

⁶ John Rajchman (1991) notes that: ‘Freedom is a ‘condition’ of the history that delimits our being, and it always works itself out in history: the history of the specific things people do to themselves and their world to make themselves free... It is not in our basic individualities or communities that we are free; it is rather the

Freedom as an *ethos* or concrete way of being reconnects the immanent, non-transcendent spiritual (what one is capable of being) and the political (how one relates to others); governing oneself was closely related to governing the state (J. Carrette, 2000, pp.129-141).⁷ It is worth some attention to two aspects of *ethos*.

(a) Ethics (*ethos*) is what gives a coherent shape to self in the exercise of freedom. It is roughly equivalent to *character* and includes a new set of limits beyond those which have been transgressed. It holds the ground gained through the battle of transgression.

(b) Coerced practice can never be *ethical* practice. One could not practice freedom if under a state of domination. There is no ethics for the slave; domination stifles the play of liberties, thereby freezing ethics.

Significantly, care of self is ethical in and of itself, not requiring a care for the other.

Foucault (1984e', p. 287) notes:

What makes it ethical for the Greeks is not that it is care for others. The care of self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships to others insofar as this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others.

In fact, he insists that 'care for others should not be put before care of oneself. The care of self is ethically prior' (Foucault, 1984e', p. 287); it is a point worth noting.

To step back for the bigger picture for a moment, the argument of the thesis thus far, is that the *spiritual way* (the elaboration of one's freedom and the fulfilment of the self) for Foucault is as follows. The enslaved, stifled, or subjugated self comes to an awareness of its historical contingency, eventually realizing it is not, by necessity, trapped in this mode of being either by the discourse, definitions, power relations, or the identity constructs of its culture. Through courage and a strong commitment to assert one's freedom, the self studies its present limits in detail. Then it actively revolts against that which has shaped it or restricted it in its historical-cultural context, refuses these identity definitions, and transgresses these limits through thinking and acting differently—the practice of

historical forms of our individual and communal being themselves which must be freed or exposed to the risk of new and unforeseen transformations.' (p. 110)

⁷ J. Carrette (2000) makes much of the interface between the spiritual and the political, and the implosion of the spiritual into the political, in Foucault's later works. This relationship between ruling self and ruling the state (spiritual and political) is also developed in section E of this chapter.

freedom—in search of a new articulation of self. The self is thereby wedged free from external and institutional determination, to move toward a reflective but risky practice of self, employing the technologies of self-formation. The goal is to shape oneself into a free, admirable and beautiful, but ever-changing form, maintaining a stance of self-determination. The Foucauldian self seeks more control over itself, with a will to explore its creative possibilities as it learns how to negotiate the complex relations of power and shrewdly interacts with the games of truth (sections E and F). Thus, the shape of one's liberty emerges as the forces of subjugation, normalization and domination are overcome by the triumph of the practical will. This mobilizes the self into a dynamic practice of freedom, which in turn emerges into an expansion of liberties.⁸

One further aspect of the fusion of the political and the spiritual (the politics of self) in this discussion is Foucault's conviction that freedom is only guaranteed through its exercise, similar to a muscle. It must be practised or one will surely lose it; freedom is not a thing, a commodity or an ideal that can be guaranteed by governments or charters; he takes some distance from Western liberal humanism. He is very cynical about the possibility of legal or state systems protecting one's *rights and freedoms*.

Freedom is a *practice*... the freedom of men is never assured by the laws and institutions that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are ambiguous, but simply because liberty is what must be exercised ... The guarantee of freedom is freedom. (Foucault, 1984j, p. 245)

The quest for freedom is an active articulation and assertion of the self. Liberation is only the beginning (requisite conditions for freedom); he is quite convinced that too much faith has been placed in utopian liberation movements only to end in the disappointment of new states of domination. Many people never learn how to practise their freedom even after the colonialist overlords have been sent home, or the state dictator has been deposed.

In conclusion of the argument thus far, Foucault's hermeneutics of self is at the same time a politics of subjectivity, a struggle. His focus of study has shifted from the hermeneutics of domination in his genealogical phase, to the hermeneutics of self as care

⁸ This is the thesis writer's summary reflection.

of self in his late work. He is convinced that freedom is a core concept; he raises it to the status of an *ethical principle* (O'Leary, 2002, pp. 165f). The next two sections will elaborate the nuances of this autointerpretive dimensions of the moral self in an important discussion of power relations and games of truth. In Chapters Three and Four, the practice of freedom will be revealed as a technology and an art respectively.

E. Freedom, Subjectivity and Power

In Foucault's work from the late 1970s and the early 1980s, his account of the forms of human subjectivity is positioned in relation to two other key axes: power and truth. Freedom must be seen, not as a legal right, but as an important dynamic in human relations; it is interconnected with relations of power and games of truth. Foucault (1984e', p. 290) says: 'I had to reject *a priori* theories of the subject in order to analyse the relationships that may exist between the constitution of the subject and games of truth, practices of power and so on.' Under criticism of his analysis of power in the early 1970s, Foucault realized that there was a need to sophisticate and broaden the meaning of power as it related to the self, in order to provide for the possibility of moral agency. In his ethical writings, power is threefold: strategic relations, governmentality and states of domination. States of domination are the least desirable. He uses governmentality as a broad term to 'cover the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other' (Foucault, 1984e', p. 300).

The important thing to attend to at this point is *power relations*. Power is always present in all relationships in which a person tries to control the behaviour of another 'among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life, and so on' (Ibid., p. 283). 'Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted "above" society as a supplementary structure' (Foucault, 1982b, p. 222). At this juncture in his work, he conceives of power relations (where freedom is present) as mobile, reversible

and unstable; the subject must be free and there must be a possibility of resistance against the effects of power. Where power relations are blocked or non-dynamic, a state of *domination* emerges. The practice of freedom cannot occur under such circumstances. This negative blocking of power relations can be economic, political or military. Thus, he (1984e', p. 283) says, 'Liberation is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of freedom.' Freedom and power relations are co-compatible. He says: 'It seems to me that we must distinguish between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties ... and states of domination that people ordinarily call "power".' (Foucault, 1984e', p. 299). His ideal is that in the practices of the self, one might 'play these games of power with as little domination as possible' (Ibid., p. 298); this is a hinge point where the philosopher can help call into question domination in its various forms. To become educated in the dynamics of power relations, one can notice potential points of resistance, reversals and tensions; the self is intimately involved with power relations.

Therefore, Foucault's view of power, at this phase of his writing, is that it is not always repressive or negative, although it can become that as a domination. Power is not evil, but it is *dangerous*; it can be abused. It can promote as well as restrict, illuminate as well as conceal, create as well as destroy. In general, he is interested in how power works to direct and shape human behaviour in certain ways; his claim is that power is present in every human relationship; even one's relationship with oneself involves power since one maintains certain restrictions and allowances. The word *conduct* may be an equivalent term with the double connotation of conducting oneself and also conducting or directing the behaviour of others. Power plays a significant role in the development of the self. Thus, he considers it quite important that individuals learn about the various relations and strategies of power as a means to pursue their individual freedom and autonomy.

It is important to see how these relations are discerned in the context of the ancient Greek understanding of self-control. In his study of the ancient world, Foucault takes note of how freedom is maintained in the midst of the various levels of power relations.

Personal liberty, according to Foucault, is actually a highly political phenomenon, having serious political ramifications. 'I think that in the measure liberty signifies for the Greeks non-slavery ... the problem is already entirely political ... Liberty is then in itself political.' (Foucault, 1984e, p. 6). His study of the ancient Greeks in *L'usage des plaisirs* (1984a) is heavily oriented toward the connection between self-control and personal liberty. The theme of self-mastery also carries on into *Le souci de soi* (1984b). One was to establish a rule over oneself called *arche*—power or authority. This self-mastery or domination over oneself is the key to freedom (read non-slavery) for the Greeks and the Romans. The concept of *eleutheria* (the avoidance of slavery) was a preoccupation in the practice and thought of ancient ethical schools. One of the real dangers was being enslaved to another city, but Foucault is particularly interested in the problem of becoming a slave to oneself, one's appetites or passions (excess). *Eleutheria* was a matter of the free citizen's relationship to himself. One who could not master self (one without ethics) was encouraged to submit to a wise authority, one who could teach such self-mastery, the noble *self-mastery* of the ethical man, but not the selfless or charitable relations with others.

One is grounded in freedom through self-mastery; this was a practice in Greek and Roman society which, Foucault claims, went all the way back to Socrates, but was lost in the modern West. The four great risks were slavery to others, slavery to one's own pleasures (*aphrodisia*), the danger of abuse of power over others (tyranny), and finally passivity, considered a feminine trait in a male.

The true freedom of the Greek male was understood as an *ethos* of mastery over oneself and one's appetites, sexual or otherwise, an austerity. Foucault (1984a, p. 78) in analysing the ancient Greek ethics of free citizens claims that, '*Sophrosyne* was a state that could be approached through restraint in the practice of pleasures; it was characterized as a freedom.' This was the way to establish and maintain freedom, through this kind of relationship one was to have with one's self, and it contained a wider implication for the well-being of the state. It had as its background the Greek fear of real political slavery, a

cruel existence. It is not about the independence of a free will (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 79-80). Indeed, it was more than non-enslavement, more than that condition which would make the ‘individual independent of any exterior or interior constraint; in its full positive form, it was a power that one exercised over others’ (Ibid., p. 80). It freed the free Greek aristocrat to wield power in a non-tyrannical way.

The man who ought to lead others was one who had to be completely in command of himself; both because, given his position and the power he wielded, it would be easy for him to satisfy all his desires, and hence to give way to them, but also because disorderly behaviour on his part would have its effects on everyone and in the collective life of the city. In order not to be excessive, not to do violence, in order to avoid the trap of tyrannical authority (over others) coupled with a soul tyrannized by desires, the exercise of political power required, as its own principle of internal regulation, power over oneself. (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 80-81)

Proper self-governance, it was believed, led to just political governance. Moderation, one of the cardinal Greek virtues, understood as an aspect of dominion over the self, was considered a virtue that qualified a man to exercise authority over others.

An example of this difference is found in the concept of *mastery as active freedom*—the *virile* character of moderation. The first binary relationship is between *freedom through mastery* and *slavery through indulgence*. The second binary is between virility (activity) and femininity (passivity).

Self-mastery was a way of being a man with respect to oneself; that is, a way of commanding what needed commanding, of coercing what was not capable of self-direction, of imposing principles of reason on what was wanting in reason; in short, it was a way of being active in relation to what was by nature passive and ought to remain so. (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 80-81)

Moderation (*enkrateia*) was a *virile manly* virtue like courage, justice or prudence, in the ancient world. Women found their identity in a passive relation to this active virility of the man. Immoderation, the symmetrical opposite, was taken to derive from a passivity that was seen to be feminine or powerless. It was a position of weakness and submissiveness, of loss of freedom, non-mastery (*akrasia*) or self-indulgence (*akolasia*). A man was then dangerously *feminine* with respect to himself and others (Ibid.).

In this ethics of men made for men, the development of the self as an ethical subject consisted in setting up a structure of virility that related oneself to oneself ... What one must aim for in the agonistic contest with oneself and in the struggle to control the desires was the point where the relationship with oneself would become isomorphic with the relationship of domination, hierarchy, and authority that one expected, as a man, as a free man, to establish over his inferiors; and it was this prior condition of “ethical virility” that provided one with the right sense of proportion for the exercise of “sexual virility” according to a model of “social virility”. (Ibid., p. 83)

Thus, self-mastery operates at different levels and they are entwined.

It is significant that Foucault does not entirely endorse this whole attitude of virility as he points out in one of his interviews; he is studying it as one form of ethical stylization, a form of ascetic discipline. To be effeminate to the Greeks, meant to be over-indulgent in one's appetites; the *ethos* was different than that of the current era. Overall, according to Foucault (1984e', p. 300), the goal was to 'make freedom your foundation, through the mastery of yourself'.

According to his account of ancient ethics, the type of sex did not concern them; the major concern was rather the intensity, the excesses, the danger of passivity, and the conditions under which it occurred. Moral code counted least, while moderation and self-control counted most highly. Beatrice Han (2002) notes that, 'The Greek model ... plays the role of a simple first matrix from which to evaluate *a contrario* modernity' (p. 10). It shows the possibility of a self-construction that is different, but robust.

The contrast is also part of a critique of Christian ethics, where he takes the self to relate to a moral and religious law. Jeremy Carrette (2000) notes that

Religion after Foucault always exists as a system of power, meaning that it orders life through a set of force relations; not through a violence which forces people to do things but through shaping of the individual subject to voluntarily carry out a particular way of life. (p.149)

His book, *L'usage des plaisirs* (1984a), opens with a declared aim to examine the subject centred on the opposition between the Greek ethics of self-constitution and the Christian forms of morality that demand submission to the law from the subject. O'Leary (2002) is even stronger when speaking of Foucault's view on this point: 'My argument is that the modern hermeneutics of the self is both historically preceded and normatively surpassed by the ancient aesthetics of the self' (p. 38). Further discussion on this point will occur in Chapter Four.

How does the relationship between freedom practice and power relations apply in the contemporary era? Although a bit evasive on this point, Foucault is actually putting forward this ancient idea of freedom as a viable alternative for people in his day, a new

ethic of freedom under the refined term *governmentality*. It is an expandable term of management of self and others (Foucault 1984e).

I say that governmentality implies the relationship of the self to self, which means exactly that, in the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other ... If you try to analyse power not from the point of view of liberty, of strategies and of governmentality but from the point of view of a political institution, you cannot consider the subject as a subject of rights ... You are then thrown back to a juridical concept of the subject. (pp. 19-20)

This definition plays to the strengths of the individual self. He wants to promote an ethics of the *possibilities of our becoming*, so he proposes a *non-legal* theory of freedom. If one is to exercise it, this entails a willingness to question a certain kind of power, or refuse servitude, or resist the effects of power. Foucauldian freedom can be a political strategy at some level. John Rajchman (1991) suggests that it does apply to the contemporary scene.

We should think of freedom in terms of the historical process through which we come to constitute ourselves as subjects of the sort of activities through which we may be governed and may govern ourselves. Under this conception, Foucault hoped to reintroduce the ancient conception of freedom as *ethos* or concrete way of being, and so to reconnect the “spiritual” and the “political” senses of freedom. (p.118)⁹

Foucault proceeds to give examples from sexual relations and pedagogy where there is reversibility in power relations. He proposes a fascinating relationship between liberty and power, which moves the self beyond domination to agency within a matrix of power relations.

In the next section, the focus of analysis shifts to the relationship between the self, freedom and truth, with power relations as a background, but still entwined. For more elaboration on the relationship between aesthetic self-making and power relations, see Chapter Four, Part 1, section D.

F. Freedom, the Subject and Truth

Subjectivity and truth are two key poles in this sector of Foucault’s analysis. In particular, the focus is on the relationship between the subject and the *games of truth*. It is a serious

⁹ Rajchman (1991) continues: ‘This relates to free speech--*Wahrsagen*. We can take it as “ethical”... as a matter of how people recognize themselves as “subjects” of free critical discourse, or of what relations to themselves and to one another they must have in order to speak truly about themselves.’ (p. 119)

question of the role of truth in the constitution of the subject. Foucault claims (1984e', p. 291): 'It is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to the games of truth which interests me'. He claims that his entire *oeuvre* (intellectual project) was an analysis of the relationship between the subject and truth. A truth game is 'a set of rules by which truth is produced ... It is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which on the basis of rules and procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing' (Foucault, 1984e', p. 297). Truth games are also social practices. 'Practices are ... not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group' (Ibid., p. 291). He is not completely cynical about truth but rather takes it seriously; truth games are not reducible to a will to power, even though there is always a power interest in every truth game. Nor is truth a mere social construction although such construction is involved in the establishing of truth in an institution or a society. But truth is *pliable*, and it is political.

The big shift of attention from his earlier work (genealogy of power) is from a position where the subject fits into certain games of truth (scientific discursive regimes or institutional coercive practices), towards a position in his ethics of self, where the subject shapes itself within a dialogue with truth games. The subject is more alert and active. It is a move away from the truth game dominating the self, to the hope that the self can dominate the truth game, a matter of learning the games and playing them to one's own advantage. The shift in focus in his late work is towards things the self can do to shape its existence; the direction is away from and against, the submission to a truth game that dominates or subjugates. Transformation of self sometimes means refusing the power a particular truth game has over one; one can escape domination by playing that same truth game differently.

In the light of this, it is relevant to look at the dynamics of freedom, power and truth as they relate to the moral self. The groundwork has been laid for a conception of a kind of

truth that is interwoven with Foucault's concept of constructive freedom. Truth in Foucault's ethics is not an absolute, but an *aesthetic* category, a matter of construction; it is pliable, historically contingent, capable of being invented and manipulated, not a revealed truth. As articulated in section B of this chapter, it is not about 'telling our true stories or finding a place within a tradition or ethical code, in completely determining our actions in accordance with universal principles' (Rajchman, 1985, p. 122). Foucault gives permission to stand back, critique the truth games about self, and to invent new games. This active freedom to interact with and engage the games of truth is essential for self-formation and self-management. It is about 'getting free from oneself' (Foucault, 1984a, p. 8), presumably the 'oneself' that was given to one by society. It is about exploring the possibility of inventing new discourses, emancipating discourses, or choosing from a different discourse than the one that has shaped the self to this point in history. The strategy is open-ended and this means that truth games are multiple. No one person or institution is in control of the various games.

How do the games of truth relate to freedom? The thesis writer agrees with Beatrice Han's (2002) observation that Foucault's analysis of ancient sexuality is actually subordinated to a history of subjectivity, that his discussion of ancient sexual practices is happening on two levels. Her conviction is that,

It is ... the fundamental idea of a connection between subjectivation and truth, not the analysis of sexuality *per se* which constitutes ... the "keystone" of Foucault's work, as it alone allows a bridging of the gap between the archaeological-genealogical study of the conditions of truth and the role that truth plays in the constitution of the self. (pp. 158f)

This brings an important insight into relief. Foucault has realized that truth plays an important, constitutive role in the genesis of subjectivity, and that one's relationship to truth (received, inner or constructed) is very powerful and formative; it impacts one's life. Central to his thesis is the following: Since the subordination by Socrates of the care of self to the Delphic imperative *Know thyself*, the constitution of the self has had to occur

through the establishment of a relation to truth. Foucault (1984e) explains this phenomenon to his interlocutors:

My problem has always been ... the problem of the relationship between subject and truth. How does the subject enter a certain game of truth? ... What I refused was precisely that you first of all set up a theory of the subject—as could be done in phenomenology and existentialism—and that, beginning from the theory of the subject, you could pose the question of knowing ... What I wanted to know was how the subject constituted himself, in such and such a determined form ... through a certain number of practices which were games of truth, applications of power, etc. ... [The subject] is not a substance; it is a form and this form is not always identical to itself ... And it is precisely the historical constitution of these different forms of subject relating to games of truth that interest me ... What caused Western culture to begin to turn around this obligation of truth, which has taken on a variety of different forms? ... It is indeed in this field of obligation to truth that we sometimes can avoid in one way or another the effects of a domination, linked to structures of truth or to institutions charged with truth ... We escape then a domination of truth, not by playing a game that was a complete stranger to the game of truth, but in playing it otherwise or in playing another game, another set, other trumps in the game of truth. (pp. 9, 10 and 15)

The games of truth relate to the interpretation of self, which affects the shaping of the self. Foucault's central idea here is that the constitution of the self can only occur through a specific relationship to truth. Foucault suggests that one can gain control over this mechanism of interpretation in order to avoid domination by discursive regimes, practices of control, or the Other.

Furthermore, he insists that the games of truth are tightly linked to power relations even though they are not reducible to power. An example finds its application in communication, with the problem of the transparency of words. Often, the one who can formulate truths has institutional power in society. That does not mean however that what he says is not true. 'Who says the truth?', asks Foucault (1984e, p. 17). His response is: 'Individuals who are free, who arrive at a certain agreement and who find themselves thrust into a certain network of practices of power and constraining institutions' (Ibid.). This is the big picture: games of truth are entwined with the relations of power and therefore one's personal freedom and identity must be negotiated amidst these complex political dynamics.

If one learns these games of truth, one can gain more power and more freedom, and is less likely to be victimized by them. The ideal, put forward by Foucault, seems to be to play the games in a way that liberates the self and avoids domination of others. Ethics as a practice of freedom requires that one have a working understanding of the games of truth

both from the perspective of discursive regimes or systems of control as well as individual alternate possibilities. Foucault is trying to bring something to light in his attempt to recover subjectivity from the extreme of his previous project on power/knowledge, where the subject is reduced to a victim of disciplinary practices. He wants to be realistic, to keep the power relations and truth games in the equation of the constitution of the moral self, but also to show a way to escape any traps.

The *logos* factor is also critical to moral self-constitution as part of a practice of freedom. In his study of the ancient world, Foucault notes the connection between knowledge and the practice of freedom. Freedom emerges from a positive relationship with *logoi*. It is in many ways an extension of the idea of self-mastery. It is also one aspect of how the games of truth get played. The practice of freedom means that one needs to avoid enslavement to over-indulgence, as well as engage the games of truth that are ascendant. There are two types of knowledge (*logoi*) which are important to the ancients in the praxis of freedom: knowledge of oneself and knowledge of rules of conduct. One could not form oneself as an ethical subject without forming oneself as a subject of knowledge, that is, without a reflective engagement with self and with ethical discourse. These *logoi* included principles of positive character building and self-formation. There are no negative rules or negative desires, as Foucault interprets the situation; there is only a negative loss of self-control.¹⁰ The imperative to care for self involved an assimilation of *logoi*, or truths. He (Foucault, 1984e) draws this concept of the *logoi* partly from the Stoics.

The care of self is of course knowledge of self—that is the Platonic-Socratic aspect—but it is also the knowledge of a number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit one's self out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth. (p. 5)

¹⁰ This is also stated in Foucault (1984a, p. 97): 'The moral reflection of the Greeks on sexual behaviour did not seek to justify interdictions, but to stylize a freedom--that freedom which the "free" man exercised in his activity.' The grand goal, the philosophical quest was to be free in a positive, self-managed way: this is why Foucault likes the Greeks and their stylization of values. Interdictions continue to have the connotation of a domination for him. This does not contradict what has been said in section B. of this chapter; the moral authority is the self of the Greek or Roman male citizen, not the *logoi*; *logoi* are the servants to the stylization of freedom. Autonomy is still in the foreground—subjectivity is self-managed.

The quest of freedom opens up new truth possibilities, as it negotiates power relations. As one develops a new *ethos* after transgressing the old limits, a new truth about the self emerges, a transformed self beyond the original limits of self. The *logoi* offer various tools for the crafting of self.

Thus, a reflective awareness of this process is quite vital in the move toward a new subject form. In an important chapter called 'Freedom and Truth', Foucault (1984a, pp. 78-92) points out the relationship between truth (*logos*) and freedom in ancient Greece:

To rule one's pleasures and bring them under the authority of *logos* formed one and the same enterprise: moderation, says Aristotle, desires only "what the rational principle [*orthos logos*] directs". Moderation could not be fully practiced "without a certain form of knowledge ... One could not form oneself as an ethical subject in the use of pleasures without forming oneself at the same time as a subject of knowledge. (p. 86)¹¹

How did this actually work? While this aspect will be covered in much more depth in the Chapter Three on Technologies of the Self, the following important insight is notable. There were many debates about the role of knowledge in the practice of virtue and moderation.

The relationship to *logos* in the practice of pleasures is described by Greek philosophy of the fourth century B.C.E. in three principal forms, according to Foucault (1984a, pp.86-89).

(a) Structural Form: *logos* must always be in the position of superiority to the desires in order to regulate behaviour.

(b) Instrumental Form: There were appropriate times and circumstances for the pleasures.

(c) Ontological Recognition of the Self by the Self: the Socratic theme was that one ought to know oneself in order to practice virtue. Foucault even makes note of a 'spiritual combat' with oneself as per *Phaedrus*.

One notes again the consistent emphasis on aesthetic *form* as opposed to substance. The play of the *logoi* is that of a quasi-subject, a mentor, a dialogue partner. He is careful to point out that it is not an internal decipherment, as one might find in Christian confession, or hermeneutics of desire, to decide between appropriate and inappropriate desires. He

¹¹ Foucault (1984e) also notes 'These practices (of the self) are not something the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group.' (p. 11)

(Foucault, 1984a) wants to emphasize that ‘it was not an epistemological condition enabling the individual to recognize himself in his singularity as a desiring subject and to purify himself of this desire that was brought to light’ (p. 89). It is an ethics of shaping self from the outside rather than a discernment of self from the inside.

There is one other kind of truth game that must be mentioned in order to understand Foucault’s full intention. It is the discussion on erotics in the last chapter of *L’usage des plaisirs* called ‘True Love’ (1984a, pp. 229-46). Foucault notes that there are various discourses on the pursuit of love by older men with young boys or adolescents, discourses that include some of the difficulties in this relationship. This is where one sees the *aesthetic* influence on (the constructive nature of) truth game. Some of the discourses wrestle with how to preserve the honour of the boy in the midst of such a relationship, but the most striking discourse cited is that of Plato where the love is articulated as ‘a relation with truth or wisdom’ (1984a, p. 239). Plato suggests that love should be directed to the soul of the boys rather than their beautiful bodies. This is highlighted in Socrates’ relationship with Alcibiades where love and truth are fused in the mentoring relationship of the older, wiser man with the young man. The ‘master of truth and wisdom will also be master of love’ (Ibid.) Foucault writes (Ibid., p. 243):

It becomes apparent that Platonic erotics ... introduces the question of truth into the love relation as a fundamental question ... The lover’s task, the accomplishment of which will in fact enable him to reach his goal, is to recognize the true nature of love that has seized him.

Foucault summarizes his intent in examining this aspect of Greek reflection on how a game of truth could be played much differently.

To this male love, and more precisely the love of young boys and adolescents—a love that was to be so severely condemned for such a long time—the Greeks granted legitimacy, which we are fond of seeing as proof of freedom they granted themselves in this domain ... To be sure, except in a few instances, they did not condemn it or prohibit it. (1984a, p. 245)

This was a way of stylizing the love of boys and hence giving it shape and form, thereby valuing it within a truth game. Erotics is rethought as the pursuit of truth; truth is aestheticized; this is a case of the practice of freedom which Foucault exemplifies. T.

Flynn (1987) writes: 'Foucault's "nominalist critique" of our history and culture requires that "truth" like "power" be conceived in the multiplicity of its occurrences, that it conform to no essence' (p. 116). He wants to open up truth games; therefore truth must be open to the erotic.

Therefore, the practice of self-formation has to take into account the games of truth; as one practises one's freedom, there is a consequent enhancement of power, a shifting of power relations, a possibility of resistance to the effects of power and the emergence of new truth possibilities, new discursive formations of the self. These are some of the dynamics of the politics of truth amidst the entwinement of freedom, truth and power in Foucault's analysis of the moral self. There is a threefold circular reciprocity between truth, power and subjectivity, which opens up moral creativity.

Conclusion

So, what is the place of freedom in moral self-constitution? The first level of a positive critical reception of Foucault's concept of the moral self involves a willingness to grapple with his two-sided play of freedom. First, one has to make way for freedom; it is not something that can be assumed as a *given*, nor is it rooted in any grand narrative of way the world is, or a notion of reality. There is for Foucault no greater reality than the freedom the self can create, no truer truth. It is a pioneering spirit of philosophy of ethics. Freedom is not an ideal state for which we strive; rather, it is a condition of the striving; freedom is not a commodity to be owned but relational and dynamic. Freedom is first an ontology, a foundation for everything else in moral self-constitution; it is a matter of opening up a space of freedom for the possibility of self-creation. The project of freedom is heavily dependent on individual human choice; it expands personal freedom. Freedom is not an essential feature of a transcendently grounded human nature, but freedom itself is rather the ground of ethics. The stylization of freedom involves a rejection of norms and

normalization of human behaviour; it involves a transgressive attitude towards any moral universals or prohibitions, or templates of identity.

Furthermore, freedom must be achieved by strategies and work within the dynamics of power relations and truth games. The refusal of a self or an identity delivered by one's cultural-historical-institutional context is replaced by an attitude of self which launches forward into the future of creative self-formation; that further involves the expansion of one's individual freedom. Knowledge of and control over the games of truth and relations of power allow for resistance to power and also promotion of new forms of subjectivity. Foucault's concept of nominalism as a foundation for freedom is about resistance to subjugating forces. The art of freedom is a contest with governmentality, normalization and social disciplinary practices. Thus, freedom is a refusal of received identity, a refusal of any true *nature* and a quest to invent one's own moral self as a work of art.

Foucault has a bold commitment to freedom as essential to self-definition, but it leaves an open question of the exact nature of *ontology of freedom*. This is a crucial question that will require some further reflection and examination in later chapters, especially in Chapter Five, with a final reflection on the theology of Foucault's freedom in Chapters Six and Seven. At this juncture, we know that it is firstly a *deconstructive* nominalist freedom with respect to any universals or boundaries, both anthropological and moral, and resistant to the control of the Other. It is secondly a *constructive* freedom as a praxis towards mastery of self with the help of the *logoi*, negotiation of power relations, and a proactive move on controlling truth games which define self, that is, towards self-definition, self-interpretation and self-constitution. All of this is involved in care of self. In Chapter Three, this thesis explores Foucault's concept of *technologies of self*, the equipment for, and disciplines of, self-shaping and self-transformation. Chapter Four will consider the important *aesthetic* dimensions of moral self-constitution as act of freedom; the idea of an *aesthetic-freedom* emerges. The question of context of freedom will be

brought forward in Chapter Five. Freedom and its definitions weaves its way through the entire thesis argument.

Chapter Three: Technologies of the Self, the Efficient Cause of Self-Constitution

Introduction

In Chapter Two, the discussion covered freedom as the ontological ground of Foucault's *ethics as aesthetics*, and it was noted that this involved a self-transformation through a training of, or work on, the self. This aesthetic self-invention towards freedom requires certain techniques of self [*pratiques de soi*] to accomplish the task. In this chapter, the argument draws on Foucault's interest in, and interpretation of, the ancient discipline of *askesis*, the pragmatic dimension or efficient cause of self-formation. Chapter Four will focus on a critical understanding of ethics as an art form, and ask the question of whether Foucault is moving toward an aestheticization of ethics and the moral self. The two themes of *technologies of self* and *aesthetics of existence* are parallel and yet somewhat conflicting themes in Foucault's ethics.

How does one directly and indirectly constitute one's identity, one's subjectivity, one's ethical self or mode of being, through the various technologies of the self that developed in antiquity? Foucault thinks it is important to note that during antiquity, the philosophical question of truth and the practice of spirituality were not separated. Philosophy at that time was a technique, a practice, which implicated and transformed the subject by means of a *conversion*. It is within the history of these techniques of conversion [Hadot (1995, p. 269) calls it the history of 'spiritual exercises'.] or transformation that Foucault situates his ethical philosophy. This is what links the ancient *exercices spirituels* with his own concern to formulate a contemporary ethics of self-transformation, to rethink the triangular relations of truth-power-subjectivity.

Prior to this discussion, it is necessary to explain his four-fold ethical schema, the grid of interpretation that he applies to all systems of ethics. It is a schema heavily laden with an *aesthetic* over against a *scientific* or theoretical perspective, and heavily focused on ethical practice or action. The two key books under this investigation, *L'Usage des Plaisirs* and *Le Souci de Soi* (1984a; 1984b), are characterized by a certain *interwovenness* between

the history of ancient discourse on sexual ethics and the theme of technologies of the self. Sexuality provides both the motivation and the domain for analysis of ethics; he wants to open up the discourse of sexuality. Foucault's vision is towards a free, voluntary self-formation, working from the assumption of a radical autonomy and building towards an ever-new, never complete, creative self-crafting as a life-long pursuit. The following is an analysis of the various dimensions of *askesis* which Foucault undertakes to study.

A. The Four-fold Schema of Ethics

Any discussion of *askesis* can be best understood against the backdrop, and in context of, Foucault's four-fold schema or matrix of ethics (Foucault, 1983a, pp. 263-265; 1984a, pp. 26-95). The key concept in his ethics is *subjectivation*, the relation of the self to self. In this schema, ethics is a sub-set of the category of *morality*, and strategically for Foucault, this sub-set is moved into a central focus; it becomes the main set. It is the aspect of morality that is most subject to historical change and this is important to Foucault methodologically. For him, ethics is not a field of rules, principles or precepts; rather it is a field of self-constitution as subjects, a *subjectivation*. Ethics consists of the set of attitudes, practices and goals by which one guides one's moral self-fashioning. Ethics is focused in the domain of the individual, not the domain of external rules to guide behaviour, or authority. Foucault wants to reimagine the multiple modes of subjectivity that are possible in the development of possible lifestyles, rather than to look towards conformity to any particular moral regime. This ethical schema includes four dimensions of one's relationship with oneself as an ethical being: (a) ethical substance, (b) the mode of subjection, (c) the practices or technologies of the self and (d) the trajectory of a certain mode of being. Each is important to an understanding of the overall schema, and in the ancient world, each philosophical school had its own version of this schema. Individual active choice is a major factor in each dimension.

(a) Ethical Substance [*substance éthique*]: Foucault calls this *ontology*, the aspect or part of self or one's behaviour that is concerned with moral conduct. What specific aspect of self should one attend to, problematize or wrestle with, when considering one's moral self-constitution? It can involve actions, feelings, intentions, desires, and pleasures. In the Classical era, the ethical substance related to sexuality consisted of the *aphrodisia* (*les plaisirs*), certain pleasures-acts-desires of Aphrodite (Foucault 1984a, pp. 38-52). It is an interesting fusion of categories.¹² The major worry at the time of the ancient Greeks was the intensity of the sexual pleasures and the possibility of excess. Foucault notes that, for the Christian, the focus was on the control of desires. The individual isolates and delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral scrutiny. This is the starting point, the first level of focus, when thinking about ethics with Foucault. The first issue is the choice of focus, the material for analysis and manipulation.

(b) Mode of Subjectivation [*mode d'assujettissement*]: Foucault calls this deontology, the way in which a subject relates freely to self, the way one is invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations either to a divine law revealed in a text, a natural law or cosmological order, a rational rule, or the attempt to give your existence the most beautiful form possible. This also involves the subject's relation to truth; it refers to one's moral positioning, a certain attitude, or one's stylization of self (Foucault 1984a, pp. 53-62). It answers the question: Why should one live life in one particular way and not another? The answer that is implied is that the self and one's life have no shape, no purpose, no justification outside the form which one gives to it. Moral authority and accountability, in this case, tends to be self-referential. It is therefore imperative that one think about that form, develop the techniques that will help to transform it, and that one reflect upon the ends, the *teloi*, to which one will direct them. The codes and explicit rules of behaviour may exist in society, and may even be valued by some, but much greater attention ought to

¹² One of the strains in Foucault's writing on ethics is that it is so completely dominated by sexuality and excludes so many other issues, and thus presents a one-sided analysis.

be paid to the methods, techniques and exercises directed at forming the self. The challenge of the mode of subjectivation (moral posturing) is not to base one's subjectivity on any external science or on any previously established doctrine; he categorically refuses appeal to science, religion, and law as the basis upon which the free person could shape his life. Baudelaire for instance gives form to his self through poetic art—a self-directed ethical shaping of one's self. The free choice of a mode of subjection shuns coercion from outside and leads into the ascetics, the disciplines for transforming self. One is subject only to oneself.

(c) Pragmatics or Ascetics [*pratique de soi/ ascetisme*]: This involves the ethical work, the means and tools by which one can change or elaborate self, one's character, in order to transform self and become an ethical subject. This category is the efficient cause, or technique: it can involve books, manuals, exercises, exemplars or mentors (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 63-77). There is a variety of tools for fashioning self from which to choose. Philosophy is central to this practice of self-transformation. It is not an ascetics of self-renunciation as one might find among religious monastics, but an *askesis* (ascetics) of self-elaboration. This will be an important distinction and the major focus of discussion in the present chapter. The nature of this ethical subject is then defined by *telos*, the final aspiration of the ethical work.

(d) Telos [*téléologie*] or Mode of Being: This refers to the kind or mode of being to which one aspires—the trajectory of the becoming self—when one behaves in a moral way. One might call it the point of inspiration or exemplum. The possibilities are to become pure, immortal, wise, moderate, a master of oneself, find tranquility of soul, or become a beautiful work of art. It provides a final cause, the motivating ideal, the moral vision of self, the character of the self when it is flourishing, or at least moving towards such (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 78-93). In this case, it is the choice of an image of self to work towards. This emphasis on individual choice follows logically from his commitment to an ontology of freedom.

This is an intriguing and provocative schema of practical reason that will be elaborated upon throughout this chapter. The third dimension, the ascesis, is clearly a key aspect for Foucault because it is the driving force behind the practical creativity he desires for the free self and connects with actual exercises that one can implement. It refers to the technique of the self as sculptor of self in the process of self-invention.

How is it that Foucault evolved this particular way of analysing the self in relation to his previous work on discursive practices and power? The following section will clarify this issue.

B. Technology of the Self: a Change of Academic Focus.

Foucault gives a helpful introduction to his analytical intentions regarding ascetics, as defined by him, which is read or interpreted through these *aesthetic* lenses. Jan Goldstein (1994, p. 114) contends that *philosophic ascesis* and *aestheticization of self* are two competing interpretive lines of the late Foucault. This thesis is arguing that *aesthetic interpretation* goes all the way down, making Foucault's *ascesis* a form of aesthetic as well, an *aesthetic ascetics*. Foucault (1981b) explains the shift in his focus.

It seems, according to some suggestions of Jürgen Habermas, that one can distinguish three major types of techniques: the techniques that permit one to produce, to transform, to manipulate things (production); the techniques that permit one to use sign systems (signification or communication); the techniques that permit one to determine the conduct of individuals, to impose certain ends or objectives (domination). (p. 177)

Each technology is a matrix of practical reason and each is associated with a form of domination. The Latin root word of technology is *techne*, meaning a set of tactics, strategies and techniques, designed to produce certain effects. A technology of self is such a set designed to produce a certain kind of person who functions in certain ways and not in others. Thus the goal or mode of being aspired to is vital to the *ascesis* employed. Technology of self works principally by a power relation determined through a relation to truth. The power is under the control of the person operating the technology, but there are also power relations within society that affect one's self-constitution; these are in tension

and competition. Once again, this chapter concerns itself with the games of truth, the relations of power, and the stylization of individual conduct, and how these forces interact. The concerns of power/knowledge have been imported into the domain of ethics, and to some degree, internalized by the subject. Elsewhere, Foucault (1988a) writes:

Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of technology of the self. (p. 225)

These technologies of self grew to become of major interest late in his academic life (late 1970s and early 1980s), a significant reconfiguration of his whole critical project. Foucault (1981b) continues to elaborate on this radical proposal for contemporary ethics, and to explain the shift in his attention.

Having studied the field of power relations taking techniques of domination as a point of departure, I would like in the years to come, to study power relations starting from the techniques of the self. In every culture ... this self technology implies a set of truth obligations: discovering the truth, being enlightened by the truth, telling the truth. All of these are considered important either for the constitution of, or the transformation of, the self. (p. 177)

This relation to truth is important in grasping what is involved in various self technologies.

Technique relates to one's ethical freedom in a key sense. Foucault's conception of human flourishing relates intimately to the freedom of one's ability to form and transform oneself through *ascesis*. In his work just prior to ethics, he studied the techniques of domination and normalization within institutions and society at large (*Discipline and Punish* [1977b], and *History of Sexuality Vol. I* [1976]), but now he is refocusing his research on the self—a pursuit of freedom and agency for the self. Previously, the self had been largely seen as a victim of domination tactics and discourses in his earlier archaeological and genealogical work. Foucault reflects,

I became more and more aware that in all societies there is another type of technique: techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power. Let us call these techniques "technologies of the self". (1981b, p. 177)

Under his attempt to rethink his academic project and re-define the ethical self, there is a philosophical move from *objectivation* to *subjectivation* of self. The self no longer need be

stuck in a state of victimization or marginalization, locked in by institutional or cultural stereotypes. His ethical proposal, the new experiment, is a way for the individual to get control of the reins of power over self. He suggests that this control can happen through self-transformation and self-determination within an overall aesthetics of existence, an artistic commitment. There is real power available for the individual in the art of self-creation. It involves a radical optimism regarding local, personal or micro-change, while remaining cynical about mega-change for society. It is a work on the self and on the fringes of society towards freedom and self-determination.

In an important note, one of his critics, Christopher Norris, points out that in the writings of his last decade, Foucault gives voice to some striking reservations with regard to the entire genealogy of power approach.

Most crucially, he sees it as lacking the conceptual resources to explain how subjects engage in that process of willed self-fashioning, that jointly cognitive and ethical endeavor [sic] which allows them to achieve something other (and more) than a passive acquiescence in the codes, conventions of the sexual mores of their time. (Norris, 1994, p. 57)

It is a transformation of both thought and action. This is truly a vital concern; the ethical project was aimed at opening up the question of other ways of constituting self as a moral subject than those which dominated in Western societies in the late twentieth century. This work is in some way an attempt to break the stronghold of governmentality, the kind that involves the management of populations with a universalist agenda, subjugating individuals by mechanisms of power that appeal to a universal anthropological truth. What is more revealing is the statement made by Foucault himself in an interview at a conference on the technologies of self at the University of Vermont (Martin, Gutman & Hutton, 1988). He explains his frustration with various ideologies and practices in the West that have dehumanized people in the name of humanism. He had previously studied the *mode of objectivation* of the subject in scientific humanism.

Through these different practices—psychological, medical, penitential, educational—a certain idea or model of humanity was developed, and now this idea of man has become normative, self-evident, and is supposed to be universal. Humanism may not be universal but may be quite relative to a certain situation. What we call humanism has been used by Marxists, liberals, Nazis, Catholics ... What I am afraid about humanism is that it presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom. (p. 15)

His concerns about *ascesis* are part of his answer to questions of forms of subjectivity; this is the other side of the coin from governmentality. He is breaking out of the universal, totalizing position for the subject towards multiple possibilities. It is the opposite of group-think, such as one found in certain political movements in the early twentieth century—especially nationalism or leader worship.

There is one other working assumption that is important for this part of the exposition. One of the phenomena of late modernity is the split between Being and Becoming. This insight is drawn out by F.F. Centore (1991). *Being* refers to that which is eternally fixed, immutable, permanent, unchanging, non-historical, and isolated within itself, and *Becoming* refers to that which is forever in flux, changing, evolving, and dynamic. The basic assumption is that Being and Becoming cannot be reconciled, and thus the modern thinker is forced to reject one or the other. A common assumption is that *Being* is held in question, while the focus is placed on *Becoming*. In Chapter Two, section A., it was discovered that when it comes to the self, there are no *human* givens according to Foucault. It is only the self one creates that exists—historically, contingently. Self is always and only a construction. The Foucauldian language of self-invention is rooted in this assumption that there is no human *being*, only a human *becoming*. Existence precedes essence, and essence is an individual's prerogative. This is an important reflection before proceeding with the analysis of *ascesis*, which is rooted in anti-essentialist becoming. Therefore, the ethical subject in Foucault is a fully mobile and malleable entity, constantly changing, in flux, on the adventure of becoming. Self is a mobile metaphor. Were the metaphor taken from literature, it would be like an autobiography that is under continual revision, never quite finished or perfected. It should be said, however, that *ascesis*, the tools of self-management, refers to the *technique* side of the constitution of the moral self.

The aesthetics of self-constitution is the more *romantic* side and will be examined in Chapter Four. The next section offers helpful clarification of Foucault's language of *ascesis* by tracing the common perceptions of ancient *ascesis* between Hadot and Foucault.

C. Askesis as Spiritual Exercise: Pierre Hadot.

A key interlocutor for Foucault's reading of the ancient *askesis* is his colleague and friend, Pierre Hadot, who held the chair of History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought at the Collège de France. Arnold Davidson affirms a strong impact of Hadot's major work called *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1995) on Foucault's last two published volumes in the History of Sexuality series. As a colleague, Foucault was well acquainted with Hadot's work on ancient spiritual exercises and was attracted to the following dimensions of that work (A. Davidson, 1994, pp. 70-72):

- (a) The description of ancient philosophy as an art, a style and a way of life which impacted the self intensely.
- (b) The attempts Hadot made to explain how modern philosophy had forgotten this tradition and had become an almost entirely theoretical discourse.
- (c) The idea that Christianity had taken on as its own certain Greek techniques of spiritual exercises.

Hadot (1995) explains ancient *askesis* as a spiritual exercise: 'The word "spiritual" is quite apt to make us understand that these exercises are the result, not merely of thought, but of the individual's entire psychism' (p. 82). The practice of spiritual exercises can be observed in the Hellenistic and Roman schools of philosophy. 'Philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory—much less the exegesis of texts—but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence' (Hadot, 1995, p. 83).

These spiritual exercises are the connection in antiquity to Foucault's contemporary suggestions for *techniques of the self* or means of transforming the self. This idea of philosophy as a way of life and ethics as proposing styles of life is quite provocative and intriguing. Foucault (1984e') says, 'By spirituality, I mean ... that which precisely refers to

a subject's attainment of a certain mode of being and the transformations that the subject must carry out on itself to attain to this mode of being' (p. 294). This is the practical dimension of the care of self as a practice of freedom. Philosophy was a technique, a practice, which implicated and transformed the subject. A. Davidson (1997) comments on this dialogue:

Hadot's notion of spiritual exercises helped to shape Foucault's whole project ... Foucault's study of ancient sexual behaviour is guided or framed in terms of Hadot's spiritual exercises, and Foucault's aim to link the practices of the self exhibited in the domain of sexual behaviour to the spiritual training and exercise that govern the whole of one's existence. In ancient thought, governing one's sexual practices was one aspect of that governing of oneself that was a goal of spiritual *askesis*. (p. 200)

The idea of ancient spiritual exercises helps one to make sense of the wide variety of issues attended to in Foucault's work on ethics, issues which involved both self-management, self-writing and self-development. Foucault argues, for instance, that the technology of self practices in ancient Greece aimed at achieving complete self-mastery, not the repression of desire or the refusal of pleasures (*aphrodisia*). Through careful attention to the moderate use of *aphrodisia* in all domains of life, it was possible for some Greeks to give their existence the most graceful and accomplished form possible.

What does Hadot mean by philosophy as a way of life? Philosophy in the ancient world is quite distinctive from philosophy currently; it is an art of living, a lifestyle, not primarily an abstract or theoretical philosophical discourse. The philosopher was first of all a person having a certain style of life, which he willingly chose and was mentored into, even if he did not teach or write philosophy. One did not have to be a professional philosophy teacher to live the reflective philosophical life. Philosophy as a way of life involved a conversion to a school of philosophy, which would radically change that person's life. It entailed a major commitment. This way of life involved spiritual exercises as disciplines, the *askesis* of self-transformation. The idea goes back as far as Socrates and focuses on praxis rather than theory. In the Hellenistic and Roman eras, Hadot (1995) writes:

Philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal was to transform the whole of the individual's life. Philosophy took on the form of an exercise of thought, will and the totality of one's being, the goal of which was to achieve a state practically inaccessible to mankind: wisdom. Philosophy was a method of spiritual progress which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being. (p. 265)

Wisdom is (Hadot, 1995, p. 103) 'a state of complete liberation from the passions, utter lucidity, knowledge of ourselves and of the world'. Philosophy as a way of life was a therapeutics to cure anguish about desires and passions, in order to promote peace of mind (*ataraxia*), a method for achieving independence and inner freedom (*autarkeia*), and a consciousness of the larger whole. In Stoicism and Epicureanism, it could be defined as an orientation of the attention. It was attention towards the purity of one's intentions for the Stoics, and attention towards pleasure for the Epicureans, especially the pleasure of existence (Hadot, 1995, p. 268). It was this choice of life and lifestyle that was paramount to the ancients. It is key that the choice of lifestyle preceded metaphysical theories or moral justification. The most important thing was the profound orientation of life, the fundamental choice of life, which passionately engaged the self. Conversion from everyday life to a philosophical way of life, defined in these ancient terms, could be shocking or offensive for the general public. Hadot (1995, p. 104) writes:

The practice of spiritual exercises implied a complete reversal of received ideas: one was to renounce the false values of wealth, honors [sic], and pleasures, and turn toward the true values of virtue, contemplation, a simple lifestyle and the simple happiness of existence.

This radical lifestyle choice inspired Foucault as to its contemporary possibilities. It emerges in his praxis of freedom.

Hadot (1995, p. 269) notes also that Christians adopted this idea of philosophy as a way of life with its spiritual exercises from the Greeks. In the second century C.E., they lived in conformity with the law of Logos—divine reason—and practised their own kind of spiritual exercises. But this idea of the philosophical way of life is lost in the Middle Ages when philosophy is reduced to a handmaiden of theology and is not picked up again until Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, whose philosophies are an invitation to radically transform one's way of life.

What was involved in these spiritual exercises? Each ancient school believed in the freedom of the will, giving each individual the possibility to modify, improve, and realize himself.¹³ Thus, it required vigorous exercises in order to produce the desired spiritual transformation: intense meditations, awareness of the finitude of existence, examinations of conscience, and a specific attitude towards time (especially the significance of the present moment). These are some of the currents that Foucault picks up. Socratism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Cynicism, Scepticism were all different models or ways of life, and involved their own unique combination of spiritual exercises. This implies a corporate aspect of spiritual exercises. Ancient philosophy required a common effort, a community of research, mutual assistance and spiritual support (Hadot, 1995, p. 274). Above all, the philosopher never gave up having an effect on their cities, transforming society, and serving their citizens. Philosophy is an intellectual, spiritual and social phenomenon. (Hadot, 1995, p. 102) notes:

In all philosophical schools, the goal pursued in these exercises is self-realization and improvement. All schools agree that man, before his philosophical conversion, is in a state of unhappy disquiet. Consumed by worries, torn by passions, he does not live a genuine life, nor is he truly himself. All schools also believe that man can be delivered from this state. He can accede to the genuine life, improve himself, transform himself and attain a state of perfection.

Their goal is a kind of self-formation, or *paedeia*, which is to teach one to live, not in conformity with human prejudices and social conventions—for social life is itself a product of the passions—but in conformity with the nature of man, which is none other than reason. The spiritual exercise is not a matter of a purely rational consideration, but the putting into action of all kinds of means, intended to act upon oneself. So, the philosopher became a radical exemplary; this is an attractive element for Foucault.

Foucault, however, brackets out what Hadot observed as the ancient Stoic emphasis on a universal nature or the whole of the cosmos or general reason in his analysis (anything transcendent or normative); he read the spiritual exercises as having the self and its well-being as the goal rather than finding oneself in a larger context, which Hadot calls *cosmic*

¹³ It is important to see that this only applies to the adult, free, literate, male citizen.

consciousness. This is part of Foucault's dedicated battle with transcendence in his ethics, part of his dedicated nominalism. The issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five as a critique of Foucault's bias on ancient spiritual exercises and a philosophical blindness to their concern with the greater good.

How is the self shaped through spiritual exercises? Often a master forms his disciples attempting to guide them to self-transformation and self-realization through dialogue. In parallel with the concept of physical exercise (Hadot, 1995, p.102), 'philosophy develops strength of soul, modifies his inner climate, transforms his vision of the world, and finally his entire being.' The quest for self-realization is symbolized by the 'Plotinian image of sculpting one's own statue' (Hadot, 1995, p. 102). This was an art which *took away*, as opposed to painting (an art which *added on*). The statue pre-existed in the marble block, and it was enough to take away what was superfluous in order to cause it to appear. In all schools, Hadot (1995, p. 102) clarifies:

People are unhappy because they are the slave of their passions ... because they desire things they may not be able to obtain, since they are exterior, alien, and superfluous to them. It follows that happiness consists in independence, freedom, and autonomy ... Happiness is the return to the essential: that which is truly ourselves and which depends on us.

Stoicism rejects all that is alien in order to return one to one's true self, to achieve moral freedom; Epicureans ignore unnatural and unnecessary desires in order to return to one's original nucleus of freedom and independence. Hadot (1995, p. 103) says: 'All spiritual exercises are, fundamentally, a return to the self, in which the self is liberated from the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions and desires.' The self, liberated in this way, is no longer merely one's egoistic, passionate individuality; it is a *moral* being, open to universality and objectivity, and participating in universal nature or thought. Again, Foucault does not agree with any universal element to the moral self, but he does like this idea of a return to self. There exists a tension in the two different analyses of technologies of self with Foucault biased towards the autonomy of the individual.

Here is how Foucault saw *ascesis*. It formed a kind of training for life, an *ascetics* in the broad sense of the term. On the Stoic side, Plutarch and Epictetus talked about various

tests as a ‘way of measuring and confirming the independence one is capable of with regard to everything that is not indispensable and essential’ (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 58-9). It is not about self-renunciation, but supremacy over oneself. Exercises in abstinence or austerity were common to both Epicureans and Stoics. For the Epicureans, it was a matter of showing how, in the satisfaction of the most elementary needs, one could find a fuller, purer, more stable pleasure; and the test marked the threshold where privation could start to make one suffer (Ibid., p. 59).¹⁴ For the Stoics

It was primarily a matter of preparing oneself for possible privations by discovering how easy it was, finally, to dispense with everything to which habit, opinion, education, attention to reputation, and taste for ostentation have attached us. (Ibid.)

Foucault is focusing on one of the concomitants of the pursuit of virtue, *apatheia*, the psychological state of insensitivity to pleasures and pain, emotions and passions, joys and grief. Daily self-examination was part of Pythagorean teaching, a practice carried out morning and evening to evaluate the progress of each day. Careful notes were taken to record the events. Foucault is quick to point out that it does not involve any sense of guilt or self-castigation or feeling sorry for failure, but rather shortcomings provide fuel for improvement, and new strategy. (Ibid., p. 62)

The Stoic, Epictetus, also had a test for thought, whereby representations were tested through critical thinking. A key qualification here is Foucault’s comment that one should ‘accept in relation to the self only that which can depend on subjective free and rational choice’ as a ‘test of power and guarantee of freedom’ (Foucault, 1984b, p. 62).¹⁵ Thought itself was an object of scrutiny and must be kept under control. All of this was involved in the shaping of a moral self; ascetics were a kind of rehearsal for the practice of virtues such as moderation (*sophrosyne*).

In conclusion, Foucault is strongly sympathetic to the idea of philosophy as a way of life with its ancient spiritual exercises, which he prefers to call practices of the self or

¹⁴ For the Epicurean hedonist, the highest good in life is the absence of pain and vexing pleasures that bring discomfort as their consequence. The aim of life should be *ataraxia* or tranquility of body, mind, and spirit.

¹⁵ It seems that he is manipulating the Stoic idea of *logos* or rational principle; he is reducing it to that which can be controlled by the self and not the World Soul or principle to which one ought to conform.

practices of freedom. He claims to have drawn much insight from Pierre Hadot and shares in his enthusiasm for the possibility of a revival of this ancient philosophical outlook. Next, it is important to understand the part played by *telos* or goal of *askesis* in self-making.

D. *Telos*: the Goal of Ascesis.

The goal or vision of any self-transformation will certainly have a major impact on the outcome of ethical activity. It answers the question: What do we want to become? Perhaps John Rajchman (1991) can assist in understanding the complexity of the *telos* in Foucault's ethical schema.

Foucault tried to isolate the "etho-poietic" tradition in philosophy, in which *poiesis*, or the work of artistic creation, would serve as a *model* for living well, as well as a *technique* in the accomplishment of this fundamental task of ancient "virtue". (p. 135)

This thesis has been arguing that aesthetics interprets Foucault's ethics *all the way down*. One should not be surprised to find that the trajectory of his ethical self-formation favours an aesthetic category: the individual as artefact that offers aesthetic delight. It is largely a question of the aesthetics of character (ethos or mode of being). Note what he lays out as a possible objectives of shaping oneself: a state of purity, freedom, masters of ourselves, the beautiful life, a state of tranquillity, happiness, perfection, or immortality. These are all categories of self-realization and involve feeling good about oneself. Foucault reads all these goals through his aesthetic interpretive paradigm as a state of personal well-being. His question is: Through the practices of the self, what should one become in one's subjectivity? How should one govern the self? Clearly, the goal of ethics is not world peace or environmental improvement or the elimination of poverty, but the pursuit of a certain *mode of being* or attractive lifestyle. It involves a rigorous pursuit of reduction of harassment from outside forces or inward anxieties, fears, agitations, excesses. There is no quest for communal justice; ethics is a personal quest to shape one's own subjectivity in the face of silent and invisible outside disciplinary forces.

Thus, as it will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, there is much energy given to analysis of those virtues which are concerned with one's own happiness, tranquillity and well-being or human ways of flourishing. In his book, *L'usage des plaisirs* (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 78-93), the focus of ethical concern among the early Greeks revolves around the state of *sophron*, a state of self-domination, or moderation. The free, moderate self was the goal of one's stylization, an honourable state in the midst of a battle for control, an ongoing *agonisme* with the self. This was the virtuous life. Its opposite is *akrasia*, which is gratuitous indulgence, shameless behaviour, and weak will, a state of being that was out of control. Foucault (1984a) explains.

Enkrateia (self-discipline) is the prerequisite of *sophrosyne*, as the form of effort and control that the individual must apply to himself in order to become moderate (*sophron*), a state of self-mastery (heautocracy), the victory ... *Sophrosyne* is described as a general state that ensures one will do "what is fitting as regards both gods and men"—one will not only be moderate but righteous and just and courageous. The subject deliberately chooses reasonable principles of action, is capable of following and applying them, holds the "right mean" between insensitivity and excess, and derives pleasure from the moderation displayed. (p. 65)

One could call this a desirable state of being; moderation and self-discipline are highly valued within the early Greek culture. This high valuation is also true of the goal of tranquillity and self-sufficiency in the later Roman culture. In terms of Early Greek and Greco-Roman morality, he claims:

The accent was placed on the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and a supremacy over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquillity, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions, and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself. (Foucault, 1984a, p. 31)

The Greeks believed that they must conquer self first before ruling others. The reward would be this state of dignity, self-respect and peace with oneself and the polis, the city-state. This was the beautiful life. Symbolically, it represented the victory over the gods Eros and Aphrodite, the lords of passion.

The Romans, especially the Stoics, focused on self-cultivation and the cultured self, the self-contained self. In Chapter Four, Part 1, section C. 'Aesthetics of Existence Involves Taking Care Of Self', and the subsection titled 'Conversion to Self', it will be demonstrated that this was the ultimate goal of the cultivation (read practices) of self, that

is, the state of *autarkeia*, or self-sufficiency. It is a state of delight in oneself and a state of non-dependence on anyone outside the self for survival or happiness. This is the *apogee* of self-care by Foucault. Autonomy, freedom, self-sufficiency are highly valued here. The force of the valorization of certain virtues or values is that it gave strong direction to the technologies of self in the ancient world; it intensified the personal quest. Foucault did not look to the ancient world for a prescription of the shape of this life or its virtues; the ancients acted more as an example of noble self-governance and self-making. Foucault allows for a plurality of possible aspirations. But the *telos* is vital to the work of *ascesis*. Michelangelo must see the David figure in the block of marble before beginning to sculpt, and so must one see the image of the desired mode of being before beginning the work of self-transformation.

What does seem significant, for purpose of clarification, is to attend to what Daniel O'Hare calls the *moral exempla*. He is suggesting a personal aspiration for Foucault in this project. The interpretive stance is as follows:

The belief that the highest human good is to shape a distinctive self out of the moral exempla in the collective archive, and to give oneself as the distinctively shaped invention or aesthetic experiment to others through one's critical acts of magnanimous judgment. (O'Hare, 1994, p. 153)

Then one places one's own exemplum in the archive for posterity. Foucault does celebrate multiple exempla in his histories of discourses about sexuality (except those which are universalist). The thesis writer agrees with O'Hare, that the major division between cultures, for Foucault, is that between a culture that imposes a single, schematic, normalizing model, a *centralizing* or *totalizing* pattern for rigorous imitation, and a culture that permits, indeed encourages the revisionary production and performance of a differential plurality of concrete exempla. The individual faces eclectic choice amidst the plurality of exempla; this plurality is what Foucault celebrates. O'Hare (1994) goes further: 'The self-mastering person becomes an individuated but still composite self, according to a self-elected rule. This self is thereby worthy of being remembered as an exemplary figure for representative articulation in the history of ethical culture' (p. 153).

This is quite a profound suggestion and one worth contemplating. It implies that Foucault sees himself as an example of moral heroics in his passionate devotion to the chosen process of self-making, in passionate pursuit and production of differences without end. He does in fact become this kind of moral hero or icon in the late twentieth century. Classics scholar David Halperin (1995, Introduction) sees Foucault as a *saint* within a certain socio-cultural context, a moral exemplum par excellence for the gay community. The beautiful, memorable, estimable life, the work of art, is possibly Foucault's personal aspiration as well, an exemplum that could be allocated to the historical archives.

Therefore the *telos* or goal of *ascesis* picks up a key point. In terms of moral self-constitution, one is shaped significantly by one's vision of the ethical state of being to which one aspires; this also affects the technologies of self that one employs. Foucault celebrates a plurality in the various modes of being and therefore lifestyles which are possible, and he employs the examples of the ancient Greeks and Romans of this type of pursuit of the beautiful life. They are, for Foucault, an alternative to Christian technologies of the self.

E. Christian *Ascesis*: the Undesirable Alternative.

Even though Foucault is an atheist, Christianity is a strategic theme in his late work. It is important to the argument of this thesis to understand Foucault's interpretation of Christian *ascesis*. It is not a systematic study but a strategic study of the technology of pastoral power¹⁶ and Christian truth telling. The distinction will become clear in the following discussion, but suffice is to say at this point that Foucault has not critiqued Christian theistic ethics as a whole, but only picks up on certain precise themes in order to build a contrast between Christian *ascesis* and the more *liberated* Greek and Roman versions. Foucault notes a transition from pagan to Christian practices of the self that he wants his readers to see. He notes a critical juncture, a watershed; subtle at times and overt at other

¹⁶ According to Foucault (1982b, pp. 214-216), pastoral power is adopted by Western states and institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to be used to manage populations in order to normalize them.

points, his analysis suggests that this is where the practices of self lost their ideal form. It was a negative turn in the philosophical way of life. Christianity and its morality represents a distinctive *loss* with respect to care of self, by means of a restructuring of ethics as law or code, and a shift toward an inner spiritual hermeneutic of self and conscience. Rainer Rochlitz (1994) supports this view: ‘Foucault establishes a rigorous continuity between the “juridicial-moral codification” of Christianity and psychoanalysis as the ultimate stage of a “power of truth” exercised on the body and pleasures’ (p. 251). Foucault himself (1984d) states this clearly.

Christianity certainly reinforced in moral reflection the principle of law and codal structure, even if the practices of asceticism continued to give great importance to the practices of the self ... Early Christianity brought several important changes to the asceticism of Antiquity: it intensified the form of law, but it also diverted the practices of the self towards the hermeneutics of the self and the deciphering of oneself as a subject of desire. The articulation of law and desire seems to be fairly typical of Christianity. (p. 260)¹⁷

Christianity is accused of subverting the art of life (care of self) in the name of its struggle against sin, partly through its normalizing tendency and partly through a concept of truth that makes desire into an object of knowledge (*connaissance*) so that it can be better controlled. Knowledge of self, suspicion of the inner workings of the soul, temptations, and the need to confess this inner errancy to a pastoral figure came to the fore. The whole discourse and *praxis* changes to one of confession and ultimately to self-renunciation. It seems clear that Foucault (1981b, pp. 175-183) has an *aesthetic distaste* for what happened to *ascesis* and the technologies of the self under Augustine¹⁸ and other Christian influences. He problematizes Christian *ascesis*. His critique details as an introversion of *ascesis* and a *self-negation* in contrast to Greek and Greco-Roman self-affirmation and self-development, what he calls a *progressive consideration of the self*. This aesthetic elaboration of self is outlined in Chapter Four, Part I. His reading of ancient *ascesis*, prior

¹⁷ It is worth reading E.A. Clark’s essay (1988) for a slightly different perspective on the early Christian practices of self, one which responds to Foucault’s analysis.

¹⁸ Foucault’s comparison between the sexual problematics of Augustine and Artemidorus reveals this. Augustine’s main concern is about inner desires while Artemidorus is preoccupied with the implications of his sexual dreams for his future status in society (1984b, pp. 4-16.)

to Christianity, is of a strong self-affirmation; nowhere does his writing observe the denial to oneself of sexual pleasures.

Since Foucault is intensely interested in the relationship between self and truth, what is the place of truth in Christian *ascesis*? As he articulates it, Christians see the issue of truth quite differently from the Stoics (his ideal of pagan *ascesis*). He is keenly interested in both the concept of truth and how truth operates in the Christian religion, both Catholic and Protestant-Reformed and of course how this then affects the Christian practices of the self. Truth obligations in fact are directly linked to self-renunciation. ‘Why this fundamental connection between sexuality, subjectivity and truth obligation?’, Foucault (1981b, p. 178) queries. Indeed, he notices certain truth obligations, external and internal to the self. In terms of his four-fold schema of ethics, *purity of the virgin* or sexual abstinence (self-denial) is the *telos* or goal of work done on the self by Christians. Foucault (1988a) observes:

It is not the same in the Catholic as in the Reform tradition. But the main features of both are an ensemble of truth obligations dealing with faith, books, dogma, and one dealing with purity of the soul. Purity of the soul is the consequence of self-knowledge and a condition for understanding the text: *quis facit veritatum* (to make truth in oneself, to get access to the light), in Augustine. (p. 242)

First, one notes the external obligations to truth in Christianity, obligation to a particular discourse, doctrine and authority. There are the required rules of behaviour that provide the means to get from this reality to heaven, as he sees it, a salvation by works or conformity to moral rules. There is also commitment to belief in a certain body of dogma, from which one must not stray. A canon of certain books needs to be accepted as a permanent source of truth. Finally, certain key authoritative persons, within the church as institution, must be respected as the proper interpreters of texts and the way to live (Foucault, 1988a, p. 242; 1981b, p. 178). This is one aspect of the Christian truth game. All of this speaks to him of the *hegemony of truth* by religious authority, a politics of control, which he dislikes.

Secondly, there are the symmetrical internal obligations to *truth-telling* with regard to one’s faults and failings, which Christians call confession. It is this that Foucault refers to as a second aspect of Christian technologies of the self. To begin, one sees the

obligation to find the truth about what is going on within the self: temptations, fantasies, and desires. This involves a *hermeneutics of self* as self-decipherment or inner investigation. There is the task of clearing up illusions about the self, temptations, seductions that can occur in the mind. One needs to begin by telling the truth to oneself, to attempt to discover the *reality* of what is going on deep within oneself. This then entails the obligation to reveal this inner truth to others: a priest, abbot, or pastor, otherwise known as confession of the soul. Foucault (1988a):

Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge his faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obligated to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and, hence, to bear public witness against oneself. The truth obligations of faith and the self are linked together. This link permits a purification of the soul impossible without self-knowledge. (p. 242)

The above statement can also be referred to as the *acts of truth*. One needs the light of external truth in order to discern the inner truth about the self. Access to this inner truth about the self is tied to purification of the soul. These are the ways and means that truth is operative for the Christian. It is a stark contrast to the pagan use of truths or *logoi*. According to Foucault, the *logoi* included principles of positive character building and self-formation, and included nothing of a negative self-discerning or confessional truth game, nothing of a required belief. It was a voluntary, eclectic and open involvement with truth.

Foucault indicates that Christianity represents the beginning stages of the problem of dominating power structures and normalization of behaviour, the loss of autonomy of the self, the *Panopticon problem*.¹⁹ He is vying for ethical action as self-formation free from the strictures of moral codes or the controlling gaze and discipline of the *Panopticon priest*. One of Foucault's critics, Nancy Fraser (1992), has an excellent summary of the issue.

¹⁹ This Panopticon concept comes from his analysis of the prison in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977b). It involves a sophisticated use of power and information control to dominate and manipulate individuals and to get them to participate in their own subjugation. It is a form of what he later calls governmentality.

In the early modern period, closed disciplinary institutions like prisons perfected a variety of mechanisms for the fabrication and subjugation of individuals as epistemic objects and targets of power. These techniques aimed at the retooling of deviants as docile and useful bodies to be reinstated in the social machine. Later these techniques were exported beyond the confines of the institutional birthplace and were made the basis for global strategies for domination aimed at the total administration of life. (p. 228)

Power relations are involved at the intimate levels of all social practices and relations for Foucault. In his estimation, the Christian obligations to truth are tantamount to this type of domination and slavery, coercion and moral imprisonment. The Christian subject is, by way of power reversal and the Christian truth games, turned into an object. Foucault's self-stylization ethics automatically resists all technologies of normalization, techniques that he assumes will produce docility of bodies and conformity; it resists external discipline. Here is the real tension or power struggle for him.

In summary, truth is a double duty of Christian societies. From the light of faith commitments (truth or belief) and the ongoing quest for purity, the Christian self proceeds to vigorous self-decipherment. In the end, this cipher must lead to confession or witness *against oneself* to a religious authority, expert or community. This, in turn, leads first to the tremendous vulnerability of exposing oneself, and then to the negative experience of renouncing oneself or breaking from one's previous self. Foucault (1981b, p. 178) labels this the spiral of *truth formulation* and *reality renouncement*: 'The more we discover the truth about ourselves, the more we want to renounce ourselves; and the more we want to renounce ourselves the more we need to bring to light the reality of ourselves.' Self is part of the reality to be renounced in the pursuit of salvation. So, the Christian *truth game*, the relationship between the subject and truth, implies the *death* of the self in Foucault's analysis. These are the things that are *inscribed* on the Christian body; Foucault reads the Christian body under the sign of the panoptic confessing self.

This leads to the next major point under Christian *asceticism*: self-renunciation as the central principle. Renouncing self follows from deciphering the assumed darker, deceptive inner self. This is best illustrated in his examination of the ancient Christian practices of

exomologesis and *exagoreusis*. The quest for the purification of soul is the driving force behind renunciation (Foucault, 1988a).

In Christianity, asceticism always refers to a certain renunciation of the self and of reality because most of the time the self is a part of that reality that must be renounced in order to gain access to another level of reality. This move to attain renunciation of the self distinguishes Christian asceticism. (p. 238)

Exomologesis was a practice in the early centuries of the Christian era, a *dramatic* and public event.²⁰ The purpose of this practice was to help someone who had committed grievous sin to recognize himself as in fact a sinner, or penitent in a *public context*. It involved confession, public shame, and lengthy exclusion or marginalization from the community, a kind of banishment, with a view to eventual restoration. *Exomologesis* exposed one's faults through mortifications, austerities, his way of living, his arguments, his manifest attitude of repentance, in short, through a whole *dramaticity*. The verbal expression did not have the main role; it was a drama of disempowerment and exclusion. In Foucault's analysis, the key point is the illumination of the self, a ritual of recognizing oneself as sinner and penitent, which likely reminds him of some psychiatrists who used to force their clients to admit they were indeed *mad* as part of their therapy. In this process, the downcast individual would do penance by parading through the streets sometimes for years before he was allowed, after reformation, to re-enter the Christian community. The practice is an emphatic affirmation on one hand, whose emphasis relates above all to the fact that the subject binds himself to the affirmation of Christian truth games and accepts the consequences of its power relations (Foucault, 1997c, p. 82).

Foucault clearly has problems with this practice, especially because, on his reading, self-revelation or dramatic public confession of wrongdoing leads to serious embarrassment, self-destruction or negative consequences for the self: 'Penance is the affect of change, or rupture with self, past, and world. It is the breaking of one's previous identity' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 245). He contrasts this to Stoic practices:

²⁰ See A. Cutrofello (2004) article on Foucault's account of *exomologesis*.

The difference between the Stoic and Christian traditions is that in the Stoic tradition examination of the self, judgment, and discipline show the way to self-knowledge by superimposing truth about self through memory, that is, by memorizing the rules. In *exomolgesis*, the penitent superimposes truth about the self by violent rupture and dissociation. (Ibid.)

Emphasis is placed on the dramatic dimension, not the verbal. But the result is self-negation, domination and exclusion by the Christian community, a martyrdom of sorts, a *killing* of oneself. The mode of *subjectivation* leads to *objectivization* and slavery of the self, cooperating with one's own incarceration.

The second major ancient Christian practice of the self or spiritual exercise that Foucault takes note of is *exagoreusis*. This is a well-developed and elaborated practice of self-examination and self-disclosure among monastics of the fourth and fifth centuries, a chastity-oriented asceticism; it became a dominant form of monastic technology down to the seventeenth century. Spirituality, within this framework, consisted largely of clearing the mind for devotion to God, with the help of a senior confessor or spiritual director. Two principles or moments dominated the practice: complete obedience to one's spiritual mentor and contemplation by means of self-examination. It was focused on a verbalizing exercise. For Foucault, it was reminiscent of the verbalizing exercises in relation to a teacher-master of the pagan philosophical schools; he contrasts the two radically different forms of technology throughout, particularly with Stoic practices of self. In Seneca, the relationship of the disciple with the master was important, but it was instrumental and professional. It was founded on the capacity of the master to lead the disciple to a happy and autonomous life through good advice. The relationship would end when the disciple gained access to that life (Foucault, 1988a, p. 246). In contrast, monastic life entailed that there is no element in a monk's life that may escape from this fundamental and permanent relation of total obedience to the master. Foucault (1988a) gives the example of Cassian from the Eastern Church where 'obedience is a complete control of behaviour by the master, not a final autonomous state. It is a sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will' (p. 246). The monk must ask permission for everything; the monastic self must constitute

itself through obedience to the master, and define the power relations in terms of the master as *dominator*.

Secondly, contemplation is the supreme good in the Christian truth game of *exagoreusis*. This entails the obligation of the monk to turn his thoughts continuously to focus on God, and to make sure that his heart is pure enough to see God. Purity is again a key *telos*. The focus of this spiritual exercise is on thoughts not actions, whereas with Seneca, it is placed on action. The goal is permanent contemplation of God (Foucault, 1988a, p. 246). However, the young novice is held back from this pure contemplation by various distracting inner thoughts. For this reason, he must undergo a rigorous self-examination, a scrutiny of thoughts and conscience, even tracing the detailed course of his thoughts. This scrutiny consists of trying to immobilize consciousness, to eliminate movements of the spirit that divert one from God. Again, in contrast, the Stoic exercise of self-examination occurs with respect to the way one's thoughts relate to rules of self-formation, and are not perceived as the enemy of improvement. The assumption for the monk is that the examination of self is concerned with the relation between the hidden thought and an inner impurity or corruption. Here, the Christian *hermeneutics of the self* engages the problem with its deciphering of inner secret thoughts or self-illusion. Examination of conscience is a matter of taking hold of the thought occurrence, of probing rather deeply in order to grasp its origin and determine where it comes from and to do a sorting out. Foucault (1988a) says, 'The monk stands in a hermeneutic relation not only to the master but to himself—the verbalization is the touchstone' (p. 247).

Self-examination then leads to confession to the spiritual authority. Unconditional obedience, uninterrupted examination, and exhaustive confession form an ensemble with each element implying the other two; the verbal manifestation of truth that hides in the depths of oneself appears as an indispensable component of the government of men by each other. But, it must be emphasized that this manifestation was not for the purpose of one's sovereign mastery over oneself as in pagan practices; what was expected, rather, was

humility and mortification, detachment toward oneself and the constitution of a relation with oneself tending toward the destruction of the form of the self (Foucault, 1997c, p. 84). Confession is not simply a statement of wrongs committed, nor a general exposition of the state of one's soul; it must tend toward the continuous verbalization of all impulses of thought. This confession enables the director to give counsel and render a diagnosis. It involves a continuous externalization through words of the *arcana* of consciousness. And here we return to the issue of self-renunciation of one's own will, and of one's own self. Foucault means it in the full negative sense of the loss of self and of bondage to the other, a *Panopticon* ethical situation of domination, a disaster of the self, in his estimate, an inappropriate moral self-constitution.

We see that his conclusion about this Christian practice of the self is a form of coercion, control and *objectivization* of the self; finally, it is a destruction of the self and a loss of choice. Clearly, as articulated, this is something which he wants to surpass. The relationship between the subject and truth is one of repression by truth and truth-telling exercises, according to Foucault (1997a):

In this process of "subjectivation"... two things stand out. This subjectivation is linked with a process of familiarization which makes the obligation to seek and state the truth about oneself an indispensable and permanent condition of this asceticism; and if there is subjectivation, it is also involves an indeterminate objectivization of the self by the self—indeterminate in the sense that one must be forever extending as far as possible the range of one's thoughts. (p. 195)

These new modalities taken up regarding sexual ethics in monastic life, the building of a new, and the establishment of complex relations of obedience to the Other, indicate something quite dangerous for this philosopher. The Christian technology of self is taken as a negative technology, and it tends to decrease freedom and self-love. It is quite distasteful and appears to Foucault to be the precursor of the sciences of domination some centuries later.

In terms of Foucault's central concern about renunciation of self, one thing stands in common between these two major techniques: it is in the very act of disclosure, the *act of truth* that renunciation occurs; one cannot disclose without renouncing. Interrogation of the

self is implied. Whether through social martyrdom or through obedience to a master, disclosure of self is the renunciation of one's own self. In *exomolosis*, one must kill self through ascetic macerations and mortifications. In the practice of *exagoreusis*, by permanently verbalizing one's thoughts and permanently obeying the master, one is renouncing one's will and oneself. The question is raised by Foucault (1997c):

How is it that in Western Christian culture the government of men demands, on the part of those who are led, not only the acts of obedience and submission but also "acts of truth", which have the peculiar requirement not just that the subject tell the truth but that he tell the truth about himself, his faults, his desires, the state of his soul, and so on? (p. 81)

It is not an ethics of freedom but an ethics of slavery in his view; he clearly finds this alarming, distasteful, something to be surpassed, or avoided.

Foucault suggests that verbalization becomes the more important of the two practices and survives to our day, albeit in a different form. From the eighteenth century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the social sciences. They are used to constitute a new self, one that is not involved in self-renunciation, but rather self-actualization. Foucault's overall objection is to the truth games and power relations within Christian ascetics (economy of austerity as self-denial), that is, between the novice and the father confessor or examiner, whether that be another or oneself. It is something to be decried and surpassed in his view. It is important to keep in mind that Foucault is an atheist and his work on religion does not sustain a traditional theological worldview. J. Carrette (2000, pp. 130-141), who studied at some depth Foucault's overall interaction with religion, notes that in his later work 'Foucault's "religious question" is in effect a *problematization of religion*, a desire to surpass religion: Religion was seen inseparably to exist in the social, cultural and political exclusions which attempt to control human experience' (Ibid., p. 129). Foucault isolated the various techniques and strategies, not the theology behind them, which made Christianity a major force in the constitution of sexual discourse in the West. He contrasts the moderation of the Greeks to the austerity of Christian ascetics. Carrette (2000, p. 136) notes:

Foucault's interest in the "new relations of power" was part of his overall strategy to place religion within the framework of "governmentality". Whether or not his account of Christianity is accurate, his overall aim was to highlight how these regimes of power and the 'techniques of the self' were a fundamental part of religious discourse. His work was an attempt to show the inescapable "political" techniques of religion ... One of the central features of Foucault's later "religious question" is how religion and Christianity in particular creates "forms of subjection" by developing "new power relations". The "spiritual", as Foucault elaborated in his 1982 lectures at Collège de France, involves a transformation of the subject. It is, as he tentatively stated in a later interview, "a subject acceding to a certain mode of being"... Religion is constituted as a political force which brings people under a certain system of control. In Foucault's work the "spiritual", like the "sexual", does not exist apart from the "political" structures, requirements, laws, and regulations that have a primary importance for it.

In this regard, it is also helpful to refer the reader to Foucault's lecture at the University of Tokyo, April 1978 (Foucault, 1978, pp. 115-130) where he speaks more explicitly of pastoral power. His ethics, which resonates with that of the ancient pagans, searches for a self-relation, that can break this relationship between power/knowledge and the confessor, and supports a more autonomous, emergent self-relatedness. This technology of self will be explored in the next section.

F. Techniques of Self in Paganism

This leads to the heart of Foucault's interpretation of the ancient pagan techniques of self, and his recommendation for citizens of the late twentieth century. For this section, the writer appeals to the background of Section C of this chapter: 'Askesis as Spiritual Exercise'. These spiritual exercises are articulated and carried out by moral philosophers and medical personnel of antiquity. Foucault says, 'No technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can the art of living, the *techne tou biou*, be learned without an *askesis* that should be understood as a training of the self by oneself' (Foucault, 1997b, p. 208). Each school of philosophy—Stoics, Epicureans, Platonists, Cynics, and Skeptics among them—embodied the philosophical *way of life*, and each embodied a different style of life: 'Each philosophical school ... represented a style of life that had a corresponding fundamental inner attitude' (A. Davidson, 1994, p. 71). Davidson proposes that we take each particular conceptual combination, or matrix—of ethical substance, mode of subjection, self-forming activity, and telos—as representing a unique *style* of life within a particular philosophical school. One's style of life, as specified by a determinate

content and mesh of each of these four components, gives expression to the self's relationship to itself. This fascinated Foucault: to choose a particular school would mean to convert to its style of life, accept its rules and obligations, and its technologies for self-formation. In his analysis, Foucault does in fact link the notions of ethics and style of life in a conceptually intimate way; this becomes even more apparent in Chapter Four.

Foucault, unlike Hadot, is not quite as clear about the hegemony of each school; he in fact sees the approach in terms of an eclectic formation of the self, picking and choosing from all the various discourses, medical and philosophical, and the various exercises, which seem to constitute the collected cultural resources (spiritual exercises) of the time.

Foucault (1984a, p. 79) is fascinated with the plurality of means for building, training and testing the self in ethical formation: through abstinences, memorizations, examinations of conscience, meditations, control of representations, silence, and listening to others. Among all the forms this training took, Foucault focuses most intensely on (a) self-writing and correspondence (through discourses and friendship) as an interactive way of self-fashioning, and (b) ways of examining or testing self through thought experiments or physical tests. Daniel O'Hare (1994) clarifies the situation.

Primarily what we can learn from the Greco-Roman technologies of the self ... is the fact that the self is not simply found, not authentically discovered deep within us, but is made, artificially invented and projected before us ... out of all the discourses available to us. This self is plural, mobile, unstable, open to revision, and dependent upon reading and writing for its "creation". (p. 149)

As discussed in the previous section on Christian asceticism, the Stoic technology of self is not about renunciation, but a *progressive consideration of self*; a positive elaboration within the possibilities of self-invention. It involves an 'intensification' of subjectivity and a preparation for this world. Judging from a review of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Volumes 2 and 3 (1984a; 1984b) on ethics and reflective essays and interviews collected in *Dits et écrits* (1994), the Stoics appear to be his prime model of self-technology. This is how Foucault (1988a) puts it.

In the philosophical tradition inaugurated by Stoicism, *askesis* means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth. It has as its final aim not the preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The Greek word for this is *paraskeuazo* (“to get prepared”). It is a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action. *Aletheia* becomes *ethos*. (pp. 238, 239)

Foucault’s concern (1981b) with the relationship between the subject and truth leads him to say that he believes that ‘in every culture ... this self technology implies a set of truth obligations: discovering the truth, being enlightened by the truth, telling the truth. All these are considered important either for the constitution of, and transformation of, the self’ (p. 77). In the case of pagan technologies of self, truth is in *logoi* or the combined archive of ancient moral discourses, not in the individual. Truth begins *outside* the individual and is then brought into one’s self for self-constitution. In this aspect, he disagrees with Plato as well as Christianity. The pagan self, according to Foucault, is taken as a *consumer* of moral discourses, discourses from which the self is stylized *ethically*.

For Plato, one must discover the truth that is within one. For the Stoics, truth is not in oneself but in the *logoi*, the teachings of the masters. One memorizes what one has heard, converting the statement one hears into a rule of conduct. The subjectivation of truth is the aim of these techniques ... In Stoicism, it is not the deciphering of the self, not the means to disclose secrecy, which is important; it is the memory of what one has done and what one has to do. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 238)

Foucault notes a transition or development in the nature of *ascesis*. Among the early Greeks, techniques of self and political training were part of a common training; political education and training in virtue went hand in hand. Eventually, the *ascesis* took on a new sophistication and became a body of material in itself, a subject matter for teaching, and a basic set of instruments in the direction of souls. It became more formalized (Foucault 1984a).

In a word, we can say that the theme of an *askesis*, as a practical training that was indispensable in order for an individual to form himself as a moral subject, was important—emphasized even—in classical Greek thought, especially in the tradition issuing from Socrates. And yet this “ascetics” was not organized or conceived as a corpus of separate practices that would constitute a kind of specific art of the soul, with its techniques, procedures, and prescriptions. It was not distinct from the practice of virtue itself; it was the rehearsal that anticipated that practice. Further it made use of the same exercises as those that molded [sic] the citizen: the master of himself and the master of the other received the same training. (p. 77)

To be a free Greek citizen assumed leadership in some capacity in the city-state; the ethical self and the political self were not considered separate subject positions. Thus, self-mastery was needed in order to lead others. Eventually, *ascesis* would begin to have an independent

status, or at least a partial and relative autonomy. A differentiation developed between the exercises that enabled one to govern oneself and the learning of what was necessary in order to govern others. Secondly, a differentiation emerged between the exercises themselves and the virtue, moderation, and temperance for which they were meant to serve as training: their procedures tended to form a particular technique that was more complex than the mere rehearsal of the moral behaviour they anticipated. The time would come when the art of self would assume its own shape distinct from the ethical conduct that was its objective (Foucault, 1984a, p. 77). Power relations become more complex in the Roman context with the end of the city-state and individuals became even more intensely concerned with self-formation, as over against the ominous Roman state; therefore the agonistic game of self-domination had to be reintegrated in a fresh way and to a more intense degree.

What was the nature of these ethical discourses and how did one appropriate them? How do they operate inside an individual? Discourses were resources for moral self-constitution, the raw materials of ethics. The discourses, according to Foucault, were used to confront the future; one might call them the *ascesis of truth* or a set of techniques that assist in linking the subject to truth. 'The object is to arm the subject with a truth it did not know; what it wanted was to make this learned, memorized truth, progressively put into practice, a quasi subject that reigns in us' (Foucault, 1982d, p. 99). For the Epicureans, the discourses were often about knowing the principles that govern the world, the nature of the gods, the causes of the wonders, the laws of life and death, in order to prepare for life. Among the Stoics, some attributed greatest significance to the *dogmata*, the theoretical principles that complete the practical prescription; others assigned the most important place to the concrete rules of behaviour. Foucault (1982d, p. 100) makes a point of the import of these discourses: 'What should be noted here is that those true discourses we need relate only to what we are in our connection with the world, in our place in the natural order, and in our dependence or independence with respect to the events that occur.' As he

sees it, the *ascesis* was part of a strategy towards independence, autonomy and *self-sufficiency*, a form of coping with external influences.

The *logoi* (teachings of the masters) could be appropriated by various means. The importance of *listening* was stressed: for the Stoics and the Epicureans, the disciple must at first keep silent and listen. Various techniques of listening were prescribed by Plutarch and Philo of Alexandria. A cultivation of *personal writing* was also quite important: taking notes on the readings, conversations, and reflections that one hears or has or does. In this technique, one kept extensive notebooks or *hupomnemata*, which must be reread every so often to reactualize their contents and to strengthen one's moral self. These came to play a significant role in the late antique Imperial period (Foucault, 1984a).

The movement that they seek to effect is the inverse of the [Christian] one: the point is not to pursue the indescribable, not to reveal the hidden, nor to say the non-said, but, on the contrary, to collect the already-said, to reassemble that which one could hear or read, and this to an end which is nothing less than the constitution of oneself. (p. 79)

In the ancient world, the goal was to collect one's own individual archive of moral insight.

Finally, there was the importance of habitual self-reflection: Marcus Aurelius was a key proponent of this *anachoresis eis heauton*—to come back inside oneself and examine the *riches* that one has deposited there. These riches of discourse, having been internalized, needed to be at one's disposal, *near at hand*, during crisis or stressful times. Plutarch refers to the *pharmakon* or medicine that protects from the trials of existence. Plutarch and Seneca suggest the absorption of a truth imparted by a teaching, a reading, or a piece of advice; one assimilates it so thoroughly that it becomes a part of oneself, an abiding, always-active, inner principle of action (Foucault, 1982d, p. 101). Here moral truth acts as an *inoculation* against trouble or trial, but Foucault is careful to point out that it does not form a proscription or barrier around the self.

Since writing is such an important item in self-formation, it deserves first attention. O'Leary (2002, p. 151) clarifies an important point regarding the self and truth in the ancient technologies of self.

It is in the 'Socratic tradition' that Foucault finds a model of the relation between truth and subjectivity in which the truth of the subject is not guaranteed by appeal to a science of the subject ... In this tradition, the truth of the subject is ... grounded by the subject him/herself through the relation which they constitute between their speech (*logos*) and their life (*bios*) ... What this model offers is a conception of truth in which truth is neither a correspondence between words and things, nor a question of internal, logical consistency; rather, it is a question of what we call a subjective consistency, or correspondence between discourse and action. Truth emerges from a certain relationship with the self; it becomes a matter of transfiguring and saving the subject. The ethical implications of this model are that the individual does not need a science of the self in order to pursue conformity with a moral truth. Rather it is their critical engagement, both with themselves and their society.

There were two types of writing: *hupomnemata* and correspondences. The purpose of writing is clearly stated by Foucault in the essay 'Self-Writing' (Foucault, 1997b, pp. 208-222). Writing as a practice of the self was of special relevance to the Greco-Roman period and especially among the Stoics—Seneca and Epictetus, for example. Writing constitutes an essential stage in the process to which the whole *askesis* leads, namely the fashioning of accepted discourses into rational principles of action. Writing has an *etho-poietic* function: it is an agent of the artistic transformation of truth into *ethos*, character, or way of life.

The *hupomnemata* or copy books began as administrative and accounting books, but eventually became books of one's life. Their use as *books of life*, as guides for conduct, seems to have become a common thing for a whole cultivated public, especially the Roman Stoics of the Imperial period. One wrote down quotes in them, extracts from books, examples, and actions that one had witnessed or read about, reflections on reasoning that one had heard or that had come to mind. In this way, they became a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation. This was akin to an ancient form of journaling. They also formed the raw material for the drafting of more systematic treatises, in which one presented arguments and means for struggling against some weakness (such as anger, envy, gossip, flattery) or for overcoming some difficult circumstance (a grief, an exile, ruin, disgrace). As they accumulated, they became an archive of moral wisdom, available for self-invention (Foucault, 1997b, p. 209). Daniel O'Hare (1994, p. 149) points out that 'the purpose of the *hupomnemata* is to make of the fragmentary *logos* transmitted by teaching, listening, or reading a means to establish as adequate and as perfect a relationship of oneself to oneself as possible'.

Each individual was encouraged to develop their own private *logos bioethikos*, which would equip them for moral contest with the passions, be available for reading, rereading, meditating, conversing with oneself and with others. And for that they must not simply be placed in a sort of memory cabinet but deeply lodged in the soul and they must form part of self: in short, the soul must make them not merely its own but itself, a thorough integration and appropriation. This process was geared towards the shaping of the self, the very development of one's character and identity. There actually existed a tension between the traditional *logoi* and one's own withdrawal into oneself in self-autonomy and self-love. The discourses are there to be consumed by the self in the midst of self-construction, like the feeding of a queen bee.

How does the *hupomnemata* contribute to self-construction? If one is shaping oneself, the help of others is clearly a necessity; one needs to set up a *conversation* both with self and with others. Dialogue goes all the way back to Plato, but all schools used dialogue for discipleship purposes. Seneca suggests that the practice of the self involves reading, for one could not draw everything from one's own stock or arm oneself with the principles of reason that are indispensable for self-conduct; one needs the guidance or example of others. For example, there was in the mental habit of the Stoics and the Epicureans a fear of the future. Due to its uncertainty, the future caused anxiety and agitation of the soul. But a positive value was attached to the possession of a past that one can enjoy to the full and without disturbance; the past was under the control of the individual. The *hupomnemata* contributes one of the means by which one detaches the soul from the concern for the future and redirects it toward contemplation of the past (Foucault, 1997b, pp. 211-12).

How is it that the end product is not just a fragmented jumble of sayings and thoughts? asks Foucault. He does emphasize the fragmentary nature of the discourses and the freedom with which one chooses from the various discourses what to include in one's moral self. The individual, he reasons, is the unifying factor in the *consumption* or

exploration, even exploitation, of a diversity of discourses (that shared stock of cultural resources). Foucault (1997b, p. 212) writes, 'The writing of *hupomnemata* is also (and must remain) a regular and deliberate practice of the disparate. It is a selecting of heterogeneous elements.'²¹ From the many things read, one selects some aspect for oneself. The unity of this heterogeneity occurs in the writer, in the very act of writing and consulting them, as a result of the construction of the notebooks. The unity in the self then clearly means a diversified self, a multiple self, a protean and ever-changing self. The process of writing is a matter of unifying these heterogeneous fragments through their *subjectivation* in the exercise of personal writing. The selected discourse becomes a body, not of doctrines, but the very body of the one who has appropriated them. The individual, opposite to Christianity, inscribes or encodes himself or herself, literally writes self into existence through this interaction with *logoi*. Writing transforms the thing seen or heard *into tissue and blood*.

Writing becomes a principle of rational action in the writer himself; writing was a moral self-sculpting. The writer also constitutes his own identity through the recollection of things said. It is one's own soul that must be constituted when one writes. Through the interplay of selected readings and assimilative writing, one should be able to form an identity through which a whole spiritual genealogy can be read. Clearly, in valuing this approach to self-construction, Foucault places a great deal of faith in the wisdom of the individual's ability to choose from the *logoi*, and self-integrate. The individual carries the final responsibility for spiritual mentorship of self, whatever resources are used (human, written or spoken).

A second form of writing, of which Foucault took serious note, is the *correspondences*, an interactive, interpersonal type of writing. These are the first historical documents available from the ancient world, prior to the *hupomnemata*. These correspondences were letters written to friends and colleagues to advise, exhort, admonish,

²¹ This eclecticism is an interpretation of ancient schools with which Hadot (1992) strongly disagrees.

or console them. They were a form of ongoing self-training, according to Seneca. The opinions that one gives to others in a pressing situation are a way of preparing oneself for a similar eventuality. It also has a reflexive component as the one consoled responds in an encouragement—mutual friendship, or exchange of soul service (Foucault, 1997b, pp. 241f). It is one step beyond writing for oneself; it also constitutes a certain way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others. The letter makes one *present* to the one to whom he addresses it. Foucault draws on the examples of Seneca with Lucilius, Marcus Aurelius with Fronto and some of Pliny's letters (Ibid. p. 216). Foucault notes,

In Seneca and Marcus Aurelius ... the narrative of the self is the account of one's relation to oneself; there one sees two elements stand out clearly, two strategic points that will later become the privileged objects of what could be called the writing of the relation to the self: the interferences of soul and body (impressions rather than actions), and leisure activity (rather than external events); the body and the days. (Ibid., p. 217)

Often, they contained an account of the mundane activities and events of a day in the life of an aristocrat. Seneca is shown going through a strict examination of his day's activity in order to assess progress, not to repent of mistakes made, but only to improve prospects for tomorrow and to improve himself. One of the results of Foucault's research into antiquity is a recovery of the ancient art of friendship, inspired by these correspondences. He was fascinated by how these letters became so important for personal development and self-constitution; they include a social dimension of *ascesis*.

To conclude this discussion on *writing the self*, it seems good to recall his contrast between pagan and Christian ideas of self-constitution, between self-revelation and self-invention, purifying the soul and creating the soul, between an Athanasius and a Seneca, embodied in the quote below. It smoothly moves the discussion to self-examination. Self-constitution, for Foucault, is a *valorization* of one's own choice of a moral life and lifestyle, and a projection of these choices, over against a meaningless existence.

In this case—that of the *hupomnemata*—it was a matter of constituting oneself as a subject of rational action through the appropriation, the unification, and the subjectivation of a fragmentary and selected already-said; in the case of monastic notation of spiritual experiences, it will be a matter of dislodging the most hidden impulses from the inner recesses of the soul, thus enabling one to break free of them. In the case of the epistolary account of oneself [correspondences], it is a matter of bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself when one measures everyday actions according to the rules of a technique of living. (Foucault, 1997b, p. 221)

After extensive reading and note-taking, the question could be raised as to how effectively the individual had appropriated the various principles and sayings from the collective wisdom of the masters. This leads to a discussion of the exercise of certain techniques for testing and self-examination. They include exercises in which the subject puts himself in a situation in which he can verify whether he can confront events and use the discourses with which he is armed. It is a question of testing the preparation. Is his truth assimilated enough to become ethics so that he can behave as he must when an event, a challenge, or a privation, presents itself? Under this category, there were various interesting meditations or imaginative exercises, practices of self. The Greeks characterized the two extremes of those exercises by the terms *melete* and *gymnasia*. *Melete* means meditation, or the work one undertakes in order to prepare a discourse or an improvisation by thinking over useful terms and arguments. It is a matter of anticipating the real situation through dialogue in one's thoughts. The most famous is the *praemediatatio malorum*, practiced regularly by the Stoics, where they imagined the worst possible future scenario in order to bring it before one's consciousness, to see how one would react to it. Since there was great fear of the future, this helped to neutralize its power over the individual (Foucault, 1988a, p. 239; 1982d, p. 102). The Epicureans rejected it as a form of unnecessary worry or disturbance of the soul. The ultimate meditation was the *melete thanatou*, meditation on death, or training for death. It is a way of making death actual in life. Seneca was especially given to this practice. The *death exercise* consists in living the long span of life as if it were as short as one day. It allows life reflection in advance, with the evaluative purpose of thinking through the progress one has made (Foucault, 1982d, p. 104). It appears to be a sort of moral shock therapy (the thesis writer's term) carried out in the imagination.

Gymnasia involved a more direct test of oneself in a real situation, a test of the independence of the individual with regard to the external world. An example of this Stoic

exercise is found in Plutarch's *On the Daemon of Socrates*. It was also a favourite of Seneca. This included heavy sporting activities, or a test for resisting temptation by putting oneself in front of decadent display of food without eating any of it. One gets the impression of a moral boot camp regimen: with practices of abstinence, privation, and physical resistance. They could have a purificatory value or attest to the *demonic* strength of the person (Foucault, 1988a, p. 240; 1982d, p. 103). This is what is traditionally thought of as asceticism.

A third, less extreme exercise, was that of self-vigilance or self-censorship of thoughts that came to mind—promoted by Epictetus. One had to watch perpetually over representations as a night watchman might guard a facility, or a moneychanger might test a coin. Ideas were to be evaluated as to whether they were appropriately or inappropriately governing one's life. This vigilance was an ongoing process that involved a lot of effort (Foucault, 1988a, p. 241). A fourth technique, which Foucault lays out in the first section of *The Care of Self (1984b)*, involved the interpretation of dreams. The only surviving document of this technique is in *Artemidorus* from the second century C.E.; the interpretation of a dream was always an announcement of a future event or social destiny (Foucault, 1988a, p. 241; 1984b, chapter one).

In conclusion, Foucault is interested in these many technologies, not because they follow a unified pattern, but because they represent the plurality of both discourse and exercises of self-testing. There is much *choice* and *creativity* available for self-formation. They involved serious dedication and tremendous effort to attain a greatness of soul and to live well or flourish. Some seem completely bizarre in today's climate, but Foucault is neutral in describing them without judgment, with the exception of Christian practices for the reasons mentioned above. Foucault is committed to a full artistic creation of self, an ethics of transformation where *aesthetics runs all the way down*. Therefore, he is very interested in how people have done this in past, and hopes that this survey of ancient techniques might give creative ideas in the present. These pagan practices could, thinks

Foucault, provide resources for resistance to normalization and domination among oppressed or marginalized people today; they open the future to real possibilities for self-creation, different practices, ways of engaging the relations of power and truth games within the social fabric.

This is further evidence of a move to internalize the struggle with power/knowledge; the individual self is now in a position to play the various forces, relations and games off each other, and to disrupt some traditional games of truth. Maturity (human flourishing), for Foucault, is to be found in one's ability to shape one's own subjectivity in the face of silent and invisible work of the disciplines of governmentality; it is a creative task, and involves hard work. This gives a picture of his *genealogy of the self* in antiquity; it has implications for a critique of the present, a debunking of late twentieth century dominating self-identities and stereotypes. John Ransom (1997) agrees with this line of thinking, 'What Foucault sees as valuable about technologies of self is the possibility that an individual might be produced who is more aware of the possible effects of disciplinary procedures and so stands in a better position to resist them' (p. 138). The political and the ethical have a way of coming together in these technologies. Further clarity on this issue emerges in his discussion of a *homosexual ascesis* which proceeds in the next section.

G. Twentieth Century *Ascesis*: the Gay Experiment of Self

It is quite instructive at this juncture to turn briefly to the relationship between ancient *ascesis* and Foucault's suggestion for a contemporary *homosexual ascesis*. A. Davidson (1994) writes that 'some of Foucault's most suggestive and philosophically revealing invocations of the notions of *askesis* and style of life can be found in his discussions of his own attitude towards homosexuality' (p. 72). Foucault has openly pointed to the homosexual *askesis* and the homosexual style of life as a contemporary example of the ancient form. It is not about Stoic austerity however. In his essay, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', Foucault (1981a) reveals his particular bias in interpretation of the ancients.

Asceticism as the renunciation of pleasure has bad connotations. But ascesis is something else: it's the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make the self appear which, happily, one never attains. Can that be our problem today? We've rid ourselves of asceticism. Yet it's up to us to advance into a homosexual ascesis that would make us work on ourselves and invent—I do not say discover—a manner of being that is still improbable ... What we must work on, it seems to me, is not so much to liberate our desires as to make ourselves infinitely more susceptible to pleasures. (p. 137)

Foucault (1978) also muses about the possibility of intensifying pleasures. For him, homosexuality is not first and foremost about the sex of the person to which one is attracted. More than this, it not about sex, but rather lifestyle, a lifestyle that appears *threatening* (Foucault, 1982a, p. 153). Is this the *philosopher as a way of life*, that strange individual threatening to the general public? He claims that the notion of a homosexual mode or style of life, with its new forms of relationship, is what is most significant about gay practices. Aesthetics and self-technologies play large in the gay community. In conversation with Pierre Hadot, Arnold Davidson (1994) was convinced that 'one link between the ancient practices of self-mastery and contemporary homosexuality, is that both require an ethics of ascetics of the self tied to a particular, and particularly threatening, way of life' (p. 73). This represents an *aestheticization of the self*.

Foucault (1981a, p. 135) explains that one should assume that gayness and lesbianism is about *becoming* homosexual, not *being* gay or lesbian in terms of desire. 'Sexuality is something that we ourselves create—it is our own creation, and much more than the discovery of a secret side of our desire' (Foucault 1984h, p. 163). Therefore, there is similar work of self-creation to be done on oneself in order to appropriate these possibilities. Foucault in this period is interested in a renewal of friendships among men. 'Right now I'm fascinated by the Hellenistic and Roman world before Christianity ... Relations of friendship ... played an important role, but there was a supple institutional support for them' (Foucault, 1982c, p. 159). Foucault (1981a) suggests that it would be better to ask, 'What relations, through homosexuality, can be established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?' (p. 135). Ultimately, Foucault does suggest the need to

develop a whole *gay culture*.²² Homosexuality is a *truth* of praxis, a *praxis of freedom*, as well as a truth of discourse; it can issue into a culture and an ethics as well as a politics.

Foucault (1982c) remarks:

I mean a culture in the large sense, a culture that invents ways of relating, types of existence, types of values, types of exchanges between individuals which are really new and are neither the same as, nor superimposed on, existing cultural forms. If that's possible, then gay culture will be not only a choice of homosexuals for homosexuals—it would create relations that are, at certain points, transferable to heterosexuals. (pp. 159-60)

It is quite clear from his various interviews and comments on this subject that the *telos* or goal of this *ascesis* is the experimental maximization of pleasure. Classicist and gay advocate, David Halperin (1995), agrees.²³ In commenting on Foucault and the connections between ancient *ascesis* and contemporary homosexual practices, he writes,

Modern methods of ascesis, for all that they have to do with effort and imagination and collective struggle, have little to do with austerity: what can impart to human lives in the modern world something of the intensity of existence which philosophers in the ancient world sought out through strategic practices of austerity is not the elimination but the cultivation of pleasure. Foucault's "homosexual ascesis" calls not for less pleasure but for vastly more pleasure. (p.102)

So there is an interesting contrast here between Foucault's high admiration for the ascetic Stoics and their worried obsessions over sexual excess, the right timing and seasons for sexual activity, and the contemporary homosexual *ascesis* with its focus on the pursuit of an intensification of pleasures. Halperin makes it clear that Foucault was fascinated with new styles of life and experiments of gays and lesbians in the seventies and eighties in the USA (New York and San Francisco), at the same time he was doing his research on the ancients, and that one was shaping and informing the other. This seems credible. These experiments also included a distinct fascination with sadomasochism (Foucault, 1982a, pp. 150-152) as a means of playing power relations differently. In this case, the ascetic metamorphoses into the ecstatic. Many of Foucault's supporting commentators are happy to integrate that interest into his philosophical project (O'Leary, 2002; Carrette, 2000).

²² This is one of the few times in this ethical discourse that he speaks of a corporate or communal terms.

²³ See also L. McWhorter (1999).

Conclusion

What conclusions can one draw from the above discussion of technologies of the self in Foucault's self-constitution as an art of living? How does it fit into the overall discussion of freedom expressing itself creatively through practices of the self, which are also ways to care for one's self? Finally, how does it issue into a full aesthetics of existence? This chapter has critically surveyed Foucault's position on the practical work that can be done on oneself (*askesis*) in the process of moral self-constitution, with a view to transform oneself into an ethical *form* of being. Having begun with the play of freedom in Foucault's ethics as aesthetics in Chapter Two, one now sees how, according to his approach, one can transform the self, re-invent the self, produce the kind of new moral self one desires. These are the techniques available for the moral artist or poet of self. Subjectivity, suggests Foucault, is constantly within a play of political forces, constituted within relations of power and interacting or reacting to games of truth. So it is imperative that one be aware of these games, these relations and their impact on identity.

This chapter has continued the discussion about the triangular interwoven relationship between *power, truth and the subject*, but the focus has been on the relationship between the subject and truth. A relationship with the good is clearly absent from the discussion; this insight will be developed in Chapter Five. Through looking at the ancient technologies of self, Foucault has managed to broaden this discussion, and shown a negative aversion to Christian technologies. He has situated the technology of self amidst technologies of production, sign systems and technologies of power. Within the four-fold schema, the trajectory of self-making moves toward the reduction of the power of governmentality, toward refusal of the hegemony of any one truth source or truth game, and thereby to increase power to the individual to control the formation of identity. Governmentality is subverted through self-government and self-control of truth. Having relativized and called into question the present modes of subjectivity and their relationship

to truth in late modernity, Foucault boldly suggests that one can change these, and therefore the way one lives. This strategy has a long tradition dating back to the ancients of Greece and Rome. He is helped in his quest for this kind of ethics by Hadot's understanding of the *ancient spiritual exercises*, which are part of a chosen and dedicated philosophical way of life. The ancients provided a model that treated the self as an open possibility to be moulded and formed according to freely chosen principles, writings, various discourses, tests drawn from the collective cultural and moral resources. The return to Greek and Roman philosophy allows Foucault to understand the modern project of the self in terms of a long philosophical tradition in which critical reflection not only constitutes a certain relation between subjectivity and truth, but also makes an essential contribution to the ethical task of living well.

Foucault has shown application of this ethics of self-transformation, and suggests that one can adopt or develop various technologies of self in the contemporary era, as he suggests for the homosexual *askesis*. Action upon one's behaviour is a key emphasis and focus of his ethics. It is a fascinating and provocative challenge that he places before his contemporaries, to confront the status quo, and pursue creativity of the *becoming a subject* in the midst of the modern moral crisis. The connecting thread through the argument of this chapter has been a notion of spirituality and spiritual exercises towards a way of life, a *lifestyle*. The importance of style will be developed in Chapter Four. It reveals a philosophy which is geared to a thorough transformation of one's whole life, one that takes the moral self seriously. It is focused directly and intentionally on the art of living (praxis), rather than philosophical discourse (moral theory). Foucault favours the individual and an eclectic approach to spiritual exercises, which he finds in a complex array of practices in pre-Christian thinkers. He tries to surpass the Christian approaches to self-formation by returning to the Greeks; he contrasts the self-renunciation of the Christian to the self-affirmation of the Greeks and the self-sufficiency of the Romans.

Foucault is interested in and analyses the place of religion within the overall framework of governmentality and how these technologies of self operate. In his analysis of Christian approaches, he has bracketed theological concerns and focuses strictly on the institutional practices and politics of the development of the Christian self, especially in monastic societies, with a strong emphasis on a negative renunciation of self. He opposes renouncing self to care of self. Christian *askesis* is presented as a problematic, revealing an intensity of issues around the relationship of the subject and truth. These subjectivity-truth obligations become part of the investigation and debate. Christianity is depicted as a negative turn in philosophy as a way of life, in the subject-truth relationship.

We are left pondering one important question: When analysing the question of self-technology, one is left with the query: *Who* is the transforming agent? Who enjoys a different relationship with themselves according to the truth game they decide to play? Since he ties the notion of subjectivity to the cultural particulars through which it manifests, and denies a general or universal subjective way of being, one cannot help but ask how the subject constitutes herself in an active fashion without begging the question of what she was before she constituted herself in this way and how it was possible to use certain cultural resources to so constitute herself. This is especially a problem because Foucault denies the existence of a core transcendental subject, a subject of substance. One is left struggling to understand who or what this shadowy subject or agent is. Is this self some kind of pre-personal being? Foucault gives no account of it. Does he confuse the constituting self with the constituted self (the subject with the object) in the technological relationship of the self with the self?

In Chapter Four, the writer will examine how this ethical project of self-formation emerges into a full *aestheticization of ethics*, with the goal of producing the most beautiful life possible. Given the premises of Chapters Two and Three, this is his trajectory. We began with the ontology of freedom, and then surveyed the technology of freedom of self. Next we look critically at the aesthetic dimension of freedom and creativity.

Chapter Four: Ethics as Aesthetics in Dialogue with Charles Taylor

Introduction

In Chapter Two, Foucault's assumptions concerning freedom, his mandate of freedom, and its relationship to the moral self were laid out. These assumptions pointed in the direction of an aesthetic freedom of self-creation, one rooted in the ontology of freedom. Chapter Three discussed Foucault's concept of technologies of the self and philosophy as a way of life, the *technical* dimension of his ethics (the materials and techniques for the artistic work). The following investigation will complete the analysis with a look at Foucault's historical and experimental exploration of ethics as an *aesthetics of existence*, an art of living. The *arts of self* trace from ancient Greece and Rome, through the Renaissance, to Baudelaire in nineteenth century, and Foucault in the twentieth century. Foucault believed the language of art could be brought out into life in society and that the constitution of moral self could produce an art form, a philosophical style of life. It is important to say that it is an imaginative, but uncritical, and unexamined use of this concept.

He proposes an experiment where the self treats its own existence as one might treat a work of art, an aesthetic posture. The complexity of Foucault's unusual concept of ethics as art, is that self acts as both the artist (creative, active agent) and the self is also the product—the work of art (object of such a creation). On one hand, this work of transformation, as discussed in Chapter Three, is a set of techniques and disciplines (*techne*), procedures that were proposed or described in order to fix, maintain or transform self. On the other hand, the transformation is a work of art (*aesthesis*) containing the passion (seeing and feeling) of the artist. When Foucault refers to the language of aesthetics of existence he is disagreeing with Kant's philosophical isolation of the aesthetic culture sphere; he is recommending the erasure of the boundary between art and ethics, a major form of transgression in itself. This is in philosophical continuity with artistic subcultures that produced the Dada movement in the field of art, the historical avant-gardes and Surrealist movements in World War 1 and the 1920s. Foucault was a specialist

in Surrealist art and his ethics fits with the change in philosophy of art in the early twentieth century: art becomes a *creation* not a *copy*. These movements sought in their work, their writings, and in some cases their lives, to efface such a boundary between art and everyday life. The vision resides in a tradition with a strong belief in the power of the *creative imagination* to transfigure or transform the self, or to reveal it afresh as beautiful.

The ancient Greeks also drew heavily on metaphors of moulding, sculpting and creating self. He looks back to a Classical Greek model where he interprets a coalescence of aesthetics and ethics, a *stylistics* of existence. Foucault (1984a, p. 13) writes, ‘These texts thus served as functional devices that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects; in short, their function was “etho-poetic”, to transpose a word found in Plutarch.’ These later studies of Foucault emphasize the scope for human expression, freedom, and action to achieve changes in personal and everyday life. He begins to open up these concepts early in the second volume of his *History of Sexuality, L’ usage des plaisirs*. (Foucault 1984a).

What I mean by this phrase are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meet certain stylistic criteria. (p. 10)

An *oeuvre* is a work of art or literature, often seen as the full body of accomplishment of one’s life. There is both the action of shaping and the *telos* of a beautiful life shaped (the *oeuvre*). There must be some recognizable worth, integrity and beauty in the *oeuvre*. This continues the argument of this critical investigation of Foucault’s moral self, that the *aesthetic interprets the moral self all the way down*.

In this chapter, the analysis will unpack this idea of an aesthetics of existence from four perspectives: (A) a special kind of ethics-oriented morality, (B) ethics as a stylization of self, (C) ethics as aesthetics as a care of self, and finally (D) aesthetic transformation of power relations. In Part 2, the chapter draws on philosopher Charles Taylor as a dialogue partner for Foucault’s idea of aesthetic self-making and ethics as an aesthetics of existence to put it further under critical review, and ask some deeper questions. Taylor appreciates

much that Foucault offers, but through a *diagnostics of self-making* exposes some of the weaknesses and even dangers in Foucault's moral self-formation.

The discussion of aesthetics of existence requires some background on Foucault's concept of two types of morality.

Part 1. The Nature of Aesthetic Self-making

A. Two Varieties of Morality

At one level, in an observation of societies, Foucault holds that all moralities contain both moral codes and specific ways that individuals relate to (integrate or rebel against) a code. At another level (Foucault, 1984a, p. 29), some moralities revolve around the specific code (*code-oriented moralities*), whereas others focus on modes of subjectivation, or practices of the self (*ethics-oriented moralities*). This continues a discussion from Chapter Two, section B. Code-orientation, such as one might find in medieval Christianity of the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, refers to the relationship between the individual's conduct and laws or rules, its juridical purchase on the self. In this case, one becomes a subject by subjecting oneself in obedience to a moral code or set of principles. He tends to hold up Christianity as the source and symbol of much contemporary code-focused morality, including secular ones that hold to universal norms. Ethics-oriented morality as seen in the discussion of Chapter Three, refers the individual's conduct to self-directed spiritual disciplines; codes can be rather less important, necessary but not determinative in this kind of morality. In his analysis of ancient morality, he chooses to focus strategically on the ethics-oriented morality. He is rather dismissive of code-moralities as that which gets in the way of a liberated ethics-oriented morality, where the focus is on one's reflexive relationship with oneself.

An ethics-oriented morality is self-constructed through one's thinking and actions, one's individual artistic creation, while code-oriented morality is generally socially constructed by the governing elite or a religion (a moral regime), and tends to normalize a

population. He suggests that the Greeks and the Romans of antiquity were more oriented to the practices of the self, or stylistics of freedom than toward codification of conduct; naturally he was intrigued to return to the ancients in his research as an example of this type of morality. The emphasis is placed on the relationship to self, rather than a concern to stay within the confines of a code of behaviour, or obedience to a moral law. It is also clear from the discussion in Chapter Two, Part B, that he has a strong aversion to scientific, religious or judiciary code, even if he does examine its impact on the transforming of the self. He spells out the logic and *inevitability* of his ethics, rooted in nominalist freedom and a technology of the self.

Well, I wonder if our problem nowadays is not, in a way, similar to this one, since most of us no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life ... Liberation movements ... cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on ... And if I was interested in Antiquity it was because, for a whole series of reasons, the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing, has already disappeared. And to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for an aesthetics of existence. (Foucault, 1983a, pp. 255-56; 1984c, p. 50)

He sees his moral position as surpassing moral code as demonstrated in Chapter Two, section B. Clearly, it is a different kind of soul that constitutes itself apart from any normative structure outside of self. He identifies the current crisis in moral philosophy: he believes that people in late modernity have given up on a common meta-narrative and therefore they could never agree on any one set of codes (see also MacIntyre, 1983). But his optimism is the possibility that people can agree to stylize their own individual behaviour, and possibly learn from each other's self-shaping techniques. At least, courageous, talented individuals could do this, and the rest could admire them. The tension in his work comes in the attempt of each individual to structure her own morality (ethics of self) through practices of the self, while avoiding the traps of a code of behaviour or moral regime. This is his contribution to contemporary moral debate; creative form-giving is a real possibility, but conformity and normativity are undesirable. Thus, he positions the debate as one between beauty or aesthetics (the future of ethics) and the moral code (the past of ethics). This is endemic to his critique of the present.

Foucault clearly favours the pagan ethical framework (the aesthetic one) over the Christian ethical framework (code-oriented one) as his paradigm for contemporary ethics of the self. This is clear from the argument in Chapter Two and Three. This is a strategic move, not an accidental one. In his mind, the ancients flourished without a heavy emphasis on code, and this is now possible once again in late modernity, as the contemporary Western self learns to shape itself aesthetically. Foucault (1983a) comments on the ancient aristocratic ethics of stylization of liberty.

What I wanted to do in Volume Two of *The History of Sexuality* was to show that you have nearly the same restrictive, the same prohibitive code in the fourth century B.C. and in the moralists and doctors at the beginning of the empire. But I think that the way they integrate those prohibitions in relation to oneself is completely different. I don't think one can find any normalization in, for instance, the Stoic ethics. The reason is, I think, that the principal aim, the principal target of this kind of ethics is an aesthetic one. First, this kind of ethic was only a problem of personal choice. Second, it was reserved for a few people in the population; it was not a question of giving a pattern of behaviour for everybody. It was a personal choice for a small elite. The reason for making the choice was to live a beautiful life, and to leave others memories of a beautiful existence. I don't think that this kind of ethics was an attempt to normalize the population. (p. 254)

Note the strong emphasis on individual choice of parameters in one's ethics. His strategy is inherent in this passage: the key phrase in this quote is 'The principal target of this kind of ethics was an aesthetic one.' In his read of the ancients, code-morality and ethics-morality are two different 'modes of subjectivation' to use the language of the second category of his four-fold schema, which was introduced at the beginning of Chapter Three. By relativizing code, the relationship to oneself becomes the paramount one. Moral self-designing or stylization of one's liberty becomes the most important factor. This contrast emerges in an interview with Foucault called 'An Aesthetics of Existence' (Foucault, 1984c).

With Christianity, there occurred a slow, gradual shift in relation of moralities of Antiquity, which were essentially a practice, a style of liberty. Of course, there had also been certain norms of behavior [sic] that governed each individual's behavior [sic]. But the will to be a moral subject and the search of an ethics of existence were, in Antiquity, mainly an attempt to affirm one's liberty and to give one's own life a certain form in which one could recognize oneself, be recognized by others, and which even posterity might take as an example. This elaboration of one's own life as a personal work of art, even if it obeyed certain collective canons, was at the center [sic] ... of moral experience, of the will to morality in Antiquity, whereas in Christianity, with the religion of the text, the idea of the will of God, the principle of obedience, morality took on increasingly the form of a code of rules. From Antiquity to Christianity, we pass from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. (pp. 49-50)

There is a sense in which he wants to turn back the clock of time (as the way forward) in his interpretation of the pagan style of morality. It is also clear from his discussion that the transition to code was a change for the worse, in the direction of loss of freedom, loss of choice and loss of ethical creativity. As stated in Chapter Two, his project holds out hope to surpass such traditions as Christian morality and its secular descendents. According to Foucault, a culture of the aesthetic self is yet to be created; it is a brilliant possibility. Ethics becomes a fusion of his concepts of freedom and aesthetics: a hermeneutic of *aesthetic-freedom*.²⁴ This leads to an investigation of what he means by style, since it is central to his understanding of ethics as aesthetics.

B. Aesthetics of Existence Requires the Application of Style

In one of his key interviews on the subject called, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', Foucault (1983a) broadens the definition of art and speaks provocatively about life itself as material for art.

What strikes me is that, in our society, art has become something that is only related to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an object but not our life? (p. 261)

According to aesthetics of existence, one should live artistically, with style and *savoir faire*. Foucault integrates the theme of the artisan, one who is a *spiritual sculptor* with respect to self. Given his premise that there is no truth to be discovered which is capable of grounding or directing the way one lives, this is what becomes one of the few positive alternatives, that is, a self-grounding. This care of self as the art of life, is an ongoing labour; the carving of the statue of self is never finished; it is a *creatio continua*, a work in progress.

Style is central to this recovery of ancient ethics; it is the *one thing that is still needed*; religion, moral codes, tradition of reason, scientific views of man are no longer needed, and are in fact a hindrance, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. The older

²⁴ This is the thesis writer's coinage.

Western traditions, although once robust influences in morality, and the development of a societal moral order, can no longer sustain or ground ethics. In the midst of lost horizons of moral meaning and much disillusionment from ideologies gone bad (nihilism and anomie), Foucault offers style; at least we have art. His view on style echoes Nietzsche (1954) who writes in ‘The Gay Science’:

One thing is needful. “Giving style” to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is exercised by those who see all the strengths and weaknesses of their own natures and then comprehend them in an artistic plan until everything appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye ... For only one thing is needful: that a human being attain his satisfaction with himself—whether it be by this or by that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. (pp. 98, 99)²⁵

The work that is to be done on the self is a stylistics: style is given to one’s character by long practice. Style is the point of integration for the self, even if that style is anarchistic in reference to societal norms. Foucault readily admits to the Nietzschean influence on his this idea of aesthetic self-creation. ‘Yes. My view is much closer to Nietzsche than to Sartre’s’, he notes (1983a, p. 262). One eventually recognizes oneself in a certain style that has been invented as unique, and celebrates it as an inspiration. In this case, it is not necessary to follow a tradition, a moral law, foster virtues, or live out a duty, but merely to practice a new and beautiful style of life, but it is to be taken with the utmost seriousness.

Foucault’s adoption of this aesthetic metaphor in the field of ethics is made possible by a certain reception of ancient Greek thought, a certain grid of interpretation placed on the ancients, an anti-normalizing ethics. Quinby (1991) comments on this point regarding the politics of style.

Self-stylization resists the *technologies of normalization*, those modes of power/knowledge and their corresponding techniques and practices of the self that discipline and regulate the body and soul, thus producing docility and conformity. They classify people as normal and abnormal, segregate and punish or rehabilitate those deemed abnormal. They define diverse people monolithically, i.e. totalize a population in terms of national identity and eugenic obligation. (p. 4)

As J. Bernauer (1990, p. 182) put it succinctly, ‘His aesthetics of existence is set up as a resistance against the “sciences of life”.’ Style resists all moral templates. Here is the anarchistic edge: rebellion is endemic to this ethics (also politics) of lifestyle. This point is

²⁵ Nietzsche (1969) has some influence on Foucault’s ethical work.

elaborated in more detail in Section D of this chapter, ‘Aesthetics of Existence Effects New Power Opportunities’. This thesis has resisted the temptation to leave individual ethics for politics for the sake of confinement, depth and coherence of the argument.

Another important aspect of ethics as aesthetics is the *savoir faire* of style. It is a kind of knowledge of how to act appropriately. It depends on the aesthetic freedom of the individual and involves a positioning of the self or the tailoring of one’s behaviour towards a beautiful, brilliant or memorable existence. It echoes the Romantic idea of the artist as a prophetic figure (seer) with deep insight into the nature of existence and superior aesthetic sensibilities. Foucault is committed to explore the possibility that ethics could be very robust, without any relation to the juridical, without any authoritarian system or disciplinary structure.

The *savoir faire* of style stands at the hub of his notion of moral self-constitution. How does this work? Foucault (1983a, p. 254) was attracted, especially to the Stoics as he read them by: (a) a lack of uniform compulsory code, (b) their reliance on an aesthetic rather than a rule-governed ethic. It is important to recognize that the looseness of codification of sexual pleasures and the trajectory toward an aesthetic ethic are the two sides of the same philosophical coin.

In terms of the concept of *savoir faire*, the nineteenth century poet Charles Baudelaire was a more recent example of the stylized, artistic self, that is, Baudelaire the dandy. French poet Baudelaire is one of the artistic and spiritual avatars of Romantic modernism. He represented this aesthetic vision of *autopoesis* or self-stylization. Foucault (1984f) writes about Baudelaire:

An asceticism ... who makes of his body, his behavior [sic], his feelings and passions, his very existence, a work of art. Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes out to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not “liberate man in his own being”; it compels him to face the task of producing himself. (pp. 41-2)

There is a powerful thrust to this idea of *producing himself*. *Savoir faire* is very important to self-invention as it relates to one’s social existence. The drive is for freedom from restraint as an individual and an artist, freedom to treat one’s subject matter as honestly

and candidly as one would wish. It means freedom to rebel against anything an artist regards as a suffocating hold of the past.

In terms of style, artistic Paris held Baudelaire's attention; Paris represents one of the world icons of the Arts, the aesthetic dimension of life writ large. Baudelaire was fascinated by the fleeting, transitory beauty and ugliness of life in mid-nineteenth century Paris, the pageantry of fashionable life, the wealthy idle people strolling down the Champs Élysées; he was fascinated by the dandies, heroes of modern life who sought to turn their lives into works of art, himself a dandy. *Dandyism* stressed the quest for social superiority through the construction of an uncompromising exemplary lifestyle in which an aristocracy of spirit manifests itself in contempt for the masses. It also held to a heroic concern with the achievement of originality and superiority in dress, demeanour, and personal habits. It identified a strong need to form life into an aesthetically pleasing whole—the result was an artistic intellectual with superior tastes and sensibilities. It was also vital that one's lifestyle in such a sub-culture would be socially recognized and admired; the aristocrat of taste needs an audience. This was all essential to the development of artistic counter-cultures, the Bohemias and avant-gardes in mid-nineteenth century Paris.²⁶ So it is not a self that is given, received or discovered, but one that is worked on continuously, by pushing out the boundaries of social convention. Poets and writers like Baudelaire, and Oscar Wilde of Oxford, are certainly representatives of the aesthetic life for Foucault. Art bounds and interprets morality.

Foucault's colleague Paul Veyne (1997) affirms the significance of stylization of self in Foucault's late discourse on ethics. Style becomes an ethical necessity in this post-conventional stance. The work is the product of effort requiring skill; aesthetic creation is where meaning is located.

²⁶ Avante-garde is often referred to writers, artists, or musicians whose work is innovative, experimental and unconventional. It also meant a rebellion against reason, or the power/knowledge regime of the time. The self-perception was that they were ahead of their time. The good life involved the desire to enlarge one's self, the quest for new tastes and sensations, to explore more and more possibilities. Tremendous imaginative effort went into these unconventional lifestyles—rebels against tradition and rationalism.

The idea of styles of existence played a major role in Foucault's conversations in his late life ... style ... in the sense of the Greeks, for whom an artist was first of all an artisan and a work of art was first of all a work ... He judged one element to be capable of reacquiring a contemporary meaning: the self taking itself as a work to be accomplished, could sustain an ethics that is no longer supported by tradition or reason; an artist of itself, the self would enjoy the autonomy that modernity can no longer do without. (Veyne, 1997, p. 231)

It is the beautiful, the admirable self, whose style is an object of aesthetic delight, to which meaning is attached, the *beautiful-good*. Meaning emerges as one stylizes one's self into existence. As with Picasso, art becomes what it is at the time of painting; the self becomes what it is at the time of creation; essence emerges with self-creation.

Clearly, the creative imagination is vital and central to the task of giving style to one's existence and the *autonomy which is necessary to modernity* issues into a new and more radical individualism, through a powerful quest for originality. In his analysis of the early Greeks, Foucault (1984a) maps a strong tendency towards this radical individualism in his vision of stylization.

Everything was a matter of adjustment, circumstance, and personal position. The few great common laws of the city, religion, nature—remained present, but it was as if they traced a very wide circle in the distance, inside of which practical thought had to define what could rightfully be done. And for this there was no need of anything resembling a text that would have the force of law, but rather, of a *techne* or "practice", a *savoir faire* that by taking general principles into account would guide action in its time, according to its context, and in view of its ends. Therefore in this form of morality, the individual did not make himself into an ethical subject by universalizing the principles that informed his actions; on the contrary, he did so by means of an attitude and a quest that ... individualized his action, modulated it, and perhaps even gave him a special brilliance by virtue of the rational and deliberate structure his action manifested. (p. 62)

This is a good snapshot of the intent of stylization, the priority of style over moral content. He was impressed with the stylishness of the ancient aristocrats. Indeed, there is an affinity between Foucault's elegance as an individual and the elegance that characterized the Greek and Roman civilization. Classical elegance privately served as a sub-textual image of an art of living.

In regard to the Greeks, austerities with respect to the body, one's wife, romantic relations with boys, and wisdom could be interpreted as prohibitions or rules, but Foucault does not interpret it this way. The themes of sexual austerity, in his opinion, are present, but in the form of recommendations for a *stylization* of sexual conduct rather than juridical obedience or prohibition. Artistic freedom of expression was the central issue, not

obedience to a law (Foucault, 1984a). Ancient style meant individual liberty rather than prohibition.

These themes of sexual austerity should be understood, not as an expression of, or commentary on, deep and essential prohibitions, but as the elaboration and stylization of an activity in the exercise of its power and the practice of its liberty. It did not speak to men concerning behaviours presumably owing to a few interdictions that were universally recognized and solemnly recalled in codes and customs and religious prescriptions. It spoke to them concerning precisely their conducts in which they were called to exercise their rights, their power, their authority, and their liberty: in the practice of pleasures that were not frowned upon, in a marital life where no rule or custom prevented the husband from extra-marital sexual relations, in relationships with boys, which—at least within limits—were accepted, commonly maintained, and even prized. (Foucault, 1984a, p. 23)

This quote reveals much about a different concept of austerity; he promotes vigorously this aesthetic stylization interpretative grid of the ancients. An elaboration of self entailed the exercise of one's power and the practice of one's liberty, but not restrictions on one's behaviour. Even the virtue of moderation is not allowed any negative or restrictive content: 'Moderation could not take the form of an obedience to a system of laws or a codification of behaviours; nor could it serve as a principle for nullifying pleasures; it was an art, a practice of pleasures that was capable of self-limitation through the use of those pleasures that were based on need' (Foucault, 1984a, p. 57). Style was not about right and wrong, but it related to a loosely held, self-directed, appropriateness of behaviour according to need, timing, and status of the person (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 56-62). He goes into extensive detail about this idea of appropriateness. Absent from his moral discourse is a language or grammar of *the good*; rather, the language of poetics dominates. The moral economy of the good has been replaced by the economy of style, and aesthetic-freedom. Upon reading Foucault, one realizes that the Greeks and the Romans are read through Foucault's unique aesthetic grid, and are mobilized for aesthetic purposes. It is not the purpose of this thesis, however, to adjudicate Foucault on historical scholarship, but merely to point out his ethical biases and tendencies.

In general, Foucault did not want to bring Greek ethics as a whole into contemporary society, but he is convinced that the concept of ethics as self-stylization ought to be transferable and desirable. Stylizing conduct involved a wide variety of concerns in the ancient world: dietetics, understood as an art of the everyday relationship of the individual

with his body, economics as an art of a man's behaviour as head of a family, erotics as an art of the reciprocal conduct of a man and a boy in a love relationship. This aspect will be elaborated upon in the section C., 'Aesthetics of Existence is a Care of Self'. The art of living included all of these (Foucault, 1984a, p. 93); it is a broader understanding of ethics than many moral philosophers hold, revealing some transgression of the boundaries of ethical categories.

Further, in his analysis of the Roman context, the theme of stylization continues, although in a slightly different form—with increased emphasis on reciprocity between members of a couple and loyalty in marriage. Foucault (1984b) writes:

What stands out in the texts of the first centuries—more than new interdictions concerning sexual acts—is the insistence on the attention that should be brought to bear on oneself ... In short, and as a first approximation, this added emphasis on sexual austerity in moral reflection takes the form, not of a tightening of the code that defined prohibited acts, but of an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts. (p. 41)

Once again, his interpretative emphasis is style over against the moral content of accountability or obligation. He is saying that the relationship with self becomes even more intense as it stands over against the great empire of Rome. Romans carry on this stylization of the individual self, but simply in a different way; they have not converted to code-ethics. The one area of change in the Roman era was a need to admit one's weakness and frailty, and to escape into a self-protection; Foucault reads this as merely a further stylization. Eventually, he admits that the Stoics of the Roman Empire do move toward more universal principles of nature and reason, toward a normalization of ethics (Foucault, 1984b, p. 67). He is dismayed by this gradual change, and by the loss of freedom and the tendency towards universality of ethics and normalization of behaviour. Universalization does not agree with his proposal for ethics, but he finds that the evidence of stylization is robust among the Romans. Romans would experience moral regime in a strong sense through the *Pax Romana*, based in Roman law. The more individualistic concept of care of self reaches its apogee among the Roman Stoics (Section C of this chapter).

Thus, the epicentre of the Foucauldian ethical plausibility structure, the new strategic possibility, rests in the self; it does not rest in a fresh moral regime, new social constructions or a grand scheme for a just society. It is strategically focused in the power and the art of autonomous self-stylization. What are some of the implications of this proposal? One implication is a reflexive loop in his accountability structure. In self-constructive stylistic activity, aesthetic freedom leads one to aesthetic self-representation, which in turn leads one to aesthetic self-justification. This is a reminder that the ethical loop is largely internal to the self; it is more a matter of consistency or coherence between self and behaviour, rather than consistency with an external truth or a world. Self is answerable to self alone, an auto-accountability; this autonomy and self-sufficiency is seen as an essential factor to a state of positive liberty, as has been demonstrated in the discussion of Chapter Two. This self-reflexive, self-accountability is also shown in Section C of this chapter, especially the section entitled 'conversion to oneself'.

Paul Veyne (1997) writes in an important essay called 'The Final Foucault and His Ethics': 'Foucault admits that he is incapable of justifying his own preferences; he cannot invoke human nature, or reason, or functionalism, or essence, or correspondence to an object ... Philosophy is about war' (p. 229). Based on his nominalistic assumptions, and read through his aesthetic interpretive schema, the self need not and probably should not try to justify any personal preferences. It is an ethics without external justification for behaviour. What does Veyne mean by this? The implication of self-stylization is that one's value preferences, according to Foucault, are always seen as self-chosen and nakedly self-interested. Veyne writes that (1997, p. 230) in a 1979 interview with Foucault at Collège de France, he said, 'As for me, I do not see, at least for now, what criteria would allow one to decide what one should fight against, except perhaps aesthetic criteria.' This authenticates the thesis argument that the aesthetic is writ large in his ethics, and that personal choice has become a sufficient condition for ethics. It is in this very sense that his preferences have political overtones.

He celebrates the choices of others, but disagrees with anyone who rationalizes that they must add justification to their choices and moral preferences: he holds that ‘the others are wrong to claim they are right’ (Veyne, 1997, p. 230). Nor did Foucault worry about justifying publicly his convictions; it was enough that he hold to them robustly. Aesthetic self-stylization for him is at the same time a form of self-assertion and inherently *self-justifying*. This is partly where he gets the idea that ethics and moral self-constitution is about war and resistance; he expects much difference of opinion on moral convictions and personal stylization. He expects conflict of values because different people value different things; he does not claim that his way is easy.

Baring the need for external justification, ethics for Foucault is about valorization of one or more values in a particular era. He is not uncritical of the Stoic ethics of the virile Greeks; he shows distaste for many of the attitudes, but he celebrates their praxis of self-stylization.

The Greek ethics of pleasure is linked to a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy ... All this is quite disgusting. (Foucault, 1983a, p. 258)

Ethical self-mastery was tainted with the will to rule over others or *domination*. But his affinity with ancient morality is toward a modern reappearance of the art of stylization in a completely new context—constituting oneself as a subject of one’s own actions, and thereby choosing one’s lifestyle. It is an aestheticization of ethics, a fusion of art and morality, in two very different moralities and two very different societies. These two moralities reveal two different styles of liberty. Paul Veyne (1997) captures its essence.

The course of history does not include eternal problems, problems of essences or of dialectics; it only offers valorizations that differ from one culture to another and even from one individual to another, valorizations ... that are neither true nor false: they are, that’s all, and each individual is the patriot of his or her own values. (226)

Veyne (1997, p. 230) hints that Foucault tries to impose at least one of his own preferences, revived from the Greeks, which he considers to be of present interest. The art

of living is Foucault's proposal of a new kind of interpretive *normativity* in a *post-normative* philosophy of ethics.

Next it is helpful to understand what Foucault meant by care of self, *curi sui, le souci de soi*, as a core part of his concept of aesthetics of existence. It is one of the practical implications of self-stylization.

C. Aesthetics of Existence Involves Taking Care of Self (*epimelea heautou*)

The following analysis extends the discussion from Chapter Two, where care of self was discussed as an interwoven phenomenon with the practice of freedom (section D). Care of self is a central aesthetic concept; it constitutes the positive side of a decisive will not to be governed by others, and a will to govern oneself and manage one's identity, part of the strategy for autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Care of self involves paying close attention to self, being occupied with self, to concern oneself with self, nurture self, and ultimately, the full cultivation of self. Care of self begins with the Greeks, but reaches its zenith, its golden age in the early centuries of the imperial Rome with the Latin Stoics. When Foucault was writing in the early 1980s, it had become a lost art that he hoped to recover. For the Greeks, it tended towards a focused pursuit of self-mastery, one might say a more Stoic exercise, 'it was a very ancient theme in Greek culture' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 43); for the Romans, it was a pursuit of the full enjoyment of oneself, combined with self-mastery, an Epicurean moment with a strong Stoic sub-theme. Eventually, it became a full *cultivation of self*, a robust enjoyment of self. Cultivation of the self can be briefly 'characterized by the fact that in the case of the art of existence—the *techne tou biou* in its different forms—it is dominated by the principle that says one must "take care of oneself" ' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 43). The aesthetic care of self used the technologies of self to carry out its goals of vigilance and self-transformation, a fundamental posture toward the self. As a somewhat whimsical term, it articulates the kind

of relationship, the posture or attitude, one could have towards oneself; it is contrasted with the Christian idea of care of others, the pastoral concern.

There is continuity in the theme of care of self between the various epochs under Foucault's investigation, but it includes some variation in how it plays out. It is about self-domination of passions and appetites with a component of *agonisme* or wrestling in both eras, but in the Roman era, it is also about maximizing pleasure and enjoyment. Care of self is a broadly understood phenomenon in the ancient world. Foucault (1983a) writes about it with a view to recapturing something that was lost to Westerners in the era of late modernity.

With Plato's *Alcibiades*, it's very clear: you have to take care of yourself because you have to rule the city. But taking care of yourself for its own sake starts with the Epicureans—it becomes something very general with Seneca, Pliny, and so on; everybody has to take care of himself. (p. 260)

From a general principle of ethics, it eventually became an art of self which is separate from ethical conduct (Foucault, 1984a, p. 79). Care of self involved a hard focus and much effort to work on oneself as diligently as one works on a great piece of art, with hours of diligent thought and effort. The contours of this care of self are four-fold: (a) it involves a whole set of occupations and exercises of a social nature, (b) it operates a close correlation between medicine and ethics, care of body and soul, (c) it has a significant place for self-knowledge within its sovereignty, and finally (d) the practices of the self or ascetics have the common goal of conversion to self (*epistrophe eis heauton*) or self-containment, self-contentment, and one might even say self-worship. The following discussion will open up these characteristics.

Where does Foucault locate care of self historically and philosophically? Alcibiades is his first touchstone in ancient history. While tracing the discourse back to the Platonists, the major concentration of his interest is with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. He mentions the Epicurean *Letter to Menoecus*, which begins by stating the principle. He finds the principle in Zeno the father of Stoicism (Foucault, 1984b, p. 46). Seneca, a first century Stoic, writes: 'one should lose no time and spare no effort in order to "develop

oneself”, “transform oneself”, “return to oneself” (loc.cit.); all of these elements are important. Seneca had a major role in the care of the self, commanding a whole vocabulary for designating the different forms that ought to be taken by the care of self and the haste with which one seeks to reunite with oneself (*ad se properare*), the ultimate state of self-reflexivity. Foucault’s favourite Stoic is Epictetus, a first century C.E. philosopher who shows the highest development of the theme. Man is defined in the *Discourses* as the being who was destined to care for himself (Foucault, 1984b, p. 47). For Epictetus, it is a *privilege-duty*, a *gift-obligation* that ensures one’s freedom while forcing one to take self as the object of diligence. The principle is seen to be valuable for all people at all ages and not reduced to the professional philosophers (Ibid., p. 48). But in fact, the study of philosophy is also part of the care of self.

Wealthy Romans would often hire a philosopher to help them care for their souls as a means to happiness (Ibid., p. 49). Marcus Aurelius, a Roman ruler and writer, was quite philosophically inclined in this way. Thus, there exists the connection with Pierre Hadot that philosophy is linked closely to spiritual exercises of both the Epicurean and Stoic variety; there is the dual concern with elaborating one’s pleasures and yet at the same time a will to maintain control over one’s behaviour. Foucault gleans the idea from different schools of philosophy, but finds the high point of care of self among the Roman Stoics (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 39-68).

Firstly, Foucault’s commitment to ethical autonomy has been noted earlier in this chapter. But, what is the social dimension of care of self? Here is the tension: despite the sense that care of self might seem quite individualistic, Foucault claims that it also has an intensely social component. This *soul-building* occupation involved rigorous work to care for the body through exercise and health regimens, as well as care for the mind through meditations, readings, notes taken on books or conversations, recollections of truths. ‘It constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice’ (Foucault, 1984b, p. 51). Around the practice of care of self, there developed an entire activity of speaking and

writing in which the work on oneself and communication with others were linked together. Epictetus had a school, where it was permitted that one receive help from others in spiritual direction and where mentoring occurred. But the social dimension also found support in the network of kinship, friendship relation as well. ‘The care of self appears ... as intrinsically linked to a “soul service” which includes the possibility of a round of exchanges with the other and a system of reciprocal obligations’ (Ibid., p. 54). It involved a social practice with social implications. Foucault (1984b) writes that,

It also took on the form of an attitude, a mode of behavior [sic]; it became instilled into the ways of living; it evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationship between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at the time even to institutions. And it gave rise, finally to certain mode of knowledge and to an elaboration of a science. (p. 45)

With all due credit given to this claim of the social dimension, however, care of self is still largely focused on the development and self-actualization of the individual. It is not a societal development of equality or justice, in both the Greek and Roman context where there were great inequalities in society. For the early Greeks, it was self-mastery with a view to a good reputation and ability to maintain a strong position of authority. The rigorous training, meditations and austerity involved others and had implications for others, but one cannot escape the primacy of attention to the self. It is not ultimately a social ethics of interrelationship, but an ethics of the self in relation to self—of personal development. In item four of this current discussion on ‘conversion to oneself’, Foucault also demonstrates that self is finally the central concern, not society and not the human Other. The Other is in effect a projection of the self, and can be manipulated.

Secondly, what is the correlation between ethics and medicine, therapeutics of the body and the soul? Foucault notes a holism in the ancients that has been lost in the more rigorous, scientific compartmentalization of current Western disciplines. Particularly with the Roman Stoics, the individual is obligated to consider that there is a sickness of body and soul or *pathos*; *pathos* applies to the distress of the body and the anxieties of the soul (Foucault, 1984b, p. 54). The analysis applied to both concurrently, because it was

assumed that an individual's malaise could circulate between them. Curing the body and curing the passions was one cure among the Romans. This is clearly a non-dualistic understanding of the human. As Foucault (Ibid.) puts it,

The improvement, the perfecting of the soul that one seeks in philosophy, the *paideia* the latter is supposed to ensure, increasingly assumes a medical coloration [sic]. Educating oneself and taking care of oneself are interconnected activities. Epictetus lays stress on this point. (p. 55)

Thus, there was the kind of wrestling with ethical problems among the Romans. Foucault (1984b) also notes in the *Letters of Seneca* an attention to the body in terms of:

The fear of excess, economy of regimen, being on the alert for disturbances, detailed attention given to dysfunction, taking into account of all the factors (season, climate, diet, mode of living) that can disturb the body and, through it, the soul. (p. 57)

The relationship one needed to develop with oneself, in this particular context, was that of a sick individual. In a fascinating way, ethics is integrated with medicine, spirituality, philosophy and education in self-care. Self was not treated (dualistically) separate from body; there is a much stronger focus on body as a central feature of ethics in this whole analysis. The return of ethics as aesthetics for Foucault involves a *return to the body and pleasures*.

Thirdly, *care of self* is coupled with *knowledge of self* in the ancient world, with care of self as the dominant concept. This is a significant point. Foucault notes that sadly the knowledge of oneself was gradually uncoupled from the care of the self, and became the dominant concern in the West, and eventually care of self disappeared from public discourse. This uncoupling of care of self from knowing self is at the heart of Foucault's concern in ethics. Care of self among the ancients included not only the need to know, but the need to attend effectively to the self, to exercise and transform the self. The knowing self was not separate from the ethical self. In Foucault's analysis, aesthetics of self among the ancients was intimately linked to knowledge of self; knowledge of self was a subsidiary category of (and integrated with) self-care. *Askesis*, as discussed in Chapter Two, came in various forms: training, meditations, tests of thinking, examination of conscience, control of representations. It eventually became a subject matter for teaching

(the *logoi*) and constituted one of the basic instruments used in the direction of souls (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 72 and 74). Aesthetics as care of self employed *askesis* as the technology to accomplish goals of self-transformation. The whole art of self-knowledge involved precise recipes, specific forms of examination, and codified exercises—self-knowledge and self-making were integrated. The writings or *logoi* became the truth accessible to self for integration, all part of philosophy as a way of life. There is a noticeable complexity to the practices of care of self, as Foucault examines it, but also a noticeable self-hegemony (*self-reflexive dialectic*), which in general excludes the Other. What is important to understand here is that knowledge of oneself is a mere sub-category of, a tool of self-care in Foucault's mapping of ancient ethics. There is similarity between the Greeks and Romans in that sexual ethics requires the individual to conform to a decorum, a certain art of living, which defines the aesthetic and ethical criteria of existence. What changes with the Romans is that the art refers more and more to universal principles of nature and reason, which everyone must observe in the same way (Foucault, 1984b, p. 67). But 'sexual ethics requires ... that the individual conform to a certain art of living which defines the aesthetic and ethical criteria of existence' (Ibid.).

On the issue of truth and the self-care, it has been demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three that truth for Foucault is not tied to the scientific, legal, religious or institutional structures; it is rather an aesthetic or constructive category, truth games. Stakes are high in terms of how the games are played and who sets the rules, the architect of truth construction. Ethical truth fits within the overall category of aesthetics; moral self-constitution and spiritual development involves the task of becoming the admirable, the beautiful self. As an aestheticized concept, not a rational concept, or a traditionally moral concept, truth is articulated relative to the individual and his evolving values. The new battle for truth about self is the truth game that is played by the individual at her own behest; it is the truth that the aesthetic self controls (not discovers) about self. Foucault (1983a) captures it in terms of the ancient world in this way.

They acted so as to give to their life certain values (reproduce certain examples, leave behind them an exalted reputation, give the maximum possible brilliance to their lives). It was a matter of making one's life into an object for a sort of knowledge, for a *techne*—for an art. (p. 271)

In this sense, art determines truth; artistic creation becomes reality construction; self as work of art is the emergent truth. Truth about the self, knowledge of the self is the knowledge that the individual creates and controls, rather than receives from the outside world. The individual's stylized life and self takes on an ontological status as an object of art, a new reality, a revelation. Truth is relative to self (a choice) and therefore self-creation becomes *imperative*. Moral truth, the product of a stylization of one's whole life under the care of self, is therefore open for reinterpretation and recreation on a continual basis, producing a protean, changeable, even illusive self. There is no access to truth without the *ascesis* of self-creation. Care of self is a first category for Foucault.

According to Foucault, however, there has been an unfortunate loss of this language of the care of self in Western culture, and consequently a change in the culture of the self and its relationship to truth. Two reasons are suggested by Foucault to account for this change: (a) the emergence of the Christian ideas of self-renunciation and pastoral care of souls (already discussed in Chapter Three), and (b) the movement in theoretical philosophy from Descartes to Husserl to separate self-knowledge from self-care. Knowledge of self took ever-increasing precedence as the first step in the theory of knowledge, and has subverted the tradition of care of self; it lost its cultural dominance. Foucault (1983a) writes:

From the moment that the culture of the self was taken up by Christianity, it was, in a way, put to work for the exercise of a pastoral power to the extent that the *epimeleia heautou* became, essentially, *epimeleia ton allon*—the care of others—which was the pastor's job. But insofar as individual salvation is channelled ... through a pastoral institution that has the care of souls as its object, the classical care of self disappeared, that is, was integrated and lost a large part of its autonomy. (p. 278)

Care of self lost its autonomy and was subverted by Christian pastoral care and self-renunciation. The movement was to search for the truth outside self in God or a book, and within the depths of one's inner self. Telling the truth about self became a form of interrogation, a *confession of the flesh*. The priority to care for self was surpassed by the

need to care for others; pastoral care emerges and re-orientes the self away from the vigilance of self-care.

Secondly, something even more drastic occurred. In a brief survey of the history of the relationship between self and truth, Foucault notes that there is a major change that occurs with Descartes. Descartes represents the point at which the practices of the self were radically separated from truth, where ethical practice and cognitive truth become separate spheres, experiencing a rupture. A reversal occurs, with practices of knowledge ending in a dominant position, and care of self became marginalized to the private sphere. The holistic concept of philosophy as a way of life was finally fractured (Foucault, 1983a).

[Descartes] succeeded in substituting a subject as founder of practices of knowledge for a subject constituted through the practices of the self ... Greek philosophy always held that a subject could not have access to truth if he did not first operate on himself a certain work that would make him susceptible to knowing the truth—a work of purification, conversion of the soul by contemplation of the soul itself ... Up to the sixteenth century in Europe, there was “no access to truth without ascesis”. (p.278)²⁷

Christianity represents the subversion of autonomous care of self, and Descartes represents the big rupture between care of self and concern with truth, the great fall into dualism and the loss of an ethics as aesthetics, even the repression of ethics in his language, according to Foucault (Ibid.).

To accede to truth, it suffices that I be *any* subject that can see what is evident. Evidence is substituted for *ascesis* at the point where the relationship to the self intersects the relationship to others and the world. The relationship to self no longer needs to be ascetic to get into relationship to truth ... Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth. After Descartes, we have a nonascetic subject of knowledge. This change makes possible the institutionalization of science. (1983a, p. 279)

He is clearly unimpressed with these results, and with the marginalization of the aesthetic ethics of self as an integrating category. Foucault does see hope that the arts of living can be recovered, and bring a return to the ancient relationship between self and truth, especially as Westerners retreat from politics, and refocus their efforts on *private* and aesthetic efforts of self-actualization. In fact, the hope that he commends to people today is

²⁷ Kant combines the subject of ethics and the subject of knowledge in a universal subject—the subject of knowledge demanded an ethical attitude. Kant reintroduced ethics as an applied form of procedural rationality. Kant says, ‘I must recognize myself as universal subject, that is, I must constitute myself in each of my actions as a universal subject by conforming to universal rules.’ Thus Kant introduces one more way in our tradition whereby the self is not merely given but is constituted in relationship to itself as subject (Foucault 1983a, p. 278-79).

to work on yourself because you cannot change the world. This concept of care of self reaches its apex in the next category, conversion to self, a tight loop of self-reflexivity.

The fourth concern in the cultivation of self, the ultimate goal of the practices of self-care, according to Foucault (1984b, pp. 64-67), is a *conversion to self* (*epistrophe eis heauton*). This ultimate state of self-cultivation reached its zenith in the first two centuries C.E. Under the term *convert to self*, there is an ancient Roman mandate to: seek oneself, escape outside dependencies, control oneself and justify oneself, and finally to fall in love with oneself (Ibid., p. 65). The quest is for a state called *autarkeia*, one of self-sufficiency and harmony—a state of non-dependence on anyone for survival and the satisfaction of physical and emotional needs. There is an element of Stoic self-control of the passions, but this is overshadowed by the Epicurean moment of pleasure in oneself; each individual should aim to promote and protect his own well-being and self-enjoyment.

This is a revelatory moment in Foucault's analysis of the culture of self. In all the discussion of spiritual exercises, self-knowledge and self-stylization, one had to keep in mind that 'the chief objective one should set for oneself is to be sought within oneself, in the relation of oneself to oneself' (Foucault, 1984b, p. 64), in other words, to shift attention to oneself. Freedom as autonomy, and one's own self-sufficiency, is critical to ethics as aesthetics—self-care. Self is first the centre of creativity and imagination (the agent) in self-making, and also the final goal of ethics. The conversion to oneself (*conversio ad se*) is arrived at through 'escaping all dependencies and enslavements' (Ibid., p. 65), to rejoin oneself as in a peaceful harbour or a fortress. This is, in the final analysis, an ethics of self-possession. It is articulated in juridical terms of possession: 'One belongs to oneself', one is 'his own master' (*suum fieri, suum esse* are terms used often in Seneca) (Ibid.). One is (*sui juris*), answerable to oneself; one is (*potestas sui*), holds the power and authority over oneself (Ibid.). Self-sufficiency, self-accountability, and self-control are the key fixations of the care of self. Conversion to oneself is the ultimate state of beauty and harmony, the *telos* of care of self.

Added to the concept of safety and self-possession and protection, conversion to oneself is about taking pleasure or delight, seeing beauty in oneself as an artist might enjoy it in his art—self-admiration. The epiphany, the revelatory moment or vision, is the aesthetic self, a self as sublime, of the highest moral or spiritual value. The language speaks of the mystification of self. The external world is relativized or demoted in significance with its worries and ambitions; even the past can be put under one's control, and changed as one re-writes it in line with joy in oneself.

The individual who has finally succeeded in gaining access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure. Not only is one satisfied with what one is and accepting of one's limits, but one "pleases oneself". Seneca uses the terms "gaudium" or "laetitia". The pleasure is a state that is neither accompanied nor followed by any disturbance in the body or the mind. It is defined by the fact of not being caused by anything that is independent of ourselves and therefore escapes our control. It arises out of ourselves and within ourselves. (Foucault, 1984b, p. 66)

This is the desired state of harmony of a *self-caused* cause, a *self-created* creator. At its best, the self can say, 'I am that I am; I exist for myself; I am content within myself' (the thesis writer's terms). Self-care, self-knowledge and self-admiration are one, integrated into the reflexive relationship within the self, or the relationship between the self as subject (creator) and the self as object (work). This is the true state of beauty to which to be aspired, suggests Foucault. One only has to look to oneself as the final aspiration, the final beauty, the final pleasure. The self becomes its own beatific vision, its own epiphany.

The aspiration here is towards a self-reflexive cycle of pleasure and control—control of the inner universe (harmony) and protection from adversity without. This is contrasted with *voluptas*, a precarious pleasure whose origin is outside the self and thereby beyond one's control. Foucault concludes, 'In place of this kind of violent, uncertain, and conditional pleasure, access to self is capable of providing a form of pleasure that comes, in serenity and without fail, of the experience of oneself' (Ibid., p. 66). In a personal interview, Foucault (1983b) connects personally with this outlook:

I think I have real difficulty in experiencing pleasure. I think that pleasure is a very difficult behavior [sic] ... I would like and I hope I'll die of an overdose of pleasure of any kind. Because I think it's really difficult and I always have the feeling that I do not feel *the* pleasure, the complete and total pleasure and, for me, it's related to death ... A pleasure must be something incredibly intense ... I'm not able to give myself and others those middle range pleasures that make up everyday life. (p. 12)

Care of self is an affirmation, an extension, and an experimentation of one's own practice of freedom. Care of self is a means of making a protective boundary around self. It is also a way of protecting knowledge of oneself from the outside world. Beauty, self-love and self-sufficiency fuse in the elaboration of the self.

In conclusion, care of self as a key theme in the art of living is a quest for an ancient, pre-Cartesian holism, where care of self and knowledge of self are one, and where care of body and care of soul are a common spiritual concern. As Foucault sees it, this holism can be recovered through a hermeneutic of self that is aesthetic; it is a productive use of power. But although there is a social dimension, it is not really a social ethics or an ethics of the polis; it is an ethics of the autonomous individual, with the well-being and pleasure in oneself as a beautiful object as the final moral trajectory. In the concept of conversion to oneself, one finds a further dimension of the elaboration of the individuated self as opposed to a self in community. The elaboration of self-care allows no external restrictions on the self, but only changes to the self from within. The conversion to self is both the *apogee* and the most provocative dimension of self-care, immediately sparking a number of questions, to be discussed in the critique portion, Part 2 of this chapter.

The next section deals with the impact of this aesthetic hermeneutic on power relations, and extends the idea of self-protection and self-empowerment. It is the final sector of exposition of Foucault's position on the moral self that brings the thought full circle to the quest for freedom and empowerment of the self in a world rife with domination.

D. Aesthetics of Existence Effects New Power Opportunities

This is a final visit, in the exposition on Foucault's ethics, to the triangular relationship of power-knowledge-self. Some profound implications emerge from his aesthetics of existence, in both power's shape and position, and the subject's relationship, or position, with respect to power. As noted in Chapter Two, Foucault sees power as a fresh, dynamic

complexity (power relations) in this stage of his research. Power is everywhere operative, in all relationships, at every level. Philosophically, power's range has now increased by entering the interiority of the subject; no longer is it just external as in political theory of sovereignty or power/knowledge regimes. Foucault's mid-career study considered the genealogy of power/knowledge, where the subject was object or victim of power (subjugated) and controlled from outside forces. Power, in the ethical phase of Foucault's work, is rethought as a more ubiquitous array of forces, both internal and external, a more sophisticated concept. Foucault recognizes that 'power relations are rooted in the system of social networks ... Power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions' (Foucault, 1982b, p. 224).

But Foucault also sees the potential for *agonisme* or resistance to the effects of power: 'Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle' (Ibid., p. 225). This discussion began in Chapter Two, Section E. There is, as he sees it, a new economy of power relations, which includes resistance and self-empowerment. 'Today the struggle is against forms of subjection—against the submission of subjectivity ... a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to' (Ibid., pp. 212, 213). It is a struggle against the dual strategies of individualization and totalization by the state. Foucault sees ethics as an anarchistic struggle against such government of individualization and totalization (also called pastoral power by Foucault).

The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (1982b, p. 216)

This form of power 'categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him' (Ibid., p. 212). The state wants *totalization* (conformity) in the midst of this individualization.

The aesthetic subject, according to Foucault, has become a new centre (site) of power negotiation. Power is recast dramatically as Foucault finds a new locale to which he had not attended prior to this work—a power in relation to this rediscovered dimension of the subject. Kyle Pasewark (1993) writes an illuminating chapter on the evolution of Foucault’s concept of power in his book, *A Theology of Power*.

The retrieval of the subject as a target of philosophy, combined with Foucault’s claim that power is everywhere, permits the extension of power into the realm of the subject as an operation within it, a self-relation and not merely as a force which operates on it from the outside. This is about the study of power’s internal operation. (p. 42)

Its focus is how human beings turn themselves into a moral subject. This discussion of power in the late Foucault began in Chapter One in terms of the importance of freedom to healthy (non-dominating) power relations. Where there is no freedom, as in the pathologies of fascism or Stalinism, there is no ethics, no room to manoeuvre among power relations or to resist them. Foucault studies power relations as the attempt to ‘act upon the actions of others’ (1982b, pp. 220f) to direct conduct. Freedom is an essential part of dynamic power relations.

When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others ... one includes an important element—freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. (Foucault, 1982b, p. 221)

Essential to freedom is the ability to resist or wrestle with the power relations at play in the social matrix; power can be used against itself as in judo wrestling.

At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an “agonism”—of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyses both sides than a permanent provocation. (Ibid., pp. 221f)

Resistance to domination and subjugation is key to a strategy of moving towards one’s own personal empowerment and self-definition. It calls into question the authority of power/knowledge as domination and the strategies of *individualization* and *totalization* (Chapter Two, sections B and C speak of Foucault’s response to such strategies).

The aesthetics of existence is key to this strategy. Chapter Three introduced Foucault’s new focus in research in section B. ‘Technologies of Self: A Change of Focus’. External, dominating power is no longer definitive or final in the late Foucault. Power with

respect to the subject has changed; there has been a shift from a self which is constituted by power/knowledge, to a self constituted by self, managed by self, a self-referential subject. It is a reflexive exercise of power by which the individual self can revise itself apart from power's victimization. Thus, external power loses some of its control over the subject; it goes into recession as self-creation emerges more strongly.

Aesthetic freedom provides the grounds for his critique of normalizing power. It is aesthetic freedom, through which each person forms his or her own subjectivity apart from the normalizing gaze of carceral society. (Pasewark, 1993, p. 38)

The art of freedom leads to the empowerment of the self, as control is wrested from the external forces of governmentality and pastoral confession, which demands both acts of submission and acts of truth—the double bind of individualization and totalization. The result can be a full, robust aesthetics of existence, and a culture of self, at the same time, a resistance against regime and a pro-active self-creation.

Therefore, resistance is an ancillary strategy of self-care; self-care resists in order to reduce the interference of power, 'taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point' (Foucault, 1982b, p. 211). In this new economy of power, which creates room to negotiate, Foucault wants to expose or bring to light power relations, and their point of application and methods. The *place de résistance* is no longer the barricade at the city centre, but the boundaries of the self (limits). As shown in Chapter Two, the liberation and redirection of the self, as well as the expansion of individual freedom, is at the heart of Foucault's strategy of ethics as an art form. The arts of self and freedom are co-dependent: art needs freedom, and freedom needs art to maintain and develop more freedom. Care of self involves an important conversion of power from external to internal, from the power of domination to power of self-determination. This conversion of power is now seen in more clear relief as a result of the above discussion of the Aesthetics of Stylization and Care of Self.

Power is now taken to be exercised throughout the social body; power relations are intersubjective. Foucault is drawn to the recognition that the positions the subject may

occupy are no longer only determined by forces external to it; self-constitution is also a self-positioning that transcends, evaluates, and chooses between positions offered. This constitutes a significant revolution in his thought. *Subjecthood* is no longer reducible to control, victimization or marginalization by the regime of power; there is now a potentially productive relationship with power, along with the destructive one. This new position for the self constitutes a breakthrough in the philosophy of subjectivity. Overall, power as it is reworked, takes the form of displacement of a judicial and negative conception of power relations by a positive technical and strategic conception. A. Schrift (1994, p. 190) captures the impact:

Power relations are not primarily repressive ... Power [must be seen] ... not as a substance or essence, but as a network of relations that works through the order of things and, in so doing, conditions what is to count as knowledge or truth.

The self has thereby become a new centre of political strategy, issuing in a politics of identity. Domination receives a new, positive ethical value, such as the Stoic internal discipline of self-mastery or the Roman self-love (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 58-64). Power over one's appetites becomes an instrument of value, and a pursuit of character transformation, whereas an earlier Foucault saw domination only in a negative light as a form of repression, a site for rebellion. Ethics as aesthetics for Foucault forms the positive edge of rebellion, and expansion of choice. Self-government entails self-mastery, a self-domination which orders and applies the knowledge that is part of self-care and one's ethical constitution towards the beautiful self. The new dimension of power is the contest with oneself, a new battle to win with regard to oneself, an internal spiritual battle.

Furthermore, an aesthetics of existence implies a significant change in the matrix of power/knowledge. Knowledge loses its necessary and inevitable involvement with power, is freed from power's control. This is why Foucault is keenly interested in the truth question in relation to the subject. Power within the arts of life no longer controls what is taken as knowledge; it introduces the possibility of knowledge that is not constituted by

external power, providing for a reign of reason apart from power. Power/knowledge is fractured. This is an important insight of Pasewark's (1993, pp. 44-51) analysis.

Self-constitution no longer needs power, read as forces within society, but only the lack of domination. Power has been demoted to a means between freedom and aesthetic creativity ... The aesthetics of freedom and self-care ... severs the bond between knowledge and power. (Ibid., pp. 44 and 50)

The major insight of Foucault's earlier work on power is that knowledge is always interwoven with power, never free of politics. Power is a condition of knowledge and therefore knowledge must always take account of its involvement with power. But the knowledge of the free, creative, artistic self positions itself over against power, and assumes a privileged form of knowledge, which transcends regime and societal forces. Freedom releases knowledge from power; it is a new trump, critical to his ethics. Foucault was led to an impasse that is resolved by divorcing one form of knowledge (knowledge involved in the care of self) from the interwoven power/knowledge. Ethics as self-creation is a strategic ploy. The hermeneutics of the aesthetic opens up new power opportunities. Once one understands the dynamics of power relations, it also opens up the games of truth and expands the possibilities of subjectivity.

In conclusion, Foucault, by privileging the aesthetic hermeneutic of self, the ontology of freedom, and the power of the creative imagination, has managed to launch a whole new discourse for ethics; it is an ethics of aesthetic self-empowerment. This is the end of the exposition of Foucault's concept of the constitution of the moral self. He has been given a robust and fair hearing, taking a generous openness to his analysis. Next the argument turns to a critique of his position. How does it stand up to scrutiny of other philosophers of the self like Charles Taylor? Taylor is important because his reflection on the self bridges Continental and Anglo-American philosophy. He has empathy for what is happening in Foucault and Continental thought while keeping some critical distance from its extremes and questioning some of its assumptions. The remainder of this chapter begins the examination of Foucault's moral self with a critical look at aesthetic self-making. Chapter Five will examine Foucault's moral ontology, his ontology of freedom. Chapter

Six will discuss some creative corrections to Foucault's position and suggest the beginning of a broader horizon for the moral self.

Part 2. Critical Assessment of Aesthetic Self-making: Dialogue with Charles Taylor

Aesthetic self-making as articulated by Foucault is a key concept now under scrutiny in this part of the chapter. This is the beginning of the critique of Foucault's moral self, based on the previous two and a half chapters of exposition. The thesis writer will employ Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor as a dialogue partner with Foucault, following a quest to discern the merits of Foucault's proposal for the constitution of the moral self, to raise some important questions, probe more deeply into the assumptions and lay open some of the possible implications of such an aesthetic self-creation. Taylor read both Continental and Anglo-American schools of philosophical thought while in Oxford at All Souls College and carries a significant expertise in Hegel. During the 1960s and 1970s, Taylor came to assume the paradoxical role of the leading Analytical exponent of Continental philosophy. Therefore he is an excellent moral interlocutor for Foucault. He appreciates in Foucault someone who is concerned to apply philosophy to the human sciences (without giving in to scientism) and to bridge between philosophical discourse and the way life is lived.

A. Points of Affirmation

We begin with an affirmation of Foucault's emphasis on the power of the creative imagination in ethics. There is real benefit to the pursuit of originality, the pursuit of the self's unique giftedness, creativity and potential, as opposed to imploding into a vast sea of conformity whether in a state dictatorship or a consumer society. The emphasis on the creative imagination is a positive movement towards keeping the self's potential open-ended, a way to create possibilities for the future. Foucault takes an *entrepreneurial* (thesis writer's coinage) stance with respect to the self, always thinking about new opportunities.

Authenticity of this type 'is itself an idea of freedom; it involves my finding the design of my life myself, against the demands of external conformity' (Taylor, 1991, p 68). A conformist concept of the self can indeed stifle. Foucault is right to affirm growth and freedom of expression, free-thinking and the examination of freedom's part in ethics. He is correct; there is no ethics without freedom; slavery and oppression lack certain ethical choice. The arts and the aesthetic are overall an important side of life lived well and bring balance to any over-emphasis on the science of the self in Western culture.

We also agree with Foucault that creative self-making is a good tool for the marginalized to use in order to avoid or confront their victimizers, whether this comes in structural or individual forms. There is wisdom in Foucault's aesthetics of existence in the positioning of oneself in the world in a way that makes one more able to avoid the various moves to domination. Julia Kristeva makes a good point on this issue, as articulated by philosopher Calvin Schrag.

Julia Kristeva, in developing her notion of the subject-in-process, which she worked out consulting the twin contributions of linguistics and psychoanalysis, made it quite clear that any notion of self-constitution involves a politics of self-formation. She called this a politics of marginality because it appeals to resources of discourse and action as they take shape within the macropractices of marginalized groups within society. (Calvin Schrag, 1997, p. 72)

Marginalized groups must be conscious of how they are being shaped by the larger society and how they are defining themselves to that society. Foucault is correct regarding the need to engage the forces shaping the self and the need to be consciously and actively thinking and involved in this shaping process. Empowerment for the marginalized is a legitimate and a true application of in Foucault's practice of freedom and aesthetic refusal of a negative or oppressive self-identity. This is a positive contribution to ethics and justice. This discussion between Taylor and Foucault highlights the importance of the stance of the moral self. Foucault demonstrated well that the enhanced expressive powers of the individual self can confront governmentalization through the creative imagination.

We will see that Taylor remains in support of Foucault's project of both articulating or defining and rethinking the self in late modernity. That is true, especially to the degree

that the motives and the purpose of this self-control and self-making lead to more justice, to positive, responsible citizenship and to improvement of fairness in social relations. There is much to glean from Foucault on the concept of one's relationship to self as one attempts to articulate one's place in the world. He has opened a good debate, and highlighted the importance of the involvement of the individual in her own moral self-constitution. Taylor, however, also has some cautions on what he considers some extreme positions in Foucault regarding the aesthetic shaping of the moral self.

B. Taylor's Concern with Aesthetic Self-Making in Moral Self-constitution

This section explores both the positive and negative implications of Foucault's aesthetic self-determination, which ultimately yields a full-orbed self-making. A strategic starting point is with Taylor's diagnostics of self-constitution in his book, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Taylor, 1991, pp. 65-67). This chart is employed in the thesis argument as a criteria grid to begin the critical examination of the robustness of Foucault concept of *aesthetic* moral self-constitution, described particularly in Part 1 of this chapter, but also in the first half of this thesis. It highlights what is present and what is excluded (the gaps); it leads us on a trajectory of opening up our awareness of the full dimensions of the self. Chapter Five goes into more detail on this same analysis, in particular focusing on the impact of the *exclusion of the good* in Foucault's ethics. Taylor begins by agreeing with Foucault that, in the West, one is self-consciously involved in one's self-development, and that one's identity, one's spirituality and one's moral self are intimately linked; those dimensions are common. Both philosophers are also critical of a cultural over-emphasis on scientific definitions of the moral self. Their debate begins when one asks *who* and *what* else is involved in one's self-shaping.

In Taylor's analysis, there are five significant criteria in the chart below, divided into categories A and B, indicators of the shape of one's own moral self-constitution. It is a chart which is respectful of the plurality of contemporary approaches. Taylor suggests that

all five elements tend to be involved, in some combination, in the pursuit of an authentic life.

Taylor's Moral Self-Construction Diagnostics

Category A (Creativity)

- (i) Creation and construction (as well as discovery) of the self.
- (ii) Pursuit of originality in one's self-crafting.
- (iii) Opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what one recognizes as morality, or the moral order.

Category B (Social and Moral Accountability)

- (i) Openness to horizons of significance prevents one's self-creation from losing the background that can save it from insignificance and trivialization (self-destructive).
- (ii) Self-definition needs to be developed in dialogue with significant Others, that is, fellow moral interlocutors. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 65, 66)²⁸

This chart is rooted in Taylor's moral ontology of the good, but contains a broad application. Moral ontology of the good is a concept which will be given more elaboration in Chapter Five. While admitting the strong impact of the Post-Romantic Turn in philosophy (of which Foucault is a part), Taylor understands the existence and currency of the language of self-construction. He takes Foucault seriously, even though he disagrees with him on certain key emphases. Taylor does not reject the Romantic and Post-Romantic traditions out of hand, but he does bring a critical reflection to bear on them.

To begin, Taylor does not concede the legitimacy of just any form of self-construction, a view that puts him into a significant tension with Foucault's perspective on the self. Referring back to the chart above, Taylor's concern with Foucault (as with other Neo-Nietzscheans) is the extreme emphasis that he places on Category A (Creativity), and the near exclusion of an emphasis on Category B (Accountability and Mutuality). Moreover, he contests that Foucault's radical nominalism, which denies the possibility of self-discovery along with self-creation (Ai); his problem is with what he considers an over-emphasis or skewing of reality. Taylor has a higher stake in, and he puts a higher value on, certain human and natural (even moral) *givens* than Foucault; Taylor is not a nominalist

²⁸ There have been slight changes made to Taylor's language by the thesis writer, for the sake of clarity and application. The chart is used to reveal Foucault's reductionism regarding the moral self and its horizon.

but a *falsifiable moral realist*,²⁹ which will become more clear in Chapter Five where the place of the good in moral self-shaping is discussed. Further, Taylor questions the merits and overall legitimacy of category Aiii, that self-constitution should automatically, by definition, involve denial of the moral rules of society—the anarchic stance. He does not have an inherent bias against social norms, but nor is he an uncritical social conventionalist. Taylor (1991, p. 63) can ask why aesthetic self-making should necessarily pass through a repudiation of the moral. Also, why are all moral regimes and all humanisms written off so thoroughly by Foucault? Finally, his concern with Foucault is the inherent denial of the significance of category Bi and Bii, including the idea of moral horizons and the more social dimension of self-making. As revealed in the discussion thus far, Foucault’s idea of moral self-constitution is highly individualistic. Taylor, as a more communitarian thinker, brings a fresh set of concerns to the table of discussion on the self.

He suggests that,

What must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other (e.g. A over B) ... That is what trendy doctrines of “deconstruction” involve today ... stress (Ai) the constructive, creative nature of our expressive languages, while altogether forgetting (Bi). They capture the more extreme forms of (Aiii), the amorality of creativity ... while forgetting (Bii), its dialogical setting, which binds us to others ... These thinkers buy into the background outlook of authenticity, for instance in their understanding of the creative, self-constitutive powers of language ... while ignoring some of its essential constituents. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 66, 67)

Taylor’s concern is that Foucault makes such a move, ignoring certain key constituents of self-articulation or self-constitution, such as the dynamics of Category B (Accountability). By abolishing all extra-self horizons of significance, and demoting the significance of dialogue with other moral interlocutors, morality can become a monologue, an abstract self-projection onto the world, rather than a source of communal conversation and cooperation. This is a crucial platform for the rest of the argument in the thesis, and will be developed further in Chapters Five and Six.

In the discussion on Care of Self earlier in this chapter (Part 1, section C), it was noted that for Foucault, the clear weight of bias in his discourse on subjectivity is towards

²⁹ Briefly put, this means that he expects both an objective and a subjective component in moral self-constitution, and will not allow ethics to be reduced to either extreme—term coined by R. Abbey (2000).

a radical autonomy, not construction as a communal dialogue, nor was it a communal ethics. It is an ethics of the individual. This tends to skew Foucault's theory of the moral self towards an ethics of self-interest. According to Foucault, ethics means that the self studies the power relations within the social matrix, abstracts itself from the problematized social matrix, rethinks itself, and then imposes the newly invented self combatively onto society. 'The understanding of value as something created gives a sense of freedom and power' (Taylor, 1991, p. 67). Foucault attempts to deal with self-constitution issue through his strong emphasis on the creative, constructive imagination. For him, the language of a transcendent good is repressed in self-making, in favour of the language of creative imagination and radical individual self-articulation (see Chapter Five). The grammar of the good is rethought and refigured in terms of the artistic self; self and its expression are taken as the proximate source of the good and the true.

The sources of the self, to use Taylor's language, are contained within the creative self. Once this is realized, suggests Foucault, individual freedom and power will emerge. Unlike other conceptions of transcendent moral sources in reason, nature or God, Foucault focuses on sources of the self within the self, in the register of moral empowerment. Such a perception of sources, such a 'love affair with power' (Ibid.) makes it possible to relativize, even marginalize the Other and the social world. This gives one power over the Other and the world, a power which could easily be abused by such a subject. It at least decreases vulnerability to the Other. This is especially acute given Foucault's emphasis on the kind of accountability that is merely a self-reflexive phenomenon, a responsibility to care for self first. It produces a radical self-determining form of freedom: 'It seems that significance can be conferred by *choice*, by making my life an exercise in freedom' (Ibid., p. 69). The one remaining virtue is *choice* itself. The kinder side of this, says Taylor, is that this is 'taken as supports for the demands of difference' (Ibid., p. 69). But overall, it pushes towards atomization of society.

Foucault would agree basically with Taylor's placement of his project in the twentieth century cultural transition called the Post-Romantic Turn (Taylor, 1989, pp. 434-55)³⁰. The *expressivism* (desire for freedom of expression) of this tradition gives a higher, even a *normative* significance to the aesthetic, and opens a full challenge to the moral (Taylor, 1991, p. 63). Foucault wishes to transcend the code-morality with its universal intent towards normalization, by a new morality of the evolving ethics of the autonomous self. The pressing question at this stage of the argument is whether Foucault himself is captive to his own *totalizing and unexamined* impulse, the *aestheticization of the moral self*. There is a strong tendency in Foucault to celebrate the individual's own powers to construct and interpret reality in a context shaped by immanence and the finite, and to deny the legitimacy of any binding moral horizon or moral culture outside the self. Taylor (1989) sees the picture in the quote below.

Foucault's spiritual profile: an even higher estimate of the unrestricted powers of the imagination than the Romantics had, and hence a celebration of those powers ... This subjectivism of self-celebration is a standard temptation in a culture which exalts freedom and puts such value on the creative imagination. (pp. 489, 490)

According to this sentiment resulting from a strong atheism, all values are welcome to the table of open hospitality, indicating a moral levelling. The consequence is that nothing appears to be of ultimate value, better or worse, innately. Virtues and vices, good and evil are levelled and reduced to an individual's stylization; only one's individually chosen

³⁰ Characteristics (summarized by thesis writer) of the Post-Romantic as gleaned from Taylor, 1989, pp. 434-455:

1. Art is superior to morality, and sees itself in conflict with the social moral order.
2. Humans live in a chaotic or fallen natural and social world, rooted in chaos and the will to power. One can take an affirmative stance towards the world through seeing it as beautiful—seeing the world through an aesthetic lens. This is the only remaining basis for its justification.
3. Being itself is not good as such, nor is human being *per se* taken as good.
4. Hope resides in a strong belief in the power of the creative imagination to transfigure or transform the world and the self, or to reveal it afresh as beautiful.
5. Language is a key means of changing the world, or at least the way one sees the world—key to one's poetic self-expression, and re-writing the self.
6. This tends to result in an aesthetic amorality, a move beyond good and evil, an embrace or affirmation of violence and cruelty as well as patience and care. There can be no logical or moral distinction between them.

values remain with the freedom to cherish them or discard them later. It is ethics as self-assertive politics; one posits and then promotes one's values in the name of style. This is a Nietzschean *embrace of it all* in the name of beauty. There is no higher or lower morality, no higher or lower marks of authenticity in Foucault; they are all just expressions of the self, all legitimated in and of themselves. 'Beauty is a satisfaction for itself ... gives its own intrinsic fulfilment. Its goal is internal' (Taylor, 1991, p. 64). Also, 'aesthetic wholeness is an independent goal with its own *telos*, its own form of goodness and satisfaction' (Ibid p. 65). Taylor makes the connection between Nietzsche's nihilism and Foucault on the issue of the aesthetic (1991, p. 60)

It is here that one recognizes that Foucault's project of the recovery of the subjective agency is threatened by a loss of meaning. There is a potential implosion into a fatal and tragic nihilism, self imploded in upon itself, without a broader horizon of significance and the recognition by the Other. Foucault sought to escape nihilism through the invention of the aesthetic self. Taylor (1989) notes that in this philosophical turn, there is a tendency to legitimate action and ethical behaviour according to beauty rather than by its inherent good.

What in the universe commands our affirmation, when we have overcome the all-too-human, is not properly called its goodness but comes closer to being its beauty ... Part of the heroism of the Nietzschean superman is that he can rise beyond the moral, beyond the concern with the good, and manage in spite of suffering and disorder and the absence of all justice to respond to something like the beauty of it all. (Taylor, 1989, p. 454)

The interpretative lens of goodness is exchanged for the lens of the beautiful. The beauty of it all makes all things tolerable. If Foucault's ethics as artistic life is passed through such a repudiation of the moral, any socially empowering moral principle is recognized and yet demoted in favour of the individual's controlled agenda over the self; this is a distortion of reality and a distortion of self. A prestigious place is given to one's own inner powers of construing, imagining or interpreting the world, and making over the self. Self-confidence is encouraged, but sensitivity to the Other is wanting.

Self emerges as the creator, *stylizer* and *valorizer* of its own individual values. The danger of much identity politics is that things can devolve into a politics of self-interest, ignoring justice for the Other or using the Other instrumentally for one's own self-interest. Taylor rigorously challenges this individualism and over-emphasis on the aesthetic side of self-interpretation in Foucault's moral self:

I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters. Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order that *matters* crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 40-41)

Trivialization of self and one's lifeworld is the route to nihilism. The reader should now be alert to the fact that the language of values and the language of aesthetics are closely entwined. The language of values emerges out of an intellectual outlook of nihilism. Where does a moral value come from? Why is compassion better or worse than violence or cruelty? Value, according to Foucault, is what the *creator of self* values, that is, the self and no one else. Self as agent has an awesome responsibility as creator of all values; the individual self's will to choose, the will to become, is paramount in this discourse. The condition of the self in Foucault works off the assumption of moral nihilism, and yet also assumes a strong will to self-empowerment, sentiments that are often contradictory or at least ironic. It is nihilism with a strong quest for freedom and creativity in its subjectivity. Unfortunately, it fails to meet Taylor's criteria of the higher versions of the authentic quest for self-construction, as shown above, it entails vulnerability to meaning loss.

Higher forms of authenticity, in Taylor's language, means a self that is connected to a moral horizon larger than that entailed by radical self-determination, is more concerned for its recognition by other people, with a more robust external accountability (social interdependence), as seen in the quote directly above. Foucault seems to be lacking a concept or structure of non-oppressive mutual accountability and positive communal, interdependent moral dialogue. By overplaying the aesthetic and the creative imagination

in his ethics, he has stripped morality down; he has reduced morality to a single component, that is, its beauty. In speaking of Foucault's emphasis on the aesthetic,

Taylor (1991) writes:

The notion that each of us has an original way of being human entails that each of us has to discover what it is to be ourselves. But the discovery can't be made by consulting pre-existing models, by hypothesis. So it can be made only by articulating it afresh. We discover what we have it in us to be by becoming that mode of life, by giving expression in our speech and action to what is original in us. The idea that revelation comes through expression is what I want to capture in speaking of the "expressivism" of the modern notion of the individual. (p. 61)

Discovery of self happens through self-making (projection). The individual self holds itself in existence. Thus the aesthetic self is in danger of simply evaporating into nothingness following its creation. Ironically, nihilism is the perfect philosophical environment for aesthetic self-creation. Perhaps this is why Foucault saw the self-creation as a continual process, an ongoing labour, a struggle of creation and recreation, a necessary, creative, yet treacherous path. Taylor understands that this expressivism is connected to earlier Romantics like Herder:

Artistic creation becomes the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition. The artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, as agent of original self-definition. Since about 1800, there has been a tendency to heroize the artist, to see in his or her life the essence of the human condition, and to venerate him or her as a seer, the creator of cultural values ... Art is understood now as a creation. (1991, p. 62.)

Clearly, this is part of the tradition in which Foucault follows and Taylor captures it well.

Complementary to Taylor's argument on the balance of Foucault's position on self-constitution, Foucault's colleague at Collège de France, Pierre Hadot, asks important questions regarding the culture of self and the care of self. Both Hadot and Foucault agree that the ancient world is a good resource and context for understanding ethics. Hadot, however, questions whether Foucault's position on the ancients does not entail an over-emphasis on the reflexive relationship with and love for oneself? He (1995) raises similar concerns to Taylor.

It seems to me ... that the description M. Foucault gives of what I have termed “spiritual exercises”, and which he prefers to call “techniques of the self”, is precisely focused too much on the “self”, or at least on a specific conception of the self ... In particular, Foucault presents Greco-Roman ethics as an ethics of the pleasure one takes in oneself ... It is not the case that the Stoic finds his joy in his “self”; rather as Seneca says, he finds it “in the best portion of the self” in “the true good”. Joy is to be found “in the conscience turned toward the good; in intentions which have no other object than virtue; in just actions” ... Seneca does not find joy in “Seneca”, but by transcending “Seneca”; by discovering there is within him—within all human beings, that is, and within the cosmos itself---a reason which is part of universal reason. (p. 206-07)

Hadot rejects the reflexive notion that one took pleasure in oneself as an end in itself, but holds that the ancients experienced a joy in aspiring to a higher moral horizon. He also rejects the idea that pleasure was an ethical principle among the Stoics. ‘Happiness does not consist in pleasure but in virtue’ (Ibid., p. 207). He finally concludes that, ‘From an historical point of view, it seems difficult to accept that the philosophical practice of the Stoics and Platonists was nothing but a relationship to one’s self, a culture of self, or a pleasure taken in one’s self’ (Ibid., p. 208). The Stoic often strove to go beyond, higher than self, to rise to a cosmic whole, an expansion of the self, toward a transcendent source. Hadot questions the way Foucault uses the Stoics, but also questions a self-construction that has the trajectory of self-pleasure as one finds in Foucault’s concept of care of self called *conversion to oneself*.

Furthermore, Hadot insists that Foucault’s emphasis over-states the importance of the aesthetic in the ethics of the ancient world. It leads to an over-emphasis on the interior, to the exclusion of a relationship with the exterior horizons of community and an objective moral context.

What I am afraid of is that by focusing his interpretation too exclusively on the culture of the self, the care of self, and conversion toward the self—M. Foucault is propounding a care of self which is *too* aesthetic. In other words, this may be a new form of Dandyism, late twentieth-century style ... What Foucault calls “practices of the self” do indeed correspond for the Platonists as well as for the Stoics, to a movement of conversion toward the self. One frees oneself from exteriority, from personal attachment to exterior objects, and from the pleasures they may provide. One observes oneself, to determine whether one has made progress in this exercise. One seeks to be one’s own master, to possess oneself, and find one’s happiness in freedom and inner independence ... I do think however, that this movement of interiorization is inseparably linked to another movement, whereby one rises to a higher psychic level, at which one encounters another kind of exteriorization ... This new way of being-in-the-world, which consists of becoming aware of oneself as a part of nature, and a portion of universal reason ... In this way, one identifies with an “Other”: nature, or universal reason, as it is present within each individual. This implies a radical transformation of perspective, and contains a universalist and cosmic dimension, upon which, it seems to me, M. Foucault did not sufficiently insist. (Hadot, 1995, p. 211)

Although this thesis does not attempt to critique Foucault's historical use of the ancient world, Hadot has an important point, in sympathy with Taylor's critique of the strong bent towards the aesthetic. Foucault's hermeneutic of the self is too one-sided, focusing strongly on the interior, and almost excluding the exterior context of ethics. Perhaps it is true that Hadot's bias is the more universalist, rationalistic approach, but the point is made that there is a skewing, shall we say twisting, in Foucault's self-creation towards a reflexive love of self and a bias towards raw individual creativity and self-stylization. He is particularly concerned with the idea of conversion to self, interpreted as a form of self-sufficiency, self-pleasure and self-admiration, a tendency towards narcissism.

There is here a new transcendence of the self, aesthetics and the creative imagination, ending in self-admiration. One finds this kind of sentiment in Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire in the late nineteenth century, models to which Foucault refers as exemplary lives, works of art incarnate. They represent worthy *stylized forms* of existence. This entails a dark side of self-worship and self-isolation. There is a clear distinction between the aesthetic mood of 'truth to self and intersubjective justice' (Taylor, 1991, p. 63), a thought that will be developed in Chapter Six. This thought leads our analysis of Foucault's self into an investigation of some other dangers, that is, the potential for the aesthetics of self leading to an aesthetics of violence, the topic of concern in the next section. The narcissistic can lead to the violent self.

C. Consequences of a Possible Aesthetics of Violence

Foucault believes strongly in aesthetic-freedom and the creative imagination and heartily celebrates a wide spectrum of human expression; that is clear from the exposition in the first half of the thesis. In fact, he is unlikely to judge the behaviour of others, unless they claim to be *right*. Sadly, one of the implications of this strong and uncritical embrace of aesthetic-freedom is that it can lead to an embrace of violence, cruelty and death itself as something to be celebrated. Aesthetics can both promote one's self-discipline and create an

open field for ethical practice towards the Other; it entails a spectrum which traverses from benevolence to indifference to hatred to cruelty and violence. This is one of the controversial implications of Foucault's moral *projectivism* (the projection of one's values onto life), and lived experience as a self-legitimizing entity. Taylor (1991, pp. 65-68) notes that one of the darker implications of aesthetic self-making is the *draw towards violence*. Referring back to Taylor's criteria of self-making, Foucault elevates the impulses of category A (Creativity) over category B (Accountability), and even excludes category B from relevance; there is an insensitivity to the total context of self and moral action. This can lead the self to a sense of severe autonomy and strident power, power that can be dangerous and destructive depending on how it is directed. But is this not one of the key elements of ethics that he ignores, that is, to guide and control how power and freedom are used? Taylor of course wants them to be used to promote fairness and justice, and positive treatment of the Other?

This shows up a crisis of moral normativity (Horowitz, 1992, pp. 325f; McNay, 1994, pp. 134ff)³¹ in his ambivalent and undefined notion of the aesthetic. Absent moral normativity and accountability, power can be very dangerous, which Foucault so readily recognized. If we follow the logic of Foucault's moral trajectory, hedonism, racism and hatred, even exploitation of the Other are also possible as a social and political praxis of his aesthetic ethics of self. These attitudes are unfortunately also a source of pleasure for certain formations of the self. Foucault understands this to some degree, and yet his elevated definition of freedom is so important to aesthetic creativity for the self that he seems to be blind or insensitive to some of the darker possibilities. The gap in this view, as Taylor sees it, involves a refusal of a whole set of demands for genuine authenticity, including accountability and responsibility to other persons as a key dimension of ethics, and to the scrutiny from a context beyond the self. Taylor would question this hermetic

³¹ McNay is particularly concerned about how the 'aesthetics of existence is elaborated through a Baudelairean heroization of the self' (1994, p. 147). She also notes a 'normative confusion' in the unproblematized notion of practice 'which reduces ethics to the act of aesthetic self-assertion' (Ibid., p.158). Why should the aesthetic be the default normative? Is this a hidden essentialism in Foucault?

concept of self-care as a conversion to oneself. Foucault's moral self lacks the appropriate sense of balance of interdependence and connectedness to the Other. It is sceptical of the prospect of relational harmony, assuming that one will be continuously trying to manipulate the Other, and will also attempt to avoid being manipulated. The protection of self can lead to deprivation of dignity for the Other and devaluation of the import of the *polis* and the public good. The political implications could be negative as well as positive; there are inherent dangers in this type of *strong* version of aesthetic freedom and self-creation.

In order to explain this concern, Taylor notes that Foucault's self-making refuses the discovery dimension of self-constitution, as per Ai, in favour of a more thoroughgoing self-invention. This can lead to both a threat of uncertainty in the self, and an unhealthy sense that all depends on the power of the individual will and one's individual choices. It is both a heavy burden to bear and a *heady wine* creating an inflated consciousness of self-importance. This can lead to violence, warns Taylor (1991).

The fascination with violence in the twentieth century has been a love affair with power ... even in milder forms neo-Nietzschean theories generate a sense of radical freedom ... this connects up in alliance with self-determining freedom ... The notion of self-determining freedom pushed to its limit, doesn't recognize any boundaries, anything given that I *have* to respect in my exercise of self-determining choice. It can easily tip over into the most extreme forms of anthropocentrism. (pp. 67, 68)

His atheism has led to an aesthetic anthropocentrism (literally, a human-centeredness) which abolishes all transcendent horizons of moral significance, and focuses attention on mere choice and self-expression. History is our witness: this can result in violence or cruelty, which can in turn be *aesthetically* self-justified. To whom, or to what standard or principle is this renewed sense of power and freedom accountable? Power of all types (even self-empowerment) needs an accountability structure in order to avoid corruption and abuse. What is missing is deterrence from evil behaviour in Foucault's post-normative aesthetic-freedom, where freedom to create is the highest *principle*.

Foucault is keenly aware that power is dangerous, and encourages a careful dance with power relations, and avoidance of the trap of domination. In Chapter Two, it was

revealed that he suggested that the emphasis on freedom and self-mastery would curb the appetite to abuse power. He is naive about the dangers of raw self-creation, for reasons that the Stoics knew well—choices based on will alone without a point of reference that sort pleasures qualitatively can be destructive to the self. A related question to address in his moral self is: For what reason should one care about another person, especially the weak and vulnerable, if one is focused so intensely on stylizing one's self? Why would someone take responsibility for the Other? An illustration in point is Foucault's controversial stance on the Iranian Islamic revolution of the late 1970s (D. Macey, 1993, pp. 407-11). As Macey points out, Foucault celebrated this uprising as a 'political spirituality', a 'spectacle of collective will' (Ibid., p. 410), but he was unprepared for, and sadly underestimated, the brutal oppression of the Ayatollah Khomeini. His report on the events in the Paris press was very controversial.³² He was caught by philosophical naiveté that led him into this failed analysis in his reporting, revealing the weakness in his position.

There is another problematic gap of responsibility and accountability in Foucault's strong self-affirmation or pleasure in self, the conversion to oneself. By focusing his ethics on the reflexive relationship with self, accountability is reduced to oneself and one's admirers to become the most *beautiful* life possible; the criteria of this *beauty* are self-positing, self-interpreted and self-legitimated; that makes them suspect. This may have currency in the land of celebrity, but is found wanting in everyday life. His *justice*, in essence, is interpreted according to the principle of self-love, even possibly leading to the extreme of narcissism. But social injustice and narcissism are linked; much injustice, and the justification thereof, can be done against others by locating all evil outside of self. The beautiful self registers as the *faultless self* in Foucault, and this is quite concerning in terms of its social implications. How could another question the motives of the aesthete on his own terms? The position is oblivious to negative motives; there is a notable lack of

³² See M. Leezenberg (2004) analysis of Foucault's reporting of the Iranian revolution. It is complex to apply his political spirituality to the scenario of such events.

discussion of motives in his ethics. This very important point will be picked up again in more detail in Chapter Six, section B. 'Quality of the Will'. The aesthetic self, in the final analysis is not open to appropriate critique; it is encased in a protective loop, a wall of self-protection and self-reflexivity. The work of art on his terms is to be admired by its audience and contains its merit within itself. For example, Oscar Wilde loved and enjoyed himself immensely and revelled in the celebration of his plays by admiring audiences, but he lived this to the exclusion of family responsibility, an *ethos* that was devastating and destructive to his wife and children. One of the illusive and difficult characteristics of the aesthetic self is that it keeps changing, being re-invented, so that it positions itself beyond the reach of criticism and accountability. This is problematic.

Furthermore, Taylor (1991) reveals in starker terms the implication of Nietzsche's inspiration of Foucault. It is well known that part of Foucault's thinking about the self is that the instinctual depths of human urges must be released for the sake of human creativity and self-actualization. This emerged in the discussion in Chapter Two, section D. 'Care of Self as a Practice of Freedom'.

Nietzsche who seeks a kind of self-making in the register of the aesthetic, sees this as quite incompatible with the traditional Christian-inspired ethic of benevolence. He has been followed and exceeded by various attempts to champion the instinctual depths, even violence, against the "bourgeois" ethic of order. Twentieth century examples include: Marinetti and the Futurists, Antoine Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty, and Georges Bataille. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 65, 66)

Georges Bataille (2001) was one of Foucault's intellectual heroes, a French essayist, philosophical theorist and novelist, who was interested in sex, death, degradation, and the power and potentialities of the obscene. He rejected traditional literature and considered that the ultimate aim of all intellectual, artistic, or religious activity should be the annihilation of the rational individual in a violent, transcendental act of communion. Taylor also exposes this anti-humanist (mis-anthropic) element within Foucault's ethics, in the discussion called *A Catholic Modernity?* (Heft (Ed.), 1999, pp. 27f) This draw to violence and cruelty is a dimension of self-making which it would be wrong to overlook. 'The Foucault of the 1980s is best understood as finally embracing a more recognizably

Nietzschean approach to the subject' (Ransom, 1997, p. 135). Like Nietzsche, one of his key intellectual sources of inspiration, he wishes to affirm all that life brings, which includes violence, cruelty and death as part of a *normal* life; he often wondered whether there would be some intense pleasure in death. He longs to hold an unsanitized depiction of existence, one that reveals cruelty. In an atmosphere of nihilism, power is always the dominant language: power trumps love. Foucault's ethics is not about love; it is about the expansion of freedom and power to the individual self, a very strategic power play (Part 1, section D), and clearly that is legitimate up to a point. It is the further extreme of this trajectory that is a concern.

Taylor worries about the potential loss of some of the key gains of modernity. He is saying that, however distasteful the thought, endemic to the aesthetics of existence is an embrace of violence, even possibly terrorism, and the lack of protection of basic human rights. Remember that Foucault's view of freedom does not support a concept of the worth of each individual or basic human rights; it is deeply suspicious of humanism. Taylor critiques Nietzsche, but the tough question applies to Foucault as well. There is an entailed celebration of cruelty under the banner of aesthetics, the beauty of it all, a radical *embrace*, or willingness to see the world as beautiful in order to accept it. Aestheticism naturally endorses violence and undercuts Foucault liberating ethics.

This is the revolt from within unbelief ... against the primacy of life ... from a sense of being confined, diminished by this sense of primacy. This has been an important stream in our culture, something woven into the inspiration of poets and writers—for example Baudelaire and Mallarmé. The most influential proponent of this kind of view is undoubtedly Nietzsche, and it is significant that the most important antihumanist thinkers of our time—for example Foucault, Derrida, behind them Bataille—all draw heavily on Nietzsche. Nietzsche rebelled against the idea that our highest goal is to preserve and increase life, to prevent suffering. He rejects that both metaphysically and practically. He rejects the egalitarianism underlying this whole affirmation of ordinary life ... Life itself can push to cruelty, to domination, to exclusion, and, indeed, does so in its moments of most exuberant affirmation ... There is nothing higher than the movement of life itself (the Will to Power). But it chafes at the benevolence, the universalism, the harmony, the order. It wants to rehabilitate destruction and chaos, the infliction of suffering and exploitation, as part of the life to be affirmed. Life properly affirmed affirms death and destruction. To pretend otherwise is to try to restrict it, hem it in, deprive it of its highest manifestations, which are precisely what makes it something you can say yes to. (Taylor, 1991, p. 27)

This quote is provocative and revealing for those who might simply accept Foucault's ethics as a total form of progress, a mandate for freedom of speech and self-expression. Of

course, Foucault finds oppression distasteful, but there is no force in his ethics to stop it or call it to account. From his moral position, a philosophy of life that would proscribe death-dealing or the infliction of suffering, is seen to be confining and demeaning; he assumes this state of attempted domination as part of social life; he is willing to sacrifice the public good for freedom and the free flow of relations. He does offer a defensive position (resistance) for the self who is victimized by abuses, but to be consistent, he cannot condemn them as wrong, because abuses of power can in themselves be articulated as free and creative expressions of self. Thus, modern secular and Christian humanisms (both distasteful to Foucault) would seem to prevent the affirmation of the primacy of the unedited self, the experimental lifestyle. He risks much for his ontology of freedom.

In an important note, Taylor points out something significant regarding the difference between the American and Continental European reception of Foucault (Taylor, 1994, p. 232).³³ In America, Foucault is appreciated by those on the Left, those of a more egalitarian perspective (for example, pragmatic neo-liberal Richard Rorty at Berkeley) as a critique of power relations and the ubiquity of attempts to dominate, plus exposure of societal inequalities, or the liberation of women. Taylor balances this view, 'But, saying that all human beings are equally worthy of respect is part of a different moral universe from Bataille. The somewhat darker, more problematical, anti-humanist side of Foucault is better understood in France' (Ibid.). This is part of the revolutionary story of the aesthetics of power relations and truth games that would be wrong to hide.

Taylor fears that this denial of the primacy of life, and its substitution with the will to choose one's own style as a way of life, could prove perilous and damaging. It can produce a counter-belief to modern philanthropy—which strives to feed the poor and aid the disenfranchised—with the possibilities for turning concern for the other into contempt, hatred, even aggression. Foucault is resistant to the 'metaphysical primacy of life and inherent value of the human being, in favour of the practical primacy of life, as it is lived—

³³ Taylor sites R. Bernstein (1991).

which involves the instinctual depths of cruelty and domination as well as free self-articulation' (Taylor, 1999, p. 28). Many individuals articulate self as a terrorist, freedom fighter or suicide bomber. Foucault ultimately fails to separate ethics from praxis; philosophically, he melts down ethics and pours it into the mould of human praxis and aesthetic self-construction. This is beginning to show significant weaknesses.

To support Taylor's concern with the aesthetic over-interpretation of self, Professor Jewel Spears Brooker reveals the dangers of an aesthetics of violence by giving an example of an aesthetic attempt to explain the catastrophic events in New York on September 11, 2001. She quotes German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's response in a September 17 interview on North German Radio, which is reported in the October 26 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

The crashing of hijacked jetliners into the twin towers of the World Trade Center was "the greatest work of art ever for the whole cosmos". Comparing the hijackers to artists and the attack to a concert requiring elaborate preparation, he continued: "You have people who are that concentrated on a performance, and then 5,000 people are released into the afterlife in a single moment. I couldn't do that. By comparison [with these artists], we composers are nothing" (Brooker, 2002, p. 5).³⁴

Clearly, what is missing here is the connection with the untold human suffering of this event, as Brooker (2002, p. 6) puts it, 'a *dis-incarnation* of reality by the aesthetic—the substitution of a sanitized image'. As a counter-point, Brooker in her article chose also to quote Emmanuel Lévinas, a French Lithuanian Jew who lived through the Holocaust. In 1948, he published an article called, 'Reality and its Shadow' which is a devastating critique of aestheticism. He argued that,

Art is not reality, but its shadow, and further, he argued that confusion in the realm of aesthetics leads to confusion in morals and ethics. In his own words: 'Art for art's sake ... is false inasmuch as it situates art above reality and recognizes no master for it; and it is immoral inasmuch as it liberates the artist from his duties as a man and assures him of a pretentious and false nobility. (Brooker, 2002, p. 5)³⁵

³⁴ M. Bayles (2001, p. B15)

³⁵ E. Lévinas (1987, pp. 1-14).

Art can work this way by substituting an image of reality for reality itself. This is a very astute insight and one shared by Terry Eagleton (1990, pp. 367f) in his critique of the *ideology of the aesthetic* in Foucault.

In this same vein of missing accountability, Taylor has an insightful dialogue with Jean Bethke Elshtain's critical review of his book *Sources of the Self* (1989). He admits that there are other problems with the idea of self-making as a quest for control (the blind ideal of self-making), problems which could lead to the sanction or embrace of violence. In response to Elshtain's concern that self-making can move one in negative directions, Taylor claims that he has been 'reading, or at least attempting to read "ideals of self-making which are blind to dependence" as *aberrations*' (Taylor, 1994, p.231). Aberrations to Taylor means both that 'something is wrong, and that it is a twisted form of something good' (Ibid.), in this case, the virtue of self-control or moderation within a will to take responsibility for the Other. Foucault, on the other hand, believes in a self-controlled freedom with malleable, even porous, limits on self-expression, limits that can and should be surpassed. Taylor (1994) writes:

I consider the blind ideals of self-making to be (at least partly) aberrations in relation to the aspiration to take responsibility, because these ideals arise from an occlusion of the context which gives the aspiration its sense. Taking responsibility can be seen to be a good given what human beings are, their powers, their potentials, their way of being. Taking responsibility specifically for our environment is a good in the context of the natural world, of its place in our lives, and in those of our descendants, and of the respect we owe it. To exult in the fact of control outside of both these contexts, human and natural, is to take joy in power for itself, a kind of joy which can easily tip over into a love of violence, because nothing manifests raw power so completely and convincingly as violence. (p. 231)

Unfortunately, the *culture of responsibility* is trumped by a *culture of choice* in Foucault. For him, there would seem to be no braking point between self-control as self-design, and control over others, even though he himself would find this or any other form of domination an offensive and undesirable (but not wrong) self-expression.

This is a good point of transition to Chapter Five, which brings Taylor's critical dialogue into debate with Foucault's moral ontology and understanding of freedom. Given some of the problems uncovered in this chapter, Taylor lays bare the need to rediscover and redeem the language and grammar of the good in moral and ethical discourse. Chapter

Five raises further questions about the ascendancy and adequacy of aesthetic self-creation, but also raises some important questions about the nature and context of freedom and the self.

Conclusion

This chapter has included the completion of the exposition section of the thesis with a look at Foucault's theme of the *aesthetic* component of the constitution of the moral self. It is now clear that the hermeneutic of the aesthetic is the *determinative* interpretive concept in Foucault's ethics: *aesthetics goes all the way down*. Ethics for Foucault is a sign language of the aesthetic. The return to the subject is a return to the subject as a function of interpretation, as opposed to a subject as a metaphysical or epistemological starting point. Chapter Two established the place of freedom as ontology and as practice in the paradigm of self-constitution. Chapter Three focused on the practical and technical dimension of self-transformation. The discussion above in Chapter Four captures the contours, the impact and consequences of dissolving the boundaries between ethics, art and everyday life into an *aesthetics of existence*, a life as art. This ethics includes all of the assumptions of Chapters Two and Three. The chapter has also begun to reveal some of the shortcomings and problems with this approach through a dialogue with Charles Taylor. This critique will continue in Chapter Five regarding the ontology and position of freedom in Foucault.

As discovered in this investigation, there is a positive, robust edge to this hermeneutic of self. It is the self taken seriously as a site for creativity, imagination and self-respect and even a site to resist forms of social and political oppression, towards the empowerment of the individual. The self is the frontier of freedom and of the invention of new forms of life and lifestyle (the entrepreneurial self). Foucault is right to encourage the individual to be more circumspect about her moral self and how it is being shaped, and to realize that one has a significant part to play in this shaping process. One's chosen action

does contribute to the shaping of one's character, which in turn creates a lifestyle, which creates the unity of this eclectic process. One is to some degree the *author* or the reflective architect and engineer of oneself. It has been Foucault's goal to intensify the awareness of this process, to make it more central to ethics. He has offered tools as found in the ancient world to inspire imaginative self-creation, a *creatio continua*. He also holds out promise that a few will be able to set a fine example as a work of art to be admired by the masses.

The language of aesthetic shaping can make a useful contribution to goals for one's future. There is a very meaningful artistic side to life, something important that transcends the science of physical survival; the aesthetic can help the self transcend the scientific *facts* of bodies. Foucault is also astute to understand the ubiquity and dynamics of power relations and the need to negotiate these power relations. He has shown that it is a struggle to form one's self amidst the various forces at work in society (governmentality). The project of the moral self offers hope at some level for at least a temporary break out of a fatalism, out of a form of subject that is controlled and victimized by the power/knowledge of the regime (helpless and docile), a subject that is not conscious of the abilities of an agent. The understanding which emerges from the exposition of the dynamics of the triangular relationship between power, truth and self is quite striking; it adds much to the academic conversation about self. We will see in Chapter Five that Foucault intentionally excludes the dimension of the good, which Taylor has worked hard to retrieve from the history of philosophy; this will make for interesting dialogue.

The concepts of style and care of self as part of self-creation in the register of the aesthetic are also fascinating, provocative and challenging. These categories open up fresh discussion, interesting questions and debate to help us *think differently* and use the imagination. The relationship between care of self and knowledge of self is worth examining further in the field of history of Western identity. Has self-care become a lost art as Foucault claims? Should one pay more attention to the style of one's life as a statement on what one really believes, or do a closer examination of the values one holds

dearly? Should one pay more attention to the nuances of a relationship between the moral self and truth commitments? Perhaps there has been an over-emphasis on principle and too little focus on an integrated principle-praxis connection in ethics. Certainly Foucault would disallow any ethics legitimacy that did not have a strong dimension of praxis. He has also spotted a loss of holism in the thought of modernity that needs to be addressed. Overall, it is quite a bold and sophisticated proposal for ethics in an age of nihilism, an attempt to redeem the subject from moral frozenness, and to redeem meaning at some level through applying an aesthetics of existence to one's life.

There is still however some one-sided extremism and reductionism in the aesthetics of self. It has been important to critically examine some of the key concepts, in order to see what is on the other side of the celebration of a culture of self, the culture of choice, and life as art. Does Foucault expect too much of the aesthetic? Is the aesthetic impulse too much of a totalizing and dominating emphasis in his ethics? Does it offer an appropriate normativity? If one's life and behaviour have a beautiful form, will it also automatically be good and praiseworthy? Does every aesthetic judgment necessarily imply an ethical judgment? Is not the aesthetic used too broadly when it is seen as an ethics? Foucault fights hard both for the autonomy of the aesthetic as a reigning impulse, and also fights for the application of this impulse to ethics and transformation of self; he wants the aesthetic to dominate and to interpret the ethical and the spiritual, to bypass moral principle and ultimately to dissolve normativity. This requires some serious reflection before we buy in.

His constitution of the self fights hard against the sovereignty of moral norms and codes, religion, science, and law, refusing them determinative control over the self. One should be circumspect and query at this point: Are there potential distasteful and harmful consequences of such an ethics? With Taylor, the cautions begin to show problems and incoherence as his diagnostics is applied to aesthetic self-making. It is precisely what Foucault excludes that gives one pause to consider again what is at stake, and the potential extremes and pitfalls inherent in his system. Creativity and freedom are strongly

emphasized to the exclusion of accountability to, and moral dialogue with, other individuals. With such a strong emphasis on the individual, the consequences for the Other are largely ignored and this will prove problematic in many cases. The groundless play of one's own imaginative powers are no substitute for justice for the community (the common good), and provide no solace for anti-humanism. Foucault never claimed to have a program for society, and this is the core of his inconsistency, a significant philosophical blinder. The radical autonomy of the self in fact works against the promotion of the common good; it discounts the common good.

The autonomy that is desired by Foucault has the real potential to become destructive of community and relationships, especially if the conversion to self is taken seriously as the apogee of ethics as aesthetics, as the care of self. Care of self and taking pleasure in oneself is a weak first principle; it promotes narcissism. After all, is not ethics fundamentally about the just and fair relationships between people towards peace, reconciliation and just relationships? The covenant with oneself (protecting one's pleasures and self-harmony) must also include a covenant with the Other, an *I-I* as well as an *I-Thou*.

The thesis writer questions whether ethics, at its best, can be defined as a quest for one's own self-indulgence. The emphasis is far too heavily weighted on the side of choice and the decision of the individual self, too strong on self-invention as opposed to self-discovery and accountability within a community. Autonomy has a mature side of independence and confidence, but it can also mean never having to say you are sorry. The struggle to avoid the grasp of governmentality and normalization can lead to a destructive anarchy, if taken to its opposite extreme. Prior to the anarchic level of intensity, it can produce a lot of pain and destruction. There are those who would see child pornography as an art form and their indulgence in it as an aesthetic delight.

Foucault's distaste for limits on the self do not allow for healthy boundaries either; moral self-editing is not his strong point. The loss of restrictions and his celebration of transgression is part of his extremism. This reveals a darker side to the art of living. For

example, politicians often tend to stylize their existence (spin their own image) as positive, and that of their opponent as negative, hiding a form of slander. Policies that exploit the poor and favour the wealthy can be used to get one elected to power; there can be a perverted beauty in this. Aesthetics (also known as optics) are often used to cover immorality or amorality. Lies about accounting irregularities in business are aestheticized as a positive protection of stockholders' interest. Many a greedy exploitation is spun in terms of socially redemptive categories. Foucault has worked hard to expose and deconstruct these corporate or regime-driven forms of abuse, but has left a gaping hole open for abuse by the individual self. The beautiful self can act out a fantasy, an illusion or a deception as well. There clearly need to be checks and balances on Foucault's proposal of creativity of self; it is far too open-ended and ill-defined. Ethics as aesthetics is a *mixed blessing*.

The major concern regarding imbalance with this approach is the forceful emphasis on praxis and the triumph of style, without normative principle or commitment to any sort of objective good. Practice trumps principle in Foucault's ethics of freedom. Without moral content, it promotes the reduction of ethics to valorization of one's individual values, and the entailed conflict between people who hold different values. Is this assumption of will to power of one's individual values morally adequate or helpful? When style (without moral content) is sovereign, life can be very uncertain and treacherous; style without accountability is truly risky. There is much potential for self-justification of dysfunctional and destructive behaviour. Noble self-empowerment can implode into public spin doctoring of self as mere image or surface, without reliable expectation; it promotes a breakdown in trust. The aesthetic is not fully adequate to define and transform the self; it is exposed as a not fully adequate hermeneutic of moral self-constitution. Style must be joined by moral content; one ought to say yes to style and moral accountability; ethics cannot be reduced to an individual's self-experiment without many hazards. Failure to separate ethics from praxis causes a moral short circuit because there exists no proper

reflective distance between one's ethics and one's self; therefore ethics implodes into a politics of having it my way, through making my choice an absolute. Iris Murdoch in her famous article 'God and the Good' (Hauerwas & MacIntyre (Eds.), p. 69) speaks profoundly to the point, 'Our picture of ourselves has become too grand, we have isolated and identified ourselves with an unrealistic conception of the will, we have lost the vision of reality separate from ourselves, and we have no adequate conception of original sin.' Ethics becomes a continual battleground and self is the site of endless conflict. Perhaps there is room for a bit more wisdom and discernment.

Finally, there is the concern that the view will implode back into nihilism. Nihilism is a possibility on two fronts: First, according to Foucault, if one does nothing and capitulates, one remains a victim or puppet of the regime, subjugated and in chains. Secondly, if one goes the route of self-creation as Foucault articulates it, one is also vulnerable to nihilism. The self still lacks grounding outside itself (the loop of self-creation and self-admiration) as a self-posed form without substance; it is in a precarious situation of possibly imploding in on itself, or sliding into violence. If one as an individual is the *only one* who recognizes and puts value on one's self, how does this value endure? What about weaker members of society who cannot fight for their values and identity? It could be an exhausting effort to keep oneself in existence under this scheme of ethics, and to keep one's life meaningful and significant without the larger horizons of meaning and a larger story of self. Foucault's project of the aesthetic self is suspect; the liberation of this ethics as aesthetics is hijacked by a *mythology of the aesthetic-freedom*.

Chapter Five: Taylor on Recovering the Good and Contextualizing Freedom.

Introduction

The discussion of this chapter picks up where Chapter Four left off. There, the critique began with the focus on aesthetic self-making. This chapter begins with the issue of moral ontology and finishes with an analysis of Foucault's position on freedom. In the end, they are connected, because one's moral ontology affects what one takes as a legitimate definition of freedom. Moral ontology is central to all other assumptions and convictions about Foucault's moral self, and therefore central to the dialogue and debate between these two philosophers; this is all part of the process of probing more deeply into Foucault's assumptions. In Chapter Two, it was revealed that Foucault posits freedom as an ontological position for the self; freedom is declared as a *reality* within which one can justifiably choose one's own moral parameters and construct one's self out of them. This is a dialogue between a realist (Taylor) and an anti-realist or constructivist (Foucault). Since freedom is so heavily weighted in Foucault's ethical self, it becomes a key point of discussion; it entails a debate between *aesthetic-freedom* and *goodness-freedom*³⁶ at this point. The critique portion of the argument so far has shown that Taylor appreciates, reveals and challenges certain assumptions of the moral self in Foucault. The following builds on the critique of aesthetic self-making which began in Part 2 of Chapter Four.

This allows Taylor an opportunity to fill out the picture of the moral self in more detail and to propose a vital relationship with the good as part of moral self-constitution. His analysis of morality is tightly interwoven with his analysis of the self in Western culture and that is helpful in a critique of Foucault: Taylor (1989, p. 3) argues that the human self is an inherently moral entity; self is always situated in moral space: 'Selfhood and the good ... or selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes.' The moral ontology proposed by Taylor sets up a lively tension and contrast with Foucault;

³⁶ These terms are coined by the thesis writer for the purpose of comparing the thrust of the two emphases, one where freedom is qualified by the aesthetic and the other qualified by the good. The language of goodness-freedom will be developed in Chapter Six.

it challenges at points, it reveals what is hidden beneath the surface, and it shows what is left out of aesthetic-freedom. This dialogue is deemed fruitful because there are insights to be gained by comparing and contrasting a more simple and minimalist ontology with a broader, richer and more complex one. There is beauty in the simplicity of Foucault, but there are also problems with this simplicity. This is a good route to comprehending Foucault's concept of freedom in context of a larger whole. Taylor raises some good questions on one hand and highlights the insights of Foucault on the other. It is an important contribution to the discussion of the future of the self in Western discourse. The discussion begins with Taylor's case for his particular version of moral realism.

Part 1. Taylor Interacts with Foucault's Moral Ontology

A. Taylor's Case for Moral Realism

Taylor's argument for moral realism is five-fold. In terms of moral givens, he argues that certain perennial features of the self are present irrespective of culture or the way they are expressed or understood. He starts his analysis with the question of how humans operate as moral beings in their actual moral experiences, and how they reflect upon those experiences. So like Foucault, he is interested in praxis. Beginning with humans and the way they experience morality, he claims that the most plausible explanation of morality is one that takes seriously humans' perception of the independence of goods. He does not want to substitute a philosophical abstraction for how people live and think. Firstly, he argues for the ubiquity of moral intuitions and judgments in human experience. These are intuitions that transcend basic human desires for survival, sex, or self-realization. They are also referred to as *second-order desires*, *strong evaluations* or *qualitative discriminations*: each of these terms is used by Taylor. One notes the important reference to the quality of the will, a term which has some relevance to the argument in Chapter Six, section B. This concept of second-order desires appeals to the ancient idea of *the good*, one which although interwoven with the self, transcends the self in significant ways. Secondly, he

argues that there is a need for a larger moral picture to facilitate the task of making sense of moral experience (debates, deliberations, decisions and actions). He calls this picture (map) a moral framework or horizon. Each framework is made up of several goods held together in a coherent relationship with one another, producing a moral worldview. The moral self is in a dialectical relationship with its framework; it is not a static set of conditions. Thirdly, he recognizes that there is a key defining good within each moral framework, which he calls the *hypergood*. The hypergood is the highest good and operates a controlling influence over the other goods within the framework; it defines the overall character of the framework and thus is central to the discussion of the moral self. Fourthly, Taylor recognizes a narrative and communal texture to the pursuit of the good in moral self-constitution. Humans interpret their lives in narrative and communal terms as they pursue moral goods. This narrative articulation helps the self to find a unity amidst the complexity of moral experience and a plurality of goods vying for one's attention. Fifthly, Taylor speaks of the sources of the moral, which he refers to as the *constitutive good*. The constitutive good (a category of moral motivation) gives meaning to and empowers, the hypergood and the other life goods within the moral framework. It provides the constitutive ground of the worth or value of the life goods, and allows the self to live the good life; this is a very significant dimension. Moral identity is interwoven with the pursuit of the good in life in Taylor's ontology. He discerns these five categories as *givens*, structural features that are common to the life of all morally healthy human beings. Taylor wants to problematize the occlusion or exclusion of such parameters, such qualitative distinctions for moral reasoning, because he believes that within the life of the self, there is a multiplicity of goods to be recognized, acted upon and pursued. Taylor emphasizes the importance of being circumspect about these goods. It is quite an ambitious and challenging proposal, a moral ontology of the *self at its best*, or most whole. It was not developed by Taylor specifically for a response to Foucault, but offers a useful framework for this dialogue on moral self-constitution.

In review of what has been discussed in the first four chapters, as a nominalist and anti-essentialist, Foucault has suggested that there is no objective, stable human moral nature either independent of culture or historical formation, or independent of one's own private self-construction. Therefore, on his view, the constructing forces of society and government are in tension with the constructing force of the individual self. Culture tends to determine the meaning one assigns to, and imposes on, the world around, and what one takes as *human* and *natural* as discussed in Chapter Two. Therefore, what is often called *human nature* is very temporary, contingent, local and changeable. The quest for freedom means that change is necessary; every self is involved in the process of defining and shaping. There is no universal nature, in Foucault's mind, other than either the ability to acquire a culture from society or the nature individuals construct themselves; moral selves are either a cultural product or a self-made product, or perhaps some combination of the two.

Foucault's moral ontology of aesthetic-freedom entails a whole *meta-position* of relativism, multiplicity, difference and diversity, but also one that excludes the good as defined by Taylor. For Foucault, there exists no ultimate or final moral position or common set of moral parameters, which is to be seen as more justified than any other. In this, he agrees with many of his fellow moderns. Attempts at claiming such justification would be seen by him as a fatal flaw. His relativist moral ontology means that he does not believe that it is possible to argue rationally for the superiority of one moral construction over another, no *totalizing* or final position; this would be to court domination. All positions are seen as problematic and dangerous, implicated with power, regime-biased. Ethics, in that sense, is *history all the way down* or a historical-cultural predisposition, and therefore must be constantly put under the critical knife. Moral self-constitution changes from place to place and era to era, and ultimately, individual to individual. The moral vision he offers in an age of moral crisis and nihilism (loss of moral consensus) is that the self might gain increased control over self-construction and escape dominating power

strategies; the creativity and originality of self is the road to freedom from domination for the individual. He does not offer hope for society as a whole in his ethics; freedom has an individual shape and it is a contest, a struggle; perhaps he has in mind the image of the Greek Olympic Games. One must assertively manage one's own identity. This sets the stage for debate on moral ontology as it relates to the self.

B. Intuitions of Qualitative Discriminations: a Common Experience

Taylor recognizes the existence of a plurality of moral positions and constructions, but in tension with Foucault's view, he has a conviction that some features of the self are universal regarding moral self-constitution. He contends that there are certain features of the moral self and its world that are endemic or common to all healthy humans. These features will be explored in this section. He recognizes plurality in the shape of human moralities, but does not follow the tradition of pluralism or the strict constructivism of Foucault. He argues for these features (dimensions of the self) according to the phenomena of reflective human experience, a look at the phenomena of human experience.

Ruth Abbey (2000, p. 29), a Taylor scholar, comments that: 'He does not suggest that in trying to explain morality we imagine a moral world devoid of humans and attempt to separate its subject-dependent properties from its objective or real properties.' He begins by claiming that all humans have certain moral intuitions, and all make moral judgments, including judgments about the behaviour of others. They all have a qualitative sense of their moral choices and deliberations; moral agency is not reducible to choice. For example, he points out that respect for human life is one of the deepest and most universally held moral instincts across cultures (1989, pp. 8, 11-12), which includes a concern for the Other; it is not merely a characteristic of self-survival. For example, 'Human beings command respect in all societies; the West articulates this in the language of rights' (Taylor, 1989, p. 11). All societies condemn murder and lesser forms of abuse. When this respect is not shown to someone, it is judged negatively; there is moral

conviction, an intuition about such behaviour. One exercises a moral or qualitative evaluation of the situation, appealing to some moral standard or moral good which transcends at some level the situation and the parties involved.

Taylor further claims that these strong evaluations are humanly inescapable.

Our moral reactions have two facets ... On the one side, they are almost like instincts, comparable to our love of sweet things, or our aversion to nauseous substances ... on the other, they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of human beings. From the second side, a moral reaction is an assent to, an affirmation of a given ontology of the human ... The whole way in which we think, reason, argue, and question ourselves about morality supposes that our moral reactions have these two sides: that they are not only "gut" feelings but also implicit acknowledgments of claims concerning the objects. (1989, pp. 5 & 7)

Taylor's form of realism means that the emphasis includes both objective and subjective aspects (poles) of self and morality, both a subjective and objective *givenness*. Humans do not just act, but regularly evaluate, praise and condemn other's actions and motives, and their own speech and conduct, always appealing to certain *objective* standards. According to Taylor, humans are *strong evaluators* by nature; strong evaluation is an essential feature of identity and a permanent feature of moral life (1989, pp. 3-4, 14, 15). He sees this capacity for evaluating or judging desires to be a distinctively and universally human one. He believes that human beings experience the goods that command their respect in a non-anthropocentric way, that is, as not deriving solely from human will or choice, nor depending only on the fact of individual affirmation of their value. He challenges the projectivist hypothesis (Taylor, 1989, p. 342). Human interpretation is involved (moral convictions are human convictions), but there is also an objective element in this evaluation process that Taylor wants to make explicit and clear.

Taylor's term *strong evaluation* comes from Harry Frankfurt's (1971, pp. 5-20) argument about *second order desires*, that is, desires one has about one's desires, evaluative desires (such as respect, or justice) that transcend other desires (sex, safety, food and survival). These are 'standards by which basic desires and choices are judged' (Taylor, 1989, p. 20). Humans experience a range of desires, but do not view them all equally; some are seen as higher or more admirable than others. There is a hierarchy and contrast in

human desires (Taylor, 1989, pp. 4, 20, 47); individuals do not see all their values or desires as being of equal worth. Strong evaluation is inherently contrastive and hierarchical; it appeals to certain goods that are independent of the self and human choice (Taylor, 1989, pp. 58, 68, 74). These goods are always related to the human moral situation, never mere abstract categories. Abbey (2000) captures the nuance of Taylor's view.

The best account of morality must be one that incorporates the fact that individuals experience goods as being worthy of their admiration and respect for reasons that do not depend on their choice of them. Beginning with humans and the way they experience morality, Taylor claims that the most plausible explanation of morality is one that takes seriously humans' perception of the independence of the goods. (p. 28)

This *independence of goods* is vital to the debate between Taylor and Foucault; it is a point where they differ strongly.

Furthermore, as Flanagan (1996, p. 147) notes in his commentary on Taylor, this concept of strong evaluations is both descriptive of how people are and act, and also normative regarding what is required for full personhood. Individuals do make these working moral assumptions, says Taylor, even if they are not conscious about relating to, evaluating, sorting and ordering goods. The process is often tacit, unconscious or intuitive.

Taylor (1985a) emphasizes this essential point and this fine distinction:

I want to speak of strong evaluations when the goods putatively identified are not seen as constituted as good by the fact that we desire them, but rather are seen as normative for desire. That is, they are seen as goods which we ought to desire, even if we do not, goods such that we show ourselves up as inferior or bad by our not desiring them. (p. 120)

There is an attempt to recover some dimension of the normative and a hierarchy of goods.

Moral realism for him, means that (Taylor, 1989, pp. 4, 20) strongly valued goods command the respect of individuals because of their intrinsic value, not one's choice to value them; they are experienced as making calls or demands upon individuals, rather than being freely or arbitrarily chosen by them. This means that Taylor takes moral experience of the good seriously and imputes ontological significance to it. He is resisting the slide towards moral subjectivism, which suggests that one's choice among the various goods can only be justified according to individual preferences or inclinations. These preferences,

claims Taylor, can be judged objectively and rationally discussed. Taylor claims that there is an inherent quality (*goodness*) in the good that individual selves ought to recognize. The good is the key element in morality that helps an individual self transcend the animal level of desires for food, sex, and survival. Taylor (1989, p. 42) offers a key test of a good: Can it be the basis of attitudes of admiration or contempt? It raises questions about ‘what kind of life is worth living ... what would be a rich, meaningful life, as against an empty one?’ (Ibid.). One can easily discern the difference in the goods appealed to between medical relief work and international prostitution or child pornography; Taylor claims that this discernment, this instinct is linked to a second order desire, or qualitative discrimination which is part of who we are as moral beings. The former garners one’s admiration; the latter draws one’s contempt. Taylor wants the moral self to affirm this capacity for evaluating or judging desires, claiming that there is a capacity within the human self (discernment) which can be revived and can help it look critically at its own desire and behaviour from the perspective of the good. He resists the stance of the nihilist, where the good is demoted to subjective choice or group values.

Some important qualifications are in order for these qualitative distinctions. Taylor is not suggesting that each and every choice is subject to strong evaluation. This is clearly not true of the choice of flavour of ice cream or style of clothing. Secondly, individuals are not always aware of the hierarchy that is in play; it can be held pre-articulately or tacitly as a background to moral understanding. Thirdly, the language of *strong* speaks more about quality than force or power. Fourthly, Taylor believes that all individuals are strong evaluators, but does not believe that they all value the same things strongly. He does however believe that some goods do feature in all moral codes and are strongly valued by all cultures: for example, human life, the dignity of the person, respect. Based on this objective element, there can be rational debate about the various goods held by an individual or a culture. Vital to the whole discussion is the claim that ‘strong value is both

logically and ontologically prior to strong evaluation' (Taylor, 1989, p. 99). Intrinsic high value calls forth strong evaluation.

Thus, the first point of Taylor's argument to challenge Foucault is that there exists qualitative discriminations intimately related to the self, yet to some important degree, independent of human choice or will (ontologically prior). The good is something the human self owns personally, yet the good has some independent status from its owner. The good is no mere projection, or the promotion of a certain value; it is not reducible to one's style. Projectivism holds that the world is essentially meaningless and that one must create meaning for life by what one affirms or creates. A moral good, under projectivism, would calculate as only a myth or an illusion, even if a myth by which one lives. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, Foucault is a projectivist, believing that morality is more about a human creation, interpretation and affirmation.

Realists, on the other hand, say that there are both objective characteristics and interpretations concerning morality, that there is a moral world that is independent of, while intimately interwoven with, the self's interpretation and understanding of it. They therefore assume that some interpretations come closer to explaining the phenomena of human moral experience, that they are more accurate or plausible than others. Taylor holds that these identified moral instincts are rooted in some greater reality than the self; this is his first indicator that the moral self is not wholly the product of culture or a product of one's self-construction alone or indeed reducible to one's basic desires. This is one of the anthropological givens that Taylor argues for, in contrast to Foucault.

Foucault's concept of the moral self, as it stands, does not explain the phenomenon of the self's relationship to the good. Rather, the language of the good and strong evaluations are absent in his ethical discourse, repressed and excluded. At most, they are illusions. Taylor's work asks the tough question: Does not Foucault, in the very midst of his enthusiasm for freedom, stylistic self-formation and care of self, work consciously or unconsciously to occlude the good—these important qualitative dimensions of morality? Is

his analysis not overly committed to issues of power, freedom and the self? Has he obscured something that could be very enriching to contemporary moral discourse, enhance the moral self, and even his own quest for freedom and creativity? Secondly, has he obscured the goods, *as goods*, which have actually shaped his own moral ontology?

Taylor does not believe that any moral self-constitution can do without some employment of the good, even if it is covert. Of course, Foucault would not call them *goods* because that would take them out of the realm of radical human self-interpretation. He employs instead the Nietzschean language of *values*: the values which his schema promotes are all human-centred, individualistic, immanent, anthropocentric ones: human-freedom, human-expressive-creativity, human self-control, human self-making, and human care of self. The debate about the good or the place of qualitative discriminations is skewed by Foucault in the direction of individually chosen values and aesthetic subjectivism; he lacks this objective dimension in his schema. As Taylor puts it (1989, p.12) regarding the post-Romantic notion of individual difference: ‘individual rights expands to the demand that we give people the freedom to develop their personality in their own way, however repugnant to ourselves and even to our moral sense.’ This kind of eclectic subjectivism is a serious concern. Another important dimension of the moral self for Taylor is the concept of *horizon*, a larger context for the self and its moral discriminations.

C. Moral Frameworks or Horizons

Once the case is made for qualitative discriminations, Taylor continues to develop the case for realism by arguing that one has to make sense of these basic human moral intuitions. This means that one has to *articulate* self within a moral framework, in a way that makes sense of that experience. The various goods that vie for attention need to be organized within a defined moral worldview, a big picture of moral thought and action. This process involves the geography metaphor of *moral mapping* of a landscape, producing a map or

making explicit the existence within the self of a map which can describe, contextualize and guide one's moral experience and judgments, through a set of moral parameters. Taylor believes that this is very significant for moral consciousness. He sees that this moral horizon is an essential dimension of the self's moral reality, claiming that all selves have such a framework, even if it is there in a fragile state or they are entirely unconscious of it. The self is interconnected in dialectical relationship with such a horizon. Taylor (1989) writes:

I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without moral frameworks is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations. Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings ... Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood. (p. 27)

He comments on the crisis that emerges with the loss of such a horizon as a disorientation of self, the kind of phenomenon that is endemic to nihilism (1989, pp. 18-19). He notes that to begin to lose one's orientation is to be in crisis—both a moral and identity crisis—and to lose it utterly is to break down and enter a zone of extreme pathology (Ibid., pp. 27-28). Employing the metaphor of physical space, Taylor claims that the framework orients the self in moral space, a space of moral questions of purpose, conduct and direction. One's moral horizon is composed of a series of qualitative discriminations spoken of above, strong evaluations, or judgments about which goods are of higher importance. The moral horizon automatically invokes a hierarchy of goods; it offers structure and guidance concerning how to relate to others, what it is good to be and what is meaningful, important and rewarding, and what one endorses and opposes. Some may lack this orientation but it is not taken as a situation to be normalized or celebrated as a boon of freedom; actually, it is taken as a concern for that individual's moral health, as a form of confusion.

The qualitative nature of the framework reads as follows (Taylor, 1989).

To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with a sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others ... available to us. Higher means deeper, purer, fuller, more admirable, making an absolute claim ... Higher goods command our respect, awe, admiration—act as a standard. (pp. 19-20)

This reference to *incomparably higher* speaks of the *hypergood*, an important aspect of the framework, which is developed in the next section. The framework or horizon is one's ultimate claim about the nature and contours of the moral world; it is not held lightly but taken as real, as one's moral ontology; it is essential to discerning oneself. Can freedom be that moral ontology? One's map transcends the self, is greater and higher than the self. Examples of such frameworks are found in a theistic religion like Judaism but also in secular viewpoints such as Marxism or Environmentalism. One's horizon contains a life-shaping worldview. The self, according to Taylor, lives in a dynamic relationship with, and is moved deeply and captivated by such a framework. The framework is composed of strongly-affirmed goods and inherently, there is a personal resonance with the self; it offers a place to locate one's self, and set one's moral priorities. Taylor (1989) takes note of this important distinction about the development of identity; one's moral worldview is critical to one's self-understanding.

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose ... the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (p. 27).

If the human animal is a self-interpreting entity (both men agree on this), the moral framework is deeply endemic to one's self-interpretation (Taylor, 1989, pp. 34-36).

Of course, there are different moral horizons, different maps, for different selves. Taylor recognizes that the orientation in moral space of an anarchist is quite different from that of a Catholic or a feminist. Various selves live in different moral universes, operating with radically different assumptions, drives and concerns. He feels that it is positive to articulate these differences, rather than hide them philosophically; it works towards better understanding and communication. According to Taylor, the relationship with one's framework is dialectical; the framework is not static. Contrary to Foucault's assumptions, such a framework is not simply something imposed by society, parents or a ruling elite, part of a power/knowledge regime. Taylor believes that one's moral framework or horizon includes a personal spiritual quest or narrative journey (Ibid., pp. 17-18), something that is

both invented and discovered ‘in virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually’ (Ibid., p. 18) and refers to the search and discovery of one’s moral calling. The quest is to find a fit for one’s reflective moral experience: discovering this fit depends on, and is interwoven with, inventing it. The discovery of a sense to life involves framing meaningful expressions which are adequate and carry moral substance, and have moral currency (Ibid., p. 18). Humans are creatively involved in the development and shaping of their moral horizon; Taylor agrees with Foucault regarding this creative dimension of self-shaping.

Taylor uses a key term *articulate* for the process whereby the aspects of the moral world are identified, clarified and made accessible, so that they can empower moral agents (Ibid., p. 18). To articulate is in a sense to draw the background picture which makes sense of one’s life morally speaking. It offers to locate the good *vis-à-vis* the self, and to specify the dynamics of how the self is related, or relates itself, to the good. He suggests that the self naturally has an urge to articulate (make explicit) this background picture (moral map). The articulation produces an awareness of something that is unspoken but presupposed; the *tacit* becomes *explicit*. This process reveals itself when there is a moral challenge to one’s framework by another self, a moral dilemma or a challenging circumstance. This elicits the ideals that draw the self to a particular moral outlook, empowers the self, and inspires it to act in accord with its framework. It is also important to realize that one can adopt new goods into one’s moral framework as these are deemed valuable in the process of one’s quest. Moral horizons can be dynamic and develop over time.

The key benefits of articulation are as follows: (a) It deepens one’s understanding of moral goods and responses by showing what underpins them; it backgrounds and contextualizes the moral self, thought and action. (b) It heightens one’s awareness of the complexity of moral life and the diverse range of goods to which modern individuals adhere. (c) It enhances the rational discussion and evaluation of goods because they are brought to the surface of consciousness. This is one place where Taylor’s moral ontology

stands out; he believes that there is the possibility for rational discussion of ethical ideals and convictions. They are not strictly private affairs.

If articulacy is to open us, to bring us out of the cramped postures of suppression, this is partly because it will allow us to acknowledge the full range of goods we live by. It is also because it will open us to our moral sources, to release their force in our lives. (Taylor, 1989, p. 107)

(d) It provides a correction to the ‘self-enforced inarticulacy’ (Ibid., pp. 53-90) of much modern moral philosophy with respect to these qualitative discriminations. Taylor (Ibid., pp. 84, 90) disagrees with those who want to obscure these frameworks or remain mute about the place of qualitative distinctions in the moral life.

Through his discussion about frameworks, Taylor recovers an interest in a *commitment* to the good. In his understanding, development of identity emerges in a way that is closely linked to one’s orientation within a particular moral framework or horizon, that is, where one is positioned with respect to one’s moral map and the goods within one’s horizon. This is the defining edge of meaning in one’s life; he claims that a self with depth (a *thick* self) must be defined in terms of the good: ‘In order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher’ (Taylor, 1989, p. 47). What one calls *the good* is the most significant defining factor: ‘What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me and how I orient myself to the good’ (Ibid., p. 34). Genuine self-understanding, clarification, moral self-discipline and education require that the self be identified and articulated within such a moral horizon. It also means that, ‘one orients oneself in a space which exists independently of one’s success or failure in finding one’s bearings’ (Ibid., p 30). One is able to grow up or mature into one’s framework. This adds another dimension to the objective pole in his moral ontology: the moral horizon has a status independent of the self, though intimately and dialectically entwined with the self.

From his perspective, Foucault rejects the validity of moral frameworks as a necessity, denying any moral reality beyond the *horizon of freedom*, or what the self

invents, or what is socially constructed (what other people invent). He rejects them along with *archaic* code-based morality. One definition of nihilism is the denial or loss of such frameworks. The great tendency in Foucault is to view these frameworks negatively through the lens of a weapon of the controlling agent or the disciplinary (carceral) society, infected with power; he does not recognize any fruitful results in their application. Foucault's understanding of the self is that it does not relate to, and is not accountable to any framework or moral horizon; self is accountable to itself. As Taylor hints, Foucault stops the discussion at exactly the point where it could become most fruitful, that is, at his critique of poor or oppressive moral systems, at domination analysis. But one can critique and even reject a particular destructive horizon such as fascism, and yet look for others that are more suitable and noble, which involves both critique and a search for a better alternative. Foucault rejects this possibility and considers all horizons imprisoning, the enemy of free moral self-constitution. So, he would warn Taylor about the negative effects of moral horizons with their exclusionary powers, and these warnings can be taken seriously as part of a helpful balance to the dialogue.

There is another important distinction in Taylor's proposal. He identifies the existence of many different and conflicting horizons that frame individual moral space. Is he merely proposing another sophisticated form of relativism, one of moral frameworks? In this regard, he does clarify an important qualifier about frameworks in a response to critical papers on his work, *Philosophy in An Age of Pluralism* (J. Tully, Ed., 1994). He denies the arbitrariness of one's framework, or the equality of all frameworks, in favour of a more critical and thoughtful perspective, where some frameworks actually calculate as being of higher value than others. This is part of his realism.

Realism involves ranking (some) schemes and ranking them in terms of their ability to cope with, allow us to know, describe, come to understand reality. Some schemes are better or worse than others ... Moral realism requires one be able to identify certain moral changes as gains or losses, yet it can be sensitive to the complexities of life and of moral choice. (Taylor, 1994, pp. 220 and 224)

This is not exactly the same as scientific realism (although there is some overlap in intent) where the forces of nature operate in a certain way whether humans observe them in that

way or not, and where the scientist bends his analysis or theory to fit newly discovered facts. The moral goods do not exist outside of the human realm; it is human beings only that see significance in a moral good and a particular moral framework; this is Taylor's concept of *resonance*. Moral realism means that some frameworks are truer to authentic human experience and make more sense than others, that is, that they are more plausible, and nobler. This is an important nuance.

Yet there are no final criteria, according to Taylor, for evaluating or judging between different frameworks, except to reveal what they actually claim. Frameworks are evaluated rationally by their highest ideals—hypergoods—and by their personal resonance with the self (sense of fitness). They are deeply connected to one's self-interpretation, one's sense of self in the relationship to other selves. Taylor puts forward an honest appraisal of the actual situation, a critique of the superficial notion of soft relativism.

The point of view from which we might constatae that all orders are equally arbitrary, in particular that all moral views are equally so, is just not available to us as humans. It is a form of self-delusion to think that we do not speak from a moral orientation which we take to be right. That is a condition of being a functioning self, not a metaphysical view we can put on or off. (1989, p. 99)

Significantly, it is not possible to hold a position where all horizons are created equal, or to hold one's moral horizon lightly or superficially, because it shapes one's very identity; it is a serious matter. Does Foucault claim this vantage point inadvertently? Certainly, he has very deep convictions about his ontology of aesthetic-freedom.

Taylor does offer hope that when one becomes dissatisfied with one's current horizon, there is a way forward of searching through it to a better alternative. This is the way of *error reduction* or filling the gaps within one's view. He also emphasizes that one must be able to live consistently and non-ambivalently within one's horizon; it must have *liveability*. This is the direction of increased plausibility, which will be discussed later in Chapter Six, but it entails a major shift within self's convictions. Both dimensions—strong subjective and objective—are recognized together in his ethics; therefore, one can engage

in intelligent rational dialogue about horizons, and across horizons. Horizons are to be respected and not to be feared or shunned as a mere ploy of controlling forces.

D. Communal and Narrative Character as the Shape of the Self

As stated earlier, one's map is an articulation of one's *moral ontology*. Taylor extends the concept of one's moral map to include terms of community and narrative. How is identity formation interwoven with the constitution of the good life? A strong qualification in Taylor's notion of the moral self is the communal or inter-subjective aspect of self-constitution. The good is not a free-floating ideal, but truly something embedded in human story and community. This aspect of his moral ontology stands in stark contrast to Foucault's individualistic moral subjectivity. In Taylor's view, the self is partly constituted by a language, one that necessarily exists and is maintained within a language community, among other selves.

There is a sense in which one cannot be a self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who are essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language of self-understanding ... a self exists only within ... 'webs of interlocution'. (1989, p. 36)

These webs of interlocution prove significant for Taylor; the communal *Other* is critical to one's moral self-constitution; in his view, there is a necessary, ongoing conversation with significant others which is critical to one's moral identity development. In Taylor's terms, there is a *myth* in Foucault's moral self, which says that one can define self in terms of a relationship with oneself, and explicitly in relation to no communal web, that true creativity and originality demands that one should work out their own unique identity (Taylor, 1989, p. 39). For Taylor, this is not possible at a practical level; it is rather an artificial and unhealthy abstraction of what it means to be human. Thus, against the backdrop of Taylor's convictions, the character of Foucault's quest for freedom can lead in an unhealthy direction, towards the isolation of self. It opens a key question of what is important to moral constitution and what feeds healthy agency and subjectivity.

These two philosophers are in fundamental disagreement on this issue of self-definition: Taylor's *communal* self contrasts starkly with the Foucault's radically *individualistic* self. Taylor (1989) contests that:

I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (p. 35)

Foucault's moral self-constitution means that one defines oneself over against the social matrix, while Taylor sees the benefits of a self which is integrated into a social matrix. One sees the need for disruption; the other pursues integration. Taylor notes that even from one's earliest years, one's language for the moral must be tested on others; gradually through this sort of relational-moral-conversation, the individual self gains confidence in what it means and in *who* they are as a moral being. The Other must be granted her intrinsic integrity, voice and presence as well. One is moved, even transformed, by the lives, the wisdom and the deeper understanding of the Other. Taking his picture of moral ontology a step further, Taylor argues for self as socially embedded in its moral constitution. One relates to the good, not only as an individual self, but within a communal context, where the community also relates to and incarnates some good or goods. This stands in contrast to the distinct lack of *we* (communal) language in Foucault's grammar of the moral self; he promotes a more decontextualized, aesthetic self, which embraces an *agonisme* with respect to the social, and especially social constructions of the good. The communal and narrative dimensions of self are not on Foucault's map. He makes a move to return to agency, and yet lacks a full, robust version of subjectivity. This point will be developed as the chapter proceeds.

Community in Taylor does not necessarily entail uniformity, or a dull conformity and conventionalism, but rather can be a dynamic economy of *being-with-others*. Community occurs even where there is disagreement. But one cannot have community without some sort of normativity, some common commitment to the good; there is no value-neutral inter-subjective state of affairs. There is a notable link between Foucault's

avoidance of community and his avoidance of normativity; community cannot exist without the normative; it is essential to trust and mutual respect. The interpretation of self in terms of its relation to the good can only proceed in recognition of self's interdependence with other selves. Taylor (1989, p. 37) presses: 'The drive to original vision will be hampered, will ultimately be lost in inner confusion, unless it can be placed in some way in relation to the language and vision of others.' Foucault's *thin* self is abstracted out of community, and out of narrative continuity, because of a concern to avoid domination, and a need to resist power relations.

Furthermore, in his articulation of moral mapping, Taylor looks to narrative depth as a defining feature of the moral self, identity and agency. Narrative is consequential to the stability and continuity of the moral self over time; it is in the shape of a personal quest. Taylor gets this notion of self involved in a narrative quest from A. MacIntyre (1989, pp. 17, 48). Narration of the quest for the good allows one to discover a unity amidst the diversity of goods that demand one's attention; the continuity in the self is a necessary part of a life lived in moral space. He sees narrative as a deep structure, a temporal depth in his *thick* concept of self, adding another texture to its communal richness. The good is more than a concept outside the self, an ideal of life lived well; it is also something embodied, carried in one's story and the story of one's community. Community is a way to understand and mediate the good. Taylor (1989) writes,

This sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story ... Making sense of my life as a story is not an optional extra ... There is a space of questions which only a coherent narrative can answer. (p. 47)

The key issue here for Taylor is the unity and past-present-future continuity of a life, over against a strong focus of the self-as-discontinuity promoted by Foucault, where the quest is to *get free of oneself*.

The movement for Foucault is towards the ever-new, re-invented self, a self which dislikes vulnerability, and tries to avoid being known by the Other, wedging itself from history and community. The narrative depth is not a priority, and there is a minimum of

interest in continuity of the life with the past. Foucault's is a very future-oriented self, one that desires to escape the self of oppression history, the self normalized. Taylor believes that one's story, properly understood and grappled with, is an essential part of what constitutes the moral self. Thus, for him it becomes relevant to ask, 'What has shaped me thus far?' and 'What direction is my life taking in terms of the good?', 'Does my life have weight and substance?' (Taylor, 1989, p. 50). Taylor suggests that a healthy self asks the questions about the span of one's life and is not only interested in the immediate present, or an escape into a fantastic future: 'my sense of the good has to be woven into my life as an unfolding story' (Taylor, 1989, p. 47). The pressing question in this dialogue between Taylor and Foucault is: Which is the way to substantial freedom? Is it denial or deconstruction of the burdensome past, or is it fathoming one's narrative depth of identity and marking out the trajectory of one's narrative quest, in order to make sense of one's story?

In this argument for narrative dimensions of the self, Taylor draws on P. Ricoeur (1992, pp. 113-68) who has written on the important difference between *ipse* and *idem*-identity. *Idem*-identity refers to the objective stability of one's identity over time (read as a succession of moments) and outside time, character traits that don't change with time. *Ips*e-identity is more fluid and dynamic, as per one's personal identity as an unfolding character in a novel; it develops in the temporal becoming of the self. It is carried through memory and anticipation, and linked with narrative temporality. Crucial to *ipse*-identity is the ongoing integration of past, present and future in a unified fashion, a narrative unity (Taylor, 1989, p. 50). There are two significant implications of these two features of identity through time. One is the possibility of the future as different from the present and past, the possibility of redeeming the past, to make it a part of the meaning of one's life story (Ibid., p. 51); it is to bring a fresh interpretation of, for instance, one's suffering and disappointments. Foucault wants a new future as well. But narrative does not allow for a discontinuity with the past, a refusal of past identity or origins which one finds as a strong

feature in Foucault (see Chapter Two). Taylor cautions against any avoidance of wrestling with the past:

To repudiate my childhood as unredeemable in this sense is to accept a kind of mutilation as a person; it is to fail to meet the full challenge involved in making sense of my life. This is the sense in which it is not up for arbitrary determination what the temporal limits of my personhood are. (Ibid., p. 51)³⁷

The past, grappling with the meaning of the past, seeking healing from past hurts and failures, is vital to the healthy self as a narrative.

Taylor agrees with Foucault that it makes sense to set a future trajectory for one's life, to project a future story, to have what MacIntyre calls 'a quest'.³⁸ This promotes the sense that one's life has a direction (Ibid., p. 48). Taylor (1989)

Because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest'. (pp. 51, 52)

This quest requires a *telos* or goal, and for this some knowledge of the good is required. Taylor believes in narrative in the strong sense—a structure inherent in human experience and action, narrative as a human given, part of reflection and self-interpretative in the human moral agent. This narrative is embedded in community where one is accountable to other narratives; he sees these conditions as connected facets of the same reality. For Foucault, the trajectory of the quest is definitely towards the beautiful rather than the good.

There is, in Foucault's self-constitution, the will to escape the past, especially with his heavy emphasis on the continual reinvention of self. He does not want to leave a trail in the character of the self; it is a very limited relationship to narrative. This is where Taylor can correct or complement Foucault. Taylor seems to be pressing the question as to whether one can so easily accomplish this escape, and whether this attempt is a boon or a problem for the self. There appears to be a deficit in the narrative unity and continuity of

³⁷ D.F. Ford (1999, pp. 82-93), elaborates on the contribution of Ricoeur to this discussion of narrative as well as the theological space of the self. Ricoeur believes that narrative is the crucial genre for description of the self in time.

³⁸ A. MacIntyre (1984, pp. 204-225, esp. 217-219) carries a parallel conviction to Taylor on this issue of the narrative structure of the self. 'The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest.' (p. 219)

the self that is endemic to Foucault's liberation strategy for the future; the continuity of the self is heavily in question.

In Taylor's sense, Foucault is suggesting a self-articulation that attempts an escape or liberation from one's earlier, historical self, untying self from past identity. This was discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The assumption is that the earlier self is in the cage of power/knowledge, which prevents the future self from a positive emergence in freedom. Foucault's focus of concern is the *becoming* of the self (ipse-identity), the *re-scripting* of the self in the future, the self re-written. There is a common interest in both Taylor and Foucault, in the future of the self, but a sharp disagreement on the relationship with the past. The outcome is that there would also be a major difference in the possibilities for the future self. One scenario (Taylor's) maintains continuity with the past attempting to resolve past issues and pain. The other scenario (Foucault's) maintains a radical discontinuity with the past seeing a need to deconstruct it, escape it, disrupt its hold on self, and change one's identity in order to hide from the chains or the pain of the past (the fugitive). There is difficulty here: the pursuit of a complete, discontinuous re-invention of self (which he celebrates) is to court psychosis and possibly to do oneself personal damage (Taylor, 1989, p. 51). It is easy to imagine that some very extreme forms of life could emerge out of assuming such discontinuity and experimentation. In Taylor, on the other hand, the good is interlaced with narrative and community in order to provide the self with more infrastructure, roots and depth of meaning.

What can one conclude from the above discussion? With Taylor's vision as a corrective to Foucault, one can build on Foucault's strengths in the arts of escaping domination with its strong sense of responsibility for one's self-creativity and self-empowerment, and moderate his extremes (the strongest being social anarchy). Foucault seems to miss the point of the *idem-identity* (the continuous aspect) as an essential part of the self—the unifying aspect of character. The individual self does have a significant part to play in the process of the development of character; all selves have creative possibilities.

Both philosophers agree that taking responsibility for one's self-constitution is a mature strategy. Nevertheless, the two disagree dramatically on the importance of a thoroughly situated self with a freedom that is also intimately contextualized in a relationship to the good, to community and narrative. Taylor does offer insights on the contours of the self that Foucault was philosophically blind to; his is a more complex dimensionality. These insights seem to be important in making intelligible sense of the moral self, and also to offer a dimension of normative accountability and structure for meaning. This will be developed further in Chapter Six. In general, Foucault over-plays the factor of *power* to exclusion of the *good* in the moral self; Foucault's moral self is very *power-laden*. The moral horizon is a clear additive to Foucault's thinking and a critique of his stripped down moral self. One of the other significant items within the moral horizon, which has an organizing role within it, is the *hypergood*, or highest good.

E. The Supremacy of the Hypergood.

E1. The Multiplicity of Goods

Within the moral horizon, according to Taylor, the domain of the moral includes many different goods that vie for one's attention. This can be frustrating and confusing; there is often competition and even conflict between these goods, especially in society at large. Taylor wants to strongly affirm these goods for the self, in their plurality; he does not want to stifle their potential just because they come into conflict. He believes that the tensions between goods are a healthy sign, and thus he does not want to resolve these tensions in any facile way by allowing, for example, one good to devour, repress or eliminate the rest. This does happen in various schools of moral thought. He, however, believes that within the framework, one good—the *hypergood*—tends to surpass in value and organize the others in some priority. This is a very significant factor in understanding the dynamics of the moral framework.

Why is this diversity of goods important to Taylor? He tries to explain in his tome *Sources of the Self* with a chapter entitled ‘The Conflicts of Modernity’ (1989, pp. 495-521), a broad reflection on the diversity of goods and the conflicts of the good among the major movements within modernity. Taylor is quite convinced that there exists a diversity of goods for which a valid claim can be made; he means that they have a legitimate claim on the self. Ethics, in his view, ought not be reduced to the choice of just one good or principle, such as happiness, efficiency or aesthetic-freedom, to the exclusion of all others. This kind of choice is too simplistic and narrow, and it is Taylor’s conviction that the denial of certain goods or families of goods has led to serious imbalance (one-sidedness) within Western moral philosophy. This has eventually led to negative consequences for how people live together in the world. He cautions against a selective denial or exclusion of certain goods.

This kind of problem can be detected in Foucault’s ethics as aesthetics—an ethic of one good to the exclusion of many other legitimate goods. The *one-good ethics* takes on various expressions as outlined in the first three chapters of this thesis: freedom, aesthetic creativity, empowerment of the self, and care of self. This vision is helpful and important (if only partially sufficient) in its own right, revealing important aspects of moral self-constitution. In summary, these elements of Foucault’s ethics seem to be conceptually captured by the general good of *aesthetic-freedom*, the freedom to be creative and to self-determine, self-construct, even self-deconstruct. Aesthetic-freedom is the determinative category. One’s moral responsibilities and concerns, one’s moral accountability is chiefly determined within the parameters of one’s self and its well-being. In terms of his starting point, Foucault denies the legitimacy of any good that transcends the self. Then at the same time, he proceeds to actually posit his one-good ethics of self—aesthetic-freedom—as a kind of norm. In the very denial of the good, he still affirms Taylor’s conviction that the self’s relationship to the good is inescapable, even if hidden philosophically or psychologically.

How is this denial of the good played out in Foucault's ethics of the self? Taylor thinks that Foucault's sympathies are too one-sided, with too much focus on the good of individual self-determining freedom, articulated as a negative freedom, an escape from domination. Taylor (1989, p. 503) speaks of such a view: 'They find their way through the dilemmas of modernity by invalidating some of the crucial goods in contest.' There is an avoidance of such goods as benevolence or one's moral responsibility to the Other; justice is articulated as justice for oneself. It is clear from the exposition of Foucault in Chapter Two that he does not want anything to thwart individual freedom. For example, in his exposition of classical ethics in *The Use of Pleasure* (1984a), there is no discussion of the possibility that the privileged Greek aristocratic male abused, or destroyed the freedom of boys, women or slaves in that culture. This power male's freedom although stylish, dominated and did not seek to create space for the freedom of other selves who had few rights of their own. One good (the freedom and stylization of the aristocrat) overrode the goods of others, the freedom and dignity of those he exploited for his own pleasures. Foucault's sole focus is on the way the aristocrat freely stylized *his* own sexual and social existence. Values are wrapped around the interest of the free, literate male who is in power, while communal concerns are demoted. This style of self-construction leads to an unjust social construction, even amidst self-discipline; it thwarts social cooperation.

Taylor, in contrast, affirms the plurality of goods, and he does not see wisdom in always trying to resolve all the conflicts of the good; the tension between goods can instruct us. Relationship to a good comes with a cost; there are times when one good has to be sacrificed for another, especially a lower for a higher. He strongly claims that a conflict between goods should not entail or require the conclusion that one must refute or cancel out other goods, nor even worse to refute the general validity of goods. This is a negative extreme for him, and yet Foucault would seem to set good of aesthetic-freedom in hostile opposition to other known goods, resulting in their repression or exclusion from his moral horizon; he allows it dominance, even hegemony. Taylor, in a different view, wants to

revive these goods in moral currency to ‘uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again that empower’ (1989, p. 520); he wants to affirm the complexity of multiple moral goods in his type of realism.

He contests the reaction of Foucault to eliminate moral goods because of their periodic abuse. Taylor (1989) exposes an important error of thought.

What leads to a wrong answer must be a false principle. [This outlook] is quick to jump to the conclusion that whatever has generated bad action must be vicious ... What it loses from sight is that there may be genuine dilemmas here, that following one good to the end may be catastrophic, not because it isn’t good, but because there are others that cannot be sacrificed without evil. (p. 503)

This is an important nuance. Extreme repudiations and denials of the good are not just intellectual errors; they are also ‘self-stultifying, assuming that a particular good can empower one to positive action’ (Taylor, 1989, p. 504). Crucially, according to Taylor, it is the affirmation of the tension between these goods that keeps an ethical theory and praxis in healthy balance. The tensions are not beyond resolution, but resolution requires the recognition of the need for a hierarchy of the goods. Taylor (1989, pp. 503-507 & 514) promotes an important inclusive, anti-reductionist stance on the good. This is important background information in order to explain the key function of the hypergood.

There is a strong tendency for Foucault’s vision of the moral self to slide into a radical form of subjectivism, sensuality and narcissism. The primacy of self-flourishing aesthetic-freedom (also known as care of self) reproduces and reinforces some negative consequences that tend toward the use and sacrifice of others in the process of this fulfilment of self. Firstly, it narcissistically invites others to celebrate one’s self as that unique, original work of art worth admiring. Community affiliations, solidarities of birth, marriage, the family, all relations with the other, or the polis, all take second place to one’s concern with oneself. All values are wrapped around the primary concerns of self-interest, and if incompatible, they are rejected out of hand. The Other can be employed, ignored or discarded at will, as the need is perceived. All other relationships, except the one with oneself, are held tentatively. Taylor (1989) counters this imbalance with a fuller, more robust picture of his *authentic self*.

Our normal understanding of self-realization presupposes that some things are important beyond the self, that there are some goods or purposes the furthering of which have significance for us and hence which can provide the significance of fulfilling life needs ... A totally and fully consistent subjectivism would tend toward emptiness: nothing would count as fulfilment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfilment. (p. 507)

A society of self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more seen as tentative, revocable and mobile, cannot sustain a strong identification with community of any sort. In Foucault; the goods of community and friendship become a means to one's end of self-fulfilment (or self-indulgence); others exist, on one hand, as a threat to self-actualization, or on the other hand, as a potential assistance to serve one's own interests. Either way, the dangerous path must be carefully negotiated, showing one of the implications of his power-laden perspective. Taylor raises a significant question.

Foucault would counter that the self-controlled, moderate, aesthetic self would not exploit or dominate the Other. This is at least part of his vision for his ethics as aesthetics, to reduce domination. Domination of others is in poor taste; we must try to resist various forms of domination; domination destroys freedom and shuts down ethics. A plurality of viewpoints and lifestyles deserve respect and tolerance; it is possible that this would promote more respect among people of different moral persuasion at some level. This posited evaluation, however, is suspect read from a broader experience in human history and society of selves who display strong self-interest. Some very self-controlled people have been shown to be quite exploitive and oppressive: for example, corrupt politicians, or super-ambitious business and professional leaders. In fact, it seems very likely that someone who would celebrate their accomplishments and themselves as a work of art (self-idolatry), and anticipate others to join in this celebration of self, would in fact be less accountable to, and less in touch with the interests and well-being of the Other. They might lose touch with reality at some level, become increasingly abusive, whether overtly or covertly. Narcissism and radical subjectivism easily morphs into negative relations of negligence, greed and even violence as shown in Chapter Four; the moral stakes are high. The epiphany of a beautiful self could be of harm to the Other.

With this discussion of the plurality of goods as background, it is now prudent to seek to understand the play of the hypergood in Taylor's moral ontology.

E2. The Significance and Function of the Hypergood

According to Taylor, the resolution of this dilemma of the plurality of goods comes by way of a highest good among the *strongly-valued* goods within each moral framework—the 'hypergood' (1989, pp. 63-73, 100-102, 104-106). 'Let me call higher-order goods of this kind "hypergoods", i.e. goods which are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these [other goods] must be weighed, judged, decided about.' (Ibid., p. 63) The hypergood has hierarchical priority and dominance; it has the most significant shaping power within the moral framework. It is the good that the individual self is most conscious of, and is most passionate about, a good which rests at the core of one's identity. The hypergood effectively orchestrates the arrangement and hierarchy of other goods; it interprets their priority and their moral play. It can raise or lower their priority, promote or demote other life goods, or even eliminate certain goods from moral play altogether. It is vital that the self be very conscious of, and be well-positioned with respect to, this particular good. This pre-eminent good grounds and directs one's overall moral beliefs, goals, and aspirations; it works to define and give shape to one's moral framework.

Examples (Ibid., p. 65) given by Taylor are: happiness, equal respect, universal justice, divine will, self-respect and self-fulfilment. There can also be conflict between these hypergoods as there are between persons who hold them; one can see this conflict among the three major hypergoods in Western culture: (a) universal justice and reduction of human suffering, (b) self-determining freedom, and (c) the hypergood of affirmation of everyday life or equal respect. This good has a major influence on how one's individual moral horizon gets articulated, the hierarchy of life goods and how a moral life is lived and one's general moral orientation. The hypergood is independent, and shapes the desires and

choices of the self, and yet can also be embedded in a community. It is not merely an ideal or the mere object of a high admiration or contemplation (no mere poetic entity); the hypergood can be quite demanding on the self, and often requires great sacrifice.

What is the role of the hypergood in self-constitution? What is one's possible relationship to this good? How does it impact one's identity? According to Taylor, a self with the requisite depth and complexity to have an identity, must be defined in terms of such a good, and is interwoven with it; one's identity is essentially defined by one's orientation to the good, but especially what one takes as the hypergood. It is a core concept in the idea of one's sense of calling; it provides the point against which the individual measures her direction in life. Taylor (*Ibid.*, p. 63) notes that, 'It is orientation to this which comes closest to defining my identity, and therefore my direction to this good is of unique importance to me.' It is something which one grows towards and something that moves and motivates the individual moral self deeply. Taylor (*Ibid.*, p. 73) says significantly, 'Our acceptance of any hypergood is connected in a complex way with our being *moved* by it.' It is no mere theory of the good or charming principle; for Taylor, there is no such thing as moral neutrality, a space where one can take *no* stance on such a good.

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I try to decide from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done or what I endorse or oppose ... It is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand ... It is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary. (*Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28)

The hypergood has a major impact on one's moral stance in life. His strong claim is that this is not only a phenomenological account of some selves, but an exploration of the very limits of the conceivable in human life, an anthropological *given*.

Foucault, on the other hand, wants to define the self apart from the hypergood, counting these limits as something undesirable, possibly even dangerous, something to be resisted and surpassed (Taylor, 1989, pp. 70-72, 98-102) in the process of human growth. They may cause self-hatred or self-negation. He attempts to dissolve the conflict of the goods by discrediting the hypergood altogether. All moral views appear to Foucault to be

‘impositions of a biased order on reality, based on fiat alone—a “regime of truth”’ (Taylor, 1989, p. 99), a mask of power-interests. His concern is validated when it comes to a hypergood such as colonial or empire ideology, which tries to squeeze all selves into the mould of the regime. Foucault rejects the place of hypergoods because he has tried to show how,

Various forms of social exclusion and domination are built into the very definitions by which a hypergood perspective is constituted. Just as certain models of religious order excluded and dominated women, as ideals and disciplines of rational control, excluded and dominated the lower classes, as definitions of health and fulfilment exclude and marginalize dissidents, as other notions of civilization exclude subject races, so these hypergoods are dangerous forms of control. (Taylor, 1989, p. 71)

Taylor agrees with him that a hypergood can have negative impact, and thus he suggests that some hypergoods must be illusory (1989, p. 32). But by rejecting hypergoods in general as repressive, Foucault runs into the error of extreme anti-normativity. He should not be blind to positive hypergoods such as benevolence or social responsibility. In effect, he has substituted his own hypergood, (*aesthetic-freedom*), and in process, he sacrifices a host of other legitimate goods. Aesthetic-freedom (which assumes a level of respect and tolerance for variant views) can lead to a very constructive peaceable life, or perhaps also to a celebration of boundless and dangerous personal indulgence. As argued earlier, his ethics as aesthetics aspires to an unqualified, unrestricted agency of the self.

One senses a tedious ambivalence here. Foucault reads the affirmation of life and freedom as involving a repudiation of the kind of qualitative distinctions, and yet he himself must dishonestly and covertly insert into his system some conception of qualitative good; he is guilty of denial or trying to have it both ways. Taylor exposes the denial and warns that ‘Foucault fails to realize that his meta-position is powered by a certain vision of the good’ (Ibid., p. 99). He has no concept of how one can deny one desire within the self in order to arrive at or enhance a higher desire, one related to a higher good. But still, he is willing to sacrifice so much to his hypergood of aesthetic-freedom. This belies an internal contradiction. It really is a question of which hypergood one espouses: for example, the hypergood of universal justice and reduction of human suffering is in conflict

with the hypergood of self-determining freedom; they cannot co-exist, because they entail two different postures to reality. Foucault cannot avoid hypergood assumptions or hypergood drive in his ethics of self.

With some leverage, Taylor provocatively suggests that the hypergood that shapes the moral self could include the fulfilment of one's duties and obligations (responsibility) to others. 'Responsibility for the Other transports the self beyond the sphere of self-interest. Other-responsibility could also be seen as the greatest form of self-realization, featuring as the highest vocation of human subjectivity' (Taylor, 1989, p. 112). As a hypergood, Other-responsibility is integrated into the structure of selfhood without compromising the exteriority of the claims of the Other. Taylor posits another scenario for the self with respect to the hypergood, and in a sense releases Foucault's position on the self from its bondage to self-interest and self-protection. There is yet one other significant dimension of Taylor's moral ontology, which produces fruitful dialogue with Foucault, the concept of moral sources.

F. Moral Sources: the Constitutive Good

One further parameter is important to Taylor's moral ontology and his dialogue with Foucault, that is, the constitutive good (Taylor, 1989, pp. 91-107). The moral framework operates at two levels. At one level, there are the general *life goods*, those that are valued by the individual self. The life goods are things that make life worth living or the virtues they advocate: such as justice, reason, piety, courage, freedom, moderation, respect. They are features of human life that possess intrinsic worth. At another, motivational level, Taylor reveals the vital category of the *constitutive good*; this good he also calls the *moral source*. With this emphasis, Taylor wants to recover the category of moral motivation for the self along with the other categories of the good. The constitutive good can be (but is not necessarily) transcendent of the self; this source of inspiration and motivation for the good can be outside the self, or higher than the self. Moral sources provide the inspiration

or motivation to live in line with life goods. This is especially the case for the dominant hypergood. Taylor (1989, p. 516) writes concerning this phenomenon, 'High standards need strong sources.' The moral source empowers the individual self to realize the hypergood in moral life, at the level of both inspiration and praxis. It is also a source of the self and its agency, or ability to do the good. The constitutive good empowers the moral agent and the moral horizon, and gives to the life goods their quality of *goodness* (Ibid., pp. 93, 122); it animates them. Many selves are not consciously aware of this motivating good, but all selves seek for inspiration and they do not flourish in its absence.

Constitutive refers to that which is essential to the particular nature or character of something; it has sustaining, energizing and nurturing power (Ibid., p. 264); it is the type of good that provides enabling conditions for the realization of strong qualifications in one's life. Therefore, one's relationship to such a good is vital to building the moral capacity of the self; knowing such a good also means loving it, wanting to act in accord with it (Ibid., pp. 533-4), growing toward it. Crucial to the position of the constitutive good is that it has independence of the self, even though it relates itself to the self. Taylor writes in an e-mail to the thesis writer:

A constitutive good is a term I used for what I also called moral sources, something the recognition of which can make you stronger or more focused in seeking or doing the good. It's a matter of motivation, and not just definition of your moral position.

This is a vital concept because without the empowerment of the constitutive good, the pursuit of the hypergood could be perceived to be a tremendous burden, even oppressive. Foucault had fear of hypergoods for this reason. The source offers hope for benefits of embracing the good, and allowing the hypergood to rule in one's life. One concludes that it also builds into the meaning structure of the self. He wants to broaden the definition of morality to include questions of what one should admire and love. 'The constitutive good does more than just define the content of the moral theory. Love of it is what empowers us to be good' (Taylor, 1989, p. 93).

A constitutive good tells one what it is about a human being (sets the value of said being) that makes them worthy of non-discriminating care and respect. Examples of the constitutive good help illustrate the category. Romantics would consider their source of the good to be in nature: in this case, things are good because they are natural to human beings. Nature inspires and finds a resonance with the self. Theists would take God as a divine source of the good: the self is inspired to mediate God's goodness and take other humans as worthy of respect because they are made in God's image. Post-Romantics like Foucault would see the self, in itself, as the major source of the good: the autonomous individual makes things good by choice (subjectivism) or positing and promoting a value (projectivism). A certain value such as creativity, autonomy or style is counted worthy because it is freely chosen or posited and valorized by Foucault and his schema of the moral self, not because it has inherent worth.³⁹ Foucault substitutes the category of *telos* for constitutive good within his four fold schema (Chapter Three, section A); it is the desired and imagined ethos, style of life or mode of being (vision of a work of art) which motivates and inspires the self rather than a source of inspiration from other-than-self.

Sources of the good (spiritual sources),⁴⁰ according to Taylor, tend to be embedded in a particular culture and function for moral agents of that culture and historical moment. Key to his argument is the insight that there have been major shifts in what people take to be the inspirational sources of the good down through the centuries. Modernization, in particular, involves a massive cultural shift with the replacement of one set of views about the self, nature and the good with another. The constitutive good is located differently, and therefore the relationship with this good can vary from one era to another. According to Taylor, sources tend to vary from (a) those solely external to the self, to (b) those both internal and external, to (c) those totally internal. As Taylor notes, at one time, the good

³⁹ Note that a particular value is not necessarily a good in Taylor's terms.

⁴⁰ In this context spiritual does not necessarily mean religious, but that which animates or inspires the self.

was wholly external to the self as it was perceived in Plato's moral ontology. Taylor (1994) notes the big transition in moral sources in the last four centuries:

Moving from an epoch in which people could find it plausible to see the order of the cosmos as a moral source, to one in which a very common view presents us a universe which is very neutral, and finds the moral sources in human capacities. (p. 215)

He takes Plato as his representative of the first. 'The cosmos, ordered by the good, set standards of goodness for human beings, and is properly the object of moral awe and admiration, inspiring us to act rightly' (Ibid.). This is, however, an important distinction: Taylor himself is a strong realist, but not a neo-Platonist: the view that the good is part of the metaphysical structure of the world. Platonic moral realism has been discredited because it leans too heavily on the idea of an *ontic logos*, a meaningful order. Nor is Taylor, on the other hand, a radical subjectivist. His view of realism lies somewhere between the Romantic subjectivist Rilke, and the Platonic objectivist. He wants to champion both the subjective and objective dimensions of the moral self, and maintain that there are sources outside as well as inside the self. Taylor (1989, pp. 127-143) notes that Augustine first articulated the whole idea of a reflexivity of self. In this case, the constitutive good is both internal and external, and the relationship is one of both reaching inside and reaching out— from within to gain access to what lies beyond the self in God. In Foucault's case, as with many other moderns, the constitutive good is reduced to one that is internal to the self: the source of the good and the self is taken as inside the self and its capacities—revealed through artistic self-expression and self-shaping in a radically reflexive relationship with self. Taylor's great concern about the constitution of the moral self is the loss of outside-the-self moral sources (1994, p. 216). It puts a heavy burden on the self to inspire itself and decide the value of everything; he considers that the exclusion of outside sources is quite costly to the moral self and issues in the draining of moral culture.

Why is the constitutive good important? For Taylor, it is vital that one articulate, or make explicit, the constitutive good, in order to understand from where this inspiration or

moral empowerment comes. It can also reveal the less honourable sources of a certain moral ontology, and expose false or less authentic motivations. Taylor challenges that the dedicated silence of many modern moral outlooks (including that of Foucault) about such external sources of the good prevents these outlooks from fully understanding themselves; they are cut off from their own history. Taylor counts it a vital task to put moral sources back on the philosophical agenda. It has practical consequences for moral agents: if one does not reflect on moral sources, one is in danger of losing contact with them altogether. One is also in danger of losing the life goods which they both ground and empower. Both philosophers agree that agency must be empowered. Taylor argues for an independent constitutive good that resources the self. Foucault, on the other hand, sees the sources located within the self alone; sources of the self are human constructions, based in self-interest, and should not have imputed to them too high a worth.

Thus, there seems to be in Foucault the strong potential of a slide toward celebration of one's own creative powers and the reduction of sources of the good to the individual creative imagination. From Taylor's perspective, this is a problem, a loss (read deficit) of a significant dimension in moral self-constitution. Sources of the self are severely limited in the quest for self-sufficiency and freedom of action. Taylor (1989) gives an example of the resulting problems.

People agree surprisingly well, across great differences of theological and metaphysical belief, about the demands of justice and benevolence, and their importance ... The issue is what sources can support our far-reaching moral commitments to benevolence and justice. (p. 515)

This is his famous dilemma of modernity—strong hypergood without strong sources—a dilemma that often leads to cynicism. Chapter Six, section C. unpacks and answers the dilemma. Taylor, over against Foucault, is not suggesting that one give up on these high ideals for justice, benevolence and the care of the Other. Foucault seems to fear that the demands of benevolence can exact a high cost in self-care and self-fulfilment, which may in the end require a payment of either self-negation, or even self-destruction. Taylor (Ibid.) does recognize the cost in the general truth that,

The highest spiritual ideals and aspirations also threaten to lay the most crushing burdens on humankind. The great spiritual visions [and ideologies] of human history have also been poisoned chalices, the causes of untold misery and even savagery. (p. 516)

This is especially true of certain Marxist and Fascist political ideologies that reigned in various decades of the twentieth century. Morality as benevolence and responsibility for the Other can, in fact, breed self-condemnation for those who feel its import and yet fall short of its ideals. This can challenge the impulses to self-contentment or harmony within the self. Taylor (Ibid., p. 516) understands, along with Foucault, some other negative results of an ethic of benevolence without proper moral sources: (a) threatened sense of unworthiness can lead to projection of evil outward on the Other as happens in racism and bigotry, or (b) some try to recover meaning through political extremisms.

So Taylor, in dialogue with Foucault, would agree that high ideals can lead to destructive ends, and might do so without a constitutive good, but he disagrees that this is the only possible outcome. Not all humanisms are destructive humanisms for him; he believes that it is possible to move towards justice and a better social order, to have just relations and just institutions. He sees the potential of the good for positive results in the individual and communal realm, especially as the proper sources of such good is realized from outside the self. In Chapter Six, the argument shows how this is possible, building on Taylor's lead and drawing from theological sources. The pursuit of justice and benevolence, for instance, often does require self-sacrifice, but this self-sacrifice can benefit both the giver and the recipient, and contribute to communal mutual benefits, enhance personal freedom, and inspire yet others to pursue such ends. Thus, the issue of sources is vital to this debate as Taylor emphasizes so strongly.

What can one conclude about this dialogue between Michel Foucault and Charles Taylor on the issue of moral ontology? Perhaps most ironic is Foucault's talk of ethics and freedom: its intelligibility presupposes the notion of an ethical or moral agent that can be free and that can master itself. Upon critical reflection, he fails to explicate this sense of agency; he assumes a transcendence of the self which is not actually there. In fact, his

articulation of self renders this possibility weakened. He promotes a *thin*, non-substantial concept of subjectivity. Perhaps this is so because he moves from a frozen agency and controlled subject (genealogy of domination) in his previous work, and he has only been able to come so far philosophically in his work on ethics. It is very likely that his ethics is a half-finished project of thought, as he died tragically in 1984 in the midst of his plans for further volumes on the self. His self as agent is quite ephemeral, leaving the reader with ambivalence about the possibilities of Foucault's goal of self-constitution and freedom for the self.

Taylor offers much help at exactly this point—with a more substantial subject entwined with the good as agent—promoting key dimensions of self to produce a robust subject, one with broader and richer horizons. Foucault is missing dimensions of subjectivity that Taylor claims as necessary for agency. Secondly, Foucault posits an ontology of *aesthetic-freedom*, which could reduce to self-will. Taylor offers some good critical questions about this ontology, especially emphasizing that what is lacking in his moral ontology is the very important qualitative category of the good. There is in Foucault a tendency to implode ethics into the desires, self-protection, and self-interest. The move with Taylor is towards a more embedded, situated self, which is developed further in Part 2 of this chapter: 'Foucault and Taylor on the Situatedness of Freedom.'

Foucault might respond to Taylor's critique in the following way. He would be suspicious of Taylor's return to metaphysics with the transcendent idea of the good and qualitative conditions for freedom. Who determines the good or goods to which one relates? He would be suspicious of a will to power motive in this return to the good. He might also claim that the majority culture of the West is on his side with a strong interest in individual autonomy, will to freedom and creativity. He would be suspicious that there is a hidden agenda to control the self once again in this ontology of the good, the confinement and coercion of a carceral society.

In Part 2 of this chapter, the argument focuses on freedom and its relationship to the self, including Taylor's critique of Foucault's de-contextualized freedom.

Part 2: Foucault and Taylor on the Situatedness of Freedom

A. Foucault's Account of Freedom Depends on a Repression and Defamation of the Good

Thus far in this chapter, the debate has revolved around the dimensions of the self and its relationship to the good, the question of moral ontology. At this juncture, there is a need for a focused critical examination of the character and place of freedom in Foucault's constitution of the moral self, especially since so much hangs on his concept of freedom. It is a further exploration of the context of moral self and the context of freedom.

Taylor raises some insightful questions regarding Foucault's position on freedom (both as ontology and ethical trajectory) which was introduced in Chapter Two. Extending from the previous discussion, the first concern with Foucault's doctrine of freedom is the repression of the good within this definition of radical freedom. Foucault has proposed an ethics focused on the self and the expansion of individual freedom, rather than the quest for a relationship with the moral good. As explored in Part 1 of this chapter, endemic to Foucault's doctrine of freedom is an elimination of the good (removal of its essential impact), a disengagement of freedom from accountability to any self-transcendent good. As Taylor sees it, there is a refusal to entertain the legitimacy of a constitutive good or any moral horizon that transcends the individual self. This is related to Foucault's conviction that there exists no such thing as moral truth outside a system or regime of power and domination. In his view, all such regimes must be resisted, and thus the good is drawn into suspicion. Taylor (1989) reads the situation as follows.

If intellectual positions are closely tied up with moral ones, this is because both are to be seen as orders which we have imposed on reality, following a line of thinking drawn largely from Nietzsche's "The Gay Science" ... In holding my moral position, I am imposing (or collaborating in the imposition of) a regime of truth on the chaos, and so does everyone. It is based on the Nietzschean refusal of the notion of truth as having any meaning outside a given order of power. (p. 99)

Now from the discussion of Foucault's freedom in Chapter Two, it has been demonstrated that he intends for the self to break out of the hegemony of social norms, and surpass moral regimes. He focuses on the strategy of power relations and truth games that allow the individual to cope with, and manipulate regimes that seek to govern the self and control it. To Foucault, the claim of moral truth entails a presumption on the part of a few to control the many; he wants to introduce resistance. Language of norms, moral truth and the good is read as *regime-implicated* and therefore suspect.

His project attempts to reveal how the self can execute a manoeuvre amidst these power relations. Thus he proposes his ethics of self as an opposition of the individual to this imposed moral order; in that sense, the perception is that it is a method of freeing the self from morality as a form of domination. Taylor's whole moral proposal of the good would get in the way of his project of freeing the self for creativity, and from slavery to the social constructions of the good with its restrictions on behaviour. Foucault champions the individual, the dissident, over against the regime and the communal good. From his vantage point, it is the good itself, along with the moral regime to which it is attached, that thwarts freedom (Taylor, 1985b, p. 177). No moral ontology, no meta-position, is compatible with his view of freedom; the good is taken as a negation of self, and is held under suspicion. '[It] works to disqualify qualitative distinctions, to make them appear as intellectually suspect and morally sinister, and to establish a model of moral thinking which tries to do without them altogether' (Taylor, 1989, p. 83). One philosopher sees the good as a key source of constituting and enriching the self (Taylor); the other sees the good as a linguistic mask for domination and an enemy of freedom for self-articulation (Foucault). It should be said that Foucault does not believe all power relations are in a state of domination, but that all individuals seek to control the behaviour of others and try to avoid having their behaviour controlled by others. The will to control is assumed to be ubiquitous, and thus the stance is one of wariness.

But is freedom as incompatible with the good as Foucault would seem to think? Does it necessarily go hand in hand with an epistemological suspicion of the good? Taylor does not believe so. For him, freedom is an intriguing but inadequate substitution for the good in ethics and is vulnerable to its own dark side, the abuse of freedom. He is sympathetic, to a point, and agrees with Foucault that visions of the good and moral horizons have been connected to certain forms of domination and violence. Evil has been done in the name of a good, an ideal, or a good cause, but Taylor does not find Foucault's final conclusions about the good extreme and one-sided; they are an *over-reaction* rather than a positive correction or contribution. He does not accept the logic of rejecting the value of the good based on past abuses. As an archivist of the good, he sees too much fruitfulness of the good for ethics in late modernity. He (1989) would counter that:

It is a confusion to infer from one example that views of the good are all simply enterprises of domination or that we consider them all arbitrarily chosen ... This would fail to recognize the manner in which one's own position is powered by a vision of the good. (p. 100)

This is certainly true of Foucault; he on the one hand denies the validity of moral ontology in general, but then on the other hand substitutes his own moral ontology of aesthetic-freedom for an ontology that celebrates the good. It is an interesting sleight of hand, and yet Foucault feels that he has the culture of moral nihilism and the history of abusive regimes as evidence for his position. Foucault would object that he does not hold to any ethical meta-position; in his opinion, there exists no moral position that is to be seen as privileged, as more or less justified than any other. All moral frameworks and codes are taken as equally arbitrary and implicated with power, and so Foucault reduces them to systemic historicist human practices, dethroning any attempts at a privileged morality of moralities (Taylor, 1985b, p. 177). He is particularly interested in dethroning Christianity from this privileged position. Social ethics and claims to the good are merely social constructions for Foucault. Taylor resists this starkly negative position.

Foucault's posture is one of the removal or liberalization of moral restrictions or prohibitions. For example, this is the interpretive lens of moral neutrality, through which

Foucault reads the ancient world of sexual ethics in the second and third volumes of *History of Sexuality* (1984a; 1984b). He refuses to judge the moral discourse and praxis of the ancients. He remains neutral when discussing men's abuse of women or slaves or the sexual pursuit of young boys in the ancient world. Especially among the Greeks, he restricts his analysis of moral problematics to the issues surrounding how to get the sex you want without losing your reputation, honour and authority. Based on this outlook, Foucault tends to define freedom as an absence of any good to which one is accountable, and to rethink the good as a form of radical self-stylization, an aesthetics of existence. He is most attracted to the stylization of the Greek aristocrat. But *aesthetic-freedom* opens the door to abuse of the Other, and to narcissistic self-indulgence and self-justification of the privileged and powerful. Freedom is affirmed in the aristocrat, but denied to most others. Ethics is skewed towards privileging an elite individual, and this creates a certain ambivalence with respect to Foucault's quest for the increase of freedom and empowerment for the individual. In many ways it undermines it; this same freedom of choice is not available to all, and this raises suspicion.

As shown earlier, Foucault cannot escape the good. If honest, he must admit that his concern about exclusion is not merely the casual, aesthetic concern of the moment, the ethical *soup du jour*; it is rather a deep passionate conviction in his thought; it is part of his concern for justice. He fails to see that the good can be used to give the marginalized a voice, to include the minority and promote justice for the oppressed. It need not serve only the interests of the oppressor for socially negative purposes. Intuitively, Foucault would not want to discount the value the good which demands respect for individual choice, decrease of marginalization, or tolerance of difference. There is a good which is operative in his ethics if he would admit it. It does seem that Taylor is correct that the good is unavoidable, and that Foucault is leading in the wrong direction to suppress its merits.

Furthermore, according to Taylor, there is a pragmatic problem with this freedom perspective. One might question whether the moral neutrality entailed in this definition of

freedom without the good is ever a lived possibility. Taylor (1989, p. 99) strongly suggests that this position of the arbitrariness, this trivialization of ethical frameworks 'is not available to us as humans. It is a form of self-delusion to think that we do not speak from a moral orientation which we take to be right'. One is not as morally neutral as Foucault suggests. Foucault holds on strongly to a relativism of moral perspectives with the deepest conviction. At a superficial level, this seems generous until it comes to adjudicating differences of opinion on a real moral question that matters, or on an issue of justice; at that point, it can prove quite frustrating and inadequate. Without a transcendent good or standard to which to appeal, the victims in an abuse situation are even more vulnerable in face of the powerful abuser or oppressor. Aesthetic spin on the behaviour of the person in power (the abuser) is inadequate; this individual could employ Foucault's ethics of self to write off his or her moral culpability and to turn the victim into the criminal. The wealthy and powerful can hire the best lawyers and spin doctors, or use the military to crush their political enemies. Foucault's own moral ontology could work against his best intentions for justice for the marginalized individual; this shows an internal contradiction, a large hole in his ethics.

Taylor (Ibid., p. 99) on the other hand, protests that holding to a horizon of one sort or another is 'a condition of being a functional self, not a metaphysical view we can put on or off at will'. Foucault is most helpful at unmasking abusive moral practices through his genealogy of power. What must be called into question, however, is his claim that one can discard normative elements of ethics so lightly, that one can pick and choose between values arbitrarily, or simply project one's values onto the world. No one can actually live as if their moral convictions, their moral framework, are up for deconstruction and reinvention at any moment; this would be terribly unsettling; one would be in a constant state of moral crisis. As Taylor has argued in Part 1 of this chapter, these convictions are deeply embedded and interwoven with a person's identity and equip the self at the level of moral discernment. This means that they are in no way trivial, neutral or arbitrary. Taylor

(1989, p. 99) makes a strong claim: 'They are not construals you could actually make of your life while living it. They clash ... with the best available account of our moral life.' Foucault's moral self lacks something quite significant.

It also misses the point in terms of how a good can stop an individual and ask for an explanation for his behaviour (accountability), or move that person, empower them to compassion, motivate them to release the oppressed, shelter the homeless, feed the poor, or care for creation. The good can also interpret and expose the self's more sordid motives, move it on to higher ones, give the self inspiration and courage to live a better life. There is much at stake and Foucault, because of his stance on freedom, misses much of the benefits of the good in moral self-constitution. Freedom from the good is not freedom in a morally healthy sense; it may well be a tragic freedom, a dysfunctional freedom.

In conclusion, Taylor raises some important concerns about Foucault's definition of the ethics of freedom (a meta-position of aesthetic-freedom) and its one-sidedness in defaming the good. He regards the repression of the good for the sake of increasing freedom (replacing the ontology of the good with the ontology of freedom) of the self as a large problem. This definition of freedom 'reads the affirmation of life and freedom as involving a repudiation of qualitative distinctions, a rejection of constitutive goods as such, while they are themselves reflections of qualitative distinctions and presuppose some conception of qualitative goods' (Taylor, 1989, p. 98).

B. Freedom and the Important Question of Situatedness

In this section, the argument addresses the question of the *situatedness* of freedom, the greater context of self and freedom. The discussion began in Part 1 of this chapter with Taylor's proactive notion of the self in orientation to the good, within community and narrative identity. Taylor offers some resolution of the dilemma that Foucault creates for freedom in his ethics, through a new location of freedom. The parameters of freedom

become the vital point of the discussion; Foucault remains intentionally unclear about such parameters in his inflated definition of freedom as an ontology.

Both Taylor and Foucault are trying to escape the negative connotations of the Cartesian sovereign self. William Connolly (1985) captures the crux of Taylor's conflict with Foucault on the context of freedom and self: Taylor asks what is the larger context of the self in its freedom, and Foucault asks how can the self escape or resist the context in order to attain its freedom. Thus there is serious tension between the two positions.

Taylor seeks to transcend the illusion of the sovereign self in command of the world by situating it in a world both larger than it and partly constitutive of it. He does this by striving to articulate for us those elements in the self and its circumstances that come closest to expressing what we are at our best. The most expressive articulations are not simply the creations of subjects, nor do they represent what is true in itself independently of human articulation: "They rather have the power to move us because they manifest our expressive power itself and our relation to our world. In this kind of expression we are responding to the way things are, rather than just exteriorizing our feelings." (Taylor, 1978)

But Foucault ... cannot endorse this quest for attunement and self-realization. He proceeds at the second level, as a genealogist, deploying rhetorical devices to incite the experience of discord or discrepancy between the social construction of self, truth, and rationality and that which does not fit neatly. And the recurrent experience of discord eventually shakes the self loose from the quest for a world of harmonization, a world in which institutional possibilities for personal identity harmonize with a unified set of potentialities in the self, and the realization of unity in the self harmonizes with the common good realized in the social order. This quest for identity through institutional identification becomes redefined as the dangerous extension of "disciplinary society" into new corners of modern life. Genealogy exercises a claim upon the self that unsettles the urge to give hegemony to the will to truth. (W. Connolly, 1985, p. 365)

Foucault fights the social construction of self; the move is to decontextualize the self, so as to free it for independence. He encourages the articulation of the moral self, in tension with the social order; the social covenant is a threat of coercion. Taylor, on the other hand, sees the potential for freeing and enriching the self within community, but does not endorse mere cultural conformity; it is more like an engagement, where the self is a very active participant.

In his book, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Taylor (1979, pp. 154-66) addresses the need to situate freedom in order to avoid a radical, improper and destructive abstraction. This critique of Hegel is now applied, by the thesis writer, to Foucault's articulation of freedom. 'What should a society of freedom look like beyond an empty formula?' is the tough question Taylor (Ibid., p. 155) asks. Taylor raises some important issues and questions concerning the *situatedness* and *relatedness* of freedom. In his analysis of

freedom in the contemporary world, Taylor calls into question the validity of a radical freedom as self-dependence or self-sufficiency, challenging one of Foucault's core convictions. Taylor (Ibid., p. 155) does not find it surprising for he holds: '[Freedom] is one of the central ideas by which the modern notion of the subject has been defined, and it is evident that freedom is one of the values most appealed to in modern times.' But Taylor would argue that freedom needs a context with definite parameters; there must also be content in its definition in order to move beyond an ideological mystification; it cannot exist *by* and *for* itself just as a beautiful shining idea or *mythos*. Pure freedom without limits or *absolute freedom* is nothing; it has no context; it is chaos; it is no place, according to Taylor's (1979, p. 159) analysis. 'Complete freedom would mean the abolition of all situation.' (Ibid., p. 157) and that renders it absurd. The only situation identified by Foucault is the obstacles of governmentality, but that does not offer adequate parameters for a positive freedom. Taylor's analysis cuts through the naiveté and the *mythology* of Foucault's position.

Much philosophical reflection in the twentieth century has engaged the problem of how to get beyond a notion of the self as an abstract, self-dependent will and bring to light its insertion into nature (one's own and that which surrounds one) and narrative history. Taylor is arguing that the situationless, transgressive notion of freedom, as a political *modus operandi* in recent Western history, has been very destructive, and insensitive to context and past. He gives examples such as the Bolshevik voluntarism, a movement that crushed all obstacles in its path with extraordinary ruthlessness, or the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, both motivated by the 'clarion call of freedom' (Taylor, 1979, p. 157). History bears out the strong temptation to forceful imposition of one's final liberationist solution, on an unyielding population, violence unleashed in the name of radical aesthetic-freedom. Too often poets have endorsed these brutal and bloody revolutions. To some degree, Foucault at this stage in life is sensitive to this liberationist problem, and the tendency for the liberator to become the next oppressor; this is one of the

reasons he eventually became disillusioned with Marxism and abandoned it. But his fundamental view of freedom as ontology is a key part of the problem—an abstraction of freedom outside of context—an idea imposed on reality, freedom as an *aesthetic* category, that beautiful shining thing. It is terribly vulnerable to manipulation; freedom without context can become an ideology, which justifies even the most brutal means to its ends. It calculates as a *mythos*, one that can be manipulated by persons with a wide variety of motives and goals.⁴¹ The *unboundedness* of freedom for Foucault is both exhilarating and dangerous, and could cause some of the same problems on a smaller scale. Taylor is arguing that freedom needs important qualifications, in order to avoid implosion or potentially destructive results.

Neither happiness nor pleasure, neither freedom nor justice could be identified under the condition of no boundaries, or where freedom is simply defined as the transgression of boundaries. Taylor (1979, p 157) notes: ‘Complete freedom would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing.’ This tradition of freedom as autonomy and self-sufficiency, which Foucault taps into, is riddled with problems, and he is uncritical about his own use of it. The notion is that freedom should be ‘endlessly creative. It should have no divisions, whether between people or within them, or between levels of existence (play is one with work, love is one with politics, art is one with life)’ (Taylor, 1979, p. 155). In these negative characterizations of freedom, what occurs is the tendency to think away the entire human situation and to substitute an abstract, fantasy world (aesthetic world) where one could be totally *free*.

Foucault offers the idea of self-creation as a beautiful life. He also has a strong suggestion for an ethics of endless pleasure, self-love and self-protection. But aesthetic-

⁴¹ M. Volf (1996, p. 63) in commenting on Foucault’s disdain for boundaries and his quest for indeterminacy, writes in parallel concern to Taylor: ‘Without boundaries we will be able to know only what we are fighting against but not what we are fighting for. Intelligent struggle against exclusion demands categories and normative criteria that enable us to distinguish between repressive identities and practices that should be subverted and nonrepressive ones that should be affirmed. Second, “no boundaries” means not only “no intelligent agency” but in the end “no life” itself ... The absence of boundaries creates nonorder, and nonorder is not the end of exclusion but the end of life.’

freedom as such becomes his default ethics, lacking important parameters for healthy living. Unrestrained, self-determining freedom can be empty freedom (a precarious autonomy) leaving a vacuity longing to be filled by almost any moral trajectory or motive, constructive or destructive: community development or self-indulgence, compassion or violence, character development or self-trivialization, militarism or peace-making. All of these can be forms of the self-disciplined exercise of freedom. Self-disciplined freedom has been applied to ethnic cleansing, to expulsion of people from their land, or to torture and terrible violence. It is naive, yes even irresponsible, of Foucault to remain unconcerned about the outcome of his open-field freedom doctrine, and his unwillingness to define it beyond the concept of the practice self-care. Freedom is his point of departure, and his hypergood; therefore, destructive forms of human self-expression are not ruled out. Freedom without context and without a relationship with the good could easily lead the self towards celebrating its own power and using it destructively.

According to Taylor (1979, pp. 156f), historically the trend toward this understanding of freedom comes from four key moves. As Connolly noted above, it involves a decontextualization, a shaking loose of the self from definitions of human nature and from the natural world, the cosmic order, social space, or history. This gets back to Foucault's notion of *getting free of oneself* and his *critique of the present*; it helps make sense of his terms.

Stage (a) The new identity of the self-defining subject is won by breaking free of the larger matrix of a cosmic or societal order and its claim. Freedom is defined as self-dependence, and self-sufficiency. It entails a negative concept: freedom is won by breaking the hold of the lower oppressed self (constructed by a disciplinary society for Foucault) so that one might explore one's potential, experimental self. (Ibid., p. 156)

Stage (b) Human nature is not simply a given, but is to be remade, reinvented. To be integrally free, one must reshape one's own nature. The only kind of situation which this view can recognize is one defined by the obstacles to unrestricted action, which have to be

conquered or set aside as external oppression; liberation is a process which results in freedom from shackles. One of the key shackles is the identity given to one's self by others. (Ibid., pp. 155, 156)

Stage (c) In this stage, there is a celebration of the Dionysian expressive release of instinctual depths (the uncensored self) of the human animal. 'Modern society is seen as the oppressor of the spontaneous, the natural, the sensuous or the "Dionysiac" in man' (Ibid., p. 140). Rooted in Schopenhauer, this dark and pessimistic view of freedom and the human condition leads to despair about freedom understood as self-dependence, because this sort of freedom can release violence and many other forms of negative human self-expression. There is both fear of, and celebration of, such human desires in the later ethical works of Foucault.

Stage (d) The final stage of this Nietzschean nihilism is the death of all traditional values and the admission that ethics is grounded in the will to power. The empty self risks ending in nihilism, that is, self-affirmation through the rejection of all values. One after the other, the authoritative horizons of life, Christian and humanist, are cast off as shackles on the will. Under these circumstances, freedom means dependent in one's actions only on oneself, lacking accountability to God, principle or society (Ibid., p. 157). Foucault's ethics seems to include all four stages. He points enthusiastically in the direction of freedom, but does not offer parameters or guidelines of how to proceed, intentionally so. Nor does he offer ways of avoiding the most negative results of this freedom.

Taylor continues by arguing that there are four significant dangers in this type of self-determined, atomistic, situationless freedom:

(a) Self-trivialization: The feeling of emptiness emerges within this notion of freedom; it produces a self that is hollow.

Complete freedom would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything. The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose. (Taylor, 1979, p. 157)

The goal of freeing the self for creativity is not sufficient as a defined moral purpose; it is yet undefined or indeterminate as a criteria of human action or mode of life; moral action needs to impart a shape to this creativity. The aesthetic self exists in a void of *situationlessness*, that is, form and style without defined moral content. Aesthetic-freedom does not offer significant discernment between good and evil, higher and lower trajectories of the will. The philosopher is inclined to ask about the *telos* of freedom: Creativity? Serving others? Community? Worshipping God? Character development? Self-indulgent sensuality? Violence? Egoism? Any of these could constitute the aesthetic ethos that Foucault purports.

(b) The Dionysian problem: Taylor (1979) writes of this danger in the following way.

If free activity cannot be defined in opposition to our nature and situation, on pain of vacuity, it cannot simply be identified with following our strongest, or most persistent, or most all-embracing desire either. That would make it impossible to say that our freedom was ever thwarted by our own compulsions, fears, or obsessions. One needs to be able to separate compulsions, fears, addictions from higher more authentic aspirations. (p. 157)

There is definitely the positive side of the expansion of one's individual freedom, but also a dark side to this release of the passions and appetites, on a trajectory of pleasures without end. The sadistic unhealthy self can gain pleasure from causing other people pain. One ought to be able to distinguish between base compulsions and the ability to hold those compulsions in check for a higher purpose, for example, to save the life of a child. The moral advance accomplished by Foucault's self in the pursuit of justice as a release of the captive self from repression is one side. But we cannot miss the darker possibilities of the desires of the moral self: toward a possible addiction to anti-human irrational hatred, or racism as one notes on the uncensored Internet. This is what Taylor (1979, p. 158) cautions: 'We have to be able to distinguish between compulsions, fears, addictions from those aspirations which we endorse with our whole soul.' It is a key point that absolute freedom misses the point about the distortions of inauthentic (suspect) and malevolent desires, and how they can lead to a life of mediocrity, self-indulgence, or self-destruction.

Freedom, both in its resistance and self-actualization, is both ontological ground and *telos* for Foucault. But what does *freedom for freedom* mean? Does it add up to a self-reflexive tautology. The Foucauldian self wants to break free from the social, historical and institutional webs which, in his view, seek to control it. His ideology of the expressive artistic self needs radical decontextualized freedom, a freedom that is also transgressive of limits and questions social boundaries on the self.

(c) Problem of Despair: How is despair entailed in self-determining freedom? Without any larger horizon of meaning than that within the borders of the self, the burden weighs heavily on the individual self to invent meaning. *Despair* is the term used by Kierkegaard (1941) and noted by Taylor (1979, p. 159). It entails the inability to accept oneself, and the sense that one is trapped inside oneself, obsessed with getting out. Is the call to continually recreate self, and get free of self, in the thinking of Foucault, a symptom of a battle or dialogue with despair? Kierkegaard would see this trap in the loop of Foucault's self-reflexive relationship with self. For Foucault, is the self really free, or is it caught in a self-enclosure that Kierkegaard labelled despair? Foucault exits into the tradition of freedom as autonomous self-determination; Kierkegaard makes the exit altogether outside the tradition of freedom as self-dependence and into interdependence with God and other persons. In Kierkegaard's estimate, despair can only be overcome by relating oneself to the external Self, which constituted the whole relational possibilities of the self, that is, God. For him, one is free only when relating to other persons freely in a way that promotes their freedom. This particular critique of Foucault will be further developed in Chapter Six.

Again, Foucault's position is a refusal of context. Taylor (Ibid., p. 159) reiterates, 'If the radical freedom of self-dependence is ultimately empty, then it risks ending in nihilism, that is, self-affirmation through the rejection of all "values".' Radical freedom paradoxically creates a trap for the self. The only way out of this despair is to situate freedom in relationship to the good, to world, to society, and to one's calling and purpose. Taylor (Ibid., p. 160) writes: 'This means recovering a conception of free activity which

sees it as a response called for by a situation which is ours by virtue of our condition as natural and social beings.' Crucially, this means acceptance of our defining situation as a positive place to stand, rather than a place from which to escape.

(d) Lost Potential in Relationships: Complementarity or Incommensurability

Further, on the issue of the dangers or drawbacks of self-dependent freedom and the culture of self-love, there is the avoidance of the good of *complementarity* between persons. In the book, *A Catholic Modernity?*, Taylor (1999, pp. 114f) makes an important point about Foucault's definition of freedom as self-dependence. It offers a good test of Foucault's doctrine of freedom. In contrast to the Herder-Humboldt model of complementarity (Ibid., p. 115), freedom as self-dependence rejects the possibility of human complementarity. Foucault noticeably never uses freedom as a form of interdependence with others; he is quite suspicious of this association and its potential harm. Foucault's appeal to difference is in fact a refusal of exchange, of complementarity, which turns difference into incommensurability.⁴² Taylor, in contrast, sees much potential in complementary relations, and has dedicated much of his thought to conciliatory relationships, even amidst difference of opinion. The posture of decontextualized freedom is always one of independence of the control of others. Taylor (1999) captures Foucault in a lucid manner as a philosopher of freedom but not necessarily a philosopher of hope.

Foucault in an important sense was a philosopher of freedom ... that is, he was a philosopher who claimed to unmask and lay bare domination, the interiorization of power relations by victims, and although he often claimed that power had no subject he certainly portrayed it as having victims ... The moral thrust of these analyses ... was implicit in the language in which it was cast. They called for opening a line of resistance for the victim, a disengagement from the full grip of the current regime of power, particularly from its hold on our self-understanding. Foucault's own intervention in politics and public life ... bore out this interpretation ... In his *History of Sexuality 2 & 3* and latest interviews, he made clear his view of freedom, the building of an identity relatively uncolonized by the current regime of power. (p. 115)

This is his strength; Foucault is rightly cautious about utopian dreams. Taylor, however, is frustrated with the incomplete and shortsighted vision in Foucault's position on this key point. In his attempt to provide a way of escape from domination, he loses communality.

⁴² Foucault does seem to promote the incommensurability of the individual self.

Perhaps it can be said that he does not go far enough, leaving many loose ends in his recovery of subjectivity.

The goal seems to be one in which the person or group concerned will have achieved full autonomy and will no longer be controlled or influenced. No place is allowed for another possible *telos* of the struggle, one in which the agents or the groups, previously related by modes of dominance, might reassociate on a better basis. The invocation of the victim scenario is a very common move in a position of this type. The history is usually planted in such a way as to make it almost inconceivable that there be a new mode of association, let alone that both sides need it to be complete beings. (Taylor, 1999, p. 115)

The move in Foucault is towards atomism and isolation, versus healing and right relationship.

Foucault never suggests the interpenetration of identities as a potential gain. It is rather that the stories he offers of the development of identity always represents ‘the definition of identity through the Other in the register of invasive power, the preferred response to which must be resistance’ (Ibid, p. 115). Freedom is disconnected from community; there is no hope of reconciliation on offer. Taylor contends for a possible alternative scenario to liberty in terms of *freedom as complementarity*. It is only suggestive of a cooperative definition. He thinks that it is important to focus on what Foucault has excluded.

The development of collective discipline by which people come to govern themselves—the modern reconstruction of civic freedom in puritan societies, for instance—all this remains completely outside of his picture of our history. What Hannah Arendt defined as power, the increased capacity that people can create by associating in common action, remained completely off his map. He thought this sort of thing an illusion, as he made quite clear in our interview in Berkeley in 1984. (Taylor, 1999, p. 116)

What Foucault defined as the only healthy mode of identity formation, the definition of the self as an aesthetic entity, was a completely solo operation. Foucault’s aesthetic *telos* seems to push one into solitary self-sufficiency as the solution, but Taylor asks us to pursue a goal to restore community, entailing complementary relationships, in which one’s need for the Other can be met without the distortion of repression or exclusion (without victimization)—the idea of covenant, and communion of love. This idea will be elaborated further in Chapter Six.

How would Foucault respond to this critique? The overall stance of Foucault does seem to be one of suspicion of the communal (which would tend to promote normalizing

practices), and for the extraction of self from community for the sake of freedom of artistic creativity. There is a fear of the Other rather than risk vulnerability. He definitely takes the individualist side of the individualist-communal debate; the protection and development of individual freedom is his dedicated cause. He would probably feel restricted by Taylor's attempt to situate the self communally because of the perceived dangers of entrapment. Thus, he would be suspicious and pessimistic about the whole idea of complementarity, although he is happy for other selves to assert their own autonomy. There is no possibility of a just regime for Foucault, where individuals negotiate amicably, no positive community of mutual support and cooperation, where the self is embedded. Foucault doesn't offer hope of a better society, which could offer a position from which to redress domination, and so ultimately there is no hope on offer of free relations within community, only techniques to escape communal or individual domination, and negotiate power relations. While these techniques are helpful at some level, they leave huge gaps in his analysis.

Foucault places a high value on self-sufficiency, and it is appropriate to worry about individual freedoms up to a point. Perhaps if he had lived longer, he would have benefited from more dialogue with Taylor, critiqued his idea of the self, and opened up his position to a more communal, situated concept of the self. That is uncertain, but given all that has been said it is highly unlikely. He would have to give up so much that he considers *sacred* about the autonomous self.

Charles Taylor is sympathetic to the worries and concerns raised by Foucault: for example, the self as defined in a restrictive manner by scientism, and other ideologies. Taylor's answer to this problem is quite distinct from that of Foucault; he attempts to situate the self and subjectivity by relating it to life as embodied social being, connected to nature (without reducing it to nature) and history (without reducing it to history). Taylor (1979, p. 155) argues strongly that one needs to see freedom within the context of a situation. Ethics and moral agency, in his mind, are embedded in a social network, a

community, in a narrative history. Taylor (1979) places Foucault's view in some historical relief:

This type of conception of freedom [Foucault's de-contextualized freedom] ... contrasts with earlier (and some later) conceptions which define freedom in terms of order or right relation. For instance, the notion of freedom implicit in Aristotle relates it to harmony, equilibrium, the mean, as against the disordered hegemony of the extremes. (p. 156)

It was not always incumbent to see the self as autonomous individual making choices, designing self in a protective stance over against a hostile world or oppressive code-ethics. Based on his proposed moral ontology of the good, Taylor is motivated to reveal the problems with radical definitions of freedom as self-dependence rather than interdependence. Foucault's freedom is finally one that cannot sustain societal harmony or promote the common good.

It is Taylor's (1985b) contention in the essay 'Foucault, Freedom and Truth' that Foucault operates largely on a negative view of freedom, an *opportunity-concept*. Negative freedom is *freedom from*, not *freedom toward*. Taylor recognizes the significance of this need to have freedom from, but adds a positive concept of *freedom for* the Other. This kind of freedom is realized in action which comes from or expresses the authentic self: 'free activity which sees it as a response called for by a situation which is ours ... by virtue of some inescapable vocation or purpose' (Taylor, 1979, p. 160). The contrast he sets up is between *freedom as escape*, and *freedom as calling* within community. The situated notion of freedom sees free activity as grounded in the acceptance of one's defining situation, together with its limits and possibilities. Even in the so-called positive side of Foucault's concept of freedom as practice (Chapter Two sections D to F), it is still occupied with fighting within power relations, protecting self, and attempting to escape domination by truth games.

Finally, Taylor offers insight on freedom's situatedness from another angle. He contends with Foucault that freedom cannot be reduced to a set of limits to overcome, with only a vague undirected creativity towards a beautiful self. A sceptical freedom that limits itself to talk of new possibilities for thinking and acting, but heroically or ironically refuses

to provide any evaluative orientation as to which possibilities and changes are desirable, is in danger of becoming merely empty or worse, predatory and malevolent. According to Taylor's view, one flourishes in freedom when one pursues the good, is transformed by the good, within a context of community and a coherent narrative identity. Freedom within this context allows the self to engage the social situation in a fruitful way; there must be a space where liberty can be secured and positive relational potential emerges, an atmosphere of trust. Taylor cautions against reductive theories of freedom and the self; he says that one needs a 'more articulated, many-levelled theory of human motivation' (Taylor, 1979, p. 160). Taylor welcomes the full complexity of moral self-constitution, and does not want to leave out anything that is actually operative in healthy moral agency or in the horizon of morality. The beauty and simplicity of aesthetic-freedom can appear quite attractive, yet when examined more deeply, it is revealed to lead to some serious concerns, problems and extremes.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a rigorous dialogue and debate between Foucault and Taylor on the character and place of freedom, and more importantly, the place of the good, in the constitution of the moral self. The relationship between self and the good is the major factor that Taylor has contributed to dialogue on the self in this chapter, along with his challenge to contextualize freedom. This is the missing axis in Foucault's analysis of the power-truth-self triangle. Foucault is committed to the primacy of aesthetic-freedom as that which sets the context for (and grounds) moral self-constitution, self-constitutive freedom as an ideal of self-definition, self-interpretation and self-justification. Human acts of freedom (praxis is self-articulation) are the focus of ontological reflection; they are of the first order of being. The art of freedom is also the hermeneutic of self, the ability to choose one's own interpretation of self. This unlimited freedom can offer itself as an absolute or norm. Taylor calls this kind of freedom into question and proposes the need for

a larger context for freedom and the self, a moral horizon of the good. The pressing question in their debate is: What is required for robust, free agency, moral subjectivity and healthy moral self-constitution?

Taylor raises some significant questions about the adequacy of Foucault's *thin* aesthetic self. In his view, holding a doctrine of freedom that lacks the depth of context of situatedness, leads to problems for moral agency. It does not calculate as a *responsible* freedom; it ignores the Other as a significant part of ethics and is too narrowly focused on one's relationship with oneself, and the development of one's own *ethos*. While Foucault is strong on the point that freedom of movement and choice is necessary for ethics to function, his view is weak on parameters for guidance of deliberation, choice and action.

Choice is necessary for ethics but not sufficient; it lacks discernment concerning the wide variety of human expression and motives, constructive and destructive. Taylor reveals dimensions of the moral self that are repressed (even subverted) in Foucault's ethical project; these dimensions are argued to be crucial for the health and well-being of the moral self: a moral horizon which includes community, narrative, the hypergood, life goods and the constitutive good. Taylor contends that one cannot flourish without them. He both critiques and opens up Foucault's position to a larger perspective. It seems that in moving from the genealogy of domination (the previous phase of his work) to the genealogy of subjectivity (ethics), Foucault does not fully understand or develop the self; at its best, it is still a work in progress. He offers a strategy to avoid domination, but fails to produce a robust subject that can withstand philosophical scrutiny. In Taylor's view, Foucault sacrifices too much in promoting his doctrine of radical, self-determining freedom. Free agency must be linked to community, narrative, and self-transcendent moral good: this will allow the self to win through to responsible freedom through reconciling the relationship between freedom and the good. We call this *redeemed freedom* and give it more elaboration in Chapter Seven.

Secondly, the text of self and the text of freedom need a context; for Taylor this context is the horizon of the good, and can include divine goodness. Within this viewpoint, the Other reappears as a significant and positive actor in one's moral self-constitution. Taylor is aware of some of the dangers of his position and the potential abuses of the good, but strongly believes that it is possible to win on freedom and responsibility, mutuality and complementarity, amidst the relationship to the good, to establish deeper relationships and build accountability. He holds that this more rooted, embedded self will endure and enjoy its freedom as it discerns its calling within a context.

Foucault in the end is asking too much of aesthetic-freedom and the aesthetic self; the burden of inventing and reinventing one's entire moral parameters is too heavy and may well lead to extremes, crisis or failure. Taylor wants us to rethink Foucault's aesthetic-freedom and expects maturity to emerge from a strong positive relationship with the good; the good is something the self can grow up into, a higher form of human moral experience. The ontology of freedom, although at first seeming to be a broad parameter, is too myopic and proves to be an unreliable substitute for the richness of the ontology of the good. Complexity (Taylor) wins over simplicity (Foucault) of the self in this way; in this case, the simplest is not the superior explanation.

Foucault's concept of freedom reveals the need for a more full-blooded conception of subjectivity than he is able to offer within his parameters. In Part 1 of this chapter, Taylor's more robust moral ontology of the good proved a fruitful setting for dialogue with Foucault's concept of the moral self. Taylor argues that Foucault cannot sensibly talk about *power* and *freedom* without the idea of a properly contextualized and embedded subject (a *thick* self). How can one make a distinction between freedom and slavery without a self that is in a dialectical relationship with the good? Taylor wants a deeper theme of freedom, with more infrastructure for the self. The aesthetic self in its escape from accountability always flirts with despair, neurosis and nihilism (loss of self and loss

of agency), amidst its struggle for freedom. Above all, Taylor offers a framework for a very lively debate on practical reason.

In Chapter Six, the argument will pursue with Taylor the possibility of an epiphany with respect to the self's relationship to the transcendent good. Taylor leads the discussion of the good into a possible transcendent turn towards trinitarian goodness; trinitarian goodness offers a transcendent marker and a source of the good within this concept of moral horizons. This will add new language in the articulation of the good. Three theologians sensitive to this discourse help to flesh out what this transcendent turn can look like, and elaborate on the concept of *goodness-freedom*, a freedom qualified by goodness. This is a thought experiment in a third way of mapping the moral self.

Chapter Six: The Transcendent Turn to Trinitarian Goodness

Introduction

This chapter will pursue some of the important reflections of Charles Taylor with respect to a possible *transcendent turn* in moral philosophy. This has deep relevance to the study of Michel Foucault and the constitution of the moral self. *Constitution* has a double connotation of both the contents of the self and the way in which the self is constructed. It leads the argument into an examination of what Taylor calls the *epiphanies of transcendence*, the *quality of the will* and the possible resolution of the dilemma of *moral lobotomy*. These provocative concepts open up the discussion of the moral self beyond that which is possible within a naturalistic metaphysics (a disenchanted world), and moves it towards a creative interaction with a plausibility structure of divine transcendent trinitarian goodness.

Throughout his work *Sources of the Self*, Taylor (1989) makes the irenic suggestion that there is no good reason to exclude *agape* love of the Judeo-Christian heritage as a viable hypergood (a term defined in Part 1 of Chapter Five) for the moral self. He sees it as the highest form of human relationship. Taylor (1989) writes, 'Nothing prevents *a priori* our coming to see God or the Good as essential to our best account of the human world' (p. 73). As a significant percentage of the world population holds to be true, 'God is also one of those contemporary sources of the good in the West, the love of which has empowered people to do and be good' (Ibid., p. 34). Michael Morgan (1994) can claim that Taylor's account in *Sources of the Self* re-establishes the plausibility of the divine-human relationship for moral experience: 'God is one of those entities that has figured in our moral ontology, has provided a standard or ground of value, and has given our beliefs and actions meaning and significance' (p. 53). This relationship is generally occluded in contemporary Western culture and philosophical ethics, and so it remains significant that Taylor clarifies it through his language of *articulation* and that he illuminates its possibilities for ethical discourse.

The potential impact of the hypergood of *agape* love and the constitutive good of a trinitarian God on moral discourse will be explored in the following discussion. It is done with a view to both appreciation of, and a proposed balance to, some of the exclusions and extremes in Foucault's aesthetic self-construction. This opens up new possibilities for the moral self within a larger moral horizon, and it further wrestles with the concept of accountability to the Other (non-self), both natural and human, through the concept of *goodness-freedom*, a word which the thesis writer has coined in contrast to Foucault's *aesthetic-freedom*. There is a new hermeneutic at play in this thought experiment which will add insight to the critical analysis of Foucault's ethics. The thesis begins and ends on a note of freedom: freedom as depicted by Foucault as ontology, and freedom rethought within the context of divine goodness-freedom. It should be remembered from Chapter Two that Foucault only posits freedom as a moral ontology; he does not defend it or examine it. He assumes it as part of a common human quest and reifies it to the level of ontology. In this chapter, it will be questioned further. The creative engagement of freedom and divine goodness is proposed and explored as a possible way forward in ethics following this particular Foucault-Taylor dialogue, a creative way out of despair, violence and nihilism.

The structure of this chapter proceeds from Chapter Five's analysis of Foucault, and the dialogue with Taylor on the recovery of the good. It further explores the idea of a transcendent turn in ethics, and then draws on some of the insights of philosophical theology to flesh out a plausibility structure for interpreting the moral self. There is an increasingly robust and fruitful dialogue between theology and ethics, between theologians and post-structuralist philosophers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (G. Ward, 1997; J.K.A. Smith, 2004; J. Bernauer & J. Carrette (Eds.), 2004). As well, trinitarian theology is a substantial, rich and relevant academic discourse in its own right, especially in Britain and the United States. This particular discussion draws on one British (Alistair I. McFadyen), one American (D. Stephen Long), and one German (Christoph

Schwöbel) trinitarian theologian for insights into a fresh understanding of trinitarian goodness and its implications for human goodness-freedom. The chapter will not, however, be an argument for the existence of a good and trinitarian Christian God, nor will it attempt to show why one should choose the hypergood of *agape* love over all other contenders. These are noble pursuits, but beyond the scope of the restricted purpose of this chapter. A further reason for this approach is that Foucault has shown a strong interest in Christian self-formation at this juncture of his research, and studied many documents in Christian monasteries, so he naturally draws out this kind of discussion. Both in the unpublished book *Confessions of the Flesh* and his later works and interviews, he shows an interest in Christian (especially Catholic monastic) technologies of the self, as he contrasts them with the pagan Greek and Roman technologies. For these reasons, it seems legitimate to proceed with this line of investigation.

This chapter will not avoid, however, the valuable comparison of Foucault's reigning hypergood of *aesthetic-freedom* and this new proposed hypergood of *goodness-freedom* (informed as it is by divine goodness). Taylor (1989, p. 71) provocatively notes that, 'at least some of the hypergoods ... must be illusory, the projection of less admirable interests or desires'. He questions ones that lead to reductionism, abstract self from real life, distort reality or exclude experience in some way, for after all, ethics is about how we should live. Ethically, one never starts from a position of neutrality; Taylor argues that our moral ontology springs from the best account of the human domain we can arrive at, and this account must be anthropologically relevant and liveable, relating to the meanings things have for us. Taylor (1989) writes,

The belief in God ... offers a reason ... as an articulation of what is crucial to the shape of the moral world in one's best account. It offers a reason rather as I do when I lay out the most basic concerns in order to make sense of my life to you. (p. 76)

Indeed, it offers a plausibility structure, not an absolute argument or scientific proof. Taylor (1994, p. 228) reflects on this work: 'My thesis claims to be about what actually makes one's spiritual outlook plausible to them.' Thus far in this thesis, what has emerged

is a process of recovery of things lost—the language of the good and the context of freedom and the self—in moral philosophy. The recovery of the language of divine goodness for the discussion of moral self-constitution is not foreign to the trajectory of the argument, but aptly follows Taylor’s suggested transcendent turn. It is at the level of a suggested alternative to Foucault’s plausibility structure for ethics. A contribution to moral thinking is offered, and a challenge to exclusion of the Christian religion in moral discourse is levelled. The argument begins with the concept of the epiphany of transcendence.

A. Epiphanies of Transcendence

Epiphanies are suggestive of transcendence. Michael Morgan (1994, pp. 56f) points out that Taylor sees a parallel between the epiphanies of art and poetry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the *I-Thou* epiphany of religious encounter with the divine. Taylor elaborates the idea of epiphanies (1989, pp. 419f, especially 490-93). He sees Post-Romantic and modernist art as oriented to epiphanies, episodes of realization, revelation, or disclosure. Epiphanies and epiphanic art are about a kind of transcendence, about the self coming in touch with that which lies beyond it, a ground or qualitative pre-eminence. Taylor reviews various ways of articulating epiphany in *Sources of the Self* (1989, pp. 419-93). He articulates how God, inserted into this idea of epiphany, fits as a moral source (Ibid, pp. 449-52). Epiphanies can be a way of connecting with spiritual and moral sources through the exercise of the creative imagination: sources may be divine (Taylor), or in the world or nature (Romantics), or in the powers of the imaginative, expressive self (Foucault). These epiphanies are a paradigm case of what Taylor calls recovering contact with moral sources, a concept introduced in Part 1, section F of Chapter Five. A special case of this renewal of relationship between the self and the moral source is religion and the relation to God, which he sees in the work of Dostoyevski. The relationship to art parallels the relationship to religion. The self is oriented in the presence of the inaccessible

or sublime, that which captures one's amazement or awe, for example, when one's eyes are riveted to a certain painting, and one's inner emotions are deeply moved by a poem. One is taken beyond oneself, in an experience of transcendence; the experience involves both encounter and revelation.

After Kant and the Romantics, transcendence meant more than a selfless exposure or reorientation alone, but also a receiving that deeply involves the self, its imagination, its inner resources, its visions and revisions. In this calculus, for religion and art, the self remains autonomous and becomes fulfilled as it opens to the impact of the Other. Morgan elaborates through the example of Jewish writer, Martin Buber, on this concept of religious epiphany or *I-Thou* encounter (Morgan, 1994, pp. 60-61). Taylor appreciates (1994, pp. 226-29) his use of Buber in relation to his (Taylor's) concept of epiphany. For Buber, the religious event, revelation, involves a meeting between the self and the divine Other, an encounter that depends upon both parties. It is an act of self-affirmation, even as it is a giving over of the self to the Other.

The self is receiver, but it is a receiver, not of a content, a proposition, a truth, but rather of a 'Presence, a Presence as Power'. Furthermore, that Presence provides 'the inexpressible confirmation of meaning', a meaning that calls out to be done, to be confirmed by the self in this life and in this world ... This confirmation and this affirmation of God and self in the world are what Taylor calls a 'changed stance towards self and world, which doesn't simply recognize a hitherto occluded good, but rather helps to bring this about'. (Morgan, 1994, p. 60)

There entails the emergence of a good in one's experience. Thus, the concept of transcendence through epiphany, that has currency for artists and poets of the twentieth century, provides a category for us to extend to the transcendence of God. The idea of God as a possible constitutive good should be at least intriguing to some disciples of Foucault. Taylor's historical account of moral ontology incorporates an advocacy of religion and the potential of a transcendent turn to the divine, and in particular, that of the Christian Trinity. Given the language of moral sources, it provides a contemporary moral and cultural discourse for moral sourcing within the divine. As Taylor (1989, p. 479) notes, an encounter with God can be the epiphany that reveals an 'unambiguously good moral source'. Morgan (1994, p. 63) clarifies: 'In Taylor's terms, practical reasoning about goods

can apply to such goods in the religious context. Revelation—the religious epiphany—gives access to the divine.’ This is what is involved in the *transcendent turn* and the recovery of a transcendent divine goodness in relation to moral self-constitution, one which lies beyond human experience (wholly other) and yet engages fully the human moral cultural sphere. It is a transcendence that provides an encounter beyond one’s relationship to oneself and a space for transformation or transfiguration of the self.

Definitions of transcendence can become confusing, so there is need for clarification of what exactly is expressed here, the specific kind of transcendence employed in the argument. There is a type of transcendence that Foucault is attuned to, a horizontal version within the economy of self-articulation and self-interpretation, transcendence in the *weak* sense—a *transcendence-within-immanence*. Transcendence of this variety remains a form of intra-mundane and intra-temporal self-transcendence. For example, this is what is attempted in the quest for the beautiful life. It defines the project of the existing self, the *pour-soi*, as a dynamic process of transcending what *is*, by perpetually becoming what *is not yet*—through the continual reinvention of self and the finessing of one’s style. The emphasis is on becoming something new horizontally within one’s own history, something new and different. It has been argued that this process involves some aspect of escape from the past and moral law as an impediment to free movement going forward. In order to distinguish the transcendence to which Taylor points, one can see it as a type in the *strong* sense, a *radical alterity*; this type finds its occasion within an encounter with *radical exteriority*, the radically transcendent Other. But it is also punctuated by the incursion of the eternal into the temporal, informed by the descent of transcendence into the historical life of the self.

Foucault remains resistant throughout to this strong form of transcendence. Han (2002) makes this observation throughout her book. Calvin Schrag (1997, pp. 124-29) points out that strong transcendence stands beyond the economy of the immanent culture-spheres of human life: science, art, morality and even institutional religion. Yet it is still

efficacious within them; it enters the economies of culture-spheres without being assimilated by any one of them. This strong type of transcendent good provides a stance whereby no one culture-sphere or ideology can gain hegemonic control over such a good, or claim a God's-eye viewpoint. It functions as a principle of restraint, for instance in Foucault's strong emphasis on the aesthetic; it works against the hegemony of the aesthetic culture sphere. Foucault mistakenly allows the radically transcendent to be assimilated or imploded into the aesthetic culture-sphere; more particularly, the ethical and the religious are absorbed into the aesthetic. This will be explained below. Human culture-spheres, however, are contingent and in flux, and this strong transcendence has the efficacy of a transcendent horizon of possibilities within those very culture-spheres; it opens them up. Whereas Foucault finds religion confining, this type of transcendence expands the horizon and the possibilities for the self.

Taylor believes that this understanding of strong transcendence is critical to one's best and most robust account of the moral world. Moral economics is critical in this discussion; the refusal or resistance of this strong transcendence is a choice to restrict the moral horizon and the moral imagination (to disenchant); it entails refusal of such an epiphany; it is not a neutral decision, but one with serious implications and consequences. This is the choice that Foucault makes. It affects the ability to see the world and the self as good, and produces a crisis of affirmation (Taylor, 1989, p. 448). Taylor illustrates some of these consequences through Dostoyevsky's (1974) work *The Brothers Karamozov*.

One of Dostoyevsky's central insights turns on the way in which we close or open ourselves to grace. The ultimate sin is to close oneself, but the reasons for doing so can be of the highest. In a sense the person who is closed is in a vicious circle from which it is hard to escape. We are closed to grace, because we close ourselves to the world in which it circulates; and we do that out of loathing for ourselves and for the world ... Rejecting the world seals one's sense of its loathsomeness and of one's own, insofar as one is a part of it. And from this can come only acts of hate and destruction. Dostoyevsky ... gives an acute understanding of how loathing and self-loathing, inspired by the very real evils of the world, fuel a projection of evil outward, a polarization between self and the world, where all evil is now seen to reside. This justifies terror, violence, and destruction against the world; indeed this seems to call for it. No one ... has given us deeper insight into the *spiritual* sources of modern terrorism or has shown more clearly how terrorism can be a response to the threat of self-hatred ... The noblest wreak it [destruction] on themselves. The most base destroy others. Although powered by the noblest sense of the injustice of things, this schism is ultimately also the fruit of pride, Dostoyevsky holds. We separate because we don't want to see ourselves as part of evil; we want to raise ourselves above it. (Taylor, 1989, pp. 451-52)

This makes some sense of the moral dynamics in Foucault's self-making: closing of oneself to grace, or transcendent goodness, is precisely what is commended in Foucault's construction of the moral self. There appears to be a provocative link from self-sufficiency to pride and the aesthetics of violence. Foucault is resistant to, and suspicious of any transcendent good, which would inform the constitution of the self, for fear of a hidden will to power. In effect, however, he boxes the self in by restricting the moral horizon in this way, and restricts the dynamics and the ways in which transformation of self can occur; it restricts the sources of the self in significant ways. What is needed is a transfiguration of vision, a transformation of stance towards the world and self: 'The world's being good may now be seen as not ... independent of our seeing it as good' (Ibid., p. 448), as part of a recovery from the crisis of affirmation. This shows the critical importance of the horizon of the self. This is picked up again in section C on moral lobotomy.

With this concern in mind, Taylor holds out hope for a transcendent turn, hope for a different type of transformation from beyond pure immanent choice-focused self-invention which brackets the social world and God. Taylor's critique of Foucault has revealed his lack of openness to *discovery* of self (Chapter Four, Part 1); it is likely that it is because of this restriction of *weak* transcendence. There is discovery of self within the economy of grace, a discovery and a transformation that offers a different stance towards self and the world.⁴³ Continuing with his discussion of Dostoyevsky, Taylor (1989) writes,

What will transform us is an ability to love the world and ourselves, to see it as good in spite of the wrong. But this will only come to us if we can accept being part of it, and that means accepting responsibility ... Loving the world and ourselves is in a sense a miracle, in face of all the evil and degradation that it and we contain. But the miracle comes on us if we accept being part of it. Involved in this is our acceptance of love from others. We become capable of love through being loved; and over against the perverse apostolic succession [of terror and violence] is a grace-dispensing one. Dostoyevsky brings together here a central idea of the Christian tradition, especially evident in the Gospel of John, that people are transformed through being loved by God, a love that they mediate to one another, on the one hand, with the modern notion of a subject who can help to bring on transfiguration through the stance he takes to himself and the world, on the other ... What he [Dostoyevsky] was opposing was that humans affirm their dignity in separation from the world. (p. 452)

⁴³ See also C. Shrag, (1997, pp. 139-44) on the economy of grace.

The economy of grace spoken of here is connected to transcendence, to the goodness of a triune God. The love, which is at issue, which works itself out in the economy of loving one's neighbour, is a love which finds its ultimate motivation and efficiency in love that is freely given. It is a love that loves for the sake of loving; a *non-possessive love*, a love that loves in spite of being unrequited, a love that expects nothing in return.

This is captured in the Christian term in Greek: *agape* love. *Agape* exceeds the bounds of reciprocity; it cannot be defined in terms of prescriptions for self-realization or self-interest alone. In this love, we find the self involved in a transcendence of the *strong* variety. But when this grace disappears, coercion, contempt and terror sometimes flow in to take its place. Dostoyevsky makes a very interesting connection between self-hatred and terror in the quote above. The Foucauldian autonomous self takes a stance over against society and the Other, a stance of resistance and self-protection, attempting to discover dignity in precisely this manner which Dostoyevsky discourages, of separation from the world. This explains the willingness of the aesthetic self to take responsibility for itself, but its unwillingness to *take responsibility* for the Other and the common good.

Taylor's recovery of transcendent moral sources ultimately implies an opening of the self to something outside that empowers it. This larger horizon could give enhanced perspective and positive energy to Foucault's artistic self-creation; in fact, it does *rethink* his doctrine of self-creation. This rethinking of the aesthetic self will unfold through the rest of the argument. Foucault is open to the epiphany of self within a self-reflexive horizon, but does not access, was not open to, this epiphany of *agape* love in a transcendent horizon. In fact, he never refers to this central theme in the Christian New Testament in his analysis of technologies of self. His focus is on the restrictive, self-negating versions of Christian self-construction, which calculate as good reason to reject and move beyond its ethics.

At this juncture, it is valuable to move beyond the philosophical insights of Taylor, to enlist the aid of two key theologians, D.S. Long and C. Schwöbel, for a richer articulation of the point of a transcendent turn to the divine good. This bridge concept is built by the thesis writer. Their work on the interface between divine and human goodness has resonance with Taylor's trajectory. It will help to define more fully the character of such transcendence and the concept of the *epiphanic* encounter. In Taylor's thought, *agape*, at one level, is a quality of human relationships, a *hypergood* that informs and even organizes the other goods within one's horizon. But *agape*, at another level, can also be seen as animating and empowering the ethical subject, and thus a constitutive good rooted in transcendent goodness. We now proceed to a further understanding of this concept, and its implications for the moral self. There is a certain *strangeness* to the idea of transcendent divine goodness. It exceeds one's human cognitive grasp, or ability to define it; one can use terms like infinite, excellent, most intense, purest, unfathomable, or superlative, as adjectives to describe this goodness. But one cannot fully grasp the qualitative dimensions of transcendent divine goodness with propositions; it is *radically other*, a *radical alterity*, trans-historical. At one level, it is incompatible, incommensurable with human concepts of the good. It is no mere human projection; goodness that we find in the world points to and participates in, but is not identical with, goodness that is God.

By definition, it is much more than an absolute or highest principle; goodness is of *the very essence* of God; the claim that *God is good* entails a distinctive character trait. D.S. Long (2001) attempts such an articulation when he writes, 'God is good in the most excellent way' (p. 21). This means that there is no greater good, nor a position of goodness from which to judge God. This is a qualitative transcendence that is worthy of love and admiration, a goodness that is much more than moral virtue or useful goodness. God is the *gold* standard by which all human currencies of the good are measured. Another way of saying it is that there is an 'irreducible density to God's goodness' (Hardy, 2001, p. 75). Schwöbel (1992, p. 72) proceeds logically from this to say that in creation, 'God has set

the conditions for being and doing the good and for knowledge of the good in the human condition.’ On this account, transcendent divine goodness is the ontological ground of the human good; the human moral horizon is rooted in God, contextualized by God.

Furthermore, the knowledge of the good is intimately linked with the knowledge of God, and one’s relation to the good is ultimately connected to one’s relationship to God.

Long (2001) adds.

Participation in God is necessary for the good and for freedom. Evil arises when freedom is lost through turning towards one’s own autonomous resources for ethics. The fall does not result from people seeking to be more than they are capable of through pride but from their becoming less than they could be because they separate the knowledge of the good from its true end, God, and find themselves self-sufficient ... Seeking the good through nonparticipation in God, through the “virtue of what was in themselves” makes disobedience possible. (p. 128)

This is what Long refers to as the *blasphemy of the a priori*, that is, the philosophical preoccupation that assumes one can determine the conditions for knowledge of the good *a priori*, without engaging the good at its *best* in God (Ibid.). This in fact is a working assumption in Foucault’s moral self-making. If the individual is the origin of the moral life, ethics would tend to be reduced to anthropology (what a tribe does) or autobiography (what I decide for myself).

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the premise of transcendent goodness is that this goodness is, in one sense, beyond human control, manufacture or manipulation; in the human world it is no mere social, legal or governmental construction of the good. Human attempts to articulate the good, construct the good, or to be good, are only vague, finite and inadequate facsimiles of God’s goodness. These articulations are also vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation, conflict of interpretations, and power interest, as Foucault saw so clearly, thus incurring cynicism about the very language of the good. Some human standards are even tribal or historically contingent, or a product of self-interest by those in power, employed in coercive or abusive ways, or employed arbitrarily by the leadership. Human claims and social constructions of the good are necessary, but not final; there is a need for a transcendent divine goodness to arbitrate and critique various human claims to the good, and human social constructions of the good.

Furthermore, the transcendent goodness addressed here is trinitarian and relational, a personal goodness of a tri-personal God. This transcendent goodness begins in God and then flows to creation as gift; this transcendence automatically has a relationship to the immanent human world. It is communicable, but the understanding and experience of goodness involves a journey towards the triune God. A full defence of trinitarian theology of goodness is beyond the scope of this thesis; instead, the writer will limit this discussion to the exploration of what *trinitarian goodness* looks like as a plausibility structure, and how it assists in answering some of the problems and gaps in Foucault's moral self. It also provides a discourse and a subject position from which to further protest Foucault's aspiration toward the hegemony of the aesthetic. The task of ethics, from within this plausibility structure, is to assist the self in the journey from human nature as it is—with its inclination toward the good but its lack of substantive context, its lack of robust moral source, and thus its temptation toward evil or harm—towards the concrete embodiment of what the self can become in heuristic relation to God's goodness.

As rooted in the Trinity, this transcendent horizon of goodness involves the dynamic action of all three persons of the Christian Trinity in the world, not separate from the world or society. Here are some of the implications that human goodness can be defined in the light of divine goodness, rather than in exclusion of it. According to this theological premise, 'the trinitarian action in creation, revelation and inspiration in the world is all part of the moral horizon in which human moral reflection occurs' (Schwöbel, 1992, p. 71). The transcendent is effective in the culture-spheres of the immanent and entails significant implications for the moral self.

This goodness is communicated through creation represented by the Father, through the Son, the God-Man, in the incarnation, and by the Holy Spirit as the source of empowerment and inspiration of human morality. The three persons create the conditions (*the horizon*) for knowing and doing the good (Schwöbel, 1992, p. 73). The Father as Creator has established the order, and the possibility of goodness in the creation, a

relational structure of goodness. The Son in Jesus Christ is the revelation of divine goodness, a dramatic means to see, encounter and experience God's goodness within the human sphere, the articulation of divine goodness within human culture and history. The Spirit is the inspiration of goodness in human creatures, a key source of the good (constitutive good) for the moral self.

This articulation shows key ways that the finite human self is made aware of and drawn up into the transcendent relationship, making divine goodness accessible and efficacious within the realm of human experience, yet without being assimilated into, or reduced to, this realm. According to Schwöbel (1992),

It is one of the implications of this trinitarian conception of divine agency that the intentionality of divine action is not to be inferred from the structure of the world God has created, but has to be understood as grounded in the revelation in the Son. It is this paradigmatic action that is authenticated by the inspiration of the Spirit which then provides the framework for the interpretation of God's work in creation. In a similar way the character of the work of the Spirit as inspiration indicates how God involves human beings in the realization of his intentions. It is the context of the interrelatedness of creation, revelation and inspiration that we can talk about God's action in terms of free, intentional action. (p. 70)

Transcendent goodness is both secure and relevant because it resides in the integrity of the trinitarian relationality, the sociality of God, and yet it becomes accessible and possible within the human condition because of the creation, revelation and inspiration of the Trinity. This means that Taylor's *transcendent turn* to a greater horizon of the good is not a fantasy. It provides a robust plausibility structure, and a dynamic context for the identity of the self, as well as an open horizon for moral and spiritual growth towards a self with a transcendent dimension of depth (a *thick* self). This plausibility structure will be elaborated further in the next two sections of this chapter; in mapping the self, this will add detail to Taylor's proposal of a new moral geography, one that includes God.

It now leads into a discussion of the quality of the will and a further exploration of *agape* love as a way forward. What are the implications of the transcendent turn to *agape* love in further substantiating the case for transcendent goodness as a source of the self?

B. Quality of the Will

Foucault's attempts to operate within a realm of moral neutrality, and his focus on the centrality of the autonomous will, is problematic. At times, it seems that his idea of the will is hollowed out so that it reduces to pure freedom of choice. Ethics is reduced to lived experience as one chooses to live and stylize it. B. Han (2002, p. 158) captures it in her comment: 'Morality must be defined not through the conformity of the action with the codes, but in reference to the intention and freedom of the subject, and thus, ultimately, to the way in which the will determines itself'. The discussion in Chapter Five raised serious questions regarding Foucault's assumptions about a moral self that did not have any relationship to the good. Taylor raises a further tough question for Foucault's aesthetic self, a question that opens up the discussion of ethics to new and fresh philosophical examinations. His question centres around the possible recovery of the ancient concept of the *quality of the will*, and the importance of sources of human motivation; he is asking us to take a step back from life as it is lived as moral *praxis*. He suggests that there might be a way to recover a fruitful connection between religion and ethics at this point. This makes sense considering that, historically speaking, God has composed a major contribution to Western moral identity; theology has a long-standing history with ethics. It is also Taylor's claim that many of the goods that are commonly aspired to in the West have their roots in the constitutive good of Christian theism (R. Abbey, 2000, pp. 50-51, 98-99; and Taylor, 1999, Part IV; Morgan, 1994, p. 49). This is hinted at in *Sources of the Self* (Taylor, 1989), but becomes more overt in *A Catholic Modernity?* (Taylor, 1999). Taylor believes that there would be real fruitfulness in reconnecting many contemporary goods to their historical roots in theism in order to empower them once again.⁴⁴

Taylor attempts to recover something lost in Western moral consciousness in his language of moral sources. From his perspective, moral sources are not about highest principles; they are all about the quality of the will, a concept which has been largely

⁴⁴ Not all moral philosophers will agree with him on this move.

absent in moral philosophy for over a century. For instance, the primary question for Taylor's moral ontology is: What or whom do I love? (motivation), not What am I obliged to do? (right action). He wants to broaden the domain of morality. The latter, to him, is the last question to ask, even though it is often the main concern of the contemporary ethical debates. The second question is 'What do I want to be?' (character), a question that is in recovery to some degree in the late twentieth century through Virtue Ethics, heralded by such intellectuals as A. MacIntyre (1984).⁴⁵

The first question addresses the issue of sources of moral inspiration and motivation, or the moral power behind decision and action. Taylor muses about the current problem of weakened moral sources. How does one maintain a commitment to high ideals under the condition of weak moral motivation (constitutive good), due to a weakening of moral vision? He asks,

Whether we can maintain the high level of philanthropy and solidarity we now demand of ourselves, without these degenerating into their opposites: contempt and the need to control. The issue here is the quality of our moral motivation—in more old-fashioned terms, the quality of our will and the nature of the vision that sustains it. (Taylor, 1999, p.120)

He points out that this first question was part of normal philosophical discourse for the ancients, Plato, Augustine and Aristotle, and he contends that it is pertinent to current moral discussion. He writes:

It is clear that, for Plato, the very definition of justice requires a higher and a lower and distinguishes our love of one from our love of the other. Christian faith could take this idea over while giving it a different content, and so Augustine speaks explicitly of "two loves". Recognition that there is a difference in us between higher and lower, straight and crooked, or loving and self-absorbed desires opens an intellectual space in which philosophy has a crucial role—as the attempt to articulate and define the deepest and most general features of some subject matter—here moral being. (Ibid., pp. 120-21)

The gradation of moral decision or action (including the question of motives), what Taylor has called *strong qualitative considerations*, fell under a deep suspicion in the eighteenth century, especially under exclusive secular humanism, and continues to be kept under suspicion by Post-Romantics. Thus, it may be perceived as a foreign concept in today's ethical debate, but it is deeply relevant according to Taylor.

⁴⁵ Foucault has some oblique connection to the question of virtue.

Taylor proposes something significant. The secular humanist and Post-Romantic perspectives are both radically immanent; their vision sees the good largely in terms of human flourishing, without any demand to give allegiance or worship to anything higher, anything *transcendent* (strong sense) of the self. Loyalty to self, and freedom to express its desires, is the first priority. Concepts of universal justice and benevolence were maintained in moral discourse of the early Enlightenment, from both Christian and Stoic sources, although they have been lost in the Post-Romantic discourse. But, the mainstream Enlightenment sidelined the issue of moral motivation and the quality of the will by what Taylor (1999, pp. 122-23) calls a ‘rehabilitation of ordinary, untransformed human desire and self-love, previously seen as an obstacle to universal justice and benevolence, which is now cast either as innocent or a positive force for good’. It is a claim of innocence for the moral will, and Foucault adopts this precept in his moral self: human motivation is neutral, and all motivation is, on these terms, appropriate motivation, a mode of self-love. Therefore all choices and all lifestyles are automatically endorsed; we ought to tolerate divergent lifestyles. Self-love (self-care) as human flourishing is a major aspiration in Foucault’s proposed life as art as we have seen in Chapter Four.

Could there be a problem here? This concept of human flourishing or well-being in Foucault seems to lack proper balance to Taylor.

Take any conception of human flourishing, that makes no reference to anything of intrinsic value beyond human flourishing, and we have something that is dangerously partial and incomplete, particularly because it cannot see that even things that negate this flourishing—solitary death, unremarked suffering, waning powers—can have the deepest human significance, just because they have more than human significance. (Taylor, 1999, p. 109)

He refers to international figures like Jean Vanier and Mother Teresa in their care and advocacy of human compassion and respect for those who are weak or broken mentally and physically. These lives are connected to the transcendent, and given significance by a story larger than the human story of social or economic usefulness. With Foucault, ethics is blind to the nuances of the quality of the will, the quality of human motivation. Foucault focuses on the second question: *What kind of person do I want to be?* and promotes the

freedom to become that type of person. It is, at its best, a self of honour and self-discipline, someone admirable, a beautiful, cultured, stylish life. There is one other major question for Foucault: *How do I love myself first and foremost?* For Foucault, all human desires are equal and legitimate, over against Christianity and some psychiatry, which question certain desires as pathological, sinful or evil. For Taylor, tapping into these pre-Enlightenment moral traditions, the quality of the will is a critical concern for ethics; the orientation of the will impacts every other moral concern. Nothing is more central to his project. Taylor wants to recover the hierarchy of qualitative distinctions, to sort out the difference between the distorted or lower, from the more authentic or higher self-understanding and self-constitution, for example, death-dealing versus life-affirming motivations. He is highlighting important considerations of discernment.

What would Foucault say in response? Perhaps he would say that we have tried these moral structures, hierarchies and institutions and they have been found wanting, in terms of their oppression and exclusion of many who were perceived to be different or outsiders (criminals, the mentally ill, homosexuals, women, minorities). Whose hierarchy do we employ? Perhaps his deconstruction of ethics that existed prior to Nietzsche, has created such a bias against moral hierarchies, suggesting that late modern mankind should retreat into self-protective, narcissistic ethics as the only hope for survival, the only leverage against domination and despair. He would probably worry that Taylor is offering a return to a morality of *rules and command*, a morality that is a form of self-negation. His celebration of aesthetic-freedom, creativity and artistic self-expression is so powerful, that it tends to overwhelm, even absorb, all other considerations; the arts of life *trumps* discernment about human motivation.

Taylor sees a way out of the *implosion* that Foucault gets trapped in; it is the route back to transcendence, a turn towards transcendent goodness. The motivating constitutive good for Taylor is ultimately found in *agape love*, the self-giving love of God. 'The only way to escape fully the draw toward violence', he writes, 'lies somewhere in the turn to

transcendence—that is, through the full-hearted love of some good beyond life’ (Taylor, 1999, p. 28). A dramatic illustration of this draw to violence is Joseph Goebbels and his wife in the final hours of the Third Reich: they killed their own children and then themselves because they saw no future beyond National Socialism and the dreams of Hitler; their horizon of self had so narrowed that they were left with ultimate despair; suicide was their only perceived alternative. Many German officers of the Reich also committed suicide rather than face prosecution. The future had died and everything had imploded in upon itself. Perhaps this can be contrasted with the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Though not fully developed, Taylor’s proposal is suggestive of a robust alternative for moral self-constitution.

Following on from a discussion that began in the previous section, transcendent *agape* love transforms the self, according to Taylor, a love from above, transcendent⁴⁶ of the human community. This is the constitutive good which can empower the moral self, a self that emerges most robustly within a community of mutuality. Trinitarian divine love offers the self a certain stance towards society; it sees something good in the human self, that is, the created image of God (*imago dei*) in the human (Taylor, 1999, p. 33). Taylor’s solution is an unconditional love, and a belief that people are made in the image of God:

Our being in the image of God is also our standing among others in the stream of love, which is that facet of God’s life we try to grasp, very inadequately, in speaking of the Trinity. Now it makes a whole lot of difference whether you think this kind of love is a possibility for us humans. I think it is, but only to the extent that we open ourselves up to God, which means in fact, overstepping the limits set by Nietzsche and Foucault. (Ibid., p. 35)

It is intriguing for him to suggest that Foucault sets limits (*weak* transcendence) that stifle certain alternatives for self-constitution. This is ironic, because Foucault is the champion of a freedom which resists stifling limits.

⁴⁶ Taylor is quite aware of some of the difficulties and complexities in the language of transcendence but still considers it useful.

What will transform the self, under these circumstances, is an ‘ability to love the world and ourselves, to see both as good despite the wrong and the suffering’ as we saw above in the Dostoyevsky quote. Taylor extends that thought.

The original Christian notion of *agape* love is of a love that God has for humans which is connected with their goodness as creatures (though we don’t have to decide whether they are loved because good or good because loved). Human beings participate through grace in this love. There is a divine affirmation of the creature, which is captured in the repeated phrase in Genesis 1 about each stage of the creation, “and God saw that it was good”. *Agape* is inseparable from such “seeing-good”. (Taylor, 1989, p. 516)

The individual self is elevated by this love, affirmed in its destiny. *Agape* informs the quality of the will; trinitarian goodness empowers, clarifies, and animates the human self. It acknowledges the value that each person gains from the recognition, mercy and affirmation of God. Within this paradigm, the self does not struggle to define itself by itself alone, but engages this transforming love from the divine Other.⁴⁷

Divine trinitarian love creates the possibility of human loving, a love that issues from the power to love in spite of rejection, a sacrificial love. This goodness is a relational attribute in God; it exists and exhibits itself in the form of a *communion of love*: the relational, interpersonal, mutually supportive, loving relationship among the persons of the Trinity. Schwöbel (1992, p. 73) explains how human goodness is rooted in this divine transcendent love: ‘In a conception where goodness is understood as a divine attribute, rooted in God’s trinitarian agency, goodness has to be understood as an essentially relational attribute.’ From this perspective, humans do not invent the good, but discover it derivatively from God and in community; as a *gift* from God, it is full of surprise. It overcomes the distance between divine and human goodness.

This plausibility structure of divine trinitarian goodness at the same time calls into question the validity of a pure self-assertion or violence. Taylor’s appeal to the concept of *quality of the will* offers one hope and a basis for critical evaluation between destructive forces like Dachau, Hiroshima or Cambodia’s Killing Fields, and the constructive forces

⁴⁷ Glenn Tinder (1989, ch. 1) does an excellent job of elaborating this for the political arena in chapter one, revealing the broader implications of *agape*.

like Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, the World Wildlife Fund. The motives for the former are destructive and death dealing; the motives of the latter are compassionate, life-affirming and life-protecting. They are not both legitimized because they are self-expressions or practices of freedom. Foucault's outlook of anti-normativity makes him blind to this discernment at a fundamental level.

The discussion of this section lays the foundation for a new definition of freedom as *goodness-freedom*, freedom *qualified by* goodness. The will is qualified; pure choice is not adequate or sufficient; the beautiful life must be scrutinized by, must answer, transcendent goodness and the Other. This leads to a discussion of Taylor's third searching question regarding a transcendent turn, the dilemma of spiritual or moral lobotomy in Foucault's ethics.

C. Question of Spiritual or Moral Lobotomy: the Crisis of Affirmation

Taylor ends his tome *Sources of the Self* (1989) with a provocative retrospective reflection on his work of recovery of moral sources. This reflection aids one in a critical understanding of Foucault. Taylor (1989, p. 520) writes concerning the horns of a dilemma, 'Do we have to choose between various kinds of spiritual lobotomy and self-inflicted wounds?' This refers back to the quotation from Dostoyevsky in section A of this chapter. Taylor asks whether one has to choose between a form of soul-destruction or self-condemnation, the disavowal of moral goods or world-hatred? 'Does one have to either judge oneself negatively, or mutilate oneself spiritually?', he asks (Ibid.). The crux of the dilemma is whether one can affirm the world and self, and at the same time affirm high moral standards. Many feel that this is not possible. At the centre of the dilemma, is the human desire for affirmation—of self and the world—going back to Nietzsche. Taylor notes that often the more morally sensitive one is, the more likely that one is to reject the world. Foucault felt that one had to deny or deconstruct high moral standards, or the Christian quest for purity or holiness, in order to affirm self and shape the beautiful life.

This comes out in the way that Foucault reports on Christian technologies of self in Chapter Three, section E. The logic of the dilemma for Foucault is as follows: one must overcome a traditional moral consciousness of normativity, a *conscience* which results in self-negation, a negation of the essential will to power that is the ground of being, and thereby overcome guilt and self-loathing.

But, Taylor says, this involves doing moral surgery (mutilation) to some of our most powerful human spiritual aspirations such as benevolence (Ibid., p. 520), a heavy price to pay for this *liberation*. Starkly put, one has to hate morality and remove its influence over the self (silence its voice), if one is to affirm self and the world. Alternately, one has to hate self and the world if one is to love morality and live by the good. Foucault and his ethics are bound by this dilemma, and he has chosen the first alternative in his aesthetic self-making—both the self-overcoming and the self-invention dimensions. Taylor understands the weight of the dilemma in late modernity, but does not buy into it as a tragic fate; he (Ibid., p. 520) writes about the consequences of Foucault's choice: 'We have read so many goods out of our official story, we have buried their power so deep beneath layers of philosophical rationale, that they are in danger of stifling'. He feels that moral lobotomy is dangerous and unnecessary in the final analysis. Instead, he attempts to uncover these buried goods through their *rearticulation*, and thereby to make them sources that empower once again, to recover the spirit of them. This is the vision of his whole project in *Sources of the Self* (Taylor, 1989). By reconnecting the self to spiritual sources of the good, he envisions a new fecundity in moral discussion and behaviour. This is the case with transcendent Christian *agape*, which he believes is a way out of the horns of the dilemma.

Taylor senses the moral weight of the dilemma, and yet holds out hope for a resolution, even *a miracle*: He questions whether Foucault's radical stance is necessary or cogent.

The dilemma of mutilation is ... our greatest spiritual challenge, not our iron fate ... There is a large element of hope. It is a hope that I see implicit in Judaeo-Christian theism (however terrible the record of its adherents in history), and in a central promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided. (Taylor, 1989, p. 521)

Taylor is suggesting that there is a sphere of sublime love, truth, beauty and goodness that both transcends and reframes the apparent ultimate status of irrational forces of suffering, injustice, and will to power, forces which often cause world-hatred and self-hatred or self-mutilation to arise. One does not have to embrace both good and evil, benevolence and violence, in the register of the beautiful, as did Nietzsche through his *yea-saying*. Taylor points to a redemptive possibility within the Christian and Jewish traditions. This includes evidence of those who remain morally sensitive and yet do find a place for this full affirmation: 'an ability to love the world and ourselves, to see it as good in spite of the wrong' (Taylor, 1989, p. 452). This is Dostoyevsky's notion of the miracle of grace, the circulation of grace, a love that empowers one to love both self and the Other.

Mutilation seems to be the only option for those who have bought into a disenchanted world, who have sacrificed a strong transcendence of the good. But those who relocate to transcendent goodness can experience a recovery of their moral agency and their freedom through allowing self to be loved by others and by a transcendent God. This transcendent goodness entails a certain stance towards the world: *hope* expresses Taylor's poetic openness to the possibility of full affirmation in the face of suffering, an openness which releases one from the horns of the dilemma, through a transcendent turn.

W. Greenway (2000) captures its profundity:

Taylor hopes for a participation with the divine that returns us to this world in such a way that we are able fully to embrace our deepest spiritual aspirations and fully to affirm the world, others, and ourselves without spiritual mutilation and without simply denying the reality of suffering and evil—a miraculous transformation indeed ... As a thinker situated within the mainstream of Western culture ... Taylor's proposed path to resolution of the crisis of affirmation involves appeals to God, grace, and agape, and there is no *a priori* reason to judge these appeals false or misleading. (pp. 38-9)

These claims have to be examined seriously because they provide a plausible alternative with integrity. Taylor does not believe that one has to *kill the moral to save the self* and preserve its freedom. His alternative is a will to the good (will to love) which helps avoid the nihilistic traps involved with the will to power.

C. Schwöbel and D.S. Long help to explore further the dynamics of freedom and goodness from within this plausibility structure. How is divine goodness made visible and accessible? How does it avoid the charge of a fantasy or unreachable perfection for humans? How is this transcendent goodness engaged at a human level? First, this leads to an exploration of Jesus as the incarnation of trinitarian goodness in communicating and making accessible transcendent goodness in the immanent human sphere. It is only the beginning of what can be a very fruitful exploration.

D. Incarnational Accessibility of Divine Goodness

Transcendent divine goodness is present and accessible in the human sphere through the incarnation. Transcendence does not therefore mean aloofness and indifference, or a burdensome or unreachable standard of perfection, but rather a creative, fruitful engagement with the world, society and its institutions. Transcendent divine goodness takes on an historical and christological determination in order to impact the human moral world. By reading the moral life through the life of Christ, one cannot espouse a minimalist and juridical conception of the moral life that merely acts on what is permitted and forbidden. We find a moral life that makes sense in the light of a Christ who is full of goodness, who incarnates goodness in human flesh, and articulates it historically and culturally with integrity. D. S. Long (2001) appeals to the *moral normativity* of the life of Jesus.

In Christian theology, Jesus reveals to us not only who God is but also what it means to be *truly human*. This true humanity is not something we achieve on our own; it comes to us as a gift ... The reception of this gift contains an ineliminable element of mystery that will always require faith. Jesus in his life, teaching, death and resurrection and ongoing presence in the church and through the Holy Spirit ... orders us towards God. He directs our passions and desires towards that which can finally fulfil them and bring us happiness ... [and] reveal to us what it means to be human. (pp. 106-7)

This immanence offers the option of life of the self, lived not autonomously but in cooperation with divine wisdom and goodness. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, goodness is made accessible, personal and real; it is not left as an abstract unattainable ideal, or a wholly other reality alone; it is transcendent goodness expressed in immanent reality.

Within this plausibility structure, the roots for the ethical life, the transcendent condition for this life, lie in God, not in a mythological *ontology of freedom*. Jesus and his followers, the church are the dynamic unity between the transcendent and the temporal, the absolute and the contingent. The relational goodness of God is discovered not by means of a mere abstract speculation but in human lives oriented toward God, subjectivity engaged and inspired by the needs of the human Other, as well as by the goodness of God. Therefore, the first human life to consider for this position of hope is the life of Jesus. This trinitarian goodness is a gift, and profoundly it is the gift of Jesus Christ. He is God's goodness embodied, God's own self. The big shift from Foucault's interpretation is that the human self, in this case, is constituted by its engagement with the divine self in the process of discovering spiritual and moral epiphany. This is an encounter which provides transformation of the self. The focus is love not power. One does have a relationship with one's own self, but one can also have a relationship with a transcendent self who is goodness, love in communion.

There is a second aspect of incarnation, beyond Jesus' particular presence on earth; it is God the Son's presence in his church. The church offers an historical and cultural presence, performance and embodiment of God's goodness, socially locating divine goodness in a human community and narrative. Schwöbel (1992, p. 76) notes that divine goodness, a communion of love in itself, 'finds its social form in the community of believers as the reconstituted form of life of created and redeemed sociality'. D.W. Hardy (2001, p. 75) underlines that the task of the church is to face into 'the irreducible density of the goodness that is God in human society' and elsewhere he (Hardy, 1996, p. 202) identifies 'the existence of social being in humanity (the social transcendental), and the movement of social being through the social dynamic, as due to the presence of divine sociality and hence the trinitarian presence of God'.

Thereby, one's own self-constitution is seen to involve the flourishing of the Other, the honouring of the Other, as well as receiving from the Other in mutuality, in a

communion of love. The Other changes in significance: from a categorical threat (a potential dominator in the world of will to power and disciplinary practices) in Foucault's ethics, to an esteemed opportunity of mutuality. The Other is highly valued as an end in herself. The self, in this case, discovers and constructs itself within community, with a moral inclusiveness that involves the pursuit of a communion of love, rather than a pursuit of radical autonomy.⁴⁸ However fragile or imperfect this incarnation of trinitarian goodness in Christian community, it is no less profound for the transformation of the self according to a strong transcendence of depth. Human creatures are called upward morally and spiritually to image and give witness to the dynamic being and activity of the triune God. This imaging transforms the moral vision of the self in a dynamic way, and enhances human possibilities for action towards the good of the Other and the good of society.

That most poignant image of hope, the Kingdom of God, expresses the relation of free divine love and loving human freedom together in depicting the ultimate purpose of God's action as the perfected community of love with his creation. (Schwöbel, 1995, p. 80)

This entails a transcendent moral turn for the self, beyond fear of domination and mutual competition (*agonisme*) or pursuit of self-indulgence (an anti-humanist stance), to a pro-humanist, self-giving love and mutual support.

The church at its best,⁴⁹ as Christ's representatives on earth, produces people on a quest for goodness of this quality, and seek to mediate this transcendent goodness in society; it still believes that God speaks and acts, that the triune God is present to the world, that it is vital to love this personal God and be loved by him, vital to seek the divine personal Good and be sought by him. It renders problematic the seeking of the good or goodness apart from seeking God, the pursuit of the good while walking away from relationship to God. It transforms ethics, within the economy of human relations, from a contest within a general will to power, to the economy of grace within a communion of *agape*. It is not the economy of a naked, free human will *choosing* to follow a moral law

⁴⁸ It is important to realize that raw self-construction is now under serious scrutiny at this stage of the thesis. It begs the question of human *givenness* and of the discovery of self in community.

⁴⁹ At its worst, the institutional church can obfuscate this goodness as well, renegeing on its most fundamental mandate.

or *choosing* to design self autonomously. Goodness is no mere achievement of the human will; it is truly a mysterious *gift* of God. The next section explores how this goodness is empowered in the human theatre and human relationships.

E. The Constitutive Good of the Holy Spirit.

As the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is important to the discussion of goodness and freedom. Can humans live by the example of Jesus alone? If goodness is a dynamic, mysterious gift, and cannot be achieved by human effort alone, even heroic effort to build one's character, from where does Taylor's motivation of the constitutive good come? How is quality of the human will enhanced? Foucault's self struggles to attain this level of goodness through autonomous aesthetic self-making.

How is goodness mediated in this transcendent turn, beyond the life example of the person of Jesus of Nazareth? Clearly, there must be a source of empowerment for living in this positive, inspiring relationship to the good, for the practices of the good, for mediating transcendent goodness in everyday life. If one pursues it, how can transcendent goodness avoid the charge of unattainable ideal? What is the nature of its human possibility? With these questions in mind, it is crucial knowledge that the Holy Spirit is a key inspirational and transformational factor in human goodness, human actualization and mediation of divine goodness. D. S. Long (2001) is optimistic about the human quest for the good because of this; he believes that with the Holy Spirit, moral self-constitution can be intimately and fruitfully related to the goodness of God, and that this will rejuvenate ethics and moral self-constitution significantly. It offers a reconstitution of both goodness and freedom for the moral self, that of which Dostoyevsky has spoken in his idea of the circulation of grace.

The Holy Spirit *infuses* a goodness into us that makes us better than we know we are by ourselves. This *better* is what theologians mean by *grace*. People find themselves caught up in a journey that results in the cultivation of gifts and beatitudes they did not know were possible. They discover that this journey was possible only through friendship ... The mission of the Holy Spirit is to move us towards the charity that defines the relationship between the Father and the Son, a charity so full that it is thoroughly one and yet cannot be contained within a single origin or between an original and a copy, but always, eternally, exceeds that relationship into another. The Holy Spirit is that relationship. (Long, 2001, pp. 302-3)

Divine goodness is made available as a gift by means of the Holy Spirit for the transformation of the self; the Holy Spirit offers relationship and empowerment towards doing and promoting the good; humans can become *entrepreneurs* of divine goodness by this means.

This is an example of the *epiphanic* experience of encounter of the *I-Thou* sort. The Holy Spirit is central to the moral life because he *gifts* individuals for works they cannot achieve in their own autonomous power, within the limits of their own resources; he makes them capable of forgiveness, reconciliation and loving in an *agape* sense. He makes possible and effective the mission of goodness of Jesus Christ and his church. He represents the ongoing presence of Jesus in the church and the world, and makes possible the transformation of the self within community towards love in communion. The Spirit catches humans up into the life of God in a personal way, into the communion within the Trinity. This process of self-constitution opens up the horizon of human moral thinking and action, first towards God, but secondly, connecting the self through compassion with human suffering, empowering the self to move beyond self-interest into service. Within a trinitarian plausibility structure, the answer to Taylor's question, Can we sustain our world benevolence? is a resounding *Yes* because the Holy Spirit enriches and empowers the self as the abundant and fecund source of *goodness*, and empowerment of the human good.

Long has an important addendum to this thought. Along with Schwöbel, he finds that the kind of ethics (Foucault) that emphasizes the will and absolute freedom of choice, is ill-focused. It leads to the human temptation to set its own standard of goodness (or beauty) as the final standard, and thereby to manipulate the language of the good in the direction of *self-interest* or *self-indulgence*. Humans are quite capable of using their

freedom in contradiction to God's goodness: to coerce other humans or abuse the natural world through their own controlling interest in social *moral currency*. Long and Schwöbel promote that ethics be focused on the constitution of the self as it relates dynamically to, and embraces, God and transcendent goodness as a moral *a priori*. This is a parallel thought to that of Charles Taylor who noted that the first question of ethics is *Who or what do you love?* The quality of the will comes into play at exactly this point. Long believes that moral self-constitution must be rooted in, and animated by, a love of God and a love of the infinitely superior goodness of God. This is the route of self-transformation and creative energy for the good, and a correction to human false claims to the good.

The picture of a lone will choosing between good and evil, or embracing both in an aesthetic move of self-mutilation, or choosing to define self, constitutes a distraction from moving into the goodness-which-is-God, being captivated and transformed by this goodness. Long's focus is to build one's life-orientation, one's identity, one's lifestyle around this goodness; it ought not to be reduced to an achievement of the human will. *Goodness-making* is not a faculty within the self that can be conjured.

Human freedom is not about the capacity to choose [merely] between good and evil. Human freedom occurs when our desires are so turned toward God and the good that no choice is necessary ... Jesus shows us that such a life is possible *in our humanity*—not against it. (Long, 2001, p. 46)

Moral transformation in this situation comes through a commitment to the good, not through seeking a controlling knowledge of good and evil or through creative strategies for self-control or manipulation of power relations and truth games. Human creatures as self-legislating beings do not possess the moral resources within themselves to enact goodness. Acts of the will do not automatically constitute acts of goodness. Goodness is rather discovered, not invented. Long, somewhat further along the same moral trajectory as Taylor, concludes that the primary question for the moral self is 'What or who is the good I seek and that seeks me?' (Ibid., p. 130) There is the idea of quest once again. Schwöbel (1992) sums up these thoughts:

The reconstitution of created freedom through the appropriation of the revelation of God's goodness in Christ which is made possible in the Spirit is characterized by the acknowledgement of the limitations of human freedom that become evident where this freedom is no longer understood as self-produced, but as a gift of grace. The liberation from the abortive attempt of self-constitution of human freedom discloses the reality of the other person and the non-human creation as the one to whom good action is directed. Human goodness is realized where it is acknowledged that it is not self-produced, but the gift of God's creative, revealing and inspiring action. (p. 75)

Through the Spirit, goodness becomes a communicable and accessible human reality as gift. The individual self is not left alone to fend for itself, left to its own devices and resources to make its way in the world, and continually justify its behaviour. This connection of human goodness to the transcendent brings an appropriate hopefulness of reviving and continuing the language of the good, and yet humility regarding any human claim to, or construction of, the good. The conversation about the good in moral self-constitution is enlivened from this perspective.

This is a qualitative paradigm shift from Foucault's position where he assumes that individual humans are the origin and controlling agents of moral currency and the moral life through his ethics as aesthetics. The moral self, in his picture, seeks for autonomous resources apart from God in the pursuit of a radical freedom of expression and self-construction. In the debate between Foucault and Taylor, at a preliminary level of discussion, it does come to a watershed between the *sovereignty of the self* or the *sovereignty of God* (who is goodness) in ethical self-constitution, the *telos* of self or the *telos* of divine love; it makes a significant difference whether God and *agape* love are allowed to enter the map of one's moral horizon.

Conclusion

In the light of all this, one is inspired by a new possible hermeneutic of emancipation in response to the discussion between Foucault and Taylor, a *theonomous goodness-freedom*, a God-related freedom that is defined or qualified by trinitarian transcendent goodness. The *transcendent turn* has proved a fruitful thought experiment that bears deep consideration and reflection. As an alternative to the radical approach of Foucault's

aesthetic, autonomous view of freedom, a paradigm of trinitarian *goodness-freedom* reveals a fresh and vital subject position.

Chapter Seven: Thesis Conclusion

The quest for freedom is central to some major expressions of modern self-consciousness. Foucault in particular brings the issue of freedom to the centre of the discussion of moral self-constitution. Now it is time to draw the discussion to closure with some overall conclusions. It will include some reflection on a way forward for the moral self, following from the three-way engagement between Foucault, Taylor and our three theologians. Three propositions will try to capture the new insights garnered, and offer projections towards future directions, under the overall theme of a quest for *redeemed freedom*. They cannot be fully defended here, but it is very useful for final reflection and future thought, exploration and debate within this particular moral discourse of the constitution of the moral self. C. Schwöbel (1995) articulates the trajectory of this conclusion.

The redemption of freedom is liberation from freedom for freedom, from the destructive consequences of absolute self-constituted freedom and for the exercise of redeemed and created human freedom which is called to find fulfilment in communion with God ... Redeemed freedom is ... essentially finite, relative freedom, freedom which is dependent on finding its orientation in the disclosure of the truth of the gospel ... freedom as created, as the freedom of creatures whose freedom is not constituted *by* them but *for* them. (p. 78)

Redeemed freedom is defined by this thesis writer as a recovery of the language and horizon of the moral good, the social horizon of the neighbour, and the theological horizon of trinitarian goodness-freedom. It requires that the self turn from *flight* to courageously face the moral good, the Other and God, in order to rescue freedom from some of its most negative possibilities. Here are the three propositions.

Proposition One: *Redeemed freedom means that one refuses freedom as an ontological ground of ethics, and embraces a new definition of freedom within an ontology of the moral good. Taylor's horizon of the good is offered as an alternative to Foucault's horizon of aesthetic-freedom.*

Foucault's idea of autonomous freedom as self-invention, self-interpretation, self-expression, self-legislation and self-justification is radical indeed. Schwöbel sums it up:

In deciding for policies of action which incorporate choices concerning the interpretation of our possibilities of action, of our goals of action and of the norms of action we attempt to observe, we decide the fundamental orientation of our lives. Such decisions are examples of self-determination. Self-determination is contrasted to determination by external authorities. (Schwöbel, 1995, pp. 62-3)

Aesthetic-freedom certainly has its appeal; it comes with a creative, youthful energy, to launch human subjectivity, overcoming the inertia and restrictions of governmentality and power relations. Foucault does not apologize for its elitist outlook. But this view of freedom has revealed a failure to offer sufficient direction for subjectivity, for the use of the will; it lacks a position of critical appraisal of actions or choices. Thus, it has a major deficit in equipping the self for serious moral reflection and action; it short circuits moral discourse by moving too quickly to praxis or action, without sufficient reflection on reasons for action, or on the virtues, or the goods involved in ethics.

During the conversation with Foucault, cracks and contradictions have emerged along with its potential dangers of Dionysian proportions. Taylor illuminates the darker side of Foucault's artful freedom. The absolute sovereignty that Foucault has given to the individual for self-expression raises concerns: it may indulge in a fantasy of the human will. Foucault propounds a very *optimistic* anthropology of the aesthetic self (artistic work is worthy in and of itself) with great faith in the creativity of the individual, and at the same time, great cynicism about society and its institutions. He understands that domination can occur in corporate regimes of knowledge (making evil visible), but he is less open to acknowledge the potential evil in individual self-shaping and self-expression.

For the future of the self, according to this proposition, what is needed is a reorientation of energies, not an elitist ethics of the privileged aristocrat of style, but one that applies to all selves, one that protects the weak and the most vulnerable, and builds the social fabric towards a just society. Foucault realizes at some level (even as defender of the marginalized), that the elitism of his ethics cannot benefit the minority and the marginalized, or the Greek slave. Redeemed freedom reconfigures Foucault's moral self, exploring a definition of freedom that is more inclusive of the Other, one that releases the repressed goods for self-empowerment and moral reflection. This entails the beginning of a recovery of the normative and a move out of solipsism and narcissism to which Foucault's

view leads. This is a quest for reconciliation between freedom and the good, a scenario in which freedom no longer dominates ethics.

The relationship between the good and freedom needs more than a reconciliation; freedom needs to be qualified by the good. It is good as a source of energy, and a guide to freedom; it directs action to an appropriate goal, and questions actions that have an inappropriate goal. Redeemed freedom articulates life as a conscious praxial engagement and commitment to the good. The good informs the self, roots the self, contextualizes the self, and strengthens the agency of the self in a profound way; it adds energizing infrastructure. With ancient historical roots and a deep personal resonance with people, there is something highly valuable in the conversation of the good as Taylor (1989), Murdoch (1997) and others have drawn it into moral philosophical discourse. As a result of this debate, we propose that freedom must be *harnessed* by, or integrated with the good, as a basic orientation for the self's being in the world and for its development.

Good thereby replaces freedom as the primary moral category. All societies require a balance between what is to be encouraged in self-expression and what is to be repressed as unhealthy for the individual or the community. Hierarchy of the goods is not always popular in moral philosophy circles, and many do not like Taylor's qualitative discriminations and hypergoods. The thesis writer however is convinced that, even with its limitations, Taylor is headed in the right direction on this point, convinced that this bodes well, and holds great promise for the future of a fragmented moral philosophy, the crisis of the self, and the lively moral debates in the West. It also bodes well for the mentoring of new leadership, and begins to answer the crisis of morality in late modernity. There is much to offer to fruitful dialogue and critique among divergent views of ethics. In terms of the future direction of the self, there is a key opportunity to champion the good, to mature in one's awareness and the benefits of the language of the good as a goal of culture and individual calling. It is possible to become an entrepreneur of the good, a self with depth of meaning, rather than an entrepreneur of one's own self-interest. With a positive

relationship to the good, the self is empowered as well as called to account; thereby, this kind of self will have the courage to face itself and its darker motives, the courage and the equipping to self-discern. But it is also to be expected that Foucault's position of radical autonomy will continue to be defended by some Westerners.

Proposition Two: *Redeemed freedom by definition takes on a distinctively communal character; it is contextualized within a discussion and relationships between fellow interlocutors, against the backdrop of larger narrative which makes sense of self. Individual freedomt gives up ground to community and makes space for the Other in order to avoid some of the pitfalls of radical autonomy and provide for a richer moral experience.*

This transformation of the Foucauldian *thin* aesthetic self is desirable under this proposal; the move is towards a deeper, more complex communal character of self, a *thick* self, as articulated in Chapter Five and Six of the thesis. Foucault articulates freedom as *flight* from one's neighbour; the aesthetic self is part fugitive, part manipulator; its context is reduced to a life of *contest* with the Other, with power relations and truth games. There is a certain validity to these concerns, but from the perspective of Taylor's comments and those on trinitarian goodness, they lack vision for relationships that are other than manipulative, that is, those informed by love, compassion and cooperation. In the light of this investigation, it is suggested that there is a need to rethink Foucauldian freedom in terms of a reconciliation between self and the Other, self and society, to put it metaphorically, in terms of *self and one's neighbour*. The direction of reformulation is the recovery of a social horizon, including a stronger concept of the social body, and the common good—the courage to face the neighbour as a *good*.

A radical pursuit of private self-interest, to the exclusion of the presence and the needs of the Other, is a far less tenable option after this critical dialogue. Foucault holds to a faulty assumption of *chronic distrust*, that is, that the Other will always try to control and manipulate my behaviour for its own purposes, or try to impose its agenda on me. Although such manipulation exists, this is a jaded and cynical perspective on human

society, and the potential of human relationships. The *autonomy that modernity cannot do without*, needs a dialectical relationship with community as a balance to one's self-reflexive relationship to oneself. The nature of autonomy cannot be confined to a radical self-determination but must involve the possibility of recognition by and dependence upon other people within a larger horizon of significance. *Flight* is the easier and least complex default option; it is more challenging to take other selves seriously in terms of the good that they are, and the good that they can offer. We suggest that trust building is a tentative but necessary exercise for the moral health of the self. Redeemed freedom can emerge through a wiser discernment and exploration of the communal dimensions of subjectivity, as freedom to cooperate with, and freedom to serve the Other.

This newly discovered type of freedom is destined to find its fulfilment, not in a self-justifying control, alone in self-sufficiency, but in seeking out a communion of love, a healthy vulnerability, interdependency and mutuality, with an ear to the voice of the Other. It promotes the relocation of the dislocated self into a new narrative, a new drama which involves *us*, within the relational order of creation. Human experience is intensely relational; one weakness in Foucault is that, by contrast, he assumes a denial of the social body when it comes to ethics. This conclusion suggests the positive outlook for the future of the self will involve a communal experiment. The word *discernment* above speaks of exploring the potential of these relationships as they relate to a communal horizon of the good, the good that can be carried in the community and its narrative as Taylor articulates in Chapter Five. Others can help discern the self, in order for it to find its own space for freedom and calling *with responsibility*.

Foucault highly values individual creativity (Chapter Four, Part 1) but he lacks appreciation for how this relates to communal creativity of interdependencies and complementarity. Fulfilment in community prevents the self from extreme forms of self-interest, narcissism and solipsism (R. Wolin, 1986). McFadyen (1995) offers a helpful reflection on this point concerning the deceptions and distortions of radical freedom.

The free pursuit of private self-interest has a naturally conflicting form, since the otherness of the individual means their interests must be opposed. One needs freedom from what is other in order to be oneself. Personal centeredness is essential, for autonomy is a private place that has to be protected by fencing it off from the sphere of relation and therefore from the otherness of God and one's neighbours ... Autonomy is something one has in self-possession, apart from relation to God and others in an exclusive and private orientation on an asocial personal centre ... Freedom and autonomy are had apart from relationship: they inhere within oneself. (p. 35)

Foucault's language of freedom has a *mythological* flavour that offers a *mask* for a disguised self-interest, the *freedom to be and do whatever I want*. Redeemed freedom reveals this outlook as a distorted reality-construction. M. Volf in *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996) shows how this reconciliation or redemption of sociality can occur even amidst the most abusive and oppressive of situations. The lack of communal discernment is one of Foucault's significant limitations.

In this anatomy of community, the good can be mediated and carried more fruitfully and robustly. One's individual relationship to the good can be strongly enhanced by involvement with a group that allows the good to shape its identity; not just any, but the right community environment can provide a positive *school of the good*. Mirrored through others, the good can offer both accountability and empowerment to the self. Group covenant and commitment to one another sustains the self in its agency; the younger self especially is released from the burden to invent its whole moral universe. Moreover, communal discernment supports the weak and challenges the strong with accountability, promoting societal justice. Moral self-constitution of this *thicker*, weightier, and more complex sort exceeds the capacity of the individual self; it requires a community. J. Habermas in response to Foucault argues that the preoccupation with the autonomy or self-mastery is simply a moment in the process of social interaction, which has been artificially isolated or privileged:

Both cognitive-instrumental mastery of an objective nature (and society) and a narcissistically overinflated autonomy (in the sense of purposively rational self-assertion) are derivative moments that have been rendered independent from the communicative structures of the lifeworld, that is, from the intersubjectivity of relationships of mutual understanding and relationships of reciprocal recognition. (Habermas, 1987, p. 315)

Proposition Three: *Redeemed freedom flourishes within a transcendent trinitarian horizon. Trinitarian divine goodness proves to be a fruitful plausibility structure within which to think differently about freedom and the moral self. Trinitarian goodness-freedom answers some of the concerns in the Foucauldian self and reveals new opportunities for identity, discovery, transformation and exploration. It also adds sophistication and meaning to some of Taylor's categories without offering the final answer on the discussion. It is in the life of Jesus as a member of the Trinity that one can visualize this goodness-freedom dynamic most dramatically.*

Foucault (1984e, p. 4) claims that, 'Ethics is the deliberate form assumed by freedom.' What kind of form will endure and flourish? What is the impact of a transcendent paradigm in this conversation and how does it help to discern the constitution of the moral self? The language of *strong* transcendence, which has emerged in Chapter Six, implies a transcendence which resides outside the economies of human experience, and human culture spheres of science, art, religion and ethics, and yet it plays a key role in the drama of self-constitution. It offers a significant contribution to the validation, affirmation, and recognition of the self from a larger horizon of significance, creating a new range of possibilities. It also occasions a standpoint for an evaluation of beliefs and practices, offering a subject position from which to protest the unexamined *hegemony of the aesthetic* present in Foucault's hermeneutics of the moral self. This hegemony, along with the hegemony of science, is resisted through an exploration of the horizons of the good, moving the self beyond Foucault's *limitations*.

The discussion of recovering ethics as a partnership with trinitarian relationality is highlighted in Jesus. He offers an example of redeemed human freedom, through the cooperation between divine goodness and human freedom, effecting and empowerment of human freedom. In Chapter Six, the human good was linked through a *transcendent turn* to trinitarian goodness. At this juncture, it will be fruitful to explore the marriage of the good (transcendently rooted and qualified) and freedom. Jesus' life constitutes the reconciliation of, rather than the enmity between, goodness and freedom; transcendent goodness energizes and impacts his expression of freedom. In the philosophical turn towards transcendent goodness, freedom as an ontology is subverted by the ontology of *agape* love,

or divine trinitarian goodness. Foucault resists this sense of *strong* transcendence in his ethics of the *disenchanted* self. His ethical thought is focused through the culture sphere of art (in resistance against the preceding cultural hegemonies of science and religion). Aesthetics is given a controlling position over the other culture spheres.

But does Foucault miss something significant in his analysis of Christian technologies of the self and is it not a bit one-sided? How does Jesus' life interpret freedom differently in the light of this suggested turn to transcendent goodness? How does it deal with Foucault's claim to radical autonomy for the self? The interpretation starts as trinitarian *theonomous goodness-freedom*, a God-related freedom, that is qualified by transcendent divine goodness. It begins with the living God of the Christian story, who is constituted by a form of relation, mutuality and reciprocity in which freedom is given to that which is Other—other Persons in the Trinity and the creational Other, humans. The Christian Trinity is a tri-unity of Persons with a history of self-giving freedom that defines God's being as *agape* love, and the moral source and inspiration for human finite goodness. Human goodness participates in, but is not identical with, nor does it reach the quality of divine goodness. Jesus is a form and expression of trinitarian goodness in human society, a robust example of this *goodness-freedom*. The avoidance of Jesus in Foucault's critique of Christian moral self-constitution is an unfortunate oversight.

The position articulated here is enhanced through the insight of British theologian, A. McFadyen, who reflects astutely on the hermeneutic of freedom and self-giving within the Trinity. Human freedom, claims McFadyen (1995), is grounded in and defined by, God's freedom; there is no necessary competition between these two freedoms.

God's inmost being is constituted by the radical mutuality of the three divine Persons, in which they both give and receive their individuality from one another. In their intersubjectivity, there is the creative intention and recognition of subjectivity, and therefore transcendence in form of the integrity of personal identity, in the giving of space to one another. This giving of space is an interpersonal event, and must not be thought of as analogous to the evacuation of physical space. It is not a form of absence, but a way of being present with others in creative recognition of their autonomy *within the relationship*. It is a letting-be, rather than a letting-go: a structuring of the relationship so that it includes space and time for personal discreteness and autonomous response. Thus the trinitarian life involves a circulation of the divine potentialities of being through the processes of self-giving, in the unity of which the three Persons receive their distinct personal identities. (pp. 46-7)

The identity of trinitarian Persons is strengthened, not weakened or lost, through mutuality; this knowledge stimulates the human imagination of the possibilities for relationships and the dynamics of the moral self. The sheer joy and freedom of this mutuality within the Trinity is not confined. Lively self-giving freedom is revealed as possibility and reality within divine relationships; it involves mutual indwelling of identities, mutual support, *perichoretic* freedom. It provides an example of interpersonal relations that do not need to threaten the individual self or its freedom, but which enhance and empower the individual self and give direction to its freedom—towards the Other in communion.

This is the same gift of benevolent divine freedom that is expressed within human creation, particularly through the presence in the world of God the Son and God the Spirit, the second and third Persons of the Trinity. God is a community of Persons in movement towards and present within creation, stimulating and opening up a future of new possibilities for human freedom. The transcendence of the trinitarian Creator includes free personal presence and free indwelling in history, revealing the potential of a definition of freedom which is rescued from the obsession with radical autonomy. It is the kind of freedom that begins as a mutuality interpreted in trinitarian terms; it then proceeds towards a rethinking, a relocation of the self through a realignment of self with God's freedom, a new interface of self with the transcendent horizon of *goodness-freedom*. The new subject position is informed by, bounded by and rooted in, divine freedom and the relational dimensions of creation, rather than standing over against or aloof from it.

The character of this *redeemed freedom* is creative and dynamic in terms of human sociality; God and human creation are in *dialogue-partnership*. Human freedom takes its cue from God, exists within the context of God's freedom, but can also engage with it. It is a creational relationship, deeply implicated with God and his freedom to create and move towards his creation. In fact, the dependence of human freedom on God secures its integrity; God creates the context for freedom, recognizes, affirms and validates human freedom; the self is constituted in its freedom at this level by God. Thus, this relationship

between divine and human freedom should not be seen as a handicap to personal freedom, but a robust source of actualization of freedom, as a profound divine *gift*.

Knowledge of this goodness-freedom is offered through relationship with God as Trinity; it is not invented. God's creation offers the latitude that affords space for human response in a non-coercive environment; it even includes the possibilities of human misunderstanding, rejection, disobedience towards and even disbelief in God. God's gift of freedom entails God's willingness to take the consequences of human freedom and even human radical assertions of autonomy. McFadyen, (1995, p. 44) writes: 'We find God subjecting Godself, first of all to the limitation of the incarnation in a human person; secondly, allowing Godself to be subject to human freedom—even to the extent of death—to bear the consequences of the human refusal of freedom on Godself.' According to his (Ibid., p. 52) emphasis, human freedom is enhanced when there is a grateful response to the God who built into creation the very possibility and parameters of human freedom, when human freedom is discerned within the larger context of God's freedom. The created, ordered ecology of relations is respectful of both divine sovereignty and a large degree of finite human choice and autonomy. Space is given for growth in individual integrity, uniqueness and particularity; this meets some of Foucault's strong desire for creativity in the self, without sacrificing many other positive infrastructural dimensions of the moral self. At the end of the discussion, Foucault resists this limited definition of freedom as a gift from God; he wants unlimited freedom for the self.

Furthermore, Jesus is the free and loyal Son of the Father, exemplifying the positive marriage between goodness and freedom, showing that it is possible and viable in this life. Whereas definitions of freedom as autonomy lead to loss of self and alienation towards the Other (Taylor's argument in Chapter Five, Part 2), a trinitarian definition leads to the fresh discovery of self and the re-appearance and appreciation of the Other in a *communion of love*. In order to explore the trinitarian concept of *goodness-freedom*, it is instructive to look to the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, to inquire what human freedom can become when

it engages with the transcendent goodness of God the Trinity. In the practice of redeemed freedom, the human freedom of Christ can vividly disclose God's creative freedom to human observers. Schwöbel (1995) captures this well.

[It is in the] Image of Christ, where freedom is exercised as rooted in the will of the Father and mediated in the power of the Spirit that the true character of the image of God is disclosed to us, both as the divine freedom for grace and as the human freedom of obedience ... Christ is ... both the revelation of the divine freedom of grace and the disclosure of the human freedom of obedience, where obedience to the will of God the father is not the abrogation of human freedom but the form of its exercise. (p. 80)

For Foucault, obedience to a religion is negative and repressive, but in Jesus, it is never a contest between God the Father's freedom and his own. It entails an intimate cooperation rooted in loving communion. Jesus reveals that freedom can be liberated from the weighty obligation to live self-reflexively out of one's own power and resources, and also reveals a creative divine-human relationship filled with freedom and grace. This is carried on even in the midst of many attempts of others to oppress Jesus and repress his voice.

McFadyen (1995) illuminates some nuances of the divine-human interface of freedom, revealed through the incarnation.

[By] incarnation in the body of the crucified one implies that God's freedom does not, after all, entail a transcendent aloofness from the world, but a form of involvement with it in which the divine being and freedom are staked. God subjects Godself to the risks, vulnerabilities and ambiguities of historical existence, including the risk of rejection, suffering and death, as well as of misinterpretation. God's freedom and sovereignty must be of a radical kind: the freedom to give oneself in relation; to be with and in creation in ways that are costly to God, but which do not abrogate God's sovereignty, freedom and transcendence. (p. 42)

In the incarnation, one sees God communicating and relating, not as a tyrannical, coercive, absolute sovereign, but vulnerably in and through the form of human individual, by uniting the divine freedom of self-giving *agape* love with that of a human being. In the Christ event, one is confronted with a divine power that is highly personal, and which consequently has impact through forms of interpersonal communication and personal presence. This God posture makes creative appeal to human freedom; divine freedom is the context of human freedom in this paradigm. It is not a divine monologue of commands, but a dialogue in which humans are intended and respected as subjects with choice. Jesus is in constant dialogue with the Father. Redeemed freedom articulates human freedom

against the backdrop, and within the horizon of, God's freedom; this is the ultimate contextualization of freedom.

Freedom, its content and definition, has been a central concern in this thesis and therefore in this conclusion of the dialogue with Foucault and Taylor and the three theologians; as a result of this dialogue, not all definitions of freedom are deemed equally valid or valuable. When freedom embraces goodness, it transforms freedom from an end in itself, to freedom as a benevolence or *agape* love. Within the plausibility structure of trinitarian transcendent goodness, love becomes the content of freedom and freedom's trajectory. The exercise of redeemed freedom takes seriously the human and divine Other, especially the weaker, more vulnerable human Other; this redirected freedom is a consequence of the interface between human and divine goodness. Schwöbel capture it succinctly.

The true measure of freedom is love as the relationship which makes the flourishing of the other the condition of self-fulfilment. Human freedom becomes the icon of divine freedom where the freedom of divine grace constitutes the grace of human freedom ... That most poignant image of hope, the Kingdom of God, expresses the relation of free divine love and loving human freedom together in depicting the ultimate purpose of God's action as the perfected community of love with his creation. The fulfilment of God's reign and the salvation of creation are actualized together in the community of the love of God. (Schwöbel, 1995, pp. 80-81)

Foucault's provocative *aesthetic-freedom* has raised many questions and stimulated deep reflection on the nature and constitution of the moral self. Taylor has pressed in on us the importance of the concept of the good in ethics; transcendent goodness has contributed further insight into that concept in healthy ways. The three theologians have shared a map of God as Trinity, who is present to humans, taking them seriously in their integrity and freedom, and inviting them to participate as living expressions of divine *agape*. The life committed to this *goodness-freedom* can constitute a great, and yet accessible, work of art, a beautiful and free life. This is the beginning of an ongoing debate and fruitful discussion that has many implications for Westerners as they engage late modern culture, and struggle to find answers and hope amidst its moral crisis.

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