

Foucault, Critique, and the Emergence of a Postmodern Technology of the Self

by

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Arnold T. Olena and Nathalie H. Olena. I only wish they were here to enjoy my accomplishment. They spurred me on to view a wider world than I could have imagined on my own. I thank my gracious family for their patience and forbearance during these last three-and-a-half years. I especially want to thank my wife Lois E. Olena for her expert editing skills. She not only read each chapter for clarity, but offered helpful suggestions throughout. I thank the Evangel University library staff who worked diligently to acquire books and obscure papers for me, especially Dale Jensen. Mark McLean helped me clarify many of the ideas present here. He was a thoughtful interlocutor, along with many others at Evangel University. I want to thank the Society for Pentecostal Studies for providing a forum to present many of the ideas in this work. My colleagues at the yearly meetings were a constant encouragement to me. Lastly, I am grateful for the conversations I had with Alessandra Tanesini, my advisor. Her comments provoked more thorough examination of my reasoning, and the depth and clarity of this work owes a great deal to her careful analysis.

Summary

This dissertation is, first, an examination of the coherence and consistency of Michel Foucault's work with respect to its development and an examination of his ethos, a product of conscious self-construction. Second, this work is an exploration of ethical techniques. The goal of the dissertation is to discover an ethos that takes into account the best contemporary critical attitudes and techniques of ethical self-construction.

The first chapter begins with a discussion of the development of Foucault's archaeological method. Discussion of some problems with structuralism, his genealogical method, and finally his movement towards an ethical program follows. The method for the dissertation will be exploratory and critical.

The second chapter develops a line of thinking about the development of freedom in Kant and Foucault. Power relations are a persistent context in which self-construction takes place. Resistance to power relations marks the beginning of freedom, which requires testing and moving beyond the limits of socially constructed selves. The Quakers display a model of structured resistance to enclosing authorities. John Woolman provides an example of ethical self-construction.

The third chapter explores Foucault's ethical project by examining ancient Greco-Roman and Christian technologies of the self, and relates those projects to ethical self-construction through writing. This exploration shows continuity in the product of writing from Ancient through modern writers.

The fourth chapter develops a postmodern ethos through an examination of weak ontology. James Rachels' ethical programme is a model for a postmodern technology of the self. The resulting technique offered provides a vulnerability to facticity while retaining the best ethical principles and critical reasoning. This is illustrated in Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory*.

Foucault's ethos is a clear precursor to modern technologies of the self that take the exploration of knowledge with humility into account.

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List of Abbreviations

Books, Lectures, and Collections by Michel Foucault

- AK Archaeology of Knowledge
 AME Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, collection
 DP Discipline and Punish
 COT The Courage of Truth, lectures
 EST Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, collection
 FL Foucault Live, collection
 FS Fearless Speech, lectures
 GSO The Government of Self and Others, lectures
 HM History of Madness
 HS Hermeneutics of the Subject, lectures
 HS1 The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction
 HS2 The History of Sexuality Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure
 HS3 The History of Sexuality Volume 3: The Care of the Self
 OT The Order of Things
 POT The Politics of Truth (includes Kant's essay *Was ist Aufklärung*), collection
 Power Power, collection
 STP Security, Territory, Population, lectures
 TS Technologies of the Self

Books by others

- BSH Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, Dreyfus & Rabinow
 CCF Cambridge Companion to Foucault, Gutting
 CKE Creating the Kingdom of Ends, Korsgaard
 EMP The Elements of Moral Philosophy, Rachels
 FA Foucault's *Askēsis*, McGushin
 FAE Foucault and the Art of Ethics, O'Leary
 FAF Foucault and Feminism, McNay
 FF The Final Foucault, Bernauer & Rasmussen
 FFES Foucault, Feminism, and Embodied Subjectivity, McLaren
 FFF Feminism and the Final Foucault, Taylor & Vintges
 FOF Force of Flight, Bernauer
 FWD Freedom Writers Diary, Gruwell
 GMM Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals, Kant
 JBR The Judith Butler Reader, Butler
 JJW The Journal of John Woolman, Woolman
 KH Kant on History, Kant
 PC The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard
 RM Recoding Metaphysics, Borradori
 Volf The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World, Volf
 SA Sustaining Affirmation, White

Introduction

0.1. Preliminary Remarks:

The primary focus of this dissertation is Michel Foucault's work, focussing especially on his mature work on the ethics of self-constitution. 'For Foucault, ethics is not a field of rules, principles or precepts, it is the field of our self-constitution as subjects.'¹ In the last decade of his life, Foucault attempted to discover the connections between power relations and ethical formation of the self by drawing out a genealogy of sexuality within Greco-Roman and early Christian society. Foucault's critique of Modernity in the 1960s and 1970s laid the groundwork for his inquiries about self-formation and technologies of the self during the 1980s. I chose the term postmodern in my title to characterize contemporary technologies of the self first because of a form of critique emerging in the late twentieth century that can be extrapolated roughly from the critical work Foucault did in the 1960s and second, because of some remarks by Jean-François Lyotard about the postmodern condition.² Third, I chose the term postmodern, because Foucault's work on the Enlightenment, freedom, and an ethos built on a historical ontology is in substantial agreement with some of Lyotard's remarks. Even though the results of Foucault's work of the 1970s and 1980s might not be classified as strictly postmodern on Lyotard's grounds, they nonetheless presuppose and use the modes of critique present in his archaeological method of the 1960s.³

The secondary focus of this dissertation is ethics. The ancient technologies of the self Foucault studied were ethical at their core. And qualifications for the possibility of knowledge were dependent on ethical self-formation. One needed to be a certain kind of person to qualify for the acquisition of knowledge. I wish also to suggest that the quest for knowledge in the modern age has inevitably led to ethical concerns in those who recognize the limitations inherent in the human condition. The postmodern technology of the self I offer as a result of this research is therefore

¹ Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2002), hereafter FAE, p. 11.

² Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), originally published in France as *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, copyright 1979 by Les Editions de Minuit, hereafter PC.

³ Foucault does not abandon Archaeological critique as is evident in an essay written in 1971, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' *Aesthetics, Methodology, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Foucault*, ed. by Paul Rabinow and others, trans. by Robert Hurley and others, 3 vols (New York: The New Press, 1998), 2, hereafter AME, p. 369.

ethical in character though it has consequences for knowledge acquisition of other kinds.

Following traces of discussions about ethics in the latter half of the twentieth century shows how the ethical turn may in fact be one inevitable reaction to the growth of technology. It also shows that Foucault's interest in ethics was partly a consequence of the times, as well as a product of his own project of self-formation.

Christine Korsgaard aptly exposes the ethical turn of the late twentieth century:

In recent years philosophers have welcomed the development of a widespread interest in philosophical ethics. In their concern about the bewildering questions generated by medical technology, legal practice, and the power and responsibility of the modern corporation, members of the professions and of the public have turned to philosophy. [...] And so the profession [of philosophers] has responded with the development of courses, textbooks, and a vast literature on the questions of "applied ethics."⁴

Ethical issues are at the juncture of theory and practice in our age. For example, medical practice of the late twentieth century has been forced to reframe the doctor/patient relationship after over a century of treating sick persons as broken machines. The medical practitioners trained in the mechanical model of human biology had no compunction about lying 'therapeutically' to the patient or attempting to induce healing by mechanistic prodding. Though medical practice has progressed remarkably since the nineteenth century on this mechanistic model, there was a marked loss of confidence, noted by Sissela Bok, in the institution of medicine between 1966 and 1976 in the United States.⁵ This loss of confidence in the medical profession was evidenced by persistent challenges from and charges of unethical behaviour by patients who had not been consulted and were kept in the dark concerning their treatment. In conjunction with the unethical behaviour of the medical practitioners, there was a rise in the awareness of iatrogenic pathologies,⁶ the dangers of modern medicine, and the failure of public justifications for problematic research. Bok's *Lying* is only one of the challenges targeting the ethical problems of medical

⁴ Christine Korsgaard, 'Two Arguments Against Lying,' in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), hereafter CKE, p. 335.

⁵ Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), p. xxx. 'From 1966 to 1976, the proportion of the public answering yes to whether they had a great deal of confidence in people in charge of running major institutions dropped from 73 percent to 42 percent for medicine; for major companies, from 55 percent to 16 percent; for law firms from 24 percent (1973) to 12 percent; and for advertising agencies from 21 percent to 7 percent.'

⁶ Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

treatment. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross⁷ challenged foundational notions of Western medicine which looked on death as an unnatural event whose treatment model forced the saving of lives, even when those individuals were long past any conscious awareness of life. Bok's and Kübler-Ross's works among others helped to re-script the conversation about medical treatment, redefining the doctor/patient relationship around mutual responsibility for the patient's treatment and respect for the patient as a person. Many of the ethical parameters of this relationship have been encoded during the last thirty years in hospitals and universities, outlining the responsibilities of medical professionals and making the entire practice of medicine accountable for its actions.

The emergence of a systematic worry over ethical issues is also evidenced by the writings of Michel Foucault who, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, began to query ethical dilemmas posed by the increase of social forces, the intensification of power which is the direct consequence of the increase in our scientific and political prowess,⁸ the increasing ability of the state to collect data on individuals and use them as a method to enforce written rules and unwritten expectations of compliance. After commenting critically and creatively on the forces composing the culture of the late twentieth century, Michel Foucault gravitated to the examination of ancient ethical writings looking for clues to problems posed within our culture as a result of the modern intensification of power relations. For example, technical ability to 'watch' people, to view every aspect of their lives, listen to phone conversations, read email, track financial transactions has increased dramatically. Not only governments, but businesses, and for that matter anyone who is interested, criminal or otherwise who can pay for the technology can gain access to essential personal data. This has forced a reconsideration of the issue of privacy, of the rights of people against the demands for national security, against the opportunity of businesses, and against the easy

⁷ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Routledge, 1970). This and other books of hers and others marked a movement toward reintegrating death into the social imaginary of modern society.

⁸ Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?,' in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. by Sylvère Lotringer, trans. by Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), hereafter POT, p. 116. 'Now the relations between the growth of capabilities and the growth of autonomy are not as simple as the eighteenth century may have believed. [...] What is at stake, then, is this: How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?' Intensification of power relations has to do with the increasing specificity that an individual may be observed, tracked, and known by means of the spread of surveillance technology, data mining, and communications. Also in Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), hereafter FA, p. 18, 'Relations of power have, then, a built-in strategic element that aims at complete control.'

access to private information by predators. Foucault does not offer an easy solution to this dilemma, but rather a compelling urgency to work out these problems through an ethical approach to life within the scope of these powers.

My project is an effort, neither to complete or extend Foucault's work, that would be presumption, nor to force his architectures and methodologies onto a world that is changing so rapidly, but to examine some of the forms our ethical projects have taken as a *singularity*⁹ or a *positivity*¹⁰ from the 1950s to the turn of the twenty-first century, roughly into the first decade of this century. It is my intention to capture some of the objects of contemporary ethical problematizations and show them in relief as a reflection of Foucault's project of making oneself into a work of art, as an aesthetic project¹¹ instead of a putative ethics generated as the result of some universal truth about the constitution of man.

Aesthetic is closest in meaning to the ancient Greek term *techne*, as it is used in expressions such as *techne tou biou* ('the technique/art of life', or in Foucault's rendering, 'the art/aesthetics of life/existence'). In this sense, to understand ethics as an aesthetics of the self is to understand it as a relation which demands a certain attitude towards the self, an attitude not unlike that of an artist faced with his or her material.¹²

I will look at Foucault's later work focusing on the 'art of living' (*tekhnē tou biou*)¹³ and the ascetic principles of the ancients from Plato to the centuries following Christ with the intention of evaluating the generation of ethical principles within the practices of late twentieth-century Western culture. I will focus on how Foucault problematized¹⁴ social structures and practices and his resultant social commentary

⁹ POT, 'What is Critique?' p. 63, 64; 'What is Revolution?' p. 84. A *singularity* is a focus point, a group of problems and issues, a social structure, for example, madness in the classical age, with the social and epistemological structures surrounding it.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), hereafter AK, p. 125. This was originally published in France under the title *L'Archéologie du Savoir* by Éditions Gallimard. © 1969 Éditions Gallimard. Concerning the word positivity, 'I have used the term positivity to designate from afar the tangled mass that I was trying to unravel.' He is interested in the truth of the discourse emerging from this 'tangled mass.' also in Michel Foucault, 'On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle' in AME, p. 321. 'This four-level system which governs a discursive formation and has to explain, not its common elements but the play of its divergences, its interstices, its distances—in some sense its blanks rather than its full surfaces—that is what I propose to call its *positivity*.'

¹¹ Luis David, 'Michel Foucault and the *epimeleia heauton*', in *Budhi*, 5.2, (2001), 41-65, p. 64.

¹² FAE, p. 14.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, tr. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), hereafter HS, p. 86.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault uses the word 'problematized' as a way of sectioning off what appeared to him to be a problem within the scope of his discussion. Bernauer says that within Foucault's teaching style problematization is an incessant interrogation in the interest of examining how an issue is cast in the form of a problem.' James W. Bernauer, *Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought* (London: Humanities Press International, 1992), hereafter FOF, p. 3. Also FA, p. 15-16. 'A problematization

and resistance to conservative elements in France and the United States which, on his account, upheld worldviews conflicting with moral claims of social and political equity.

Among the central features of Foucault's work as an intellectual, the desire for discovering truth characterized his personal attitudes and drove his research. Attempting to avoid the pitfalls of doing history, philosophy, psychology, or sociology along traditional lines, Foucault often launched out on studies with as yet undeveloped tools, relying on the notion that philosophers, sociologists, and historians have glossed over something essential in their research, that is, that they have forgotten that life, history, and reality are not formed according to ideologically coherent theoretical programmes. His research in the 1960s ran counter to three projects, three theoretical programmes, meant to render the human sciences coherent: phenomenology, positive science, and hermeneutics. Even with heroic attempts in the *History of Ideas*¹⁵ to formalize notions of the human sciences and render them systematic and coherent, the emergence of the human sciences is marked by deep and persistent epistemological and ethical dilemmas. In a positive way Foucault characterizes the constitution and genealogy of knowledge and relations of power within social structures, as well the discovery and emergence of man as an object of positive empirical study from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Foucault, following on the heels of the Frankfurt School (though initially without any knowledge of them), deeply influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, develops two methods, archaeology and genealogy, within three domains of theory: truth, power, and ethics in order to study the objects of his interest.

Foucault's first method, archaeology, where his chief concern is to discover the properties of meaningful discourse through an examination of the emergence of the human sciences, is marked by opposition to three great themes of the history of ideas: genesis, continuity, and totalization.¹⁶ In the following chapter I will discuss Foucault's archaeological method and how it contrasts with these three themes. In order to critique these themes he focuses on discursive formations (not yet

[...] is the process by which an aspect of reality, of one's world, one's experience is brought into focus as a problem in need of response. Through a problematization, "people begin to take care of something ... they become anxious about this or that." Also Edward McGushin, 'Michel Foucault's Retrieval of the Care of the Self in the Thought of Plato', in *Budhi*, 6.2-3, (2002), 77-103, p. 85.

¹⁵ Though Foucault and his translators often capitalise *History of Ideas*, for the remainder of this dissertation it will not be capitalised.

¹⁶ AK, p. 138.

knowledge, but regularities signalling patterns that may lead to knowledge) which reveal the discontinuous character of emerging movements within society such as the treatment of madness in the Classical age, the birth of modern medicine, and the transition from the Classical to the Modern age. The difficulties of using the archaeological method, the apparatus which reveals the emergence and disappearance of discursive formations, trouble him,¹⁷ and after a survey of the archaeological method, I will discuss some critiques of that method.

The first object of the second method, genealogy, is to comprehend the constitution of man in society in relation to various strategies and social structures which not only exercise power but also constitute knowledge.¹⁸ These relations of power/knowledge seem to leave less and less room for individual human freedom. From the concern Foucault had for freedom comes the second object of the genealogical method, the ethical constitution of man. His research moved from the almost fixed character of the power of the disciplinary society found in his book *Discipline and Punish*¹⁹ to the problems of governing populations discussed in the lectures from 1977 to 1979, of what he called Biopower, where the limits of governmental power are explored. The breadth of his genealogical research began to include a concern for individual freedom. That concern was more fully developed in his lectures of 1981-1982 titled *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*.

The result of Foucault's work was to remove first, any sense of certainty about foundations in a transcendental subjectivity—of the Cartesian ego; second, to critique the certainties of formalized scientific practice and the human sciences; and third, to question the nihilistic failure to come to a ground of interpretation—‘an instance of what Paul Ricoeur has called the hermeneutics of suspicion’²⁰ by locating the ground of interpretation in the body itself.²¹ This embodied critique has sparked enduring

¹⁷ AK, p. 135.

¹⁸ Daniel E. Palmer, ‘Taylor and Foucault on Power, Truth, and Freedom’, in *Southwest Philosophy Review*, 25.3, (July 1996), 171-88, p. 184. ‘The connection between power and knowledge [...] guarantees that when something, such as sex, is constituted as a problem for truth, that process will be thoroughly saturated with power relations.’

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish; The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), hereafter DP. Originally published in France as *Surveiller et Punir; Naissance de la prison* by Éditions Gallimard, Paris. Copyright © 1975 by Éditions Gallimard.

²⁰ BSH, p. xxii, ‘Heidegger claims to find that the deep truth hidden by the everyday practices is the unsettling groundlessness of a way of being which is, so to speak, interpretation all the way down. This “discovery” is an instance of what Paul Ricoeur has called the hermeneutics of suspicion.’

²¹ BSH, p. 11.

debates in feminist theory. Lois McNay, Cressida Heyes,²² Margaret McLaren,²³ Judith Butler, and many others examine how that embodied subjectivity is experienced, what its implications are for private and public selves, and how Foucault's genealogies and ethics play into modern views of self-construction. Though feminists concerns of the sort noted have been and continue to be fruitful grounds to engage Foucault's thought, the thesis of this dissertation focuses on some examples of self-construction whose details, in general, are not centred around strictly feminist concerns.

Foucault resisted searching for the grounds of knowledge in idealized structures or interpretations. His observations made possible the removal of false confidences in theoretical structures, yet did not fall into nihilistic dismissal of human projects. McGushin reminds us that 'in order to understand philosophical problems and the place of philosophy or the philosopher in culture and history one must grasp philosophy at the level of its concrete, embodied life.'²⁴ But after the loss of this confidence in idealized structures or interpretations, how will people recover themselves? How will people recover their equilibrium without foundations?

Foucault's solution to this, which he left unfinished in the unpublished fourth volume of *The History of Sexuality*,²⁵ was concerned with the project of the creation of the self as a work of art. I will revisit this theme later. But to understand his project, one must recognize that he carried out the development of his own ethical self both in public and private. With his auditors at the Collège de France as well as his close friends and associates Foucault made his life a project. This, I suspect, was the escape Foucault took from the intensification of social forces formed in the movement of the modern era toward the institution of disciplinary hierarchies.²⁶ This was a recognition on his part that one could not be free from power relations. Power relations are all around us, infusing the apparatus of our daily lives, our

²² Cressida J. Heyes, *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²³ Margaret A. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), hereafter FFES, p. 29, McLaren says, Foucault's 'shift in emphasis from beliefs and reason to bodies and practices may render the question of justification irrelevant.'

²⁴ Edward McGushin, 'Foucault and the Problem of the Subject', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 623-648, (p. 624).

²⁵ The proposed title of this book was *Les Aveux de la chair* (*Confessions of the Flesh*), what he called the 'Christian book.'

²⁶ Foucault developed these themes throughout *Discipline and Punish*.

consciousness, and forming the structures of our unconscious self.²⁷ But, one can become a better person, an individual for whom freedom within the confines of these disciplines means the development of techniques that sidestep problematic power relations, rise above them. It is this exploration of what man is in his freedom that Foucault had only begun to elaborate when his untimely death forced the cessation of that exploration.

‘Foucault’s work was profoundly intertwined with his own project of subject formation.’²⁸ Didier Eribon recounts one project of Foucault’s later years: that he had taken on himself the project of self-improvement, finding not only solace in the works of the ancients, especially Seneca, but a path toward freedom.²⁹ Yet, subsequent to his death, in the twenty-first century, the project of many governments around the world, especially in the West, has been that of surveillance of its own peoples. The scenario found in *Discipline and Punish* has become more thoroughly entrenched in government than, I think, Foucault could have imagined. Today, more than ever, the population of the world has become subject through advanced technology to scrutiny unimaginable in previous eras. That, along with the dramatic rise in knowledge and investment in communication technologies, puts man in a position unique to this era in terms of being subject to the ubiquitous pressures of surveillance. More than ever, discovering a route to freedom through technologies of the self, through disciplines focussed on producing an ethos as modelled in Foucault’s later life, may be the only escape today from the inevitable intensification of power.

For Foucault, there is no escape downward into criminality: one becomes the pawn of government through the constitution of the self as delinquent. There is no escape in collaboration with the strategies of power: one becomes a function of government. There is no escape in science: one becomes a partner in developing strategies of subverting man to the material, instinctual, and primitive motivations behind the institutionalization, compartmentalization, cataloguing of man as object.³⁰

²⁷ I use the word ‘unconscious’ for convenience only, since it is an ordinary way of talking about what has become part of our unproblematic assumptions about our lived world. I do not intend this to mean that it is not capable of being examined or analysed.

²⁸ Daniel E. Palmer, ‘Taylor and Foucault on Power, Truth, and Freedom’, in *Southwest Philosophy Review*, 25.3, (July 1996), 171-88, p. 172.

²⁹ Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 331.

³⁰ Here is an interesting connection to C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001). In the third chapter titled, ‘The Abolition of Man,’ Lewis outlines the results of rejecting objective value. Mankind becomes enslaved to the instincts of a few under the guise of

There is no escape in a transcendental or totalizing *logos*: one becomes subject to a shallow and twisted ideology. The escape Foucault recognized tentatively and hopefully is one that leaves the responsibility for the production of life in freedom to the individual within the matrix of power relations as an ethical project of self-improvement. ‘The introduction of the category of the practices of the self overcomes the theoretical impasse of Foucault’s earlier work, which does not explain how social agents operate as autonomous individuals.’³¹ In this I think Foucault’s work is prescient.

0.2. Synopsis of the Project

In the first chapter, I will examine Foucault’s methodology. I will examine Foucault’s ethical project with respect to some movements in ethical thought in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Mining Foucault’s methodology is important, even though limited in scope. And during the sixties it is in a constant state of development since Foucault’s first concern was not methodology, but rather the objects he studied. In addition, the objects he studied forced transformations in his method. As a matter of temporal succession, his first formal work on methodology, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* came at the end of the 1960s after a period of reflection on the works that preceded it.³² After *The Archaeology of Knowledge* there is no further book on methodology, only a few short papers. This does not mean he was unconcerned with method, only that method was a means of avoiding pitfalls previous writers had fallen into, not an end in itself. The *Archaeology* gives us some insight into Foucault’s attempt to organize a body of work around themes that were until that point only roughly developed. An examination of Foucault’s method in the *Archaeology* gives us a rough outline of the movements of his theoretical enterprise, a catalogue of what he is trying to avoid doing within that enterprise, and a starting point for the method of this thesis.

This discourse on Foucault’s method will clear away what I think are unfruitful paths of research, and suggest more fruitful ones. In general, I will not be

building society on a new set of values that on retrospect are only the whims of the few, the Conditioners.

³¹ Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1992), hereafter FAF, p. 84.

³² Michel Foucault, ‘The Birth of a World,’ in *Foucault Live*, ed. by Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnson (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), hereafter FL, p. 65, interview with Jean-Michel Palmier May 3, 1969.

undertaking the project of an epistemology of modern ethics, or a discourse on ethical truth, but describing some of the ethical problems of our age regarding the constitution of the self in relation to the current age in order to display the complexity of the project of becoming ourselves as a work of art through the application of technologies of the self. The end result of the project is not art for itself but the constitution of ‘ourselves as moral agents.’³³

In chapter 2, I will examine some of the puzzles Foucault worked on concerning the writings of Immanuel Kant. Foucault thinks of the time of publication of Kant’s essay ‘What is Enlightenment?’ (*Was ist Aufklärung?*)³⁴ as a moment of transition from the Classical to the Modern age. During his life, Foucault frequently re-examines Kant’s *Aufklärung*, finding in it issues that pertain to the self and to individual freedom, the relations between the self and tutelage of the self under powers that in freedom must be set aside. Foucault studies the problem of resistance to power of different sorts, of the dangers of just going along with the status quo, the inflexibility of systems of thought in the Classical age, and Kant’s inquiry about that inflexibility as a sign of modern sentiment. Foucault’s interest in Kant surfaces throughout his career, and later appears to be more urgent, as evidenced in the essays collected in the volume *The Politics of Truth*. Part of Foucault’s problem with Kant lies in a view of Kant’s ethics as absolutism, as what some have called Kant’s moral atomism. But reading Kant this way is not without difficulties.

Christine Korsgaard, in her essay ‘The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil,’³⁵ makes a good case for treating Kant like a modern moral thinker—for treating Kant’s ethical system in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals* only as an ideal case. This gives us a reading of Kant that not only allows for the possibility of conflicts between duties in the presence of evil, but also a way of resolving such conflicts. But this doesn’t mean that Kant must give up the Categorical Imperative, the decision procedure for discovering our duty. Rather, with Korsgaard we now have a decision procedure that takes into account both our duty and conflicts of duty with respect to moral evil in our society. This view of a more pragmatic Kant, will ameliorate some of the difficulties arising from the strict moral atomism found in

³³ Michel Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, in *Ethics Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley and others, 3 vols (New York: The New Press, 1997), I, hereafter EST, p. 262.

³⁴ POT, p. 29.

³⁵ Christine Korsgaard, ‘The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil,’ in CKE, p. 143.

Kant's *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, leading to a more useful reading of Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung*. The difficulty with a less pragmatic reading of Kant is that in *Was ist Aufklärung* there does not seem to be a mode of critique for the expression of freedom. I will argue that the mode of critique is that of resistance and transgression as one response to manifestations of power relations, one that Foucault sees as necessary for the expression of freedom. 'Critique is thus a permanent interrogation of the limits, an escape from normalization, and a facing-up to the challenges of self-creation while seeking to effect changes in social structures.'³⁶

I will consider Foucault's reading of the practice of transgression as a mode of behaviour within the expression of freedom.³⁷ What we see in Korsgaard's essay is a way of reading Kant that acknowledges the free choice to transgress the principle of humanity³⁸ in certain cases, as one method of resolving a conflict between duties resulting from our exposure to evil. With respect to freedom, this gives us what we need to break away from a rule in society that we may have mutually agreed upon from the perspective of the principle of humanity, but now recognize the inadequacy of that very principle when a real conflict of duties arises. This is the difficulty with reading Kant strictly in terms of the *Groundwork*, that he doesn't permit the possibility of conflicts between duties or improvement of our moral codes.

So with the structure of this argument I develop a strategy, using the life of John Woolman, an eighteenth-century colonial Quaker as an example of discovering how the drive for freedom, a precursor to developing techniques of the self, requires one to live at cross purposes both with oneself, one's associates, and society, that resistance at the point of conflict with power is a necessary prerequisite to the practice of freedom. The drive for freedom from the conscious or inchoate acknowledgment of our unfreedom forces transgression, and rewrites an acceptable view of the self that includes the desired freedom, and drives the adoption of techniques that may remain outside the status quo, even though these techniques may be essential to our own well being in freedom. It is essential that the word transgression as used here, though it

³⁶ Mark Olssen, 'Foucault and the Imperatives of Education: Critique and Self-Creation in a Non-Foundational World', in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 25.3, (May 2006), 245-71, p. 246.

³⁷ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?', p. 113; AME, 'Introduction to Rousseau's Dialogues,' p. 51, and 'Preface to Transgression,' p. 69-87.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. by H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), hereafter GMM, p. 96, Prussian Academy edition numbering, p. 429. The principle of humanity is that one should 'Act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.'

may include, from a position of social mores, the breaking of rules, should be seen rather as the movement in freedom toward the possible crossing over to another way of thinking and behaving which may not be understood or approved by the society in which it is performed. This discussion will segue into the third chapter, where I discuss the development of technologies of the self in Foucault's writings.

Chapter 3 will focus on Foucault's ethical works, found in the Collège de France lectures, the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, and many lectures and interviews from the late 1970s to the time of his death. The first part of chapter three will be a survey of his writing. The second part will be an evaluation of some of the salient features of his work, including the theoretical problems raised by the ethical writing of the centuries around the beginning of the common era, roughly from the time of Socrates to the second or third century AD, on Greco-Roman and Christian technologies of the self.

The ethical work is markedly different from Foucault's critiques of the Classical age and modernity found in his archaeologies and early genealogies. The ethical works focus on practices of improvement of the self, on a stream of philosophical development in the ancient world centred on techniques of the self leading to living life as an art, as distinct from the stream of philosophical development also current in that age which took as its object knowledge of the ontological constitution of reality. This distinction can be seen as the contrast between philosophy as a therapeutic technique practiced by the Epicureans and Stoics, and philosophy as the objective scientific examination of reality as found in the Milesian school of pre-Socratics and Aristotle. I intend no strict demarcation here, merely a difference of emphasis. Certainly one can extract both themes from both streams of thought. For example, the Stoics made knowledge of the cosmos one condition for successfully taking care of the self, and the formation of the moral agent in Aristotle is dependent on the conscious application of ethical practice. As well, Foucault's ethical subject matter does not signal the arrival of a new method. The method of his examination is still genealogical with archaeological content.

Foucault begins his remarks about the therapeutic tradition reading Plato's *Alcibiades I*. Plato's concern is with the care of the self,³⁹ a project that held great cultural capital in the ancient world as a primary mode of living. For Plato, and

³⁹ I do not intend to suggest that Plato invented the therapeutic tradition. Foucault and others cite predecessors, the Pythagorean community, and others as therapeutic communities.

Foucault the scientific model of philosophy was secondary and dependent on philosophy as directed to the care of the self.

Foucault's last focus was not on the self as constituted by some external force as found in *Discipline and Punish*, or the control of sexuality as a public works project as found in volume one, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*,⁴⁰ but on the forces one could exert on oneself to make, modify, or remake the self. For example, in an interview with D. Trombadori in 1978 Foucault discussed some reasons for his own writing. He said, 'my problem is to construct myself, and to invite others to share an experience of what we are, not only our past but also our present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed.'⁴¹ But, he does not answer the question about what direction one is to aim or the end result of remaking the self which reveals that 'his whole approach during these years suggested a deepening perplexity about what this thing called the "self" actually was.'⁴²

Foucault writes ethics from a perspective unique for his age. He writes as a response to the question, 'What must I do to promote the development of my self?' Trying to compare his line of research with some traditional meta-ethical methods is difficult at best, and certainly it was never his intention to develop meta-ethical foundations. Foucault does not look at the problems of life that require an ethical answer in the same way as Aristotle, Augustine, Hume, Kant, or Mill would. He is not attempting to establish the grounds for discovering the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, an absolute truth, or the commands of God. He is not looking for first principles that would ground ethical thinking in reason or practice. He aims at a genealogy of ethics, a method of explaining our contemporary ethical problems through the examination of historical struggles with moral dilemmas and the adoption of technologies of the self.

Ethical practice for the individual is the primary focus of Foucault's later work. He modelled that ethical practice, as a method of refining, and writing the self.⁴³ Foucault did not collect the answers to ancient civilization's problems in a

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), I.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault*, ed. by Paul Rabinow and others, trans. by Robert Hurley and others, 3 vols (New York: The New Press, 2000), III, hereafter *Power*, p. 242.

⁴² James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 319.

⁴³ FA, pp. xxvii-xxviii, and Miller, pp. 319-53 *passim*.

catalogue to be applied to today's problems, but rather aimed at formulating a heuristic which might enable one to develop an ethos best suited to whatever age one lives in. This heuristic is marked by the avoidance of a few missteps by means of practices we can see in Foucault's own behaviour.

For example, one should avoid polemics in speech or writing as well as not responding to polemical speech, all in order to promote real dialogue, a dialogue between equals.⁴⁴ Another characteristic is that one should not speak about what one does not know, one does not give an unstudied opinion.⁴⁵ This is characteristic of his desire to avoid the expression of absolutes, to be more modest in one's theorizing, to concentrate on the discovery of material for research, avoiding totalizing theories that force research to come up with a compliant answer.⁴⁶ In addition to this he viewed his own writing with a sense of humility, not requiring those who read it to use it in any certain way. In fact, he was not averse to the dismantling of the structures of power in which his own works were constituted.

The strategies of living well were of persistent interest throughout the last decade of his life, and he returns often to the questions posed by resistance to power and thematic development of life as art. Following this I will try to provide a fair evaluation of the payoff of Foucault's methodology for examining a few current techniques of elaborating, of developing the self, one of which—writing—he examined in some detail. Writing as a practice is an example of a technique that need not follow ancient forms but is easily adapted to the strategy of self-construction in any age. Foucault speaks of the process of his own writing as a project of the development of himself, as a therapeutic method.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ EST, p. 111. 'I don't belong to a world of people who do things that way, I insist on this difference as something essential: a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other.' also see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. by Michael Senellart, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), hereafter STP, p. 3-4. 'I think this serious and fundamental relation between struggle and truth, the dimension in which philosophy has developed for centuries and centuries, only dramatizes itself, becomes emaciated, and loses its meaning and effectiveness in polemics within theoretical discourse. So in all of this I will therefore propose only one imperative, but it will be categorical and unconditional: Never engage in polemics.' Also note 2, p. 24.

⁴⁵ EST, 'Sexual Choice, Sexual Act,' p. 142.

⁴⁶ FL, p. 149.

⁴⁷ AME, 'What is an Author?,' p. 205; also Power, 'Interview with Michel Foucault,' p. 242. 'But my problem is not to satisfy professional historians; my problem is to construct myself, and to invite others to share an experience of what we are, not only our past but also our present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed.'

I develop in Chapter 4 a view of human ontology that is first, sympathetic to Foucault's desire to create a historical ontology of the self,⁴⁸ and second, finds coherent connections with Plato's view of the self. I discuss a trend in twentieth-century thinking that makes a distinction between *strong* and *weak* thought leading to a view of the human being cautious of universalizing, totalizing claims. The transcendental subject does not stand aloof of the world as a Cartesian transcendental ego would. Rather, the subject whose consciousness is embedded within the world it examines, is transformed by that embeddedness and transforms the world within the connections underlying its own humanity.

I discuss a parallel course within Foucault's work comparing his methods with the description I will give to a weak ontology. There is a close fit between themes in Foucault's work and many persistent themes within the weak ontological framework I discuss at the beginning. In Foucault's discussion of Plato's epistemology in *The Government of the Self and Others*⁴⁹ Foucault brings together in one place the difference between studies (*mathēmata*) and philosophical knowledge, Plato's knowledge of the thing in itself. Foucault, reading Plato's seventh letter, manages to see an explicit connection between techniques of the self—leading to self-mastery—and spiritual qualifications for knowledge, themes explicitly discussed in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. At this point it becomes clear that Foucault's ethical turn is well grounded in the Ancients, and his rereading of the Ancient texts leads to a rejection of Cartesian subjectivity as qualification for knowledge.

In James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*,⁵⁰ I found an example of what I call a postmodern technology of the self. I discovered in Rachels a method compatible with a weak ontology that was first cautious about the conditions under which principles could be adopted and critical of moral systems that didn't take facts into account well enough. He develops a systematic approach to the discovery of solutions to ethical problems with the humble acknowledgment that solutions of that sort are not the last word. Rachels moves from theoretical ethical systems to techniques of deriving answers to ethical questions, all with attention to real-world problems that require equitable treatment of people. The techniques of ethical

⁴⁸ POT, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), hereafter GSO.

⁵⁰ James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* 5th edn, rev. by Stuart Rachels (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2007), hereafter EMP.

deliberation Rachels provides are all dependent on a personal ethos that holds a tension between correct attitudes, reasoning, and attention to facts. Ethical deliberation, on the account I offer, could be called a technology of ethical self-construction. A subject that makes a decision about behaviour, not only has the goal of deciding, but as an object of consideration, the transformation of the self in response to new information.

I offer at the end of Chapter 4 a technique of self-construction that first, takes into account a weak ontology, and second, drawing from Foucault and Rachels, requires persistent attention to facts in a susceptible or porous attitude. Though we cannot keep the whole world in mind at one time, we must be responsive to facts when they impinge on our theoretical enterprises. Reductionism, a standard practice of knowledge acquisition in science, has gone too far in eliminating parts of human experience. This attitude of susceptibility, of being responsive to the facts makes it possible to reintegrate problematic data into a theoretical project.

I illustrate this need for vulnerability by examining a work by Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*.⁵¹ His experience in Yugoslavia in the 1980s of an unjust interrogation of his person, constituted violence against his person that transformed his worldview. The process of remembering rightly illustrates first, the inextricable nature of our self from the world, and the deep moral struggle with our selves as we seek to prevent memory from twisting our selves into an unjust posture. Through the use of Christ's ethical innovation of loving one's enemies, Volf succeeds in overcoming the deleterious effects of having been subjected to persistent interrogation, so that in addition to forgiving Captain G., his interrogator, Volf rehumanizes him in the process of restoring the facts of his interrogation to whatever possible clarity can be discovered.

Chapter 5 is a summary of the work, and a review of the choices I made in research. Reading Foucault has awakened the possibility of research in many areas, but I drew a line toward the ethical constitution of the self, toward self-mastery in this dissertation. I left untouched many problems both with Foucault and his interlocutors that are of interest to me.

⁵¹ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

0.3. Project Scope and Constraints

Michel Foucault in some ways forced us to confront our real world, to rearrange our notions about truth, social responsibility, and personal development. My project will attempt to provide a method for integrating the development of our selves as a necessary project into our wider social responsibilities by focusing on some ethical problems emerging in our current age. I will be focussing on Foucault's ethical work, though associated material is important for constructing a viable understanding of his ethics. In choosing ethical problems as the focus of this thesis, I do not attempt to reduce 'forms of knowledge,' or 'relations of power' to the 'modes of formation of the subject through practices of the self.'⁵² Foucault suggested that the problems and domains of discourse associated with forms of knowledge and relations of power are intimately connected to ethical problems, though not reducible to them.

In order to evaluate Michel Foucault's writing, I will rely on his major works, lectures at the Collège de France and elsewhere, as well as comments he made in interviews, and reviews. He persistently evaluates his own work, its deficiencies and strengths, comments on his own method, and contextualizes his academic effort in order to help the reader understand his work, even though he often resisted generalizing descriptions of his work. I will look at secondary materials to help elaborate what the academic community has taken Foucault's work to imply for their particular speciality when it intersects with my work.

I have chosen not to use the structures of other examinations of Foucault's work like that of Gary Gutting's *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*⁵³ because my concern is not with a detailed examination of the coherence of Foucault's early work, but rather with some of the salient features of that work. That doesn't mean Gutting's critique of Foucault is incorrect, but that major features of Foucault's work were sufficient on their own for the use I made of them.

James Bernauer's *Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought* is an early and successful attempt to make general statements about the totality of Foucault's thought. But my concern in this dissertation is with the practices of self-construction. In addition, though I agree with Bernauer's conclusions about Foucault's use of bold

⁵² Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of the Self and Others II: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), hereafter COT, p. 9.

⁵³ Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

speech (*parrhesia*) they do not move my thesis forward substantially. In addition, the majority of the work in *Force of Flight* is taken up with the writing of the 1960s, which I briefly deal with in the first chapter. I did use some of the materials, also found in Bernauer's and Rasmussen's *The Final Foucault* concerning Foucault's ecstatic thinking. It is in that material that Foucault's drive for freedom of thought is explained.

I agree with Edward McGushin who makes a good case that the problematization of *parrhesia* is central to Foucault's thinking about the Ancients 'because he sees in this experience a way of isolating the dynamic interplay between relations of power, discursive or epistemic forms, and practices of ethical subjectivization.'⁵⁴ But since the project of this dissertation is more concerned with techniques of self-construction than with their relation to the whole of Foucault's oeuvre, I purposively don't explore this avenue of thought. In the examples I give of self-construction, especially with respect to the life of John Woolman, the dynamic interplay McGushin finds with *parrhesia* is assumed, but not explored in any detail.

Though I mention feminist contributions, and even use the example of Emma Goldman with respect to the technique of writing the self, of self-construction by means of correspondence, and though I appeal to the resistance to patriarchy found in first-wave feminism, I do not explore in any depth the discussions of Judith Butler or Lois McNay, or other modern feminist critics of Foucault. Some of the issues I deal with in chapter 4 would profit from an interaction with these writers, but I did not use them in this case because I wished to move in another direction, toward a more general problem described by weak ontology, that would encompass (even though not explicitly,) the embodied ethical approach of the feminist. I also did not use the scientific approach of Carol Gilligan's feminism because that would have required an extensive elaboration of the connective tissues between her and Foucault's project, even though I think they are there. I am not suggesting by this elision that the feminist contributions are not germane, but that their inclusion would have required more background than the limits of this thesis could support.

If this is to be an original contribution, I must focus on developing an intimate consciousness of a limited number of contemporary problems and their consequences. If I am to construct a method which aims at this analysis of problems and provides a

⁵⁴ Ed McGushin, 'Michel Foucault's Retrieval of the Care of the Self in the Thought of Plato', in *Budhi*, 6.2-3, (2002), 77-103, p. 81.

subsequent recommendation about how one should advance one's free self-development, then I will need to be able to construct a method in terms of strategies for the promotion of freedom and a contemporary examination of the art of living (*tekhne tou biou*) as the elaboration of a postmodern technology of the self. This dissertation will give grounds to judge our own behaviour, to know ourselves (in the Platonic sense of humility, knowing that we are not gods) and give us techniques to take care of ourselves with the goal of acquiring an embodied ground for research and ethical practice.

I don't want to elaborate the entire history of philosophical discourse around the objects Foucault examines, or trace the entire lineage of his thinking. For instance, I will not be looking closely at *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, *Discipline and Punish*, or even *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. I will be looking specifically at the problems associated with the constitution of the self by the self as found in his later ethical writings, lectures, and interviews of the late 1970s and early 1980s that lead up to and can be characterized as his mature view. I will be looking specifically at Foucault's lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and *The Government of Self and Others* as well as published lectures, correspondence, and interviews of the 1980s and the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*.

I will discuss Foucault's method in the first chapter. This will serve as a beginning of the thesis: My examination of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* should enforce the proposition that with Foucault, I am not aiming at genesis, continuity, or totalization. My aim is much more modest. I wish to pose questions about the construction of the ontology of free persons through a discussion of ethical problems in the era of Foucault's research, as well as in the time following his death. I will use examples of projects of self-construction in these eras to demonstrate that Foucault's desired attitude or ethos is not only a plausible direction for ethical self-construction, but a necessary corrective and critique of any meta-ethics.

I stop short of thoroughly analysing the totality of Foucault's oeuvre, the purpose of which would be to discover an underlying coherence in it. That project has been done by various authors⁵⁵ with some comprehensiveness, even with respect to

⁵⁵ For example, Edward McGushin's *Foucault's Askēsis*, Timothy O'Leary's *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, James Bernauer's *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight*, Lois McNay's *Foucault and Feminism*, and many others. See Bibliography.

the material I examine in the following chapters. However, though they are generally in agreement about the details, their theses interpret Foucault with a variety of emphases, not altogether consistent with each other. These interpreters, some of whose work I have used in the chapters of this dissertation, are not to be faulted for getting Foucault wrong. There is enough variety in method and content within Foucault's oeuvre generally to support the variety of interpretations represented. And the structure of their arguments is often driven by the purposes they wish to support. Even though I take exception to some of their generalizations,⁵⁶ their work has been useful in creating space for my own work.

That space is limited to the examination of techniques of the self, which for Foucault were instrumental in generating the necessity and qualifications for *parrhesia*, free or bold speech in the politically good sense.⁵⁷ In chapter 2 I discuss the bold speech of John Woolman concerning the abolition of slavery which I take to be the outcome of a life lived within a practice of ethical self-construction. But the discussion of bold speech is not the purpose of my dissertation, and I do not include that as part of my examination of Foucault's ethics in chapter 3, even though the constellation of ideas surrounding bold speech and the qualifications of being a truth teller are as close as one could come to Foucault's conclusion as a result of his study of the Ancients. My dissertation is limited to an ontology of the acquisition of philosophic knowledge and the practices that contribute to its acquisition. I do not take Foucault's final step in his elaboration of *parrhesia*.

⁵⁶ For example, McGushin suggests that Foucault's final methodology is problematization (FA, p. xxiii). Roger Deacon suggests that problematization is used by Foucault as a tool throughout his genealogical work. Roger Deacon, 'Theory as Practice: Foucault's Concept of Problematization', in *Telos*, 118, (Winter 2000), 127-42. Also Foucault's later synthesis of his work as genealogical with three emphases, tends to make problematization a subset of genealogy instead of a methodological category of its own. EST, p. 262.

⁵⁷ COT, 1 February, 1984, first hour lecture, pp. 9-12, and FS, *passim*.

Chapter 1: Methodology

1.1. Methodology:

In this section I will examine Foucault's various methods and the methods I will use. Methodology is addressed in Foucault's major publication *The Archaeology of Knowledge* which is explicitly dedicated to this topic. Further, Foucault also describes how his methods should be applied in interviews and other works subsequent to the publishing of his books in answer to queries about problems with his books that emerge as conflicts with neopositivism,¹ phenomenology, and the philosophy of history.² Part of what constitutes his methods and the transitions between those methods is generated by what he sees himself as being and becoming. Preferring to remain outside specific disciplines, Foucault wished to be thought of as an intellectual. Though his work is philosophical it is not the work of a philosopher, one committed to certain schools of thought. Though his domain is history, he is not a historian, and though his work impinges on medicine, psychotherapy, sociology, economics, and jurisprudence, he is not a practitioner of any of these arts.

In an interview with Roger-Paul Droit shortly after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault proposes an attitude, by his account, unusual in that age.

I believe that today there is such a prestige attached to projects of the Freudian type that very often the analysis of historical texts takes as its objective the "non-spoken" of a discourse, the "repressed" or "unconscious" of a system. It is good to abandon this attitude and to be at once more modest and more of a rummager.³

If I am getting this right, Foucault neither believes himself to be, nor recommends to others the sort of intellectual who aims at some unifying, underlying, unconscious or repressed thesis, but one who aims to discover the ordinary but unsuspected treasures of discourse that reveal the unfolding narratives within our own societies. Following this attitude he not only reflects that any author's work will be used unpredictably, but

¹ Foucault contrasts the neopositivists of the twentieth century with the positivists of nineteenth century science. The two projects, though related, are distinct in purpose. Roughly, the positivists optimistically trusted in the powers of their science to answer fundamental questions about reality, to give an objective truth about the real world. The neopositivists of the Vienna Circle in the twentieth century, sought to ground physics in an axiomatic physical language that could be extrapolated to all the sciences, that would ground the sciences in an objectively agreed upon language, systematically eliminating disputes between accounts therefore unifying the sciences.

² AME, 'Theatrum Philosophicum,' pp. 351-52.

³ FL, 'From Torture to Cellblock,' interview with Roger-Paul Droit: Feb 21, 1975, p. 149.

that he would be happy if his own work should be used in ‘new, possible, unforeseen’⁴ ways, and that his books should be seen as

little tool boxes. If people want to open them, use a particular sentence, idea, or analysis like a screwdriver or wrench in order to short-circuit, disqualify or break up the systems of power, including eventually the very ones from which my books have issued... well, all the better!⁵

1.2. Foucault and Methodology

There are a number of ways in which Foucault’s method can be classified, but each of these ways carries an inherent tension. The tension arises partly from the subject matter of Foucault’s research, and partly from the methods he used, often idiosyncratic tools for single subjects. However, for the purposes of this thesis, Foucault’s method will be split into two parts, roughly divided into archaeology, and genealogy which includes a modified form of archaeology as well as the tool of problematization. There are roughly three eras of Foucault’s writing, the early archaeological writings of the 1960s, generally concerned with the truth of post-Renaissance culture and social systems; the middle period, roughly the 1970s where his concerns were genealogical examinations of power relations within classical and modern Western society; and finally the ethical research of the late 1970s and early 1980s that included a genealogical examination of ancient Greco-Roman and Christian ethical culture.

Because the ethical project describes various techniques and methods of self-development, it shouldn’t be thought therefore that the ethical problems Foucault dealt with were problems of the methodology of his research. And though Foucault can be understood as taking on the project of his own self-creation, the methods of that self-creation shouldn’t be related strictly to the academic method of his research, even though his personal ethos and the practices resulting from it created the conditions under which his research took place.

Foucault saw his own project as genealogical as well as problematizing. And though McGushin wants us to view problematization as a final method after genealogy, Roger Deacon puts problematization within the scope of genealogy. It is part of the genealogical method. ‘Central to [genealogy] is the concept of “problematization,” which is concerned with how and why, at specific times and under particular circumstances, certain phenomena are questioned, analyzed,

⁴ FL, p. 149.

⁵ FL, p. 149.

classified, and regulated, while others are not.’⁶ In Foucault’s ethical work of the late 1970s and early 1980s we begin to grasp that the discipline of philosophy, and hence the intent of his oeuvre, is embodied in the complex of exercises whose locus is the care of the self, leading to development of the self through spiritual practices that qualified the subject for truth.

1.2.1. Archaeology and Truth

Though Foucault eventually abandons the formal project of the archaeological method described in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and used in the three previously published major works, *Madness and Civilization*,⁷ *The Birth of the Clinic*,⁸ and *The Order of Things*,⁹ results drawn from that method are not absent from the practice of research in any of his subsequent work. Within the dimensions of archaeological thought—the method that evolved within his writing during the 1960s—we see a statement of its mature categories in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

Archaeology is Foucault’s early method in the strictest sense, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is his only extended discourse on method. He describes the process of archaeology as a way of discovering the rules of the emergence and disappearance of a particular social space, practice, or singularity, what he calls discursive formations; specifically the rules related to the emergence of madness in the Classical age found in the *History of Madness*, the birth of modern medical practice found in *The Birth of the Clinic*, and the emergence of the human sciences in *The Order of Things*. Essential to this method is the object Foucault focuses on, the archive. What he intends to examine in any of his diagnostic endeavours are objects

⁶ Roger Deacon, ‘Theory as Practice: Foucault’s Concept of Problematization’, in *Telos*, 118, (Winter 2000), 127-42, p. 127.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, tr. by Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). The English translation is taken from Foucault’s abridged edition of *Folie et Dérailson: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*, one of the projects required for his Doctor of Philosophy, titled *Histoire de la Folie* published in 1961 by Librairie Plon. This volume has now been republished in English as *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalifa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalifa (London: Routledge, 2006), hereafter HM.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). This book was first published in 1963 under the title of *Naissance de la clinique: Une archéologie du regard médical*, by Presses Universitaires de France.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), hereafter OT. This book was first published in French in 1965 under the title of *les Mots et les choses*, translated and published in English in 1971 as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* a title Foucault thought better suited for the book. The originally suggested English subtitle was *An Archaeology of Structuralism*, Hubert L. Dreyfus, and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), hereafter BSH, p. 17.

of a certain sort. He names these objects variously ‘the archive,’ ‘positivities,’ ‘discursive regularities,’ ‘singularities,’ etc. These objects under examination are more like rough agglomerations. They are defined as constellations of events, problems, evidences, behaviours, discourses, etc. They are not global syntheses and coherent encapsulations. In the archaeological writings he strove to avoid any facile unities within the disparate events emerging in human thought and society to discover what the underlying, unspoken *truth* of human practice is.

In ‘On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle’ Foucault described the archive, his term for the collection of evidences, as not exclusively a collection of documents,

not the totality of texts that have been preserved by a civilization or the set of traces that could be salvaged from its downfall, but the series of rules which determine in a culture the appearance and disappearance of statements, their retention and their destruction, their paradoxical [*sic*] existence as *events* and *things*.¹⁰

Also, in an interview with Jean-Michel Palmier he described the archive this way:

By the archives, I mean first the mass of things spoken in a culture, presented, valorized, re-used, repeated and transformed. In brief, this whole verbal mass that has been fashioned by men, invested in their techniques and in their institutions and woven into their existence and their history.¹¹

The archive is distinguished from official documentation about events, histories, philosophical interpretations, and generally documents whose purpose is to establish a hidden unity in the events of an era. Foucault sidestepped the official story, the story told after the fact, in order to hear the occluded voice of the participants as they struggled through the project of an emerging discourse. Instead of noting after the fact that events have taken place within some global scheme, Foucault forced a re-examination of the archive to view the practices and thinking leading to the emergence of discourse and the practices and thinking leading away from them as well. Foucault asked the participants what motivated the changes. He did not query the common person, but persons who actually took part in the production of an emerging (or disappearing) discursive regularity. He did not survey the entire society, and made no effort to find a general consensus.

The archive itself is the collection of fundamental data for observation and it is not strictly textual; but an artificial, selective collection without any pretensions to

¹⁰ AME, ‘On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle,’ p. 309.

¹¹ FL, ‘The Birth of a World,’ interview with Jean-Michel Palmier, 1969, p. 66.

universality or totality. The generation of the archive is not guided by non-discursive practices as ground or field of empirical experience governing the emergence and disappearance of discourse,¹² nor by a Kuhnian paradigm.¹³ The archive Foucault is interested in lies between non-discursive practices, positivities and the first stages of the adoption of the practice as a science, what he calls epistemologization.

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, in a number of interviews and short essays, Foucault explicitly states the scope and parameters of this type of inquiry. He wished, first, to contrast archaeology with the history of ideas, which aims at ‘Genesis, continuity, totalization: [...] and that by which it is attached to a certain, now traditional, form of historical analysis.’¹⁴ Second, he placed the focus of the archaeological project at the early stages of the development of discursive regularities, the beginning of the constitution of a form of knowledge, when a positivity solidifies to the point it reaches ‘the threshold of the epistemologization’¹⁵ when the discursive regularities are transformed into a nascent body of knowledge that potentially but not necessarily becomes a science with the eventual possibility of formalization. But no discursive regularity advances to the stage of becoming a science as a matter of necessity. It is as likely that the discursive formation would vanish as it is for it to become a science. The archaeological method is as interested in the disappearance of discursive regularities as it is with their emergence. Foucault used examples like the emergence of the psychiatric discipline in *Madness and Civilization*, or the study of natural history, grammar, and the accumulation of wealth in the classical age in *The Order of Things* to illustrate this problematic emergence of fields of discourse. Foucault is not interested in universal history, but in the limited, transient changes within very narrow epistemological spaces. He did not examine in depth the established, formalized sciences like mathematics, though he suggested a study of those things in terms of archaeology is possible. So, the study of these discursive formations is a project with parameters, limited to the emergence and transition of discursive regularities into an epistemological form, a belief system, the precursor of a science.

¹² BSH, p. 79.

¹³ BSH, p. 76.

¹⁴ AK, p. 138, and FFES, p. 31, ‘I argue that Foucault employs what I call a “sceptical method” that allows him to reject the ahistorical, universal claims that underlie humanism and foundationalism, while still engaging in social criticism.’

¹⁵ AK, pp. 187, 90, and *Foucault and Philosophy*, ed. by Timothy O’Leary and Christopher Falzon, ‘Foucault’s Theory of Knowledge’ (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 149.

To do this Foucault needed to clear the historical space of residues from the history of ideas: first, the tendency to search for the origins of an idea through the instrumental imposition of a continuity of thought. Second, he needed to eliminate privileging any genesis of a discourse, that might lead the reader to find central principles unifying discourse that would result in covering over problematic conflicts of practice and thought.

A traditional form of historical analysis under the general rubric of the history of ideas relies on unifying features in numerous historical events to show, by tracing these features, the origin of an idea, the origin of a way of thinking and behaving. In order to show the origin within a history of ideas, there must be some explicit continuity with the past which requires an idealization of historical features. Because discontinuities in transmission of ideas and various mutually exclusive expressions of the same or similar idea in different eras and places, Foucault didn't think that tracing an idea to its origin was possible. In the mature characterization of the history of ideas, the unifying features become fixed reductively around one object or another, for example in Marx around the economy, in 'a Nietzschean metaphysic of life,'¹⁶ or in Freud, around the ubiquitous unconscious. The ideological force of the history of ideas reduces disparate events and formations in history to a single locus, a single explanatory logos, a single lens through which all history needs to be viewed, an ideological structure privileging a single totalizing idea. Foucault's contention was that these tendencies warp the truth of historical formations of discourse. So, he made the effort to distinguish his method from a history of ideas in order to be able to discover the truth of these discursive regularities. He contrasted the history of ideas with the history of thought, an alternative construct.

The history of thought is the analysis of the way an unproblematic field of experience, or a set of practices, which were accepted without question, which were familiar and 'silent,' out of discussion, becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behavior, habits, practices, and institutions.¹⁷

I will first illustrate Foucault's use of the phrase 'history of thought' with the emergence of disputes about women's rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One need not look too closely at Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology*¹⁸ to

¹⁶ FOF, p. 18.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), hereafter FS, p. 74.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. by Robert B. Louden (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

discover his assumptions about the inferior position of women in society, assumptions that underlie his normally assiduous analysis. For Kant, the consideration of a woman's place appears to be a constituent element of the natural moral structure of late eighteenth-century society. The absence of contention on the surface of this discourse places some practices based on the assumption of natural law, the rights of men, and the limited rights of women within Foucault's 'silent and unproblematic field of practices.' The emergence of contention, for example, from Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*¹⁹ where she contests Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord's 1791 report to the French National Assembly in which the position of women in French society was construed more narrowly than that of the French man is illustrative. What appears then is that Foucault's analysis of the history of thought gives place to an examination of the emergence of events and issues, like feminist resistance in Enlightenment Europe, that point out problems and induce crises within assumed structures of society. The history of ideas, rather, attempts to smooth over the problems and silence the alarms over supposed crises, suggesting that there is some deeper reason, explained by some law of nature or transcendental causality, a form of natural determinism that drives natural progress teleologically toward future perfection. It is against this teleological continuity that Foucault frames the history of thought in the 1960s, primarily because the history of ideas forces a misrepresentation of the actual archive, and later in the 1970s because the teleological reinterpretation of the archive implants, embeds and reinforces asymmetrical power relations.

I discuss Foucault's reading of the history of ideas and the elements within it that force a misreading of history. I will give a brief synopsis of his work in *The Archaeology*, and afterward look more carefully into the use of the terms Foucault used to define the history of ideas. The first project of the history of ideas is that of, discovering an *origin*, a foundational event, idea, text, or practice, from which the entire fountain of ideas, beliefs, and practices spring; some origin which, without equivocation, marks the beginning or original emergence of a practice or idea.

Second, with respect to *continuity*, Foucault pointed to an analysis of discourse within the history of ideas which makes the attempt to unify discursive formations under 'an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity

¹⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1792).

of contradictions,²⁰ to suggest that divergence and eruption in thought do not exist, or if they do exist, that at some layer beneath the contradiction there is a ‘calm unity of coherent thought.’²¹ Examining the science of natural history, Foucault discovered a fundamental thesis that assumes the continuity of nature. This continuity is the text, the assumption that lends the history of ideas its concrete unity. Within the history of ideas any data, theory, or idea which conflicts with this assumption is either massaged to fit, or discarded.

Third, with respect to *totalization*, Foucault explained that the tendency to universalize—for example, in rationalism, economics, positive science, or phenomenology—their explanations as guided by central principles, foundations, and mechanisms is misleading because it hides the discontinuities of real-world events in the emergence of theory and practice. Foucault’s attempt to build the edifice of archaeology as opposed to the history of ideas is the attempt to avoid falling into habits of thought that explain events and structures in society by means of totalizing principles instead of reference to the emergence of discursive formations, which he takes to be the real objects of historical discourse.

Archaeology is not the attempt to reveal the hidden ‘thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations’²² behind the discourse. Discourse itself doesn’t have the motivations attributed to it by the history of ideas. There is no subtext to the development of the discourse. It just is what it is. Archaeology does not read between the lines of discourse to find some hidden meaning. Rather, ‘it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*.’²³ Discourse, as an object, with all its characteristic flaws, missteps, and problematic assertions is to be interpreted on its own terms as it stands without some thematic presentiment. Archaeology ‘does not proceed, in slow progression, from the confused field of opinion to the uniqueness of the system or the definitive stability of science; [...] but a differential analysis of the modalities of discourse.’²⁴ The suggestion that every discourse moves inexorably toward the refinement of a science is belayed by the examination of the archive. The archive betrays no such movement toward systematization. Foucault rather asked about the possibilities of the flourishing or diminishment of a discourse and the rules

²⁰ AK, p. 155.

²¹ AK, p. 155.

²² AK, p. 138.

²³ AK, p. 138-39.

²⁴ AK, p. 139.

that underlay that change. So archaeology is not history *per se*, but rather discovery of rules governing the appearance and disappearance of discourse within social structures. Archaeology is not a search for discontinuity, but a recognition of it in discourse. One searches the archive to discover the possibilities of the elaboration of discourse. Archaeology doesn't ignore or diminish the conflict inherent in the discourse by appealing to an underlying unity as does the history of ideas.

Archaeology does not try to reconstruct the intention of the writer. It is not discovery of the *oeuvre* or of a subject, the author, to whom that *oeuvre* is attributed, but a recognition that there are driving forces for the emergence of discourse that are discontinuous with the subject, and exercise influence over the subject. The writer or framer of the discourse is under the influence of the same social pressures that are driving the emergence of a discourse. So the discovery of the *oeuvre* or the subject to whom the *oeuvre* is attributed is incidental and so, not revealing. It is not the subject that is of interest here but the elaboration of the pressures driving the emergence of discourse. 'It is not a return to the innermost secret of the origin; it is the systematic description of the discourse-object.'²⁵ Again, Foucault steered us clear of the problematic search for a hidden unity within a discourse, in this case the *oeuvre* of a writer or the writer as subject.

In Part 4, Chapters 2-5 of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,²⁶ Foucault outlines four differences between the history of ideas and the Archaeological method. 'They concern the attribution of innovation, the analysis of contradictions, comparative descriptions, and the mapping of transformations.'²⁷ Following, I will summarize these four areas and elaborate what Foucault saw as the advantages of archaeological analysis. Foucault wished to sidestep the problem of the origin, the continuity of rationality, and the problematic assumption of some totalizing principle, rule, or ideology.

First, for Foucault, the *attribution of innovation*²⁸ is problematic. He discounts this attribution as irrelevant to the process of noting the emergence of a discursive regularity. The need for defining the original statement as opposed to the regular, or ordinary, is driven by the need to assign to some person the origin of thought, the rupture that signals the emergence of a new idea. In the history of ideas, it is

²⁵ AK, p. 140.

²⁶ AK, pp. 141-177.

²⁷ AK, p. 138.

²⁸ AK, p. 141.

important to know the origin so that one might trace the lineage and succession of ideas and develop a logical and coherent progression, securing the assumption of progress. Contrarily, for example, what archaeology ‘seeks in the texts of Linneaus or Buffon, Petty or Ricardo, Pinel or Bichat, is not to draw up a list of founding saints; it is to uncover the regularity of a discursive practice.’²⁹ The first time something is said is no different in Foucault’s view than ‘imitative statements’ of it.³⁰ They are all part of the same emergence of a specific discursive regularity. He is not denying that the first annunciation of a thesis, or some historical timeline of the discussion around that thesis exists, only that it is merely part of the emerging discursive regularity.

Developing a systematic explanation of the progress of thought through a logical and coherent progression of ideas suggests that the development reveals some underlying undemonstrable axioms or fundamental themes.³¹ ‘The archaeological order is neither that of systematicities, nor that of chronological successions.’³² Developing a linear chronology from the origin of the emergence of the idea gives no special access to the truth of the discursive formation. It misleads by generating a continuity misread as an underlying theme of the discovery. But this does not mean that the account of the archaeological order will differ substantially from the systematic treatment or chronological order found in other historical accounts, only that it doesn’t appeal to an underlying continuity of a natural progression.

Second, with respect to the *analysis of contradictions*,³³ mankind sees coherence where there is none. ‘The history of ideas usually credits the discourse that it analyses with coherence.’³⁴ If puzzles remain in the discourse ‘then it regards it as its duty to find, at a deeper level, a principle of cohesion that organizes the discourse and restores it to its hidden unity.’³⁵ Archaeology refuses to gloss over the inconsistencies of discourse. ‘By taking contradictions as objects to be described, archaeological analysis does not try to discover in their place a common form or theme, it tries to determine the extent and form of the gap that separates them.’³⁶ More simply stated, the archaeologist, like a good scientist, doesn’t throw away or

²⁹ AK, pp. 144-45.

³⁰ AK, pp. 144-45.

³¹ AK, pp. 147-48.

³² AK, p. 148.

³³ AK, p. 149.

³⁴ AK, p. 149.

³⁵ AK, p. 149.

³⁶ AK, p. 152.

adjust data either when it disagrees with the hypothesis that generates the experiment, or when it contradicts data generated in some other experimental regime. Though the scope of archaeology is limited, it is not therefore reductionistic.

‘For archaeological analysis, contradictions are neither appearances to be overcome, nor secret principles to be uncovered.’³⁷ Instead of hunting for agreement and continuity, a way of harmonizing disparate views, archaeology makes room for disputes.³⁸ An archaeological contradiction is not something that requires a simple adjustment to fix, and is not explained by foundational principles or cause and effect mechanisms. The contradictions arise within the discourse. ‘It is a complex phenomenon that is distributed over different levels of the discursive formation.’³⁹ The purpose of archaeology is not to resolve the tension set up by disputes within the space of the discourse.

For example, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault discussed the emergence of a model of change within the study of natural history.⁴⁰ The traditional or fixist model of Linnaeus observed a static biosphere, and its science was relegated to the taxonomy of species. The origin of each plant and animal form as it now appears is placed in some historical epoch. The evolutionary model of ‘Buffon, Diderot, Bordeu, Maillet and many others’⁴¹ though it shares with the fixist model the concepts of species and genera, allows the mutation of forms and eventually in the nineteenth century, in Darwin, an explanation for the generation of new species. Some elements, the organization of organisms around organs and skeletal structure are shared, but some, such as the conflict over the transmutation of species are in stark contrast and conflict. What Foucault wanted us to recognize here is that Darwinian theory is not the logical outcome of Linnaean natural history even though it shares some elements. Darwinian theory is a break from traditional fixist theory.

The aim of archaeology is not to point to a theory of everything. It is not to collect all theoretical entities under a single *logos*, a single unifying theme. ‘Its purpose is to maintain discourse in all its many irregularities; and consequently to suppress the theme of a contradiction uniformly lost and rediscovered, resolved and

³⁷ AK, p. 151.

³⁸ AK, p. 152.

³⁹ AK, p. 154.

⁴⁰ AK, pp. 151-152.

⁴¹ AK, p. 151.

forever rising again, in the undifferentiated element of the Logos.⁴² Within the history of ideas there is a tendency to attempt to resolve conflicts and contradiction, but this only works for a while. In the scientific drive toward a better description of the real world, theories only lose their hold on our imagination when phenomena unexplained by the theory forces a re-examination of the data and fresh theorizing. A Copernicus resolves deep conflicts with a Ptolemaic planetary system, but does not solve the entire riddle in one stroke of genius. Much remains that Galileo and Kepler, then Newton will resolve, then Einstein. And theoretical physics has not solved all the puzzles of reality yet. Even the best attempts are marred by problematic speculation, no matter how well the internal conflicts are masked by a seeming consistency within the theoretical landscape. Archaeology will not optimistically gloss over the disputes, contradictions, irregularities and inconsistencies of some singularity like cosmology. Its use is, rather—by allowing all problems to remain on the surface—to observe the transformation, the emergence and disappearance of discursive regularities.

Third, with respect to *comparative descriptions*,⁴³ archaeology, instead of revealing general forms, ‘is always limited and regional.’⁴⁴ It compares discursive formations and contrasts them with ‘non-discursive practices that surround them and serve’⁴⁵ as a context for them. Archaeological analysis is limited, and purposefully so. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault, cited possible objections to his project in *The Order of Things* that suggest he has omitted fruitful and well-developed ideas. But this omission is in keeping with the avoidance of universalizing and totalizing claims.⁴⁶ Where a possible critic might see incoherence, Foucault acknowledges his intention to use archaeology to show that the history of ideas covers over a factual lack of coherence in real historical data. What, for the critic, ‘is a lacuna, an omission, an error is, for me [Foucault], a deliberate, methodical exclusion.’⁴⁷ The data themselves do not contain the requisite glue required to prove the claims of the history of ideas.

The horizon of archaeology [...] is not *a science, a rationality, a mentality, a culture*; it is a tangle of interpositivities whose limits and points of intersection cannot be fixed in a single operation. Archaeology is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses, and to outline the

⁴² AK, p. 156.

⁴³ AK, p. 157.

⁴⁴ AK, p. 157.

⁴⁵ AK, p. 157.

⁴⁶ AK, p. 158.

⁴⁷ AK, p. 159.

unity that must totalize them, but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures. Archaeological comparison does not have a unifying, but a diversifying, effect.⁴⁸

Archaeology is not an attempt to reveal the causal sequence whereby different discursive regularities may be linked. Yet there are linkages, interdiscursive networks of overlapping positivities that need not be described by some ideal formation driven by a real ‘total historical independence’ of discourses.⁴⁹ Rather, these networks could be characterized as the normal confluence of streams of thought, facts of research, crosscurrents of theoretical speculation within larger educated communities linked by commerce, education, political hegemonies, the expansion of police influence within the state, and ordinary travel between states and nations. These listed opportunities for the spread of discourse do not exhaust the possibilities for the transfer of ideas, plans, and strategies—the development of new knowledge—but noting them should remove the tendency to read discourses as ideologically isolated from one another. In the study of ancient literatures, for example, in some streams of Christian Biblical interpretation, there is a tendency to treat the literature as isolated from external influence.

The unspoken presumption underlying that sort of research is that all the explanations necessary for understanding the literature is contained, first, within the literature itself. Though much can be understood this way, what emerges is a collection of problems with the text that do not resolve simply within the artificial logical interpretative matrix of interconnected references. A drive to retain the purity of the text for interpretation forces this isolation. Second, to resolve these problems of interpretation, the interpreters access the local culture that produced the text, even though, for modern Christian interpreters, this often involves the necessary abandonment of ancient prejudices against the rabbinic traditions within which Christianity was birthed. This accession to culture is immediately fruitful, rendering entire passages comprehensible, even though it introduces ideological conflict with the purported origin of Christian dogma citing the early church fathers of the second through the fifth centuries AD. But comprehending this confluence between the text in its purity with the text in its historicity as a necessary historical ground of interpretation doesn’t answer all the difficulties of interpretation. Better

⁴⁸ AK, pp. 159-60.

⁴⁹ AK, pp. 164-65.

comprehension of the text requires the inclusion of a broader world, a world populated with Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Indians, Phoenicians, etc., the entire cosmopolitan world with whom and against whom the text was written. Affirmations and proscriptions are so deeply embedded within the matrix of culture that the crosscurrents of thought and practice cannot be entirely disentangled from the text.

In a study such as this, Foucault wished to avoid the attribution of some transcendently purposive connection privileged by the observing subject, where independent discourses show surprisingly coherent connections to one another. In the history of ideas, one need not necessarily comprehend the historicity of any emerging discourse but rather glean from a comparative study of various discourses the ideologically driven teleology of natural historical progress. For example, in the study of the Christian scriptures, one notes the startling similarity between the use of the concept of *logos* in Heraclitus and John the Apostle without also needing to suggest that the Jews of John's day knew anything of the Greeks at all. For John, as for Heraclitus, followed by Aristotle, and the Stoics, and subsequently by Philo and others, the historical connection becomes immediately suspect because for some it would call into question the revelatory character of the text supposed to be ideologically pure and separate from the taint of worldly collusion. Though there seems to be a plausible historical and theoretical connection between Heraclitus' and John the Apostle's writings, there need be no necessary transcendental purpose driving the connection.

For an archaeological examination of the *logos*, one need not trace the origin of the concept to discover a confluence of ideas within the ancient world, an intercultural association of independent but culturally apt practitioners of their singular arts, whether they be materialist philosophers or scribes in a theistic autocracy. One need not show some continuity between thinkers, or argue for a coherent universal concept to show the emergence of discourse of a certain kind within disparate cultures. One need not appeal to a totalizing universal concept of the *logos* to describe the similarities between expressions of that concept. A comparative description, though limited in focus, does not falsify the historicities of various expressions of a concept, which would happen if one tried to find the origin, continuity, or totalization of the concept.

Fourth, with respect to the *mapping of transformations*,⁵⁰ Foucault admitted that ‘Archaeology [...] seems to treat history only to freeze it.’⁵¹ Seeming is the operative word here. It ignores temporal relations and ‘seeks general rules that will be uniformly valid, in the same way, and at every point in time.’⁵² In this way it seems to force a sense that the ‘slow and imperceptible movement’⁵³ of the development of discursive formations under examination can be seen as synchronous. It seems to deny the passage of time within the description of discourse itself, only showing the emergence and disappearance of it. It is the atemporal focus of archaeology itself that gives this image of a universalizing thesis. As Foucault admits later, this is a weakness of his thinking⁵⁴ that if taken to its logical conclusion could be as totalizing as that which he seeks to replace. But, this image of a universalizing thesis is misleading or at least incomplete.

Archaeology does not set out to treat as simultaneous what is given as successive; it does not try to freeze time and to substitute for its flux of events correlations that outline a motionless figure. What it suspends is the theme that succession is an absolute: a primary, indissociable sequence to which discourse is subjected.⁵⁵

In a series of remarks in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*⁵⁶ concerning *The Order of Things* Foucault explained that what archaeology does is note atemporally the formation of the discourses on grammar and natural history, where, sometimes, a more mature formulation of a thesis arrives earlier in time than one less mature. Foucault suggested that this seeming incongruity in temporal succession leaves a problem for any claim about continuity in the development of a thesis, while for archaeology, though temporal succession is absent, the conglomeration of developments are all participants in the emergence and persistence of that discourse.

There is no attempt to list the emergence of the formulations of ideas in terms of a succession of events. For Foucault, as I stated before with respect to the *attribution of innovation*, there is no difference in priority between the first

⁵⁰ AK, p. 166.

⁵¹ AK, p. 166.

⁵² AK, p. 166.

⁵³ AK, p. 166.

⁵⁴ AK, p. 200, ‘I misunderstood the transcendence of discourse; in describing it, I refused to refer it to a subjectivity; I did not give primary consideration [...] to its diachronic character.’

⁵⁵ AK, p. 169. Foucault does not think that there is a single rationality or that what we know or can know is or ever will be universal, or that laws of discourse are founded in some human rational or persistent structure. In that sense each rationality within its own limitations forbids universalization, but nonetheless within the emergent discourses there appear to be rule-like structures, undefinable outside that emerging discourse itself.

⁵⁶ AK, p. 167.

enumeration of an idea and the subsequent imitations of that idea. The first instance is not some notable eruption, but only signals the emergence, with all its imitations, of a new way of thinking about something, the emergence of a discursive formation.

Since the aim of archaeology is not history per se, but the discovery of rules of formation for collections of statements within the archive—a way to signal the emergence of and disappearance of discursive regularities—it doesn't aim at developing a succession of events. However with each emergence and each disappearance a sequence of events unfolds. What Foucault wished to avoid is the sense that one object of discourse is the cause of the next or that there is some coherent necessity driving the succession of discourses, an underlying continuity smoothing the rough historicity of the archive, that the succession of discursive events may be explained by appeal to an abstract relationship between them. So, even though archaeology may seem to treat history only to freeze it, it is not 'indifferent to succession, archaeology maps the *temporal vectors of derivation*.'⁵⁷ It follows the direction of the emergence of discourse without forcing it to obey an underlying rule. What is simultaneous, archaeology does not characterize as succession—nor what is succession as simultaneous. Foucault wished to retain the historicity of the discourse. 'What it suspends is the theme that succession is an absolute: a primary, indissociable sequence to which discourse is subjected.'⁵⁸ Foucault wished to avoid the sense that discourse self-consciously drives its own progress. Discourse, being limited and finite, without a God's-eye view, cannot, when events are unfolding, adjust the shape of its emergence, sustain a linear development, moving it toward an ideal, coherent, continuous expression which underlies the project of the history of ideas smoothing and rendering coherent the 'project' of history lending inevitability to our current state of affairs.

For the truth of change and transformations in history, however, Foucault reiterated the persistence of discontinuity, of irruption, fault, and surprise as the norm. Archaeology takes differences seriously, does not attempt to reduce their effect, or unify discontinuous discourse. It therefore has claim to a more truthful recounting of events than history explained under the auspices of the history of ideas, even though the events it recounts are not strictly history, but a selection of historical events in the form of the emergence and disappearance of discursive regularities. In his subsequent

⁵⁷ AK, p. 169.

⁵⁸ AK, p. 169.

work in the 1970s and 1980s Foucault did not ignore results of the archaeological method. His focus changes, but his search for emerging discourses, transformations of social consciousness, his avoidance of universalising, totalizing flaws in any history of ideas, and search for truth within properly historicised discursive spaces does not.

From remarks found within the last book of the 1960s, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, it is fairly clear that Foucault found the structures of the archaeological method unwieldy, its limitations problematic, its future as a method, short, and that without an enormous effort to retrieve it, the method had become a dead end. What emerges from the archaeological method at the end of the 1960s is a tool that disrupts confidence in some history of philosophy or history of ideas, which anachronistically places itself as the product of the inevitable movement of history toward the ideal, resulting in the contemporary status quo. It is a critical instrument that levels the playing field for truth to emerge from the background noise of the many voices within our own histories.

For example, Foucault suggested in an interview with Jean-Jacques Brochier in 1969 with respect to his purpose in writing *The Order of Things* that man was to be cast aside, that the Cartesian ego, the transcendental subject is problematic. ‘At present this whole philosophy, which since Descartes has given primacy to the subject, is falling apart before our eyes.’⁵⁹ The strategies of philosophy and history that take as their origin the transcendental Cartesian ego persist. But Descartes’ dualistic view of man makes less and less sense as a substantial answer to the question of human constitution. The truth of what humans are, the factual residue of research is slowly emerging from the noise of multiple discourses, as the prominence of some discourses wane and others emerge to take their place.

Though the shout of early twentieth-century monistic materialistic science was not enough to dislodge the transcendental self, the emergence of data from contemporary thinking about human and artificial intelligence, as well as neuroscientific data may be doing so. The emergent structure of whatever constitutes consciousness is overthrowing the last vestiges of the certainty Descartes struggled to achieve. Though we know enough to dispense with the Cartesian transcendental self, we are left with deeply perplexing puzzles about the self that we are only beginning to understand.

⁵⁹ FL, ‘The Archaeology of Knowledge,’ interview with Jean-Jacques Brochier, p. 60.

For Foucault persons are constituted in their own age as part of that age. For him, there is no foundational concept of man or structure titled human nature that constitutes persons. There is no essence of persons in general one can point to. Any putative concept of man emerges as a function of man as an object of history, then disappears. The concept of man as *homo sapiens* (wise man) emerged from the discourse on natural history, and from the time Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (overman) burst onto the scene competitors have lined up to replace *homo sapiens*: *Homo noeticus* (man of knowledge), *Homo neuroticus* (neurotic man), Foucault's *homo æconomicus*, etc. Each of these labels function as descriptions of what we appear to be or wish ourselves to be. But they also function as our best guess of our place in the universe, our place in history, about our functions as persons. On this account these titles with all they imply within the milieu they emerge from serve as a symbol of that milieu, no more. To argue for the retention of a label like this as if it points definitively to some human essence is to argue for the entire body of knowledge that birthed it and not a discovery of the substance that symbol supposedly points to. This is all that Foucault intends by posing the disappearance of man. 'Experience has shown that in their development the human sciences led to the disappearance of man rather than his apotheosis.'⁶⁰ This emergence and development of the human sciences, the subject of his archaeological works, is an exposition of the dethronement of man. Instead of becoming gods man has disappeared. But not only is man's disappearance to be reckoned with, there must as well be an account of his death.

The death of man is nothing to get particularly excited about. It's one of the visible forms of a much more general disease, if you like, I don't mean by it the death of god but the death of the subject, of the Subject in capital letters, of the subject as origin and foundation of Knowledge (*savoir*), of Freedom, of Language and History.⁶¹

It is particularly this transcendental subject—this absolute origin of what we call truth—that he opposes. 'Perhaps we have to recognize the birth of a world where the subject is not one but split, not sovereign but dependent, not an absolute origin but a function ceaselessly modified.'⁶² Obviously, Foucault is not talking about the

⁶⁰ FL, 'The Order of Things,' interview with Raymond Bellour, p. 16; and Judith Butler, *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. by Sara Salih (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), hereafter JBR, p. 30, 'That we experience ourselves or others as "men" and "women" are political categories and not natural facts.' Butler here argues that the concept of gender and the categories of man and woman are constructs, not ontological categories.

⁶¹ FL, 'The Birth of a World,' interview with Jean-Michel Palmier, p. 67.

⁶² FL, p. 67.

disappearance of the biological entity that gives intelligibility to the continuity of recorded history. But this continuity is only a marker. It tells us nothing about what we consist of or what we consider ourselves to be in whatever age we exist.

Archaeology points to the fallacy of defining our essence by any terms whatsoever. Foucault's work of the 1960s pointed to the emergence of the human sciences that transform our view of ourselves, and leave us without recourse to adequate historical models, in effect, transforming ourselves, reconstituting ourselves endlessly as our discoveries warrant.

It may be that man, selves, and souls are patterns, writing and being written on, modifying and being modified, subject to powers and powers in their own right, self-referentially modifying the self. In archaeology Foucault exposes the frangibility of any view of man which places man at the centre or origin of his own world, his own existence.

This dethronement of man is the truth that emerges and persists through the archaeological examination of positivities within the history of the discursive regularities Foucault examines. It is this truth that persists in both the genealogical examination of our present and the ethical constitution of our selves. The dictum 'know thyself,' has been taken variously to mean something like: We should intensify the project of acquiring scientific data about ourselves, generally, an Aristotelian stream of philosophical and scientific inquiry. The temper of the last few dialogues of Socrates' life recounted by Plato, however, does not drive the reader to this conclusion. What Socrates moved toward is, rather, that one should have a sober estimation of oneself. One should know that one is not a god. From this view, Foucault's archaeology forces a humility on our estimation of our place in the scheme of things.⁶³

Now, what was lost when Foucault's method moved towards genealogy was the demarcation of the epistemological space taken up by *discursive regularities*,⁶⁴ which were for the most part an effort to reject the global continuities of the history of ideas as the ground of our interpretation of history. What remained, even to the end of his life and writing, was the drive to discover the truth of the historical events and transformations he selected for study, even though he does 'replace' archaeology with

⁶³ EST, 'Technologies of the Self,' p. 228.

⁶⁴ Definitions for the terms Foucault uses to define the archaeological project should become clearer as we move along in this section. Roughly, a discursive regularity is a persistent theme emerging in the archive.

genealogy as a formal method. Retained as well is the denial of the hermeneutics of suspicion,⁶⁵ the phenomenological essence of man, and certainty⁶⁶ arising from the product of positive science.

Though the archaeological method served his purposes for the examination of various singularities, it suffered weaknesses which Foucault recounts in a dialogue, the conclusion to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Though there are no notes to this chapter, it appears that the objections stated are perhaps not the voice of an interlocutor, but a synthesis of objections taken from various discussions with people before and during the time of writing the book.⁶⁷ I will list the objections first, then, elaborate on them with a discussion of Foucault's responses.

First, Foucault was accused of not quite dodging the attribution of being a structuralist.⁶⁸ Second, how can one discuss the emergence of the sciences free 'from all taint of subjectivity?'⁶⁹ I answer these first two objections together below, and the following objections after that. Third, is there any ground for archaeological discourse?⁷⁰ Fourth, what is archaeology?⁷¹ Fifth, does archaeology fail to apply to itself the rules it imposes on others? Foucault answers some of these objections incompletely. His critics and interlocutors subsequent to publication were not convinced that his answers were compelling in every case.⁷²

First let us look at the charge that Foucault is a structuralist. It is the most enduring criticism which also provides an interesting insight into Foucault's own view of his work. It is telling that so many individuals raised the question of Foucault's relation to structuralism. The critic of this dialogue in the Conclusion to the *Archeology* charges Foucault with making a number of mistakes. First, the critic asks whether Foucault avoids the tools of structuralism because the domain that he tried to deal with is not susceptible to an analysis of that kind.⁷³ The critic answers his

⁶⁵ A sense garnered from Nietzsche that there is no end to interpretation, that one must remain pessimistic about the discovery of any useful ground.

⁶⁶ JBR, p. 3. 'Butler's interrogative mode of political philosophizing seeks to suspend the ontological certainties currently pertaining to the category of "the human."'

⁶⁷ Gary Gutting, 'Introduction,' *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting, 2nd edn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), hereafter CCF, p. 5.

⁶⁸ AK, p. 199.

⁶⁹ AK, p. 201.

⁷⁰ AK, p. 205.

⁷¹ AK, p. 206.

⁷² Clare O'Farrell, *Michel Foucault*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 26-29, also note p. 158.

O'Farrell attributes the structuralist label to Foucault's work of the 1960s, and J. G. Merquior, *Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), among others.

⁷³ AK, p. 199.

own question by challenging the tools Foucault invented such as ‘formations, positivities, knowledge, discursive practices,’⁷⁴ suggesting they are derivative of the weakest themes of structuralism. So, if Foucault wants to avoid structuralism, why did he invent tools that resembled the tools of the structuralist? Then the critic accuses Foucault of reducing the domain of discourse to avoid the problems of trying to apply a structuralist theory to it, that Foucault dispensed ‘with the speaking subject’ and treated discourse ‘as if it had never been formulated by anyone, as if it had not come about in particular circumstances, as if it were not imbued with representations, as if it were addressed to no one,’⁷⁵ criticisms that could be levelled at structuralism as well. For example, the universal deep grammar of Claude Lévi-Strauss assumes universal structures of the human mind, so taking individuals out of the equation. The critic finishes his first set of remarks by accusing Foucault of taking the discourse out of its historical setting, treating discourse ahistorically.

Foucault answers the last set of charges first, and replies that the critic is right, saying, ‘I misunderstood the transcendence of discourse; in describing it, I refused to refer it to a subjectivity; I did not give primary consideration [...] to its diachronic character,’⁷⁶ then explains that his intention was not to study the speakers of a discourse: ‘it was not to discover laws of construction or forms that could be applied in the same way by all speaking subjects, nor was it to give voice to the great universal discourse that is common to all men at a particular period,’⁷⁷ a project that could be classified as structuralist, but, rather, to show irruptions and discontinuities in discourse. Foucault rejected ‘a uniform model of temporalization, in order to describe’⁷⁸ the characteristics of discourse itself without being required to force that description into an unsuitable temporal form. Foucault finishes his response by dismissing the seriousness of the structuralist enterprise: ‘This particular controversy, which might have been so fruitful is now acted out only by mimes and tumblers.’⁷⁹

In this spirit Foucault, when queried whether he is a structuralist during subsequent interviews or when the topic must be discussed during lectures, responds that he is not a structuralist, has never been one, and that ‘structuralism is a category that exists for others, for those who are not structuralists. It is from the outside that

⁷⁴ AK, p. 199.

⁷⁵ AK, p. 200.

⁷⁶ AK, p. 200.

⁷⁷ AK, p. 200.

⁷⁸ AK, p. 200.

⁷⁹ AK, p. 201.

one can say that so and so are structuralists.’⁸⁰ Foucault also gives a list of some people Jean-Paul Sartre thinks are structuralists, which includes Foucault himself. In 1972, Foucault said that ‘no one agrees with anyone else what structuralism is.’⁸¹

To be fair to the criticisms, Foucault mentions structure in a discussion of the nature of consciousness,⁸² and in a lecture given in Kyoto in 1970, after dismissing the label of structuralist he said that ‘structuralism is only a means of analysis,’ then added that ‘I merely make use of the structuralist method to analyze’⁸³ the changes in the lives of madmen from the time of the middle ages. He mentions in a number of places that human character and languages have structure. But he does not subscribe to some structuralist manifesto. ‘Unlike those who are labelled “structuralists,” I’m not really interested in the formal possibilities afforded by a system such as language.’⁸⁴ In the first of five lectures delivered in Rio de Janeiro in 1973 Foucault says,

Neither Deleuze, nor Jean-François Lyotard, nor Guattari, nor I ever do structural analyses; we are absolutely not “structuralists.” If I were asked what I do and what others do better, I would say that we don’t study structures; indulging in wordplay, I would say that we study dynasties.⁸⁵

In the mid-seventies it would appear that Foucault had shrugged off, at least to his own satisfaction, the appellation of structuralist. In late 1978 in an interview with D. Trombadori,⁸⁶ Foucault explains what he took the structuralist problem to be and what his position was. First Foucault dismisses the ‘whole series of polemical outbursts’⁸⁷ of his critics then begins to ask what was so problematic about structuralism. He suggests that

In the mid-sixties the term “structuralist” was applied to individuals who had made studies that were completely different from each other but presented one common element: they tried to put an end to, or circumvent, a form of

⁸⁰ FL, ‘Foucault Responds to Sartre,’ March 1-15, 1969: interview with Jean-Pierre El Kabbach, p. 53.

⁸¹ AME, ‘Return to History,’ February, 1972, p. 419.

⁸² FL, ‘An Historian of Culture,’ Sept-Dec, 1972: interview with Giulio Preti, p. 99. ‘Thus if I now speak of structure and the unconscious I do so from a completely external standpoint; nor do I consider myself bound by the answer that I give. Anyway I am quite incompetent in this field. I will say that it seems to me that in recent years (I am speaking as an historian of culture) an unexpected discovery has occurred: I mean the discovery of the existence of formal relationships, which can indeed be called structures, exactly in areas that appear in all respects under the control of consciousness.’

⁸³ AME, ‘Madness and Society,’ September 27, 1970, lecture at the Franco-Japanese Institute in Kyoto, tr. Robert Hurley, p. 341.

⁸⁴ AME, ‘On the Ways of Writing History,’ June 15-21, 1967: interview with Raymond Bellour, p. 289.

⁸⁵ Power, ‘Truth and Juridical Forms,’ May 1973, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Power, ‘Interview with Michel Foucault,’ p. 261-66, 272.

⁸⁷ Power, p. 261.

philosophy, of reflection and analysis, centered essentially on an assertion of the primacy of the subject.⁸⁸

French Marxists took up this line of criticism against him. But, Foucault thinks there is something deeper than this, a history that could explain the facts better. The French of the 1960s did not discover structuralism. Rather it was a Russian invention that became a 'great cultural victim of Stalinism, a possibility that Marxism hadn't been able to face.'⁸⁹ Foucault asked why people insisted 'on defining as structuralists a group of intellectuals who weren't structuralists, or at least who rejected that label?'⁹⁰ What follows is an explanation of Foucault's reflections on this issue.

Foucault suggested that structuralism was a cultural tradition of the Russians of the early twentieth century that was associated with the October revolution.⁹¹ Stalin distanced himself from this theme, even made it dangerous to adhere to the theory. When Stalin died, many intellectuals⁹² embraced some form of structuralism, a prestigious non-Western theory. Foucault thinks that the French Marxists of the 1960s inherited from the diehard Stalinists a tension about the resurgence of this tradition, leading them to denounce French structuralism. Foucault recounts the story of a lecture he was to give on structuralism in Hungary. His hosts accepted the topic he proposed, which included structuralism, but when he arrived to give the lectures, they put the lecture in the rector's office, preventing the lectures from being heard by a wide audience. Eventually he understood that they were not permitted to speak of structuralism at the university. 'I was taken aback,' Foucault recounts. 'It made me understand that the heated and confused debates that took place in France on this theme were only the repercussion, poorly understood by everybody, of a much more serious and harsh struggle conducted in the countries of the East.'⁹³ It appeared that Foucault, with this explanation set aside the problem of structuralism.

However, in 1982 Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* raise the spectre of structuralism from an analysis of Foucault's archaeological period. They classify structuralism into two

⁸⁸ Power, p. 261. Foucault notes this characteristic of his work in the conclusion to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

⁸⁹ Power, p. 262.

⁹⁰ Power, p. 262.

⁹¹ Foucault was probably referring to Russian formalism. The word structuralism does not appear before 1935 in Prague. Jan M. Broekman, *Structuralism: Moscow, Prague, Paris* (Dordrecht, Holland: Springer, 1974), p. 19.

⁹² Broekman, p. 42. For example, Jurij M. Lotman.

⁹³ Power 264.

types. The first was atomistic structuralism, ‘one positing structures determined by inductive generalization’⁹⁴ from which Foucault specifically distinguishes his thinking. The second form, holistic structuralism, ‘i.e. one positing structures, deductively determined, which exceed empirical instantiations,’⁹⁵ suggest Dreyfus and Rabinow, seems akin to what Foucault was doing in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and therefore becomes the subject of their criticism.

Dreyfus and Rabinow first gave some general characterizations of structuralism: ‘The structuralist approach attempts to dispense with both meaning and the subject by finding objective laws which govern all human activity,’ and ‘structuralists attempt to treat human activity scientifically by finding basic elements (concepts, actions, classes of words) and the rules or laws by which they are combined.’⁹⁶ Foucault did attempt to dispense with meaning and the subject in his discussion of the emergence of discursive regularities. But he did not do it by trying to find any positive objective laws governing human activity, neither was he attempting to treat human activity scientifically. Trying to find objective laws or produce a positive science was not in the scope of Foucault’s work. Though, according to Dreyfus and Rabinow, in his early work Foucault does try to specify ‘the structural rules governing discourse alone,’⁹⁷ and in the first section of their book they analyze Foucault’s ‘attempt to divorce discourse as far as possible from its social setting and to discover the rules of its self-regulation.’⁹⁸

The questions that have to be answered for Dreyfus and Rabinow are whether Foucault’s views amount to structuralism, strictly speaking, and whether these views undermine his archaeological project. The answer to the first question is that though there are similarities to structuralism in Foucault’s archaeologies, and he appeals to structure repeatedly in the latter part of *The Order of Things*, that he was not modelling structuralism, or some sort of methodological formalism,⁹⁹ that though there are analogies with structuralism, concerning the avoidance of the subject and meaning, Foucault never had in mind a totalizing project meant to give universal rules

⁹⁴ Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁹⁶ BSH, p. xix-xx.

⁹⁷ BSH, p. 16.

⁹⁸ BSH, p. 17.

⁹⁹ AME, ‘Structuralism and Post-structuralism,’ 1983, interview with Gérard Raulet, tr. Jeremy Harding, p. 435. In 1983 Foucault classes structuralism roughly with formalism.

to human behaviour. Gary Gutting suggests ‘like structuralist work on language, culture, and the unconscious, archaeology displaces man from his privileged position,’¹⁰⁰ but that Foucault’s archaeology, though it ‘works “alongside” structuralism,’¹⁰¹ is not itself structuralist.

Foucault, however, states that he was looking for rules governing the emergence of discursive regularities and Dreyfus and Rabinow correctly point out that Foucault is not consistent with respect to his search for rules. To remain consistent, say Dreyfus and Rabinow, these rules must be merely descriptive rather than prescriptive. There must not be an appeal to some universal source of the emergence of discursive regularities. Yet Foucault suggests that if there is a unity ‘it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation.’¹⁰² On Dreyfus and Rabinow’s account, ‘The rules, it seems, actually operate on the phenomena.’¹⁰³ Dreyfus and Rabinow make a fair case against Foucault’s thinking on this issue.

Foucault’s difficulty stems in part from the fact that he is rightly convinced that the productive and rarefying principles he has discovered are not merely descriptive, although he also sees that their mode of operation cannot be accounted for by either objective laws or subjective rules.¹⁰⁴

Dreyfus and Rabinow conclude that since ‘the archaeologist is committed to the reductionist project of explaining meaning in terms of “discourse-objects”¹⁰⁵ no explanation’¹⁰⁶ which relies on external foundations, such as that of Heidegger’s ‘horizons of intelligibility’¹⁰⁷ shaped by non-discursive elements is available to Foucault. His only option, according to Dreyfus and Rabinow is to appeal to some form of structuralism. If Foucault wished then, to retain rules governing the formation of discursive regularities, those rules must reside unconsciously within the individual. But that won’t do either. Since Foucault was committed to history he rejected the possibility that there are either some universal, empirically observable, biological, atemporal, cross-cultural rules that ‘govern’ discourse of the sort Chomsky and Lévi-

¹⁰⁰ Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault’s Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 228.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 228.

¹⁰² AK, p. 72).

¹⁰³ BSH, p. 81.

¹⁰⁴ BSH, pp. 81-82.

¹⁰⁵ AK, p. 140.

¹⁰⁶ BSH, p. 82.

¹⁰⁷ BSH, p. 82.

Strauss appeal to, or some descriptive approximations that sustain and perpetuate norms that Heidegger and Wittgenstein might appeal to.¹⁰⁸

Next, Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest that what is left for Foucault is a recursive formalism wherein the rules that sustain the existence of a practice, that are constitutive of it, also generate the practice.¹⁰⁹ Lastly, Dreyfus and Rabinow characterize Foucault's error that is not an appeal to hermeneutics, phenomenology, positive science, structuralism or formalism: 'In his account of the causal power of the rules of discursive formations, Foucault illegitimately hypostasized the observed formal regularities which describe discursive formations into conditions of these formations' existence.'¹¹⁰ Their suggestion is that Foucault should not have raised the problem of the 'causal efficacy' of rules, that the project should have limited itself to a descriptive analysis.¹¹¹ This conclusion is also part of the answer to the second question I posed above, about whether archaeology fails if Dreyfus and Rabinow's criticism holds. Though there are similarities between structuralism and archaeology, the rough association with structuralism is not the weakness of archaeology. The weakness of archaeology, abandoned later, lay in Foucault's goal of finding the rules of formation. This weakness raised both the spectre of structuralism as well an inconsistency trying to avoid universalizing historical ideas.

Following, I will look at Dreyfus and Rabinow's final criticisms of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. There are internal difficulties in the archaeological project Foucault produced. Dreyfus and Rabinow, given the fourteen years since the writing of the *Archaeology*, fairly model Foucault's own reservations about the project, his own concerns that motivated the abandonment of any explicitly archaeological method. It is telling as well that much of Dreyfus and Rabinow's criticism emerged as a product of discussions with Foucault, criticism that Foucault did not disagree with, or at any rate did not publish any evidence of disagreement with.

Though Dreyfus and Rabinow finally characterize archaeology as having been 'able to achieve the rigor of structuralist theory [... that the] oscillation between description and prescription [noted above] has revealed an even deeper instability.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ BSH, pp. 82-83.

¹⁰⁹ BSH, p. 83.

¹¹⁰ BSH, p. 83.

¹¹¹ BSH, p. 83.

¹¹² BSH, p. 90-91.

The instability they point to involves a problem Foucault attempted to avoid concerning two of four ‘doubles’ the archaeological critique seeks to dissolve. The four doubles Foucault concerns himself with are listed by Dreyfus and Rabinow as the retreat and return, the thought and unthought, the empirical and transcendental, and finally what belongs to the order of positivity and what belongs to the order of foundations.¹¹³ A double is described as a pair of poles of thought considered to be the only logical choices that interact problematically as long as they are considered the only alternatives. Foucault advances the archaeological method to resolve them.

For example, when considering the empirical/transcendental double, we are talking about the origin, justification, and finally certification of knowledge. When we ask the question of the origin and pose empiricism as the absolute source, we run into difficulties because empiricism is incapable of organizing observations without an appeal to the subject doing the observation. It can’t of itself produce knowledge. When asked to identify the contribution of the subject without requiring some objective distance and rationality, a requirement forced by the weakness of a purely empirical appeal, empiricism fails. Similarly, when appealing to a transcendental subject as the origin, a priori, of rationality, and the justification of knowledge, we find it impossible to construct the real world without appeal to observation of that real world. Foucault attempts to dissolve this double by posing a historical a priori that limits any recourse to absolutes, to certainties, and forbids appealing to either a purely empirical or transcendental origin for knowledge. Forgive this oversimplification of the issue. It illustrates, nonetheless, that the two poles in discussion are deeply entangled, and it is precisely this entanglement that Dreyfus and Rabinow mark as Foucault’s difficulty in advancing the archaeological method.

Dreyfus and Rabinow disagree that Foucault’s archaeological resolution of the doubles actually works, and that he remains entangled in the complex of issues within the transcendental/empirical double and the cogito/unthought double. In addition ‘archaeology has not arrived at the problems which give rise to the return and retreat of the origin.’¹¹⁴

So, Dreyfus and Rabinow conclude that though archaeology has achieved the rigor of structuralism it is not structuralism and that its difficulties are tied to the self-referential character of the rules of the constitution of discursive regularities, that

¹¹³ BSH, p. 91.

¹¹⁴ BSH, p. 92.

Foucault should have stuck to a descriptive project instead of requiring archaeology to characterize some prescriptive rules of formation.

The third objection raised by the critic: ‘Is there any ground for archaeological discourse?’ specifically, whether the writings of the 1960s are history or philosophy elicits embarrassment from Foucault, acknowledging that he has failed to appeal to what *could* ground the project of archaeology. So, as a critical enterprise, archaeology ‘is trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre.’¹¹⁵ There could therefore be no stated foundations, and any putative foundation could be the object itself of the same critique. Foucault states in this critique that there is no subtext to the discourses he studies, no global underlying ideas. The task of archaeology ‘is to *make* differences: to constitute them as objects, to analyse them, and to define their concept. [...] it is continually making *differentiations* it is a *diagnosis*.’¹¹⁶ Philosophy as diagnosis is consistent with his later writings.¹¹⁷ But when Foucault is queried about whether the *Archaeology* is philosophy, the critic has something else in mind. According to Foucault the critic points to philosophy as ‘a memory or a return of the origin’¹¹⁸ concepts explicitly rejected as part of the archaeological analysis.

To recapitulate: I answered the first objection about whether Foucault was a structuralist by showing that he avoided for the most part the criticisms that pointed to structuralist elements in his work, and that even where there were similarities, the resemblance ended there. The second objection, whether Foucault could successfully discuss the emergence of the sciences without reference to the subjective element is more difficult. But Foucault agrees with this criticism. Third, in response to whether there is any ground for archaeology, Foucault responds that there is no foundation for archaeology, nor should one look for it. The point to archaeology is to avoid privileging any feature of the discourse.

¹¹⁵ AK, p. 205.

¹¹⁶ AK, pp. 205, 206.

¹¹⁷ Foucault suggested in a number of places that philosophy’s proper domain was diagnostic or critical, an interview with Giulio Preti in 1972 titled ‘An Historian of Culture.’ (FL, p. 95) In an interview with Jean-Pierre El Kabbach in 1969 ‘Foucault Responds to Sartre,’ Foucault tells how philosophy has changed: ‘Philosophy from Hegel to Sartre has essentially been a totalizing enterprise, if not of the world or of knowledge (*savoir*), at least of human experience. I would say that perhaps if there is now an autonomous philosophical activity within mathematics or linguistics or ethnology or political economy, if there is a philosophy free or independent of all these domains then one could define it as a diagnostic activity. To diagnose the present is to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that is not it, that is to say, from our past.’ (FL, p. 53)

¹¹⁸ AK, p. 206.

The fourth objection of the critic in the Conclusion of the *Archaeology*, I suggested was a query about what archaeology actually was. I think Foucault's answer is satisfactory, and though the following quote only gives the general outline, I think it is sufficient as a response to the objection:

The word archaeology [...] indicates a possible line of attack for the analysis of verbal performances: the specification of a level—that of a domain—the enunciative regularities, the positivities; the application of such concepts as rules of formation, archaeological derivation, and historical *a priori*.¹¹⁹

The fifth objection is double: does archaeology fail to apply to itself the rules it imposes on others, and isn't man capable of changing his course.¹²⁰ The first problem, Foucault answers adequately in 1975 in an interview with Roger-Paul Droit. Foucault allows that his works are as much a product of the same kinds of forces in this age as the works he examined in the 1960s are of their own age, deeply enmeshed with the power structures of that era. And, he allows that his own works may be as much subject to the sorts of analysis he himself did.¹²¹ The second problem, Foucault answers by decentering the subject and placing that subject in the frame of rules that he himself does not control, the rules for the emergence of discourse. This assertion by Foucault, of course, raises Dreyfus and Rabinow's previously noted objections about the causality problem of rules being both the cause and the structure of discourse, and their suggestion that Foucault should have stuck to a descriptive project.

This analysis doesn't exhaust the controversy or discussions awakened by Foucault's archaeological writing. But it does help to place that writing in the frame of the 1960s as a participant in its debates and concerns, what he reacted against, what he proposed as an answer both during the time of his writing as well as his and others' later considerations of the archaeological work. He considered the difficulties of commenting on the current times, and the kinds of resolution to the problems of an era which become possible once one is removed in time from it. There is a progression in his reactions to his critics from the vociferous objections during the 1960s toward acknowledgement of the difficulties addressed during the 1970s with better perspective and finally in the 1980s at a distance from the concerns of that era, a certain calm. Foucault's genealogical research of the 1970s is marked by a more mature perspective than the turbulent work of the sixties. Its breadth, forcing a less

¹¹⁹ AK, p. 206.

¹²⁰ AK, p. 208.

¹²¹ FL, p. 149.

strident tone and with a measured cadence, marks his growing awareness of the deep complexities of our social interactions.

1.2.2. Genealogy and Power

The genealogical works of the early to mid 1970s: *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality, an Introduction* as well as the lectures delivered at the Collège de France during that time describe the emergence of problems in seventeenth through nineteenth century Western society, the strategies used to resolve them, and take into account not only the discourse surrounding whatever problem is being examined but the increasing complexity of a world being thrown into the modern era. Genealogy is a method that, like archaeology, does not look for ‘genesis, continuity, [and] totalization,’¹²² and while including the archive, the object of archaeology, does not confine itself to that archive, or merely to the emergent properties within a civilization that generate discursive regularities. The scope of genealogy is larger, taking into account not only the explicitly archaeological work but also the problems of power as well as ethics,¹²³ creating an account of society at once more general, as well as more supple and inclusive.

Foucault does not see genealogy as a method designed to supersede archaeology but as ‘contemporaneous dimensions in the same analysis,’¹²⁴ and that the project he engaged in ‘is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.’¹²⁵ Archaeology and genealogy have different functions within this account of history. Archaeological research within the archive provides the ground for an accurate portrayal of history, while genealogy explains the movements within relations of power. While archaeology sorts through the archive, genealogy makes the connections between society and that archive. If elements of the archive force a re-evaluation of the genealogy, well and good; truth demands at least that. Archaeology uncovers the factual points of contention with theory while genealogy attempts to describe plausible historical transformations within society.

Genealogy becomes the overarching method for the rest of his work, the method he uses to refine and categorize all previous and subsequent scholarly efforts.

¹²² AK, p. 138. Also in POT, ‘What is Critique?’ p. 64. Foucault discusses the nature of genealogy as being ‘Opposed to a genesis oriented towards the unity of some principal [*sic*] cause burdened with multiple descendants.’

¹²³ EST, p. 262.

¹²⁴ POT, p. 65.

¹²⁵ POT, p. 113.

It is less controversial than archaeology because, as a response to criticism in the late 1960s, Foucault begins to take seriously the relations between discourse, the focus of archaeology, and the social framework in which it resides. In general, all Foucault's writings can be understood as being part of a genealogical project, at least that is, on retrospect, what he thought of it, but it would be a mistake to think that a reduction of Foucault's work to genealogy would represent his *oeuvre* adequately. In many works, Foucault discouraged his readers and listeners from thinking in universalizing terms, and in many works he explicitly minimized any focus on the *oeuvre* as a useful explanatory category. Nevertheless, Foucault thought it useful to think of his work as genealogical.

Foucault told us in this clear statement of intent in 1972 that 'I speak to you as a historian, even if my goal is to be a historian of the present.'¹²⁶ In the following passage, Foucault specified this both positively and negatively and set the genealogical project apart from some of the explicit claims of an archaeology such as the need to define the rules of the emergence and disappearance of discursive regularities. Early in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault outlined the project of genealogy with respect to a study of the prison system:

I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present.¹²⁷

Foucault wished to characterize rightly the relations of power affecting the political constitution of the soul through discipline of the body. The prison with all its characteristic pressures and asymmetrical forces is the extreme form of a nearly universal political discipline found in the military, schools, business, even the family, that trains the body to be its own watcher, to consider that it is being observed, under surveillance, that the body is under pressure to perform the rituals demanded by that discipline or suffer repercussions, even if, in fact no one is actually watching. The prison is constituted to form the soul with the implicit gaze of external power, and can do this because the inmates, or 'patients' are under constant pressure from the guard's

¹²⁶ FL, 'An Historian of Culture,' interview with Giulio Preti, 1972, p. 102.

¹²⁷ DP, p. 30-31. In a note to the text Foucault specifies that he is going to examine the French prison system, because a global view would be too compendious and force the work to be too schematic. However he often refers to prisons elsewhere to illustrate a point. The prisons of the United States are mentioned frequently.

gaze, the pressure of physical and mental discipline, an unendurably long, crushing force that cannot be escaped. To endure, the prisoner must learn to think of himself as constantly under that force, and thereby to learn behaviours that will ensure he will escape notice. In other words, he will learn to behave, to fit the expectation of his watchers. With the prison as a model, Foucault wished to convey that the entire society is completely invested with discipline as a strategy of consolidating and elaborating power relations.

So, rhetorically, in the above quotation, Foucault asked why he is doing this. Why didn't he use the tools of his own contemporary society to look at history? The answer is, negatively, that he wished to avoid an anachronistic view of historical social structures.

An anachronistic view that reads the history of the past in terms of the present is mistaken because it assumes structures and methods as yet invisible and unknowable to the society of that earlier era. There can be no premonition within the nineteenth century of the twentieth-century state. For example, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault recognized the problem of thinking anachronistically when he considered forms of thinking in the Classical age. 'The men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do not think of wealth, nature, or languages in [...] forms that presaged what was soon to be discovered.'¹²⁸ The concept of eras defined by what people were able to think is firmly entrenched in Foucault's method. Thinking of the past in terms of present theoretical structures is a mistake.

Positively, genealogical research moves a step farther by suggesting that what people think is defined by and defines the strategies of power developing in their society, that knowledge and power imply each other, that the present becomes comprehensible when one understands the relationship between our present and the history that leads to it. Each acquisition of knowledge implies a new strategy of power, and each new power acquired constitutes a domain of knowledge. This is the advantage of genealogy over archaeology, and Foucault's response to his critics. Genealogy allows one to trace cause and effect relations leading to the establishment of power relations, institutional structures, strategies of governing in society, and in the case of his book, *Discipline and Punish*, the establishment of an ubiquitous system of incarceration, that the discourses within an archaeology cannot.

¹²⁸ OT, p. 208.

Writing a history of the present in genealogical terms means for Foucault, that within the history of our culture lies the power relations in social structures that will explain the existence of some of the social structures active in the present. How is this different from the archaeological works of the 1960s? What distinguishes these two intellectual enterprises?

Archaeology defines a history of systems of thought. The genealogical work of the mid 1970s defines temporally transient structures and strategies of power. It is not that Foucault does not or cannot describe transitions and movements in terms of the emergence and disappearance of discursive regularities within archaeology. However, temporal causal relations are difficult to describe within an archaeological discourse that makes no reference to the social structures they are embedded in.

The genealogical history of the present, then, gives us a lineage of the relations of power leading to our current state of affairs. But Foucault would argue that we are far from completely conscious of the implications of these relations of power. There is much that is unsolved, much waiting for the generation of a possible future where the problems of our era can be seen clearly in retrospect.

1.2.3. Ethics and the Care of the Self

Ethics as a category of Foucault's writing could not correctly be called a methodology; rather, following the procedures of a genealogy using archaeology, Foucault's aim is to offer a genealogy of the development of the ethical self, of the production of the self as a work of art. Instead of being a methodology, Foucault's ethical project generates a drive toward the free development of the self, though there is no *necessary* end product of this development. The sort of product he envisions is that people would become responsible for the constitution of themselves as moral agents.¹²⁹ This belies the impression that the end result of Foucault's ethical strategy is to produce a sort of modern dandyism, a purely aesthetic product, without reference to any socially responsible self.

The constitution of ourselves as moral agents is bound up with the problem of freedom, but not freedom as a given constituent of being human which one finds in Sartre's phenomenology. The freedom Foucault envisions is one that we struggle for, that we create in and for ourselves. It is not an axiom of being, but the relentless drive of the un-free self embedded within a power matrix, toward self determination—to be

¹²⁹ EST, p. 262.

released as stated in Kant's terminology, from its self-incurred tutelage. In addition, Foucault's struggle toward freedom involves the dismantling of internal proscriptions and external political and ideological structures that bar discovery of the truth. The difficulty of the struggle toward freedom is that within the scope of the examination of constraints on freedom there is no objective view of ourselves aloof from those constraints. Humans are embedded within the socio-political structures of their age. What humans are and what they appear to themselves as being is defined by those constraints. This is why Foucault appeals to Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung*. In Kant's view our state of being unfree is due, at least partially, to the acceptance of socially approved boundaries.

Foucault suggests that the work of an author, to make any headway, to go beyond accepted practices and norms, to be original, must make a 'breakthrough [*franchissement*]' which he equates with 'a pure transgression.'¹³⁰ An author cannot be considered mad in producing work that moves beyond the expected boundaries, for to produce work precludes madness.¹³¹ This transgression or breakthrough should not be considered a form of 'sin' or missing the mark [*hamartia*] but rather an expansion of the limits of possible freedom within the constraints of the socio-political matrix, even though it might be considered sin by society. Foucault demonstrated that it is not possible to be entirely free of the power relations that define us as described in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's point is that the expression of freedom cannot be elaborated theoretically within some history of ideas which draw absolute limits, but rather within a practical critique which suggests the need to cross over to unexplored territory.¹³² To understand this practical critique it will be instructive to look at the movement of Foucault's writings from his works concerned with power to the ethical works.

To require that Foucault's explicitly ethical books define his approach to the ethical constitution of the self would oversimplify his thinking and restrict discussion to those books alone. Instead, the development of Foucault's thinking during the 1970s through his lectures and essays shows us, in some fashion, how he arrived at the last two books in the *History of Sexuality*. From the publication of the first volume of the series, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* which is similar in style to his

¹³⁰ AME, 'Introduction to Rousseau's *Dialogues*,' p. 50-51.

¹³¹ AME, p. 50.

¹³² POT, 'The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.' p. 113.

previous works whose objects are located within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the second volume in the series, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*,¹³³ an examination of ancient Greek ethical writing, is a span of eight years.

Within this period, between the writing of the *Introduction* and *The Use of Pleasure* his lectures move toward the recognition of the complex interaction between the constitution of *raison d'État* [reason of state] as justification for the expansion of governmental strategies to consolidate power and the expression of distaste with being governed in certain ways. In *Security, Territory, Population*, the lectures of 1977-1978 Foucault describes the interplay of power and resistance resulting in the formation of counter-conduct within cultural enclaves that promoted ways of life that sought to escape the forces of governmentality by the mode of strict self-rule. In the next year's lecture *Biopower*, Foucault describes the interplay of the economy with the state which modified the expansion of the powers of the state. What is interesting here is the description of the emergence of the liberal state as being not so much an offshoot of natural law theories found in the Enlightenment, but as an intervention in the free-market economy limiting the expansion of capitalism to provide the best opportunity for generalized growth of the whole economy. In both series of lectures, *Security, Territory, Population* and *Biopower*, Foucault moves away from ineluctable power structures as described in *Discipline and Punish* toward the cooperative limitation of government forces in a theory of governmentality¹³⁴ defined by government concern for populations in contrast to a concern for the control of territory.¹³⁵ The lesson of these lectures is that power is not unilateral, that individuals and their social being are not only important elements in any description of the state, but that the freedom of individuals and groups is a feature of society that modifies possible expressions of governmental power.

In the lectures of 1980-81 *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault, who had been thinking about the issues concerning the self and freedom, began an extended research project into ancient Western questions about the care of the self, about the constitution of the self, about the technologies of the self the ancients employed to constitute themselves as moral agents. From this research on ancient discourses about

¹³³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), II, hereafter HS2.

¹³⁴ EST, 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,' p. 300, 'I intend this concept of "governmentality" 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.'

¹³⁵ FA, pp. xix-xx.

ethical practices and attitudes, Foucault began to formulate the final three books in *The History of Sexuality*, only two of which were published in 1984. The third, *Confessions of the Flesh* a book on Christian techniques of the self, was as yet unpublished in 1984, and because of a stipulation in his estate that no unpublished works would be allowed to be published subsequently, remains unavailable to the public.

Foucault enumerates the history of ethics within the Greco-Roman ancient world in the lecture series *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and the final two published books of *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, and *The Care of the Self*.¹³⁶ Foucault does not think these descriptions of the answer to ethical dilemmas the ancients provided are any sort of solution to our current dilemmas.¹³⁷ Instead, he traces the formation of ethical solutions to problems of the ancient era through the literature of the Greeks, Romans, and Christians to a form of power relation—pastoral power within the Christian Church—a precedent for forms of power which emerge within the medieval and later eras. In *Security, Territory, Population*¹³⁸ Foucault shows the connections between pastoral power and the elaboration of governmentality in the emergence of *raison d'État*.

For Foucault, the problem of forming an ethic is not the process of deriving necessary behaviour from universal principles. This is the lesson of the ancients: whatever had become problematic in behaviour either for individuals or society became the subject of a discourse whose aim was that of managing the behaviour. The abundance of discourse on a topic was, for Foucault, not a sign that the problem was adequately managed, but rather a sign that it continued to be a problem. The discussion of diet, marriage, and pederasty in *The Use of Pleasure* signals this characteristic of Greco-Roman ethics in Foucault's thinking. But, again, this elaboration of ancient moral sensibilities is not designed to be a list of prescriptions proposed for our own adoption, even though Foucault finds evidence that the ancients themselves borrowed not only ideas, but illustrations of correct moral deportment from their predecessors. It is rather an effort whose guiding principle is that one

¹³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), III, hereafter HS3.

¹³⁷ EST, p. 262.

¹³⁸ STP, p. 123.

should see ethical dilemmas in terms of what is dangerous.¹³⁹ So in Foucault's process of creating a genealogy of problems, one must look at behaviour in terms of the risks involved in performing it, and 'the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.'¹⁴⁰ Benda Hofmeyr suggests that

our immersion in and the all-pervasiveness of power *do not* give cause for fatalism. Because power relations are unstable, they are subject to change; and because there is power everywhere, there is also freedom and the possibility of resistance everywhere.¹⁴¹

In his ethical writing, Foucault traces the behaviour centred on the care of the self from Plato to the ancient Church, describing its transformations from the implicit Greek suggestion that we are responsible for our own development, to techniques of discipline within the Christian monastic societies. 'The precept of the "care of the self" [*souci de soi*] was, for the Greeks, one of the main principles of cities, one of the main rules for social and personal conduct and for the art of life. For us now, this notion is rather obscure and faded.'¹⁴²

In the first few lectures in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and in the essay 'Technologies of the Self,' Foucault discusses how the West misplaced the concept of the care of the self and put in its place a mistaken reading of the Delphic principle 'know thyself.' This Greek recognition of our humble estate, that we are not gods, is transformed within the Christian Church to become a project whose goal is the deciphering of one's own heart, analogous to a project of self-knowledge. However, 'the Delphic principle was not an abstract one concerning life; it was technical advice, a rule to be observed for one questioning the oracle. "Know yourself" meant "Do not suppose yourself to be a god."¹⁴³ It was not detached, according to Foucault, from the care of the self in Greek or Roman literature. The adoption of self-knowledge as the primary centre is subsequent to the original admonition. This movement away from the care of the self to knowledge of the self in the West implies a transformation

¹³⁹ Benda Hofmeyr, 'The Power Not to Be (What We Are): The Politics and Ethics of Self-creation in Foucault', in *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 3.2, (July 2006), 215-230, p. 220, 'Power relations are not inherently negative or evil, but dangerous. In cases of domination, power relations give way to *violence*.'

¹⁴⁰ EST, p. 256, and Mark Olssen, 'Foucault and the Imperatives of Education: Critique and Self-Creation in a Non-Foundational World', in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 25.3, (May 2006), 245-71, p. 262; Olssen quoting Bernstein citing Hiley: 'What is dangerous is that "everything becomes a target for normalization."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Benda Hofmeyr, 'The Power Not to Be (What We Are): The Politics and Ethics of Self-creation in Foucault', in *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 3.2, (July 2006), 215-230, p. 221.

¹⁴² EST, p. 226.

¹⁴³ EST, p. 226.

of attitudes toward the self and a change in the perception of the constitution of the self.

The chief mistake Foucault points out in this move is that society in the West moved away from an ethical concern to an epistemological one. He gives two reasons why the West moved toward an epistemological reading of this phrase, ‘know thyself.’ Foucault says that:

We find it difficult to base rigorous morality [...] on the precept that we should give more care to ourselves than to anything else in the world. [...] We inherit the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation. To know oneself was, paradoxically, a means of self-renunciation. [...] “Know thyself” has obscured “Take care of yourself” because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject.¹⁴⁴

The second reason Foucault gives is that from Descartes to Husserl, the thinking subject, the locus of knowledge, is the primary ground of being, and ethical theory, within the objective knowledge of the self, unsuccessfully groped within this mode for foundations of practice.¹⁴⁵

Foucault’s discovery of the ancients’ focus on the care of the self avoids the technical arguments about first principles in ethical discourse which led inevitably within modern positivism to emotivism expressed as a denial of the meaningfulness of ethical prescriptions. Foucault’s discovery also avoids the Christian transposition of the care of the self, requiring decipherment of the self, which led finally to denial of the self within a tradition of pastoral power. Though Foucault gives no prescription for ethical behaviour, he does elaborate avenues of research leading to comprehension of the individual’s responsibility for the self as well as an examination of practices the ancients found valuable. First, Foucault refocused contemporary sensibility on the need for self-care and self-elaboration as responsible persons within society. Second, Foucault’s discourse on ethics is embedded within his discourse on freedom and the expansion and elaboration of individual moral personhood especially as found in his essay ‘What is Enlightenment.’

I am going to examine ‘What is Enlightenment’ in the second chapter of this dissertation, first, by treating it as part of an organic whole with all its divergent themes, seeming and real contradictions, transformations of language, and problematic cul de sacs; read it as a work in progress without tying it to some

¹⁴⁴ EST, p. 228.

¹⁴⁵ EST, p. 228.

supposed *telos*. Second, I want to use this essay because many of the threads of Foucault's writing are woven together there. 'What is Enlightenment,' along with Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung*, provide a route for the examination of moral responsibility in terms of responsibility for the care of the self within an historical socio-political context. Part of the project of chapter 2 will be an examination of one branch of counter-conduct through the study of the life of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakers, and especially the eighteenth-century Quaker, John Woolman.

1.2.4. Genealogies

I am suggesting we read Foucault in a way that permits reading his work on truth in the archaeologies, power in the genealogies, and constitution of moral agents in ethics without requiring a unity in his *oeuvre*. Foucault problematizes the use of an *oeuvre* to interpret a writer.¹⁴⁶ However, he recognizes retrospectively a unity of purpose in his methods that doesn't require a unity of history or the discovery of an underlying unity in ideas.

It doesn't help reading Foucault that after writing, he often finds connections in his texts and reasons for writing that were not part of his original intention, but subsequently become part of his own interpretative matrix of those texts. For example with respect to archaeology, in 1969 he gave an interview with Jean-Michel Palmier entitled *The Birth of a World*.¹⁴⁷ In it Palmier asks what unites *Madness and Civilization*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault reflects on this while writing *The Order of Things*.

The three books that precede this last one [*The Archaeology of Knowledge*]—*Madness and Civilization*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Birth of the Clinic*—I wrote in a state of happy semi-consciousness, [...] At the last moment, while editing *The Order of Things*, I realized that these three series of studies were not unrelated and that, moreover, they raised a large number of problems and difficulties.¹⁴⁸

It is at this point that Foucault began to formulate a response to these 'problems and difficulties' by writing *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. This certainly suggests a self-reflective development, but it only gives us a clue to reading Foucault's work if we are aware of it before we read. Problematically, there seems to

¹⁴⁶ AME, 'What is an Author?', p. 207; 'On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle, p. 304; AK, p. 23, 24.

¹⁴⁷ FL, p. 65.

¹⁴⁸ FL, p. 65.

be no good place to start reading Foucault. However, the following cautionary tale can prepare the reader to abandon hopes of a simple explanatory interpretative matrix. Readings that proceed in the following fashion will at least guard the reader from making any premature judgments, and allow Foucault's readings to speak for themselves on their own terms.

There are at least two modes of reading Foucault, development and dispersion. Since the first, development is useful only once one has read all of Foucault's work, whether in order or not, it is perhaps trivial, even though informative. It is trivial because its form is more of a biography than an analysis of his ideas. It is informative because a biography reveals essential tensions in the work as part of a personal struggle for freedom within the structures of everyday life. The second, dispersion, is characterized, for example among many others, by Gary Gutting,¹⁴⁹ and Dreyfus and Rabinow.¹⁵⁰ In this sort of reading there is no central method with Foucault. He uses whatever method he needs to in order to examine whatever historical object is under observation. There is no unifying theme carried on throughout the multiplicity of works from the 1950s to the 1980s. It is senseless to try to force some unity on his *oeuvre*. Foucault's own remarks about the author and the *oeuvre*, in addition, belie any attempt to unify his discourse. Gutting says that Foucault's theories 'are temporary scaffoldings, erected for a specific purpose, that Foucault is happy to abandon to whomever might find them useful, once he has finished his job.'¹⁵¹ But, even though Foucault's changing view of his own writings leaves the reader at odds with any unifying project, he did give us a few clues about his general project.

As with any thinker, Foucault's project was a work in progress. It is transparently easy to show Foucault's writings as being in the process of development. What is more difficult to show, and perhaps not possible given his early death, is that his work drove in any particular direction. I will not attempt to force a reading that interprets his *oeuvre* as the inevitable result of some teleological drive.¹⁵² But the clues Foucault left in an interview with Dreyfus and Rabinow in April, 1983¹⁵³ are more than merely suggestive. Foucault tells us that he considered many of his books to be genealogical.

¹⁴⁹ in CCF.

¹⁵⁰ BSH, 'Interpretative Analytics.'

¹⁵¹ CCF, p. 16.

¹⁵² I do think the aetiology of his ethical project rested in his prior work.

¹⁵³ EST, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,' p. 253, and BSH, p. 229.

Foucault suggests that we look at his historical work, not including *The Archaeology of Knowledge* this way:

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.¹⁵⁴

Foucault outlines how he categorizes his books with respect to this structure, and further outlines how the second and third books of *The History of Sexuality* fit in.¹⁵⁵ There are three things to note here. First, Foucault equates genealogies with historical ontologies of ourselves. Second, the three fields of research have to do with the constitution of our selves as subjects. Third, our relation to truth, power, and ethics is a matter of our own purposeful engagement with them. We must will to engage ourselves, will to form ourselves as subjects within the matrix of our relations.

What is a historical ontology? Foucault, throughout his work avoids the attribution of any essential nature of human being.¹⁵⁶ There is no universally applicable characteristic of socially constituted human nature. This is no remark about human genetics. What humans are and what humans become, is constituted within any particular historical framework. A historical ontology becomes necessary, not so that humans become predictable, but that however man is constituted, in whatever age man is constituted, he can only be understood as tied historically to that age. So in relation to truth, power, and ethics it is unlikely that any universal principles of human constitution or human essence will be forthcoming. The truths available are historical truths. Constructing a history of the present, then becomes possible as we trace the movements of truth, power, and moral constitution into the present genealogically.

What is important about the subject, about subjectivity in Foucault is that the subject is both constituted by the historical matrix as well as responsible for constituting itself within that matrix. This paradoxical self-referential production within a historical milieu shows both transient forms of rationality, the emergence of

¹⁵⁴ EST, p. 262, and FOF p. 18, 'Foucault indicates a way to overcome [the] failure [of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud] by constituting thought itself as an action that must be ethically interviewed as the anxious source of the forms of knowledge that inform our reflection, interpret our political situation, and shape our relations to ourselves.'

¹⁵⁵ EST, p. 262.

¹⁵⁶ Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature* (New York: The New Press, 2006), pp. 5, 7, 44. I cite this as one example.

a perception of relations of power, as well as a drive toward the creative elaboration of freedom to become responsible for the self, a production of one's own ethical domain by the constitution of 'ourselves as moral agents.'¹⁵⁷

Though Gutting recapitulates Foucault's changing views about his work, saying first in 1969 that his work is about 'analyzing discursive formations,' then in 1977 that his work concerns power, then in 1982, that 'the subject [...] is the general theme of my research,'¹⁵⁸ this does not mean that Foucault's remark in 1983¹⁵⁹ about the genealogical method is suspect of being another thematic disjunct. It means that Foucault found a useful way of generalizing various modes of his work. However, it would be counterproductive to try to wrestle all his *oeuvre* into the themes of truth, power and ethics under the guidance of genealogy, to force the exposure of his views about the subject, or even about himself, even though many books, lectures, articles, and interviews refer, if even obliquely, to those themes.

1.3. Concluding remarks on Foucault's method

Though Gary Gutting offers insight into the whole of Foucault's work by dividing it into histories, theories, and myths, I find it more useful to treat Foucault's work as Clare O'Farrell does by calling it, in general, culture studies.¹⁶⁰ Doing this offers the scope for interpreting any of Foucault's works on its own terms and avoids the forbidding territory of giving a united general account of his work, something which writers like Dreyfus and Rabinow,¹⁶¹ and Gutting,¹⁶² have, of necessity, shied away from. Gutting does this by suggesting that Foucault's works are independently to be considered intellectual artefacts, that one shouldn't try to see them as falling into one or an other general categories.¹⁶³

In the most general terms Foucault preferred to be thought of as an intellectual with all the social responsibility that that appellation carried in France, disclaiming variously the attribution of philosopher, historian, Marxist, structuralist, etc., about which his interlocutors queried him. Nevertheless, he often referred to himself as a philosopher, with the caveat that he was not a philosopher of this or that sort.

¹⁵⁷ EST, p. 262.

¹⁵⁸ CCF, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ EST, p. 262, Footnote this dissertation p. 178, block quote on previous page.

¹⁶⁰ O'Farrell, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ BSH, p. 104

¹⁶² CCF, p. 6.

¹⁶³ CCF, p. 6.

Foucault is also considered by some as a postmodern thinker.¹⁶⁴ However, though he mentions a postmodern era,¹⁶⁵ he says this to dismiss such time-bound categories as inflexible, incapable of fairly defining or answering the problems he addresses, instead turning the reader to the idea that modernity is an attitude or an *ethos*.¹⁶⁶ Further, in *The Order of Things*, he even dismisses the terms ‘Classical age’ and ‘modernity’ as being unimportant.¹⁶⁷ But to say that Foucault is, on this account, a postmodern thinker, is an outsider’s view, a label he did not accept. However, the generation of the category of thinker called ‘postmodern’ is often attributed to ideas central to Foucault’s archaeological method, and Foucault’s early writing is cited. What marks him as postmodern is the incorporation of properly historicized readings of history under ‘perspectives that interpret power as dispersed, indeterminate, heteromorphous, subjectless and productive, constituting individuals’ bodies and identities.’¹⁶⁸ It is clear that Foucault’s thinking in the seventies could not be categorized precisely this way, especially since he details with some precision the characteristics of the relations of power and the body, and the relation of power with resistance, though some themes as the ones stated above persist in Foucault’s writings and the literature surrounding those writings.

Jean-François Lyotard presented a more subtle expression of the postmodern category, one that Foucault, I think, could have assented to. Postmodernism is first, a critique of the Enlightenment, a critique ‘on the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject’¹⁶⁹ construed as being a Cartesian subject. Second, the postmodern ‘is undoubtedly a part of the modern. All that has been received, if only yesterday [...], must be suspected.’¹⁷⁰ Postmodernism became, on Lyotard’s account, the leading edge of modernism. It is ‘not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.’¹⁷¹ Postmodernism is then modernism breaking through its limits. It

¹⁶⁴ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ POT, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, p. 105. Modernity is ‘an epoch; situated on a calendar, it would be preceded by a more or less naïve or archaic premodernity and followed by an enigmatic and troubling “postmodernity.”’

¹⁶⁶ POT, p. 117.

¹⁶⁷ OT, ‘The threshold between Classicism and modernity (though the terms themselves have no importance—let us say between our prehistory and what is still contemporary)...’ p. 304.

¹⁶⁸ Best and Kellner, p. 49.

¹⁶⁹ PC, ‘Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?’ p. 73.

¹⁷⁰ PC, p. 79.

¹⁷¹ PC, p. 79.

is, even as Foucault might have said about Lyotard's characterization that 'this philosophical ethos may be characterized as a *limit-attitude*.'¹⁷²

Third, Lyotard describes how the work of the artist or writer 'are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories [...] to the work.'¹⁷³ This passage is reminiscent of Foucault's discussion of Rousseau's work. A postmodernism of this sort can be construed as a sensibility of being in the present, yet stretching the habitation for work beyond ordinary limits, a fair description of Foucault's treatment of freedom as an aspect of enlightenment, of the production of a philosophical ethos through the creation of a historical ontology. The tension within postmodernism characterizes Foucault's attitude toward the future.

However, it might be useful to mark these themes in Foucault to note convergence in ideas concerning fields other than the ones he was interested in, and in this way make application of his methods to our contemporary period that in many ways he was neither interested in nor considered to be important. He was not interested in elaborating any possible future. It smacked of utopian thinking. For him, it led to the institution of problematic directions and the worst legal structures for society. This is not merely a theoretical concern, but one history bears out:

In fact we know from experience that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions.¹⁷⁴

But now that his near future is past, and having become present to us, especially in this time of dramatic and swift technological change, Foucault's future is fair game for examination.

My method will be largely drawn from Foucault's mature view of his own method. I think it will be, fairly, a 'genealogy of the present,'¹⁷⁵ 'a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² POT, p. 113.

¹⁷³ PC, p. 81.

¹⁷⁴ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?' p. 114.

¹⁷⁵ DP, p. 23.

¹⁷⁶ EST, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics,' p. 262.

Chapter 2: Resistance and Enlightenment

2.1. Introduction

In order to examine techniques of the self in practice, I will follow a line of argument that first seeks to find a confluence between the work of Immanuel Kant and Michel Foucault, roughly along the lines of Foucault's discussion of Kant's examination of the question of the Enlightenment. Foucault questions Kant's reading of the Enlightenment because of concerns with a universalizing rationality that originates from individual transcendental reason. I argue with Christine Korsgaard, concerning practical issues that one need not dispense with Kant's moral absolutism, which requires the construction of universal moral axioms, but treat it as a special case for living in ideal circumstances. Using Kant's own writing, Korsgaard broadens the scope of individual responsibility to concerns for the community when faced with either individual or socially widespread evil. This broadening of scope will require a re-evaluation of Kant's insistence that there can be no conflict of duties. It is at this level of conflict between duties that Foucault's histories of Western society force a broadening social consciousness of relations of power and the rationalization of those relations of power. Subsequently, Foucault suggests, those who dispute those rationales form societies of counter-conduct around formalized rules of resistance such as is found in the Society of Friends (Quakers) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

I will examine the formation and elaboration of Quaker society as emerging in response to English government, the Anglican Church, and as a counterpoint to the Puritan movement. Subsequently, I will look at the life of one individual, the eighteenth-century North-American Quaker, John Woolman. My reasons for examining Woolman are first, that the resistance to power which engenders the formation of societies of counter-conduct is not sufficient to complete the task of the production of the ethical self, and second, that there is a rough isomorphism between the formation of the ethical self within the society of counter-conduct and the formation of the society of counter-conduct within the broader society. Individual moral development is capable of refinement even in a subgroup that makes some fair claim to having an enlightened polity.

My examination of John Woolman will first focus on the techniques he used to advance his own ethical development within the Society of Friends. Second, it will

show that the methods of development of Woolman's ethical self can be described, along the lines Foucault sketches, as technologies of the self, which develop roughly as follows. Within the practice of resistance are found the seeds for enlightenment that require personal discipline centred on the care of the self, resistance to self-incurred tutelage, to social forces as well as acts and practices of resistance to being governed. 'This task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty.'¹ That form, in Foucault, is the constitution of the self by the self as a work of art, an aesthetic project, the development of 'a philosophical ethos consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves,'² I will demonstrate how John Woolman's life typifies this *ethos*, in both personal disciplines and social reform. Woolman's life as a historical ontology is chronicled in the form of his autobiographical journal.³ 'Such a project is [...] an investigation of how we have been fashioned as ethical subjects. While the domain of such a study is ethics, its aim is to sustain a form of resistance to newly recognized political forces.'⁴

In answer to some immediate objections that might be raised by the spectre of an *aesthetic* project of the construction of the self, I suggest that the aesthetic nature of the project doesn't imply that it is trivially constituted as an artistic project, as *merely* the work of a fertile imagination, or the artistic production under the influence of a muse. Instead, first, the project resists codification. It can't be non-reductively characterized as a formalism. Second, the project concerns the ethical formation of the self, and requires the engagement of the will in relation to enclosing power relations in a critique that may not have an analogous predecessor. Judith Butler suggests that 'there can be no ethics, and no politics, without recourse to this singular sense of poesis,'⁵ where *poesis* of the subject is both the crafted self and the process of crafting that self.

Tied to the problem of being governed, Foucault characterizes critique as 'the

¹ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?', p. 119.

² POT, p. 113, and Mark Olssen, 'Foucault and the Imperatives of Education: Critique and Self-Creation in a Non-Foundational World', in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 25.3, (May 2006), 245-71, p. 246, 'Critique for Foucault, is the basis of his own conception of maturity. [...] Critique is thus a permanent interrogation of the limits, an escape from normalization, and a facing-up to the challenges of self-creation while seeking to effect changes in social structures.'

³ John Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton, (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 2001), hereafter JJW.

⁴ *The Final Foucault*, ed. by James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, 'michel foucault's ecstatic thinking' (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), hereafter FF, p. 55.

⁵ JBR, p. 320.

art of not being governed quite so much.’⁶ He frames this *art* of critique as resistance against *raison d’État*, a rationality framed within the production of state power arising in the fifteenth century. However resistance plays out within this critique, it is part of the acquisition and production of reasons to support the production of a free self and free communities within the state, reasons that cannot be justified over against the state apparatus. The Quakers of the late seventeenth century found a way of resisting the government of England and eventually being given room to practice their form of life.⁷

Aesthetics is not a category of knowledge as might be found in something like Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* even though Foucault views aesthetic works as a source of truth equal to that of the sciences.⁸ This work on ourselves is aesthetic, negatively, in part because it is critical of the assumption of the superiority of formalized declarations of truth within analytic categories that see the possibility of knowledge only as constituted separately from the relations of power—that knowledge is legitimate only where it is untainted by an association with power.⁹ Positively, the liberty of an aesthetic work pushes against and breaks through the boundaries of the developments of axiomatic systems of thought, against totalizing movements within the history of ideas. The aesthetic of Foucault is also not to be associated with a formal critique of art. The aesthetic Foucault describes is based on an experimental and productive technology of self-mastery. When it is successful, it is productive of an *ethos* that fairly guides the self within a social framework.

That the project Foucault encourages is aesthetic doesn’t imply that Foucault was irresponsible with histories of the objects he examined. Foucault’s own method relied as much on an accurate depiction of the historical archive as those historiographies of which he was critical. He asserted that his historical research was as capable of being checked against the facts as the historiography of those who criticized his work. ‘There is nothing original in what I do. From this standpoint, what I say in my books can be verified or invalidated in the same way as any other book of

⁶ POT, p. 45, emphasis mine.

⁷ With respect to the doctrine of toleration in England, the Quaker lifestyle became legally permitted.

⁸ Power, p. 242-43. The relationship between truth and experience is a complicated set of problems. In this text, during an interview with D. Trombadori, Foucault suggests that truth is a construction, a fiction. Yet, though something is a fiction doesn’t mean it is false.

⁹ FL, ‘Schizo-Culture: Infantile Sexuality,’ 1975, pp. 159, 162. This is just one quote of many relevant ones found throughout his works of the seventies.

history.’¹⁰ And, even though the account Foucault gives of some historical figures has been questioned,¹¹ and even soundly criticized in J. G. Merquior’s *Foucault*, it would be unfair to think he would not have corrected his account when better data became available. In addition, though, some of the approximations Foucault gave for some broad swathes of history are difficult to verify, and some generalizations he used, though not substantially accurate, are nonetheless explainable without requiring a rewrite of history.¹² Barry Allen suggests that ‘professional historians who read Foucault may sometimes find his arguments overbold, but none thinks he was just incompetent.’¹³

Foucault frames the lesson of the Enlightenment not in terms of a formal elaboration of the history of ideas that have sprung from it, but rather as an examination of the history of what it means to examine the present in which one lives. Foucault suggests that Kant is one of a number in that era to pose a particular sort of question, that is, ‘What, then, is this event that is called the *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today?’¹⁴ Foucault takes Kant’s view of the problem of enlightenment as indicative of a constellation of prescient themes that persist in a long stream of writers through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. ‘The specific features of Kant’s answer to this question are not important to Foucault; his aim is not to “reactivate” the concept of maturity, or to define the relative domains of the use of public and private reason.’¹⁵ Foucault is interested, instead, on the problem of attitudes toward the present that Kant thinks about. The next section will proceed as a review of some problems in the discourse on the Enlightenment by examining Foucault’s and Kant’s essays both titled ‘What is Enlightenment?’

¹⁰ Power, ‘Interview with Michel Foucault,’ D. Trombadori, interlocutor, p. 242.

¹¹ CCF, p. 15. Gutting, for example, criticizes Foucault’s treatment of the history of Tuke’s asylum, but suggests that this weakness in historiography does not detract from the thesis in *History of Madness* ‘about modern psychiatry’s lack of moral neutrality.’

¹² For example, a figure Foucault gives for the British penal code, ‘for more than three hundred kinds of offense one could be hung,’ (Power, p. 62) is difficult to verify. Histories of the same era attempt more exact figures: approximately 220 offenses, or 222 offenses. It is difficult in the passage quoted to determine the exact era in the eighteenth century about which Foucault is talking. And with the unpredictable and unsettled character of British government of that era, it is additionally difficult to pin down which regime Foucault is discussing. Strangely, reliable figures are hard to come by. I found figures of under 200 laws for the eighteenth century, but for 1815 I found figures of from 220 to 288 laws. Foucault’s remark may have been a throwaway, or perhaps the statutes encompassed numerous acts of a certain kind, making his figure roughly correct.

¹³ *Foucault and Philosophy*, p. 153.

¹⁴ POT, p. 97.

¹⁵ FAE, p. 166.

2.2. What is Enlightenment?

I want to trace a confluence in the work of Immanuel Kant and Michel Foucault moving along the lines of autonomy and resistance, the elaboration of freedom and its necessity, of breaking through, crossing over, and of transgression.

I will first examine the question asked by Immanuel Kant and Michel Foucault: *What is Enlightenment?* My aim is to frame their answers within Foucault's project of developing a historical ontology of ourselves, to position ourselves in the matrix of power relations of the ordinary world so that the means to the expression of our freedom and the development of our ability to resist the incursions of government power over individual freedom is established. To do this, I will examine Foucault's treatment of the problem of resistance to power that will lead eventually to the necessity of development of techniques within the technologies of the self¹⁶ leading to the elaboration of one's life as the project of developing our selves as moral agents.

Immanuel Kant wrote an essay in response to the question '*Was ist Aufklärung?*'¹⁷ in the Berlin newspaper, *Berlinische Monatschrift* in November 1784. What troubles Kant in his answer to the question and subsequently Foucault in his own essay titled '*Qu'est-ce que les lumières?*'¹⁸ published in 1984, are the relations of power between populations of individuals and the ruling structures of society.¹⁹ The individual's move toward enlightenment, one that both Kant and Foucault see as desirable, is accompanied by a struggle with those structures marked first by resistance and transgression, leading ultimately to self-reliance; from heteronomy to autonomy.²⁰ Many distinctions can be drawn both between the content and purpose of the two essays, as well as the historical context. But for my purposes the historical problems are peripheral.

¹⁶ Foucault makes a distinction between technologies of the self as ways of life within society and specific techniques, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking used as exercises whose general goal is self-mastery. One might speak then of a Stoic or Christian technology of the self as the form of techniques possible within that social ethos.

¹⁷ POT, pp. 29-38.

¹⁸ POT, pp. 97-119. I will also be comparing some of the amended translations within the edition found in EST.

¹⁹ The literature on this topic is extensive, and I will not be surveying it. The point I wish to make here, though not distinct from this literature, is focused on resistance and transgression.

²⁰ Neither Kant nor Foucault think that one can escape power, but Kant sees power as a formal structure whereas Foucault sees it as an ubiquitous inescapable context, including formal structures. Freedom for Kant means liberation from the rule of others, liberation to autonomy while freedom for Foucault does not require liberation from the context of external power. FAF, p. 89, 'It is important to note that Foucault sees this exploration of the self not as a liberation of a true or essential inner nature, but rather as an obligation, on the part of the individual, to face the endless task of reinventing him or herself.'

2.2.1. Limits and Freedom in Kant and Foucault

For Foucault the project of becoming autonomous is that of elaborating our freedom, experimentally.²¹ What interested Foucault was the process of elaborating that freedom from a self-incurred tutelage under heteronomous control by means of taking control of the process of becoming one's own person, of constructing the self, of taking on the project of the care of the self instead of leaving the production of the self to the forces and disciplines inherent in the social structures into which one is born and raised.

Like Foucault, Kant considers the mature individual to be one who takes care of the self. Kant argues that when a state prosecutes a war, no support exists for education, hence no support for the project of training 'good men who *can improve and take care of themselves*.'²² This does not imply that Kant's view of the self or what is required to take care of the self is the same as Foucault's, or what Foucault describes the Ancients as having. I am suggesting that the project of enlightenment in both writers requires the refocus of attention on the care of the self. What this means in Kant's moral theory is that one should discover one's duty and perform it within a society of likeminded individuals.²³

Besides the quotation above from Kant's 'An Old Question...' the expression, *care of the self*, occurs infrequently in Kant's writings and shouldn't be taken as a signal that Kant's ethical work considered, except peripherally, the ancient thinkers Foucault concerned himself with. The connection I am making between the two writers is more generally through the lens of Kant's *Was Ist Aufklärung?* and Kant's principle of autonomy from the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. For moral rules to be developed in Kant's view, one must independently discover them through reason. This requires a certain solicitude about one's own condition. It is not likely that one would take on the project of developing and becoming responsible for a properly universalized moral duty under conditions that are unlike those the ancients made for themselves in the effort to master themselves. To take on the project of caring for oneself in the ancients required that they be convinced of its necessity, and

²¹ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?' p. 114.

²² Immanuel Kant, 'An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?', in *Kant on History*, ed. Lewis White Beck, trans. by Lewis White Beck and others (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1980), hereafter KH, p. 151, emphasis mine.

²³ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.), trans H. J. Paton, hereafter GMM, p. 100. I am referring to Kant's formula for the Kingdom, or Commonwealth of ends.

that necessity could be framed as duty in Kantian terms.

Take two of the examples of duties Kant gives in the *Groundwork*.²⁴ In the first example Kant concludes that it is a perfect duty of self love not to commit suicide after experiencing ‘a series of misfortunes that has mounted to despair.’²⁵ This is in contrast to some Stoic justifications for suicide,²⁶ but not contrary to the general principle that committing suicide against Kant’s rule is clearly a case of not caring for the self. In the second example Kant concludes that it is an imperfect duty for one to promote their own self improvement,²⁷ what Kant calls a ‘contingent (meritorious) duty to oneself.’²⁸ Here we find a very close relation to the problem of the *stultus* as Foucault outlines the position of the Ancients. The description Foucault gives of the *stultus*,²⁹ paraphrasing Seneca, almost entirely follows Kant’s characterization of the person who does not will their own self improvement.³⁰

The move to equate Kantian duty to the self with the Ancients’ concept of the care of the self is straightforward when one realizes the goal for Kantian duty, (at least with respect to the self.) The goal of the care of the self in the Ancients is identical, to engage the individual in the project of their own self improvement, for Kant the formation of a good will, and the Ancients, self-mastery.

The context for care of the self, in both Kant and the Ancients, is a community. As Kant describes in the *Groundwork*, it is the *kingdom or commonwealth of ends*, an ideal community of individuals who associate themselves with each other through mutually individual formulation of duty using Kant’s Categorical Imperative. For the Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, and early Christians the formulation of the rules of self-care is passed down from their predecessors, those who have already mastered the art of living. In the Ancients there is a visible master, teacher, or guide, while for Kant, heteronomy is not the condition of enlightenment or of following one’s duty. Nonetheless, let us help Kant concede that the state, in whatever form, say, the school, is responsible for setting up the possibility of an enlightened autonomy within the individual, eventually in the race as a whole.

²⁴ GMM, pp. 89, 90.

²⁵ GMM, p. 89.

²⁶ Michael Cholbi, ‘Suicide’ in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/suicide/>> section 2.1 Ancient and Classical Views of Suicide [accessed 27 November, 2009].

²⁷ GMM, p. 90.

²⁸ GMM, p. 97.

²⁹ HS, p. 132.

³⁰ GMM, p. 90.

For Kant, at least part of the responsibility for creating the conditions for the possibility of enlightened behaviour is placed on the state. The first thing required for enlightenment is that freedom be given to people; he says that ‘men work themselves gradually out of barbarity if only intentional artifices are not made to hold them in it.’³¹ This implies that the conditions for enlightenment rest first with the state, and after those conditions are met, people would move, by natural necessity, ineluctably toward enlightenment. This does not imply that no effort will be required by newly freed citizens, but that unfettered individuals by nature seek to improve their own conditions.

For Foucault, there is no commonwealth of ends to participate in, and no absolute duties necessitated by and generated from a natural law³² derived, albeit imperfectly, through the application of reason.

There is also the problem of power. For Foucault, power relations are ubiquitous, ever present in any and every society at every level. Society does not set up the conditions under which the citizen can seek enlightenment. The tension set up between purposes of state and the projects of individuals will never be eliminated, and so if enlightenment is to take place, it will have to take place within the context of those power relations. This conflict between individuals and the state is aptly illustrated by Bernard Williams³³ where he shows how the state apparatus cannot count the projects of individuals as important when it decides how that individual, as a resource, should be deployed.³⁴

In contrast to reasons of state, living freely within the inevitability of power relations through specific techniques of the care of the self in Foucault is not altogether rational. The techniques are often disciplines, methods, and strategies that do not exclude transgression of socially persistent mores and reasons in an effort to define the truth of one’s being, in an effort to recreate oneself in freedom. Further problematic in this comparison is that Kant and Foucault have different ideas of what constitutes the self, and the society in which that self is embedded.

³¹ POT, ‘Was ist Aufklärung?’, p. 36.

³² Though Kant is not strictly part of the natural law tradition, he does suggest that the moral law has the same provenance as the natural law we approach through science. GMM, p. 104.

³³ Bernard Williams, ‘Against Utilitarianism,’ in *Ethics: The Big Questions*, ed. by James P. Sterba (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 133.

³⁴ Foucault thinks Bentham is the key figure with respect to the era of social control, and a utilitarian rationality in the form of the Panopticon, a model for the central tool of social control. (Power, pp. 57-59.)

The self in Kant is transcendental. It is capable of deciding what is right, a priori, without needing corroborating statistical evidence, all within the framework of a possible good will that energizes the right motivation and right thinking of a person within the society. It is within this context that Kant believed one could formulate the conditions of freedom free from the restrictions of heteronomous control. Foucault, however, does not recognize any transcendental ego. The self is purely material within the confines of society and has no transcendental foundation for reasoning. Reasoning is always embedded within a social context. Foucault rejects the assumption that a transcendental Cartesian rationality can serve as a foundation for the Enlightenment and all its offshoots, including positive science. But even if they are foundational, Enlightenment rationality and reasons of state cannot be exempt from critique. So, even though both essays titled ‘What is Enlightenment?’ foster the discovery and use of freedom for the reason of being responsible for, and taking care of the self, what actually constitutes the practice of taking care of the self for Kant and Foucault are different.

Even though Kant writes that an individual should ‘dare to know,’ that one should ‘have courage to use your reason,’ and that this is the ‘motto of enlightenment,’³⁵ he also wrote that the citizens had made it the project of the state to guide the students toward enlightenment.³⁶ For Kant, enlightenment is not only the process of freeing oneself from self-incurred tutelage; it is the product of that effort that can be handed down to succeeding generations. Kant argues in the Second Thesis of the ‘Idea for a Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View’ that ‘those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.’³⁷ But, for the individual as well as the society as a whole, ‘through continued enlightenment the beginnings are laid for a way of thought which can in time convert the coarse, natural disposition for moral discrimination into definite practical principles.’³⁸

Contrarily, Foucault places the entire responsibility for individual enlightenment on the individual. It is, therefore, no one else’s project, and no one else is responsible for the results of this effort of caring for the self. Foucault does not

³⁵ POT, ‘*Was ist Aufklärung?*’, p. 29.

³⁶ KH, ‘Idea for a Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View,’ p. 21, 23, and ‘An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?’ p. 152.

³⁷ KH, ‘Idea for a Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View,’ p. 13.

³⁸ KH, p. 15.

blame the state as Kant does, either for the failed project of training people to care for themselves, or for the project of advancing enlightenment in the race.³⁹

For Kant, the state must remove restrictions to the public expression of reason⁴⁰ for enlightenment to take place. For Foucault, the presence of the state implies the existence of an ubiquitous relationship of power over individuals the elimination of which cannot be seen as the condition of enlightenment. An enlightened society for Kant would allow free discourse, but require obedience to the law.⁴¹ For Foucault, the possibility of transgression for setting up the conditions of enlightenment cannot be eliminated. Freedom doesn't require transgression, but cannot deny its possibility. The problem of power and the resistance that defines it is a central feature of Foucault's treatment of enlightenment.

It will be instructive to look at Foucault's view of the necessity for transgression as breaking through or crossing over limits. In order to do that one must first examine the problem of reason as the ground of justifications, and rationalities as justifications for the application of power in the face of resistance.

2.2.2. Reason, Unreason, and Rationalities

The problem of power and resistance is also a problem of reason and rationality. One of the features of Foucault's thinking is that historically, there is not just one rationality.⁴² It is important to recognize the mystification generated by some streams of modern thought that required a single, linear, exhaustive, and progressive movement toward the truth through logic and a comprehensive systematization and formalization of thinking. John Rajchman suggests this trend toward 'a single or unified sort of rationality appropriate to each domain'⁴³ comes under criticism during the latter part of the twentieth century. Foucault, in order to demystify this formalism,⁴⁴ implies a multiplicity of rationalities, a multiplicity of Wittgensteinian

³⁹ Foucault, as I remarked in the first chapter dispensed with the concept of human progress along a teleological trajectory.

⁴⁰ POT, 'Was ist Aufklärung,' p. 31.

⁴¹ POT, p. 31.

⁴² John Rajchman, *The Freedom of Philosophy*, p. 108.

⁴³ *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, ed. by John Rajchman and Cornel West (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. xiii. From Rajchman's introduction.

⁴⁴ A formalism can be defined as a coherent theory where the axioms and rules of inference together rigorously encompass their domain. For example, in mathematics, Russell and Whitehead attempted to formalize all of mathematics in their *Principia Mathematica*. Even though PM was the archetype of formal theories for the time, Kurt Gödel demonstrated its incompleteness.

forms of life.⁴⁵ His rejection of formalism is not born out of logical necessity—though it can be understood in that form after the fact—but rather is born out of historical observation. If, historically, knowledge is a construction born of the clash between instincts, and ‘knowledge has no affinity with the world to be known,’⁴⁶ then the structure of knowledge cannot be teleologically driven toward a single, absolute, unified characterization within some necessary progress of mankind. Knowledge remains a construct and as such can and will be deconstructed and reconstructed by further conflicts between our instincts. A short survey of the history of modern science⁴⁷ tells us this is true and admits the puzzles we currently face.

In an interview Foucault gave in 1978, he tells us that rationality cannot be considered an:

anthropological invariant. I don’t believe one can speak of an intrinsic notion of “rationalization” without, on the one hand, positing an absolute value inherent in reason, and on the other taking the risk of applying the term empirically in a completely arbitrary way. I think one must restrict one’s use of this word to an instrumental and relative meaning. [...] One isn’t assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them.⁴⁸

Reason has been considered the *sine qua non* of the difference between humans and animals. I don’t think Foucault disputed this, though for him the capacity

⁴⁵ Anat Biletzki, and Anat Matar, ‘Wittgenstein’, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/#Pri>> [accessed 29 June, 2009] ‘Forms of life can be understood as changing and contingent, dependent on culture, context, history, etc; this appeal to forms of life grounds a relativistic reading of Wittgenstein.’ Though this is only one reading of Forms of Life, in Wittgenstein, it captures the sense that knowledge [savoir] in Foucault is the ground of interpretation, though it itself remains uninterpreted.

⁴⁶ Power, pp. 7-9. ‘Knowledge was invented, then. To say that it was invented is to say that it had no origin. More precisely, it is to say, however paradoxical this may be, that knowledge is absolutely not inscribed in human nature. Knowledge doesn’t constitute man’s oldest instinct; and, conversely, in human behavior, the human appetite, the human instinct, there is no such thing as the seed of knowledge. [...] Knowledge is a result of the instincts; it is like a stroke of luck, or like the outcome of a protracted compromise. It is also, Nietzsche says, like “a spark between two swords,” but not a thing made of their metal. [...] Knowledge—a surface effect, something prefigured in human nature—plays its game in the presence of the instincts, above them, among them; it curbs them, it expresses a certain state of tension or appeasement between the instincts. But knowledge cannot be deduced analytically, according to a kind of natural derivation. It cannot be deduced in a necessary way from the instincts themselves. Knowledge doesn’t really form part of human nature. Conflict, combat, the outcome of the combat, and, consequently, risk and chance are what gives rise to knowledge. Knowledge is not instinctive, it is counterinstinctive; just as it is not natural, but counternatural.’

⁴⁷ One need only look at the extensive literature born in the late twentieth century around works like *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to be convinced that theories of progress in science are historically dubious. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science, 2 vols (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), II. Originally published in 1962.

⁴⁸ FL, ‘The Impossible Prison’ p. 279-80.

for reason is probably a matter of degree instead of essence.⁴⁹ Rationality is both the structure and context of our reasoning but also the result of that reasoning. Kantian rationality, both as context and result assumes correspondence with the world.

Foucault reminds us that Kant stated, ‘explicitly that the conditions of experience and those of the object of experience were identical.’⁵⁰ Kant’s rationality born out of and developed from Newton’s discoveries forms the context under which truth emerges as a necessary feature of continued reasoning about the world.

This is one place Foucault diverged from Kant, and it is empirical history that drives the divide. Foucault has told us that privileging any rationality, as Kant does, perpetuates the theme that reason and knowledge can only thrive where power doesn’t exist. But truth on Foucault’s account will be intimately co-dependent with the rationality within the genealogy of power that spawned it. The genealogies of historical rationalities as Foucault delivered them tell us that power both produces forms of rationality and that forms of rationality produce power. Avoiding the *cul de sac* of defending one privileged rationality over others and hence incommensurable truths emerging from them is part of Foucault’s intent.

Foucault steered the reader away from this negative consequence of the Enlightenment toward a way of living, a philosophical *ethos* that he characterizes ‘as a *limit-attitude*,’ a criticism consisting ‘of analyzing and reflecting *upon limits*.’⁵¹ This ethos forces an evaluation of the necessary and arbitrary elements in the structure of our lives. ‘The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression [*franchissement*],’⁵² a critique of the limits of what we are permitted to do into an exploration of what we might be able to do. The French word *franchissement* translated by Catherine Porter⁵³ as ‘transgression’ is translated elsewhere⁵⁴ as a ‘possible crossing-over.’ But Foucault equates crossing over [*franchissement*] to transgression in another essay,⁵⁵ where he is discussing some differences between madness and the work of an author. Foucault says that ‘the

⁴⁹ This follows from his rejection of an essential humanity.

⁵⁰ Power, p. 9.

⁵¹ POT, p. 113.

⁵² POT, p. 113.

⁵³ POT, ‘What is Enlightenment,’ p. 113.

⁵⁴ EST, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, p. 315. This translation is amended, to reflect the common usage of the word *franchissement*, though on my account not necessarily the best translation.

⁵⁵ AME, p. 33.

categories of the normal and the pathological, of madness and delirium, cannot be applied to this language [of the author]; for [that language] is a primary breakthrough [*franchissement*], a pure transgression,⁵⁶ where *pure transgression* is an unmodified cognate of the English word transgression.

Let us disassociate the concept of transgression as necessarily connected to a formal catalogue of sins in a list as it might be associated with some absolute moral anthropology, but rather treat it as the breaking of social mores and expectations, the breaking of standard credal statements and methods, of ingrained moral and social structures.

In the context of the ‘Introduction to Rousseau’s dialogues,’ Foucault believed he needed to defend Rousseau against the charge of madness. But, posing as the arbiter of truth, an accusation of irrationality against Rousseau is tantamount to suggesting his work is outside a rational worldview. But, if one wishes to be known as enlightened, then one avoids the appearance of irrationality. Yet, the force of this remark is that even though rationality is constituted, not as some absolute, but as the product of a certain line of socially appropriate reasoning, it masquerades as an absolute. One could then look at creatively breaking through or crossing over as a transgression, but categorizing it as such acknowledges the work as bearing the purposive intent of the author, a movement in freedom, something that madness precludes. Foucault conveys a sense that creativity carries with it the possibility of intentional transgression, that the creative construction of the self through a historical ontology is both a crossing over, a breaking through as well as a socially—and for some an internally—constituted transgression. Moral development on this account is experimental. It goes beyond structured boundaries into unknown, or at least undefined social and moral spaces.

For Kant, the process of attaining Enlightenment begins, not with transgression, but daring to think for oneself. What Foucault has done is to analyse that process of thinking for oneself within a consciousness of ubiquitous power relations while at the same time discounting any moral or rational obligation to the authority of government. Foucault elaborated the actual process of what Kant’s dare really costs. We see here the beginning of a divide between Kant and Foucault,

⁵⁶ AME, p. 50-51.

between the privileging of the transcendental subject and the promotion of an ethos as routes to enlightenment.

2.2.2.1. Ego and ethos

Kant's program in his three critiques⁵⁷ can be seen schematically as using and defending a scientific rationality, though God, freedom, and the moral law are beyond the capability of scientific proof. This rationality, marking the limits of human reason, is built up systematically from rational propositions and joined with practical reason showing what is necessarily outside the domain of reason only by what can't be conceived without it. The ground for these judgments, and the thing that distinguishes Kant's view of the self from Foucault's is the assumption of a transcendental ego, the 'I,' the subjective self which stands above the world of observation. This Cartesian ego is the foundation of our certainty, the ground of our judgments, the assurance that we've gotten it right, the irreducible centre and source for reason and rationality.

Foucault, however, found no transcendental self, no self which stands above its embeddedness in the world. The self is formed by the ordinary forces of training within the context of its society. The process of reasoning about the world takes place at every stage of physical, mental, and moral development under the pressures, tensions, and expectations that are the context of life. Self-formation, the decision to act for oneself, begins with resistance to those pressures, tensions, and expectations. Foucault avoids the dualistic Cartesian transcendental view of the self by pointing to deep ambiguities in the forms of ideal knowledge which could unify all our empirical collections of data. There is more than one rationality which is the product of reasoning, and claims to the pre-eminence of any one rationality over another are mistaken, or at least inconsistent with other candidates. When one recognizes that self-formation takes place by resistance to a cultural expectation, one is released from a Cartesian project of doubt in order to gain a privileged view of reality, what Descartes does in his *Meditations*.

Instead of choosing the Cartesian transcendental ego as a starting point for enlightenment, Foucault aims rather at the development of a philosophical ethos, not an essence but an attitude:

I have been seeking to stress that the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the

⁵⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Critique of Judgment*.

permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.⁵⁸

This ethos implies two things for Foucault, ‘first, the refusal of what [he likes] to call the “blackmail” of the enlightenment,’⁵⁹ which I will discuss in the following section. Second, it is a test of limits, though ‘always limited and determined’⁶⁰ by our engagement within culture without a transcendental fixed point of reference.⁶¹ In the 1970s, Foucault argued that the development of society and development of the self are deeply entangled. What Foucault tried to avoid is the notion that our elusive social self can be examined without the entanglements of relations of power with which the individual coexists and interacts. There is no way to separate out non-reductively the objects of human life without doing damage to them. So, any examination of this ethos, any practice associated with freedom and the test of limits it implies, must take place within the limits and determinations that constitute ordinary human experience. The self is never free of the strictures of social engagement.

Foucault considered that in this philosophical ethos, we can avoid a stultifying dogma, and test the limits of freedom. To make matters even more difficult, this ethos implies that ‘we are always in a position of beginning again,’⁶² always recognizing the limits of our views and interpretations; not only expanding our horizons, but waking to a day when our interpretative lenses are recognized to have misguided the search and must be abandoned for new ones. The world is never uninterpreted,⁶³ and we are never able to find an absolute beginning.

From one of Foucault’s essays written in the last year of his life, we see not a return to old themes, but the persistence of themes he developed, retained, and used all his academic career. What this ethos implies is that interpretation, though not objective, or certain, is nonetheless useful, and should not be rejected without evidence and good reasons. Foucault is not intending a Pyrrhic scepticism, but rather a cautionary note about the limits of interpretation. That we cannot find the original, the first, the beginnings of our ideas or practices is part of the problem of both social entanglement of our knowledge and the fact of interpretation. When we attempt to trace the origins of a practice or idea, the absolute beginning may not be found

⁵⁸ POT, p. 109.

⁵⁹ POT, p. 109.

⁶⁰ POT, p. 115.

⁶¹ See 1.1, also, 1.2.1 of this dissertation.

⁶² POT, p. 115.

⁶³ See 1.1 of this dissertation.

because we can trace no more than the interpretations of interpretations, all made within contexts that are socially entangled.⁶⁴ Foucault thinks we can reconnect to the best parts of the Enlightenment, but what that will require is the avoidance of some negative residue of the Enlightenment and the adoption of a positive philosophical ethos.

Now that we have a rough idea of what enlightenment is for Foucault, we should look at what enlightenment is not, and two clarifications must be made before further discussion can take place. These clarifications have to do with definitions of the Enlightenment and Modernity. First, Foucault usually leaves eras undefined by date. When he speaks of the Renaissance, the Classical era, the Enlightenment, or the Modern era, they are characterized primarily by their difference, whether in art, literature, medicine, or government from the preceding and following eras. There are, however, a number of places in Foucault's work where he marks an era by date. But these dates are always couched in terms that are flexible and rely for their definition on the discourse constitutive of that age. In this spirit he marked the beginning of the Enlightenment era at around the end of the eighteenth century,⁶⁵ the time Kant wrote *Was ist Aufklärung?*, a time when people began to ask questions and pose questions about their own era that differed from their predecessors; also the time of the French Revolution.

In 1967 in an interview with Raymond Bellour titled 'The Discourse of History' in response to some questions about the structure of *The Order of Things*, Foucault marks out roughly the late eighteenth century (from 1790) until 1950, as the *modern* period,⁶⁶ that is, a period when people who were participants in the Enlightenment were asked what it was. But on Foucault's account, this doesn't answer the question about what the Enlightenment is, unless of course we look to a philosophical ethos emerging during this time. In addition, Foucault insists that late twentieth century philosophy has not fully grasped either the problem of the Enlightenment or answered the question of what it is. By calling enlightenment an ethos Foucault sidesteps the requirement of a specific definition with attendant critiques and places the onus of our inquiry on grounds that require us to specify the attitudes and events that mark it.

⁶⁴ See 1.2.1 of this dissertation. The themes of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* encompass these problems.

⁶⁵ POT, p. 109.

⁶⁶ FL, p. 30.

Second, attitudes of the modern period can be seen as modes of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task. A bit, no doubt, like what the Greeks called an *ethos*.⁶⁷

And as an attitude, an *ethos* does not need to be confined to a chronological era. Thus, one may find expressions of the modern ethos in other historical periods. With such a perspective, one may say that a person expresses a modern attitude.

In order to analyse some modern attitudes, Foucault suggests that we look at Baudelaire, for whom ‘Modernity is not a phenomenon of sensitivity to the fleeting present; it is the will to “heroize” the present.’⁶⁸ The man of Modernity

“makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history.” [...] Baudelairean modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it.⁶⁹

It is not only a relation to the present that interests Baudelaire, but also a concern for the process of what it means ‘to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration.’⁷⁰ The Modern individual is the one ‘who tries to invent himself,’⁷¹ not the one who tries to discover himself as if there were an essential self. On this account, Kant’s encouragement to ‘have courage to use your own reason’ is perfectly germane. Kant did not require a particular outcome, except the expansion of freedom by taking responsibility for the self. Kant recognized well enough that humans as individuals have not perfected themselves, and the species as a whole has not perfected itself, and so required that ‘An age cannot bind itself and ordain to put the succeeding one to such a condition that it cannot extend its [...] knowledge, purify itself of errors, and progress in general enlightenment.’⁷²

Baudelaire’s reaction to the Enlightenment is just one example that characterizes the complexity of attitudes found within modernity. Within the body of Foucault’s work many instances of the attitudes of modernity can be found. If one looks at the *History of Madness* it is not difficult to see the emerging respect for the rationality of persons, respect for the human ability to reason one’s way out of

⁶⁷ POT, p. 105.

⁶⁸ POT, p. 106.

⁶⁹ POT, pp. 107-08.

⁷⁰ POT, p. 108.

⁷¹ POT, p. 108.

⁷² POT, ‘*Was ist Aufklärung?*’, p. 33. It is for writing the same sort of thing in *The Rights of Man* about British politicians of the same era that Thomas Paine was chased out of Britain.

madness found in the structures of both Tuke and Pinel's asylums⁷³ as a method of returning the mad, healed, back to society. If one looks at *The Birth of the Clinic*, one sees the skill gained through the observation of persons, the medical gaze, to turn persons into objects of scientific examination. This objectification of man, which marked positive science, is also one of the attitudes born out of the Enlightenment. The same attitude can be found in *Discipline and Punish*. Or one could observe the push and pull of political power and resistance found throughout Foucault's work that resolves itself piecemeal in economic theory beginning with Adam Smith's invisible hand as described in the lecture series in *The Birth of Biopolitics* with the recognition that human behaviour follows patterns of resistance.⁷⁴ The dilemma for political power in the *Biopower* lectures is how to set up the circumstance where people do what the government wants them to because they themselves desire to do it. Or one could trace the projects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries designed to formalize parts of our scientific enterprise, for instance mathematics and logic in Russell and Whitehead, and the language of observation in the Vienna Circle, with the resultant failures at the limits of their respective formalizations. Foucault is not giving some complete description of a single attitude of modernity by looking at Baudelaire but rather problematizes the complex relationship we have with the historical fact of the Enlightenment and all the projects that could claim to be following its dictums.

2.2.2.2. Blackmail and Humanism

Foucault, who took Kant's *Aufklärung* as one starting point for the complex social phenomenon called the Enlightenment, warned against what he calls the 'blackmail of the enlightenment.'⁷⁵ Foucault wished to

stress that the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical *ethos* that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.⁷⁶

So, it is not the theoretical or practical content of a philosophy, science, ethic,

⁷³ HM, pp. 205-06. It is not so much the release of the patients on their own recognizance but the requirement that they control their outbreaks and behaviours associated with their madness. The patients are being given responsibility for themselves. It is not that they are free to do as they wish, but that if they are to be confined again, they will recognize it as a failure on their own part.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. by Michael Senellart, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁷⁵ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?', p. 109.

⁷⁶ POT, p. 109.

or political system emerging from the Enlightenment, but critique itself that should be revived and retained. His sense is that critique was profligately productive of domains of knowledge characteristic of enlightenment, and the domains of knowledge themselves have critique to thank for it. Knowledge is the product of the critique found in enlightenment, not the cause.

Hence, the blackmail he wants to avoid is that of choosing to either adopt or oppose the Enlightenment with its form of rationality, or to believe that we must embrace or escape the dogmas that supposedly arose from it. For example Foucault suggests in an interview: 'Couldn't it be concluded that the Enlightenment's promise of attaining freedom through the exercise of reason has been turned upside down, resulting in a domination by reason itself, which increasingly usurps the place of freedom?'⁷⁷ Reason has been raised, like a judgment, over those who do not abide by its rules, even when the ability of reason itself has been formed by the same culture it resides over. In addition, 'One has often tried to blackmail all criticism of reason and every critical test of the history of rationality so that one either recognizes reason or casts it into irrationalism.'⁷⁸ The ability to reason along prescribed lines within the form of the current rationality has forbidden critique. What a person learns to fear is not being unproductive, but being accused of irrationality, because it would result in their being set aside from the rest of society. Instead of being coerced by this blackmail we must see that we are in some form historically determined by the Enlightenment, and that a fruitful study of it will free us from those elements within it which are no longer necessary 'for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects.'⁷⁹

Rationality, for Foucault, emerges as a response to some problem in society. No rationality is either universal or complete. The answers that any one rationality offers are limited to the problem the rationality purports to solve, the domain it addresses. Reason and historical rationalities split, break, bifurcate in 'an endless prolific division.'⁸⁰

In the mid-1980s, Joseph Margolis of Temple University said during a class

⁷⁷ Power, 'Interview with Michel Foucault,' by D. Trombadori, 1978, p. 273.

⁷⁸ FL, 'How much Does it Cost for Reason to Tell the Truth?,' Interview with Gerard Raulet, 1983, p. 353.

⁷⁹ POT, p. 110.

⁸⁰ FL, p. 354.

discussion, ‘he who controls the distinctions wins the argument.’⁸¹ The one who successfully defines what constitutes rationality, places their opponent in a position of defending his or her own rationality. It is this standoff between reason and its competitors—unreason and irrationality—that Foucault thinks of as blackmail. One co-opts the authority of reason and reasonableness, and of rationality, turning the authority of their opponent’s reasonableness against them. For instance, when Foucault defends Rousseau against the charge of madness, he is suggesting that a body of work is proof against madness, because madness precludes work.⁸² Though Rousseau steps outside the ordinary boundaries of the contemporary literature of his age in writing the *Dialogues*, that does not imply that Rousseau is somehow irrational, unreasonable, or mad.

Some use the above strategy to delegitimize the coherence of Foucault’s morphing *oeuvre*, suggesting that, either the oeuvre is internally consistent, or it is inconsistent. If inconsistent, it cannot be defended as reasonable or rational. Therefore it appears as unreason. It is this same attitude that interprets some portion of Foucault’s work and labels it postmodern,⁸³ structuralist,⁸⁴ poststructuralist,⁸⁵ and labels him a political philosopher, a historian, and ethicist, etc., without considering the various domains and qualifications of the variety of his work.

It is also blackmail that requires a coherent transmission of Enlightenment dogma to the current age, by whoever is claiming to have resolved the questions Kant asks. Their form of critique, say, the neo-positivist critique of metaphysics within the Vienna Circle, delegitimizes any discipline that doesn’t take as a matter of fact the neo-positivist constitution of facts in protocol sentences as the groundwork of any universal, empirical science. Only when Thomas Kuhn writes *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in the early 1960s does the project of the unity of science

⁸¹ Joseph Margolis, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Temple University, in a classroom discussion explained the Foucauldian problem of knowledge and power implying each other. Simply, the definitions one gives for the terms one uses in an argument determine the outcome of the argument.

⁸² AME, p. 50. ‘—So the *Dialogues* are not the work of a madman? —That question would be important if it made any sense, but by definition a work is nonmadness.’

⁸³ Best and Kellner in *Postmodern Theory*, James K. A. Smith in *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* These are a few of the numerous examples of those who characterize Foucault as a postmodern thinker. Refer to 1.3 in this dissertation above for a short discussion of Foucault’s relation to postmodernism.

⁸⁴ Dreyfus and Rabinow in BSH, Clare O’Farrell in *Michel Foucault*, J. G. Merquior in *Foucault* These are a few of the numerous examples of those who characterize Foucault as a structuralist. Please refer to 1.2.1 in this dissertation above, in the section on Archaeology and Truth for an extended discussion of Foucault’s relation to Structuralism.

⁸⁵ Todd May, *The Moral Theory of Poststructuralism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 6-11.

envisioned by the founders of the Vienna Circle lose its footing. As soon as science itself is seen to be a social phenomenon—a transitory, non-cumulative project of knowledge that advances not by a slow, steady, systematic accretion of facts but by irruptions and discontinuities of theory, exemplars, and practices within science—the neo-positivist claim to being heirs of the Enlightenment is seen to be false. The neo-positivist has fallen for the blackmail. It is almost as if in Kuhn's *Structure*, the neo-positivist community is faced with the problem that there has been no laying on of hands in some direct lineage of rationality from the Enlightenment to themselves.

The curious effect of the sociology of science is that the very reasonableness of the neo-positivist project is called into question without challenging the rationale for the construction of the unity of science program about which it was engaged. Kuhn's examination, rather, challenged the sustainability of the unity of science project in the face of a history that is critical of some of the founding premises of the project, such as the theme of progress.

In addition to freeing 'ourselves from the intellectual blackmail [...] we must also escape from the historical and moral confusionism that mixes the theme of humanism with the question of Enlightenment.'⁸⁶ Humanism, in its many varied and opposing forms, has been misused and misdiagnosed so frequently as to render it conceptually unreliable, shifting, and problematic.⁸⁷ Enlightenment, on Foucault's account, as a collection of ideas or an attitude does not require an ideological commitment to humanism. Foucault suggests in an interview with Rux Martin in 1982, that

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.⁸⁸

Foucault is noting a problem with a category of claims that distinguish themselves by reference to ideals that can be roughly categorized as humanist. There is a vast literature, both historical and contemporary in a humanist tradition; the persistent

⁸⁶ POT, p. 112.

⁸⁷ POT, p. 111, 'We must not conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected, but that the humanism thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection.' Also CCF, James W. Bernauer and Michael Mahon, 'Michael Foucault's Ethical Imagination,' pp. 149-50.

⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, 'Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault,' in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin and others (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), hereafter TS, p. 15.

contention between its adherents about who can, in fact, claim to be humanist is one of its most remarkable features.⁸⁹ Even so, a serviceable definition of humanism turns out to be simple, that is, ‘any philosophy which recognizes the value or dignity of man and makes him the measure of all things or somehow takes human nature, its limits, or its interests as its theme.’⁹⁰ This definition is satisfied by the systems that lay claim to it but are often at odds with each other. These systems are constructed on different underlying anthropologies which gives rise to differences in the forms of humanism they sustain. These various anthropologies, themselves, are a matter of contention, and the source of disputes.

Humanism derived from human science, politics, and religion is based on a notion of anthropology. Foucault suggested that humanism must be mistaken first because it is based on human practices which are changeable, and second because it makes claims to being universal. Foucault worried that humanism ‘presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom.’⁹¹ All of the varieties of humanism dogmatically limit the range of possible freedoms, and humans do not fit any of the anthropological models of humanity being offered as universal. The tendency to foster moral demands on the basis of what an *essential* humanity is or must become perpetuates the mistake Foucault wished to avoid. What enlightenment requires for Foucault, on the contrary, is an experimental movement toward freedom as found in a technology of the self that centres on self-care. This implies no particular anthropology, or essence of human being.

The themes of humanism have always been ‘tied to value judgments,’ and have ‘served as a critical principle of differentiation.’⁹² Humanisms have variously served as a critique of Christianity, as Christian humanism opposed to a theocentric humanism, a humanism hostile to science, a Marxist humanism, a National Socialist humanism, and a Stalinist one.⁹³ These thematics which depend on humanism for justification and support, ‘can be opposed by the principle of critique and a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy.’⁹⁴ Foucault considered the character of the

⁸⁹ For an example, note the discussions in the Wikipedia.com article on humanism.

⁹⁰ Nicola Abbagnano, ‘Humanism,’ *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards, 8 vols (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1972), IV, pp. 69-70.

⁹¹ TS, p. 15.

⁹² POT, p. 111.

⁹³ POT, p. 111.

⁹⁴ POT, p. 112.

Enlightenment to consist in this opposing principle and attitude.⁹⁵

The defence of some ideology on the basis of its 'humanist' temper or value is prone to inconsistency because it is used to defend widely divergent, even contradictory, claims.⁹⁶ For example, one could note the differences between a Marxist and Christian anthropology that lead to contradictory moral forms, contradictory forms of life, while both claim that their position is humanist.

The anthropology Marx constructs totalizes human character around an economic form.⁹⁷ Marx claims that a change in economic conditions toward a communist state will repair the breach between classes caused by Capitalism, but this is too simple a solution to encompass the complexity of social history. The humanism he espoused is clearly contrary to dominant Western culture when he suggests in the *Manifesto* the abolition of morals and universal truths.⁹⁸ Humanity in Marx is now narrowly defined as *homo economicus*, universalizing human character around the axis of economic life. Economic freedom becomes the sole model for human flourishing, and this is accomplished by wiping culture clean of any bourgeois remnants; it is in this sense that Marxism is a humanism. What Marx doesn't realize is that he has created a new anthropology that crudely generalizes human persons, and limits freedom in a morality that is only free of bourgeois morals.

Christian humanism has gone through numerous transformations through interactions with non-Christian philosophies and moral systems. However, while continuing to satisfy the definition mentioned above, it has retained throughout, an emphasis on the pre-eminence of the dignity of man over secular and religious government. Thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries like Erasmus held to the Catholic tradition of human free will against some Protestant views of predestination. This Christian anthropology contends that man is made in the image of God and is

⁹⁵ FAF, p. 90, 'The Enlightenment is not coextensive with humanism. Rather, the two are in a state of tension because one fosters static conceptions of human nature, whilst the other encourages a process of critical self-awareness and self-overcoming.'

⁹⁶ Wm. Halleck Johnson, *Humanism and Christian Theism* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), p. 10. 'The views of these so-called Humanists are so diverse or even antithetic that it is evident that without more precise definition the term Humanism lacks descriptive accuracy and scientific value.'

⁹⁷ Helmut Thielike, *Modern Faith and Thought*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 467-68.

⁹⁸ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1982), Chapter 2. 'But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.'

therefore worthy of bearing the rights of such an association; hence free will is one of the attributes of man.

What is common to both forms of humanism mentioned above is that man is in a position to do something about his lost state. In Marxism, revolution provides the venue for social transformation, and in Christianity, appeal to the grace of God provides individual salvation. But the anthropologies of Marxism and Christianity are at polar extremes of those claiming to be humanist in the West. They exemplify the problem Foucault is concerned with. Both propose an anthropology or essential human character. Both limit human freedom in principled ways. So Foucault concludes that humanism cannot further our understanding of the Enlightenment because it doesn't expand the possibility of freedom. The chiaroscuro humanism presents is deceptive in that it purports to solve the mystery of moral responsibility without having resolved the problem of anthropology.

Foucault explained the justification given for punishment by the juridical reformers in *Discipline and Punish*:

It is as if the eighteenth century had opened up the crisis of this economy and, in order to resolve it, proposed the fundamental law that punishment must have “humanity” as its “measure”, without any definitive meaning being given to this principle, which nevertheless is regarded as insuperable.⁹⁹

Two things happen here. First, humanity is raised to a universal principle and, second, humanity, as a principle is privileged without further justification. The appeal to humanism is made to be its own justification without puzzling out the tougher questions about human nature. However, Foucault's view is that enlightenment not only does not require an anthropology in order to function as a critique, but principled humanisms are opposed to the attitude of enlightenment which permits the creation and exploration of our selves in freedom. Foucault offers, distinct from the requirements of a humanist anthropology, morality, and structure—technologies of the self as a way of exploring the possibilities of freedom.

2.2.3. Enlightenment

So, we can conclude from Foucault's remarks that the Enlightenment cannot best be described as a set of ideologies or dogmas, and neither requires the rejection of humanism nor its adoption, nor the appeal to a rationality of any particular kind. By suggesting that what can be retrieved from the Enlightenment is an ethos or

⁹⁹ DP, p. 75

attitude, Foucault has sidestepped some problems inherent in any project attempting to formalize a dogma, that is, the need to fragment and divide the work of diverse groups into opposing camps, each claiming the imprimatur of the Enlightenment. This ethos grants the possibility of freedom and the right to critique—the possibility of self-elaboration and moral development. These goals are perfectly compatible with Kant’s writing on the Enlightenment. It is Foucault’s contention that techniques of self-elaboration and moral development function within power structures, that power relations are ubiquitous, and that the ideal conditions for enlightenment Kant required have not been available in any age historically and so may not be available at all.

The philosophical ethos in Foucault’s description of enlightenment is characterized by an experimental attitude,¹⁰⁰ ‘We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative, we have to be at the frontiers.’¹⁰¹ Foucault wished to dispense with the negative aspects of our Enlightenment heritage and move toward the discovery of freedom.¹⁰² This implies both the critique of our limits and a rejection of any universalizing tendency while moving toward an ‘archaeological—and not transcendental’¹⁰³ apparatus. The goal of Kant’s critiques was to provide a universal grasp of principles, and the foundation for those critiques was the discovery of transcendental grounds outside the limits for reason, practice, and perception. The goal of Foucault’s critique was the discovery of limits without a metaphysical or empirical foundation. Rather, Foucault wished to have a comprehensive archaeology, a rigorous catalogue of discourses on historical events within a genealogy that sets up the conditions of possibility for us to be, do, and think differently than we do now,¹⁰⁴ to set up the conditions for the exploration of our freedom. It is not, however, adherence to the catalogue that marks definitively the path of enlightenment, as if any particular catalogue contains within it a comprehensive diagnosis of its own time.¹⁰⁵

Unlike Kant, Foucault does ‘not know whether we will ever reach mature adulthood,’¹⁰⁶ and he said that even after the Enlightenment, we have not attained it. But Foucault also suggests that Kant’s form of reflecting about the Enlightenment

¹⁰⁰ Foucault used the term ‘limit-attitude’ to describe our posture toward freedom implying that freedom is found at the limits of proscribed behaviour.

¹⁰¹ POT, p. 113

¹⁰² John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 43.

¹⁰³ POT, p. 113.

¹⁰⁴ HS, p. xxviii, and HS2, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Pieter F. Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2008), pp. 3-5.

¹⁰⁶ POT, p. 118.

‘has not been without its importance or effectiveness during the last two centuries.’¹⁰⁷

This reflection on the Enlightenment has one purpose in this paper, that is, to set up the conditions within which a discussion of the complex problem of power and resistance can take place. The relations of power and resistance from which Foucault constructs the archaeologies for a variety of his works suggest that there is, in the movement of historical events, a way of tracing the emergence of social systems arising from conflicts inherent in the exercise of power over resistant populations. From the emergence of social systems described by a complex set of practices, individuals who take these practices to their logical limits exercise themselves within their milieu using techniques that further extend, elaborate, and refine, within that milieu, what they take to be the intent of the original practices, while laying aside practices that are detrimental to that elaboration. I am looking for techniques to decide which practices to adopt and which ones to reject. And Foucault’s intent for a historical ontology of ourselves gives us a clue about how to discover these techniques that guide the adoption or rejection of practices. To this end I will first discuss Foucault’s view of relations of power and how resistance and power are two necessary poles of the same phenomena.

2.3. Resistance and Counter-conduct

The coexistence of resistance and its practical results in dissidence, refusal, desertion, counter-conduct, and even revolution are coextensive with the expressions of power used to control and suppress that resistance. For Foucault, resistance

is coextensive with [power] and absolutely its contemporary. [...] As soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance. We are never trapped by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy.¹⁰⁸

Foucault rejected any notion of power described merely in terms of the law, institutions, interdictions, or the military.¹⁰⁹ ‘I think that resistance is a part of this strategic relationship of which power consists. Resistance really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles.’¹¹⁰ When there is no resistance, when there is only obedience, power doesn’t exist. There is also no responsibility. If injustice is codified and established as a practice, resistance demonstrates that power is required

¹⁰⁷ POT, p. 118.

¹⁰⁸ FL, p. 224.

¹⁰⁹ FL, p. 224.

¹¹⁰ EST, p. 168.

to keep the codification in place.

For example—the slave/master relation is only the most explicit form of this relation—when a slave resists the demands of a master, the slave asserts the right to personhood, identity, self. The master who has codified the asymmetry under the consideration that the slave lacks these rights asserts a will to pressure the slave into submission. If the slave never resists, there is no need either for the codification of slaveholder privileges or the need to assert pressure to prevent the slave from exercising rights. If both parties take the relationship as a proper expression of social function, there will be no resistance on the part of the slave, nor any exercise of power by the slaveholder.

Foucault's most frequent specimens are far more subtle. He usually examines broad sweeps of culture and the institutions that structure it; it isn't until the late 1970s that he intensifies his focus on individuals when he starts thinking about technologies of the self. But the example of slavery is germane because resistance is individual and only becomes generalized socially after it expresses itself individually. For our concerns here, the level of the individual is important because it is at this level that Kant's moral theory has bearing.

It is at this juxtaposition between power and resistance where Kant's view which promotes an ideal moral system becomes limiting. This is where Christine Korsgaard revisits Kant's moral *decision procedure* and takes into account some differences between two versions of his Categorical Imperative. Korsgaard's critique of Kant's work effectively changes Kant's procedure guiding his method of determining duty. This shows the advantages of a critique of the ideologically strict formalism to which Kant confined himself. Kant's explicit but difficult method in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* gets a new lease on life within Korsgaard's critique because it reflects better the probable intentions of Kant's overall thinking about duty than one finds in the *Groundwork* alone. In addition, Korsgaard's revision better portrays Kant's engagement with his milieu and his reflections on that milieu, themes which reflect Foucault's engagement with Kant on enlightenment.

As a result of Korsgaard's revision of Kant's procedure, I will elaborate a view of Kant's work that leads to a dynamic view of rational persons in resistance to being governed in some particular fashion as a result of following Kant's strategy for determining universal laws of morality. Resistance on this account becomes a natural characteristic of following Kant's procedure.

Finally, I will trace the development of counter-conduct within the Quaker community of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain with the purpose of setting up a context for the development of a technology of the self guiding the *decision procedures* of the eighteenth-century Colonial-American Quaker, John Woolman. Woolman will serve as an example of how individual techniques are used to elaborate a consistent strategy for the development of the self as a moral agent. There are two interesting things in Woolman's decision procedures that suggest his inclusion in this thesis. Woolman's techniques anticipate a practice of the development of the moral self Korsgaard's modifications of Kant's *Groundwork* might have addressed. Two, Woolman is deeply conscious of the practical difficulties of change within his society that required resistance to both political and religious traditions, themes which Foucault aptly elaborates.

2.3.1. Korsgaard on Kant

Foucault's description of state control of individuals as justified by reason of state within police science¹¹¹ shows the weakness of Kant's decision procedure as described in the *Groundwork*. That decision procedure requires first that people be free to use their reason to develop their moral selves, and second the state to lift its restrictions on freedom so that people will move toward enlightenment, a social condition that on Foucault's view never has nor ever will be the case. Christine Korsgaard offers us in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* a subtle reading of Kant that with the help of some modern ethicists, and a broader reading of Kant ameliorates the strictness of Kant's *Groundwork*. For our purposes here, it also broadens the confluence of Foucault's and Kant's thinking around the problem of resistance, and the actions resulting from that resistance.

Necessarily, my treatment of Korsgaard will be limited to some central themes in her reconstruction of Kant's account. My argument will centre around the justifications she gives for permitting some behaviour on one account of Kant's moral decision procedure and not permitting that same behaviour on Kant's further refinement of that account. I discuss her analysis of the reasons for this conflict between those two accounts, and finally her justification for overriding Kant's refinement in instances where its strictness implies intuitively incorrect procedures. Within the limited space of this inquiry I will not offer complete justifications for

¹¹¹ Foucault's description of police science is found in section 2.3.2. Foucault and Power

Kant's views in the *Groundwork* and Korsgaard's account of Kant's writing in the *Groundwork*. In the chapter 'The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil,'¹¹² I will favour Korsgaard's solution to a conflict between duties to ourselves and others, a conflict that Kant doesn't admit.

In this essay, Korsgaard uses the problem of lying for at least two reasons: first, Kant thought telling the truth to be one of the most obvious duties to ourselves.¹¹³ Second, it is Kant's view on telling the truth that has driven some writers to discount his decision procedure as being too inflexible to deal with ordinary moral quandaries,¹¹⁴ and in so doing, attributing to Kant a form of moral absolutism. My strategy in reading Korsgaard will be first, to examine how in fact she characterizes the conflict of duties in Kant, second, to look at the puzzle this generates for Kant in the *Groundwork*, and third, to explain Korsgaard's resolution of this conflict using the resources of the Kantian tradition by an appeal to Rawls' proposal of a distinction in moral philosophy between ideal and non-ideal theory. This will demonstrate my suggestion that resistance to power is the mode by which one rejects heteronomy and embarks on the road to enlightenment. Resistance is the entry to enlightenment, not one's choice made freely once power has been moved aside through just governance as Kant requires in the *Aufklärung*.

Korsgaard first considers Kant's statements about the duty not to lie and whether one should tell a lie when faced with a moral dilemma:

Kant seems to endorse the following pair of claims about this duty: first, one must never under any circumstances or for any purpose tell a lie; second, if one does tell a lie one is responsible for all the consequences that ensue, even if they were completely unforeseeable.¹¹⁵

Unsympathetic readers of Kant, like Sissela Bok, suggest that these claims lead to unacceptable consequences and that Kant's ethics must be, on that account, poorly suited as a decision procedure for moral quandaries. Sympathetic readers of Kant like Korsgaard are of the opinion that Kant's ethics can be redeemed from this conflict by appealing to the extended corpus of Kant's own writings.¹¹⁶ Both sorts of

¹¹² CKE, pp. 133-58.

¹¹³ CKE, p. 133., GMM, pp. 54-55.

¹¹⁴ Sissela Bok, p. 38. Bok, quoting Kant... 'He takes the duty of truthfulness to be an "unconditional duty which holds in all circumstances"; a lie, even if it does not wrong any particular individual, always harms mankind generally, "for it vitiates the source of the law."'"

¹¹⁵ CKE, p. 133. Korsgaard is referring to statements in Kant's *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, and the essay 'On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives.'

¹¹⁶ CKE, p. 134.

readers, says Korsgaard, ‘have focused their attention on the implications of the first formulation of the categorical imperative, the Formula of Universal Law.’¹¹⁷

Korsgaard reminds us that there is more to the *Groundwork* than is contained in this formula.

Korsgaard’s treatment of this issue revolves around an illustration Kant used. The exact scenario is unimportant, but it concerns the quandary of whether to lie about the whereabouts of a friend who has hidden in your house to escape a murderer who is pursuing him. You’ve been warned that a murderer will arrive later and wishes to kill your friend. The murderer comes to your door and asks where your friend is. You must choose between lying and telling the truth.

Kant draws out the problem this way: If you lie by telling the murderer that your friend is not present, and the murderer goes away, it may be the case that your friend has left the house without your knowing it and your lie turns out to be the truth. If the murderer then finds your friend and kills him, Kant says that you, who have lied are culpable for that lie even though not for the murder. If you told the truth, that your friend was in the house and the murderer forced his way into the house and searched there for his prey, then your friend may have had time to get away. By telling the truth according to Kant, you have fulfilled your duty; you are blameless. But if your friend is still in the house, your truth-telling turns out to be a death warrant for your friend when the murderer kills him. But still on Kant’s account you are blameless for telling the truth. It is the murderer who killed your friend, not you.

The two scenarios, one—where you lie and become culpable for that lie, and are implicated indirectly in your friend’s death, and two—where you tell the truth and are blameless for your friend’s death, are where our intuition rejects Kant’s solution. This is where Korsgaard steps in to suggest that it is possible to universalise a lie to the murderer on the grounds of Kant’s Formula of the Universal Law which states: ‘*Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*’¹¹⁸ A maxim is simply a proposed rule of action, and in this case Korsgaard defends lying to the murderer for two reasons: ‘First, we have a duty of mutual aid. This is an imperfect duty of virtue, [...] This duty gives us a reason to

¹¹⁷ CKE, p. 134. The Formula of the Universal Law is: ‘*Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*’ GMM. p. 52.

¹¹⁸ GMM. p. 52.

tell the lie.’¹¹⁹ Whether the lie is imperative or not depends on the circumstances, and ‘If the lie is permissible, this duty will provide a reason, whether or not an imperative one, to tell the lie.’¹²⁰ Second, Korsgaard reminds us that we have a duty of self-respect. ‘The murderer wants to make you a tool of evil; he regards your integrity as a useful sort of predictability. [...] You owe it to humanity in your own person not to allow your honesty to be used as a resource for evil.’¹²¹ Korsgaard considers this to be a perfect duty of virtue, and quotes Kant in the *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*¹²² saying, ‘Do not suffer your rights to be trampled underfoot by others with impunity.’¹²³ To answer this threat of the loss of rights requires autonomy leading to resistance to avoid the misuse of our reason or the possibility of bodily harm.

The lie to the murderer at the door, on this account, is permissible. The conflict as Korsgaard sees it, arises from considering Kant’s formula of Humanity which states: ‘Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.’¹²⁴ Using anyone as a means is forbidden by the formula of Humanity. If you allow the murderer, who assumes that you don’t know his intentions, to use you as a means, you betray your own autonomy. While if you lie, you are using the murderer’s humanity as a means. The puzzle¹²⁵ is caused by the apparent possibility of treating people as an end as required by the formula of Humanity. The conflict lies therefore between Kant’s formula of Universal Law which permits the justification of a lie to the murderer at the door and Kant’s formula of Humanity which gives rise to a conflict of duties with regard to the same lie.

Korsgaard thinks this puzzle is a real one and suggests that it cannot be resolved within the *Groundwork* alone. She appeals to John Rawls’ ‘division of moral philosophy into ideal and non-ideal theory.’¹²⁶ Ideal theory assumes ‘that everyone will act justly,’ and that ‘historical, economic, and natural conditions are such that

¹¹⁹ CKE, p. 145.

¹²⁰ CKE, p. 145.

¹²¹ CKE, pp. 145–46.

¹²² Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* in *Ethical Philosophy*, tr. James W. Ellington, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), p. 99, and p. 436 (Akademie edition).

¹²³ CKE, p. 146.

¹²⁴ GMM, p. 66.

¹²⁵ This is true irrespective of any question about justifications for lying to liars, or the moral status of the behaviour of those whose lives are perpetually at risk in war or under perpetual injustice.

¹²⁶ CKE, p. 147, referencing Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*.

realization of the ideal is feasible.’¹²⁷ There are other plausible conditions Rawls draws out for an ideal theory, but those stated should suffice to explain the notion of an ideal theory; Kant’s high expectations for compliance with his theory certainly fit the conditions for an ideal theory. Rawls’ non-ideal theory, as Korsgaard understands it, modifies the terms of justice to redress historical inequity by temporarily unbalancing equal distribution of goods and services. For example, the Civil Rights movement in the United States in the 1960s uncovered racial injustice. Rawls non-ideal theory would justify temporary strategies to assist blacks in achieving social and economic parity, because of the historical maltreatment of blacks by whites. However, Korsgaard is not interested in replicating Rawls’ use of a non-ideal theory, but she recognizes it to modify Kant’s absolutism in the *Groundwork*.

Korsgaard contrasts her proposed two-level theory with two single-level theories, utilitarianism and Kantian theory. Utilitarianism ‘does not distinguish between ideal and non-ideal conditions. [...] but simply between better and worse states of affairs.’¹²⁸ Utilitarianism, on this account, in the effort to provide the greatest good for the greatest number, ‘may lead to violations of what we would ordinarily think of as integrity’¹²⁹ by forcing compliance to collective goals which are detrimental to an individual’s projects. On the contrary,

A Kantian approach, by defining a determinate *ideal* of conduct to live up to rather than setting a *goal* of action to strive for, solves the problem about integrity, but with a high price. [...] The trouble is that in cases such as that of the murderer at the door it seems grotesque simply to say that I have done my part by telling the truth and the bad results are not my responsibility.¹³⁰

A two-level theory, in contrast, gives us both guidance for ordinary behaviour under ideal circumstances, and a decision procedure for when an ideal answer will not suffice. This leaves us with some problems such as the difficulty about when a non-ideal solution is called for, but it avoids a utilitarian slippery-slope and retains a model for best practices.

At this point Korsgaard reminds us of the moral price one must pay for appealing to a non-ideal theory, that of regret for having to do something even though it was the right thing to do.

¹²⁷ CKE, p. 147.

¹²⁸ CKE, p. 150.

¹²⁹ CKE, p. 150.

¹³⁰ CKE, p. 150.

We will regret having to depart from the ideal standard of conduct, for we identify with this standard and think of our autonomy in terms of it. Regret for an action we would not do under ideal circumstances seems appropriate even if we have done what is clearly the right thing.¹³¹

At this point Korsgaard engages her previous analysis of Kant's formula of Universal Law as a method for deriving non-ideal solutions to moral dilemmas. 'The Formula of Universal Law clearly allows for the category of the permissible.'¹³² It is within the bounds of the permissible for us to adopt the maxim that it is universally acceptable to lie to the murderer at the door to prevent ourselves from being used as a means to the murderer's evil ends. So the formula of Universal Law provides room to perform acts that, though they are individually regrettable, nevertheless address the requirements of a non-ideal theory. The formula of Humanity on the other hand strictly forbids those actions 'and gives implausible answers when we are dealing with the misconduct of others and the recalcitrance of nature.'¹³³ It is nonetheless applicable as an ideal theory that can serve to 'define a goal toward which we are working.'¹³⁴

So Korsgaard concludes that though the formula of Universal Law gives permission to perform acts that would not pass the formula of Humanity, it does not also allow the adoption of maxims that are self-contradictory such as making a false promise to obtain a loan, or self-serving maxims, such as a justification for the promotion of our self-interest under conditions where there is no threat.¹³⁵ Lying to a liar cannot be justified, even though lying can be justified universally in the case of lying to prevent the murderer from using you as a means.

Korsgaard also suggests an analogy between Kant's own view on the morality of the conduct of nations and about individual conduct. A nation that wishes to be at peace with an aggressive neighbour does not unilaterally disarm thereby setting itself up for conquest.

Peace functions not as an uncompromising ideal to be lived up to in the present, but as a long-range goal which guides our conduct even when war is necessary. [...] If this is right, the task of Kantian moral philosophy is to draw

¹³¹ CKE, p. 151.

¹³² CKE, p. 152.

¹³³ CKE, p. 151.

¹³⁴ CKE, p. 151.

¹³⁵ CKE, p. 145. Korsgaard illustrates a possible beneficiary lying to the philanthropist to gain the proffered benefit because the philanthropist is lying in order to gain information from possible candidates.

up for individuals something analogous to Kant's laws of war: special principles to use when dealing with evil.¹³⁶

Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant's laws of war clearly define a non-ideal space of national resistance to the possible hegemony of belligerent neighbours. Analogously, Korsgaard defines the use of Kant's *Groundwork* as the space of a double-level theory where the formula of Universal Law serves as the arbiter of non-ideal solutions to moral quandaries where one must resist the hegemony of those who would use our autonomy as a means to their ends, while the formula of Humanity serves as a goal to strive for when ideal conditions for its practice are unavailable.

What Korsgaard's analysis makes available to us is a means of understanding resistance to power that guards the autonomy of individuals who must transgress the autonomy of others by means of a maxim of action justified by the formula of Universal Law. This provides for us an egress from the strictures of an unsympathetic reading of Kant's *Groundwork* that is modelled within his *Aufklärung*. When Kant suggests in the *Aufklärung* that the 'only' thing required for self determination is that 'intentional artifices'¹³⁷ are removed and that people will subsequently work toward enlightenment, he places a burden on the essential rationality of mankind, precisely the prerequisite for deliberating our duty through the instrument of the Categorical Imperative. Not only is Kant suggesting that the Categorical Imperative will give us consistent answers, but that once the test of our maxims has been carried out correctly, there will be no conflict of duties.¹³⁸ But Kant requires freedom within the state as the prerequisite of rational decision-making, precisely what Foucault thinks is unavailable. For Foucault, freedom is found in resistance against those strategies used

¹³⁶ CKE, p. 154.

¹³⁷ Immanuel Kant, 'Was ist Aufklärung?', POT, p. 36.

¹³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* in *Ethical Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), p. 24, #224 'A conflict of duties [...] would be a relation between them in which one of them would cancel the other (wholly or in part). – But since duty and obligation are concepts that express the objective practical necessity of certain actions and two rules opposed to each other cannot be necessary at the same time, if it is a duty to act in accordance with one rule, to act in accordance with the opposite rule is not a duty but even contrary to duty; so a collision of duties and obligations is inconceivable [...]. I am not here denying that Korsgaard's useful distinction between general duties and the duties to carry out the maxims we have justified through the principle of universalization can mollify the strict rational necessity of lack of conflict, (CKE, pp. 39-40 note 25) but that the maxims we are not able to universalize because of conflicts between general duties force us to choose between those general duties, setting one aside for the maxim at hand because another general duty is more important in the case under examination. For example, Korsgaard selects the maxim that lying to the murderer at the door is universalizable, even though it misuses the autonomy of the murderer. Lying in this case upholds the duty to render mutual aid to our friends and our duty of self respect that requires we avoid being used for evil purposes as over against the right of the murderer not to be lied to. (CKE, pp. 145-46)

to dominate, in the movement against assumed asymmetries within power relations.

We can now see Foucault's reading of enlightenment as the formation of ourselves as moral agents as crossing over toward freedom within the context of ubiquitous power relations. Because Foucault denied that reason can be exercised only where power is absent and that a rationality can be formed only outside the structures of power relations, in his view it is possible to justify four things: first, resistance to power, second, the practice of stepping past boundaries to freedom within the bounds of the enclosing social structure, third, the movement toward a rational commonwealth (even in Kant's sense) whose practices may transgress against the inequities of socially persistent power relations, and fourth, justify individual moral improvement even within the enclosing social structure.

2.3.2. Foucault and Power

Though Foucault devoted much of his research to deciphering historical movements of the relations of power, he did it in an effort to understand the present condition of the Western world.¹³⁹ In *Discipline and Punish*, and the lectures of the early 1970s, the individual is characterized as passive under examination, subject to societal forces which mould and shape the self. Though in the late 1970s Foucault had been accused of abandoning the genealogical project because of its totalizing focus on heteronomous power; this is a mistake. His own later comments reflected in Chapter 1 of this dissertation tell us that he did not abandon genealogy but rather conceived it to be the overarching project on the axes of truth, power, and ethics. In much of his work he describes the exertion of power over individuals as a reaction by authority to resistance against that authority in many forms. The increasing move toward secrecy of punishment¹⁴⁰ described in *Discipline and Punish* is a response to the increasing resistance and revolt by the people toward the injustices fomented by the 'spectacle of the scaffold.'¹⁴¹ During public executions the crowd was permitted to voice its displeasure with the prince's judgment, but this created problems from time to time.

Resistance to power is a common theme in Foucault's writing. Power is not monolithic. In fact, power is not even necessary and doesn't show itself when there is

¹³⁹ DP, p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Foucault describes how the state, when it could no longer control the outcome of a public torture or hanging, moved that torture and hanging behind prison walls. Often, Foucault describes, public sympathy for a criminal would incite the spectators to riot and free the convict, making a mockery of justice.

¹⁴¹ DP, p. 59.

no resistance. It can be said that power is dependent on resistance, and does not exist without it.

Following the writing of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault's concerns begin to shift toward the responsibility of the individual not only to react against societal forces, but in his writings and lectures of the 1980s, to become responsible for 'the care of the self,' to take on the project of the development of the self. But arriving at this project of self-development required new historical studies and a plausible explanation of the political and social being of the state—and individuals and populations within the state as it evolved.

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault discusses a project that brings into focus themes surrounding the development of power around populations. Instead of describing a worldview of the disciplinary society around the objects of the prison and related architectures as he did in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault draws out the movement of *raison d'État*, or reason of state, as the attempt to govern populations. And the implementation and elaboration of a political economy by means of a science of policing within the state, shows how populations become the stabilized functionally productive resource by which the strength of a state was measured. No longer is the state measured by its ability to control territory, but by its ability to control populations and individuals. Foucault was looking for a mechanism, a strategy that non-reductively explained the attitudes present from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century in the societies under examination.

Looking for a plausible link with historical structures of governance, Foucault advanced a theory of pastoral power in his Collège de France lectures of 1977-1978, *Security, Territory, Population* and the Tanner Lectures of 1979 at Stanford, published as 'Omnes et Singulatim.'¹⁴² The intention of his Tanner lectures was to trace a form of power defined as pastoral which addressed the problem of government over a population as well as the individual. He traced the transition of pastoral care of the flock from the Middle Eastern concept of the king as shepherd to the governmentality of populations emerging in the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The multiplicity of strategies for managing populations in the West included the forms and structures of policing, organized and driven by a rationality defined as *raison d'État*. In *Security, Territory, Population* he described government

¹⁴² Power, 'Omnes et Singulatim,' pp. 298-325.

within the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as moving from the rule of territories within a monarchy to the management of labour forces, necessitated by the need to address the constantly expanding requirements of manufacturing and distribution of goods. These movements drove the increasing attention to the care and distribution of the population, maintaining peace and morale toward the assurance of a productive economy. This care of the population becomes the responsibility of the police. N. De Lamare in *Treaty on the Police* written at the beginning of the eighteenth century says that

the police must see to eleven things within the state: (1) religion; (2) morals; (3) health; (4) supplies; (5) roads, highways, town buildings; (6) public safety; (7) the liberal arts (roughly speaking, arts and science); (8) trade; (9) factories; (10) manservants and laborers; (11) the poor.¹⁴³

This signals a concentration of power within the state apparatus, a transition of responsibility from diverse structures charged with managing these various aspects of life, to a singular structure justified by *raison d'État* in an overarching strategy meant to secure the stability and productivity of the state. This does not mean, at least immediately, that the Church no longer functions in the position of moral authority, but rather, that the Church's authority over the citizen stands in a complementary relation of authority over individuals with the state, and that the State uses the Church as an instrument of control.

It will be helpful here to describe what Foucault intended by the phrase *pastoral power* and to trace its emergence within the Christian Church as a form of power aimed at guaranteeing the salvation of the whole flock as well as that of individuals. My line of reasoning may provide sufficient justification to see some aspects of Western forms of government as derived from pastoral power. As well, Western forms of government will be the context in which I will draw the form of resistance productive of such events as the Protestant Reformation and of groups like the Society of Friends, the Quakers in seventeenth-century England.

My reflections on Foucault will be limited to some central themes. First, that the institution of forces over both populations and individuals constitutes a pastoral form of power. Second, that resistance to being governed by working through revolts of conduct, insubordination, dissidence, and finally five modes of escape through

¹⁴³ Power, 'Omnes et Singulatim,' p. 320.

what Foucault named ‘counter-conduct.’¹⁴⁴ These five modes of escape in counter-conduct are described as movements of resistance in which a form of authority other than the state—or the Church as an apparatus of the state—defines the group.

First, what is the character of pastoral power? To answer this I will look at Foucault’s description of pastoral power as found in *Security, Territory, Population*¹⁴⁵ and show how some aspects of pastoral power are instantiated within the structure of the science of policing as described in *Omnes et Singulatim*.

Within the early Christian pastorate, there are three points of contact between the leader, in this case pastor, and the people: through salvation, the law, and truth. Foucault wants us to see first that these relations suggest not a disconnection of leader and congregant, or leader and flock, but a chain of authority extending outside and above the immediate relation of power, both to the larger Church and to God. With respect to *salvation* this relation implied a common destiny of shepherd and flock, reciprocal responsibility between the community and the responsible person. The shepherd was responsible for the salvation of the whole flock and each of the individuals in it, yet he was accountable to the flock since he had to pay the price for the loss of one, even if that one was the shepherd himself. Although the shepherd must be prepared to give his or her life for the sheep, a pastor’s failure is not necessarily grounds for condemnation, but means for edification of the flock. This implies

a subtle *economy of merit and fault*, an economy that presupposes an analysis into precise elements, mechanisms of transfer, procedures of reversal, and of the interplay of support between conflicting elements; in short, a whole detailed economy of merits and faults between which, in the end, God decides.¹⁴⁶

We see in this description of salvation in pastoral power, procedures for how government in the disciplinary society extended its reach and influence in the form of surveillance and the examination.

With respect to the *law*, the shepherd transmits the rule of absolute obedience to God’s will. In this the shepherd requires absolute obedience from members of the flock, but is also responsible to be obedient to someone else above in the hierarchy. We see in this a law of the hierarchical structure of obedience as found in the disciplinary society of the West. Foucault illustrates the form of this obedience in the

¹⁴⁴ STP, March 1, 1978, lecture, p. 191.

¹⁴⁵ STP, February 22, 1978, lecture, pp. 166-83.

¹⁴⁶ STP, p. 173, emphasis mine.

life of the monastery.¹⁴⁷ The aim of obedience is the renunciation and mortification of one's will. The law is a form of absolute servitude that implies the destruction of the individual will and the self.

With respect to *truth*, the shepherd is responsible for the daily conduct of the sheep, and must direct the conscience. This form of spiritual direction is mandatory, unlike that found in its Greek predecessors, the Stoics and Epicureans. Unlike the voluntary direction of the therapeutic Greek philosophers, the externalized, forced examination of conscience under the direction of the shepherd is meant to be a method of ensuring subservience of the follower. We see in this construction of relations of truth within a forced examination of the conscience how power invested in the shepherd through the foregoing definition of salvation and law creates knowledge within the confines of the disciplinary matrix of pastoral power. But this knowledge is suspect. And without defining any universal form of anthropology, this confinement of the self within the structure of pastoral power historically produced mystification¹⁴⁸ that resulted eventually in resistance. And the attempt at clarification eventually leads to the production of counter-conduct.

Looking at N. De Lamare's list¹⁴⁹ found in *Treaty on the Police*, it is easy to see where some aspects of the domain of pastoral power are quickly transferred to the state; certainly religion, morals, the guidance of manservants, labourers, and the poor were the domain of Church polity. Simple illustrations can be made for health, public safety, and schooling in the liberal arts also being within the domain of Church polity. Due to the increasing complexity of society, because of the rise of capitalism, urbanization, and the failure of pastoral power to scale to large political structures,¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, 'The Battle for Chastity,' in *Religion and Culture*, ed. by Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 188-197.

¹⁴⁸ Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death: The Sixties Counterculture and How It Changed America Forever* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994). I am defining mystification as the result of being told that something is true, and being made to adopt that position for whatever social reason or necessity, when, in fact something else is true. The simplest example at this moment is the scandal of young-earth creationism in the United States in the twenty-first century. Conservative Christian families are choosing to home school their children because of the *dangers of secular* indoctrination. While, arguably, there may be some justification for this move with respect to public morality, one of the results is the perpetuation of an eighteenth-century cosmology, fairly common within conservative families in the United States. When the student is later introduced to elementary astronomy or geology in a college curriculum, the discovery of widely held, plausible, well documented, scientific proof of the deep age of the earth results in the student doubting other truths discovered in the same home-school forum, the very truths the parents wished to preserve by home schooling.

¹⁴⁹ Power, p. 320. '(1) religion; (2) morals; (3) health; (4) supplies; (5) roads, highways, town buildings; (6) public safety; (7) the liberal arts (roughly speaking, arts and science); (8) trade; (9) factories; (10) manservants and laborers; (11) the poor.'

¹⁵⁰ Power, 'Omnes et Singulatim,' p. 312. Throughout these lectures Foucault points to police science

police responsibility for supplies, physical infrastructure, trade, and factories can be derived from pastoral power only by describing in detail the transition from an agrarian culture to a capitalist one, a description that Foucault offers in *Security, Territory, Population*.

Yet there is still a way to relate the assumption of police power given the previous description of the law and truth within pastoral power, that there is a relation of hierarchy between the reason of state through the police to the control of every aspect of the life of the population, and individuals that comprise it. We see also how the rights of the state to assume detailed control of every aspect of the life of the citizenry is assumed by the structure of police enforcement.

2.3.3. Foucault on Counter-conduct

In ‘Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity’¹⁵¹ Foucault makes explicit the connection between power and resistance. There is no power without resistance. Otherwise, obedience to authority would not require an expression of power. Without resistance, power relations don’t make sense.

So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. [...] Resistance is a part of this strategic relationship of which power consists. Resistance really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles.¹⁵²

This struggle emerges from the sentiment that I do not wish to be governed that way, and is elaborated in methods ‘how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.’¹⁵³ By stating how not to be governed *like that* ‘he is not posing the possibility of radical anarchy, and that the question is not how to become radically ungovernable.’¹⁵⁴ Rather, Foucault’s intent is to discuss how resistance moderates the inevitable movements of government toward the intensification of control. This is the virtue of his critical attitude.¹⁵⁵

Foucault traces this sentiment in a discussion of resistance in the analysis of pastoral power in *Security, Territory, and Population* with respect to the nascent

as the domain of pastoral power within the state.

¹⁵¹ EST, pp. 163-75.

¹⁵² EST, pp. 167-68.

¹⁵³ POT, ‘What is Critique?’, p. 44. and, FAE, p. 158, ‘And it is this task – the minimization of domination – which connects the fields of ethics and politics; it is their “point of articulation.”’

¹⁵⁴ JBR, p. 311.

¹⁵⁵ JBR, p. 312.

modern state¹⁵⁶ and then reframes the problem of resistance first as a revolt of conduct, then insubordination, dissidence, and finally counter-conduct, each level of resistance better developed and protected from reasons of state, and from manipulation by the state. Schematically, counter-conduct, the best developed of the four modes of resistance, shows itself in five forms: asceticism,¹⁵⁷ communities,¹⁵⁸ mysticism,¹⁵⁹ a return to the biblical text,¹⁶⁰ and finally, eschatological beliefs.¹⁶¹ On Foucault's account these are methods of reformulating self government on grounds other than pastoral power. They are well reasoned responses to the weaknesses of reasons of state. As such, the strategies individuals and groups use sequester them from both the influences of heteronomous control as well as volatile strategies like revolt, insubordination, and dissidence. Foucault suggests that their autonomous choices have the advantage of some form of internal coherence. As I mentioned above in section 2.3.2 on Foucault and power, the state had taken on the functions of the pastorate, with police taking on the task of shepherding the population. Police intervention of 'men's activities could well be qualified as totalitarian.'¹⁶² The sense that the state had justified an overweening authority and misused that same authority drove people to respond by looking for forms that more closely reflected their own sensibilities about what governing should consist of. Their revolt was not against government, but against the abuses of authority. There was a recognition that government was necessary, but what that consisted of was a matter of contention.

Those engaged in the five different forms of counter-conduct mentioned above, must not be seen as expressing singular behaviours but rather mixing and matching strategies with the intent of securing alternative ways of living, rationales separated from the state for the production of an autonomously moral context for life. Instead of just rebelling, or reacting, or struggling against authority, those engaged in a counter-conduct have reasons against the state, and the ability to tolerate abuse, even persecution from the authorities because on their account their reasons are superior to the reasons of state.

Ascetics, by means of self disciplines and self-incurred privations, bypass the

¹⁵⁶ Foucault does not generalize to other forms of power than the early modern state in the West.

¹⁵⁷ STP, p. 204.

¹⁵⁸ STP, p. 208.

¹⁵⁹ STP, p. 212.

¹⁶⁰ STP, p. 213.

¹⁶¹ STP, p. 214.

¹⁶² Power, p. 319.

need for a pastor to control behaviour. This is not the asceticism Foucault describes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.¹⁶³ Communities in the sense Foucault discusses are egalitarian in structure, each individual holding the same authority as any other. *Mysticism*, where one receives guidance directly from God, bypasses the need for a human guide, a pastor. When one returns to the *biblical text* to avoid being governed pastorally, one has said that the pastoral form of government does not fulfil the requisites of a biblical model. An *eschatological focus* is unconcerned with day to day life, but is governed by the necessity of fulfilling one's role in the overall scheme of things, bringing in the final apocalypse. Each of these forms of counter-conduct avoid the necessity of falling under the influence of pastoral power, whether in the Church or the state, and as such can be counted as mature forms of resistance to it. Combined, they form an alternative worldview with strategies and techniques of guidance in cases of moral conflict. They supply a polity in contraposition to the surrounding culture with a rationale for promoting its differences from this culture, and the superiority of its counter-conduct over the reasons of state administered by police.

I will now demonstrate how this theoretical structure of counter-conduct is exemplified by the Society of Friends, the Quakers, a Christian group having foundations in seventeenth-century England as an offshoot of the Puritan expression of resistance to the Anglican Church.

2.4. Quaker Counter-conduct

The emergence of the Quakers in England of the 1650s follows the pattern of revolts of conduct Foucault describes in *Security, Territory, Population*. The Quaker revolt of conduct does not take place in isolation, nor is Foucault's explanation of resistance to the state sufficient to explain the complex origins of Quaker society. The Quaker Society of Friends emerged as only one of a number of revolts of conduct within a politically unsettled and morally transitional age, a period of expanding frontiers and changing English polity. Within the Quaker community of counter-conduct, ruling principles are formalized only in the period following the first and second generation Quakers around the turn of the seventeenth century.¹⁶⁴ From that

¹⁶³ *Asceticism* in Foucault's *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, is defined as techniques or disciplines of self control, not as monastic renunciation of the self which is the meaning this word took on later in the Church and is the meaning intended here.

¹⁶⁴ Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 52. 'Most of the first generation of leaders had died by the 1690s, including Fox himself in 1691. Some of the second generation of leaders, such as Barclay in 1690, also died at this time. The passing of

time, the development of American Quakerism becomes the predominant expression of this group. It is within this expression that John Woolman emerges as a minister and weighty member of the Quakers in the American Colonies.

The principles of Quaker character are consolidated shortly after the early formation of their sect. The following four general principles were consolidated, the first three of which were developed within the early decades of Quaker behaviour, and constitute the context for church life until the nineteenth century when numerous disputes arose about church polity and practice.¹⁶⁵ The interpretation of these first three rules differ in the modern world, though they are still part of what it means to be Quaker. The last rule is a development of the first generation of adherents, that became a permanent fixture persisting until today.

- 1) the centrality of direct inward encounter with God and revelation, and thus forms of worship which allow this to be experienced...;
- 2) a vote-less way of doing church business based on the idea of corporate direct guidance;
- 3) the spiritual equality of everyone and the idea of ‘the priesthood of all believers’;
- 4) based in part on the latter, the preference for peace and pacifism rather than war, and a commitment to other forms of social witness.¹⁶⁶

These rules are of interest because they suggest reasons why Foucault was interested in them. The counter-conduct of the Quakers implied in the first rule is that there is no external authority, either human or textual, that is as important as the intimate connection to God implied by the direct inward encounter with God. Pastoral power is of no consequence in this context. The second rule denies any oligarchy. Though there are members who carry more weight than others, the final recorded consensus is left to the Clerk, the one who is responsible to the whole Quaker meeting for perceiving the consensus correctly. This final voice is not meant to quell opposing voices but rather to consolidate the individual leadings of the members. The third rule opposes hierarchy. The Quakers were birthed in a time when the overweening power both of the state and the Anglican Church had made inroads, through pastoral power

these early leaders led to the publication of journals and collected works which became standard texts for the third generation.’ p. 68 ‘The eighteenth century saw advice become codified and enforced. As the century wore on, the list of rules increased, particularly in the mid-part of the century when Friends on both sides of the Atlantic began to feel that their diligence was lacking.’

¹⁶⁵ Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 169.

¹⁶⁶ Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 2.

as Foucault describes it, into many aspects of life. The Quaker dissent takes the form of levelling all people by considering them as being equally able to get individual guidance from God. No priest or magistrate has any more intrinsic authority than the common person. This third rule marks Quaker dissent from the Puritans as well, who believed with the Catholics and Anglicans that all English people should be under one church authority.¹⁶⁷ The fourth rule, developed in the first five decades of Quakerism, allowed them to take a moral stand against the futility of promoting the kingdom of God through violence. They took seriously the pragmatic effects of non-violence, seeing the force with which they themselves and contemporary separatist groups such as the Ranters and Diggers were treated. The Quakers learned their lesson about public demonstrations and found non-violent protest to be more lastingly effective. These four rules distinguish the Quakers against the power of both Church and State.

2.4.1. English Context of Quaker Origins

Following the Protestant Reformation in Europe and the birth of the Anglican Church in England in the sixteenth century, a variety of Protestant expressions emerge that can be traced back either to the arrival of individuals like Martin Luther, John Calvin, or in the eighteenth century John and Charles Wesley. Other movements like the Quakers, Baptists, Anabaptists, and Moravians can be understood as principled protests with varieties of leaders, none of whom entirely characterize the movements of which they are part. This second group best fits the structure Foucault suggests as the route of protest against the abuse of power found in the form of pastoral power within the Roman Catholic Church. This is not to say that Luther and Calvin did what they did alone. The movements they led were already in motion by the time they emerged as leaders. The history of strife over the Roman pastorate since the Great Schism of Christianity in the fourteenth century is well documented.

What is of interest in this context about the Quakers is the historic route of their protest. Foucault does not elaborate, but says that both the Quakers and Methodists emerge out of the Anglican Church.¹⁶⁸ The beginning of the Quaker community, though, is less directly associated with the Anglicans than it is with the separatists and Puritans. The Quakers, a working-class group,¹⁶⁹ and separatists (as

¹⁶⁷ Barbour & Frost, p. 16.

¹⁶⁸ Power, p. 60.

¹⁶⁹ Barbour & Frost, p. 17, 'Like most separatist groups since Queen Elizabeth's day, they met to worship in halls and homes and frightened more conservative Puritans by choosing ministers from their

were the Baptists) whose origin can be traced roughly from Puritan roots,¹⁷⁰ placed little faith in central leadership. They were convinced ‘that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ.’¹⁷¹ Foucault wants to attribute to the Quakers the establishment of a form of internal policing like that of the Methodist ‘John Wesley, for example, [who] visited the Methodist communities on inspection trips, a bit like the bishops of the early Middle Ages.’¹⁷² But the establishment of an informal ‘inspection tour’ among travelling Quaker ministers enforcing their rule is something that would not be found until the eighteenth century in both America and England—long after the early struggles with the English government and Anglican Church during the seventeenth century. In fact, ‘since the Spirit was the Friends’ only authority, they rarely quoted each other, but no Quaker could easily admit another Friend had erred. Thus their tracts defended each others’ doctrines, however casually some had been first thought through.’¹⁷³ Though the writing of defences of doctrine could be part of theological discourse, defence of Quaker practice carried over to the behaviours purportedly driven by the spirit as well. The development of the eighteenth-century self-examination of the Quaker society happens after the establishment of the community as both a political force in colonial Pennsylvania and the establishment of English rules of toleration that permitted peculiarities of the Quaker testimony. Self-examination and internal policing is subsequent to toleration, not, as Foucault implies, coextensive with, and an escape from, external policing.

Foucault admits in ‘Truth and Juridical Forms’¹⁷⁴ that he would not be dealing with American examples of state control of individuals, and so his omission of the political circumstances of the colonial Quaker state, Pennsylvania, could be seen as an oversight with respect to the development of Quaker society in England and its intimate ties to Quaker society in America. This tie between English and American Quakers is essential to understanding the resistance that Quakers maintained politically to English law, especially as it applies to the Quaker William Penn who, as

own working-class members: untrained “mechanick preachers” who were craftsmen, “shoee-makers, ... boxe-makers, coach-men and felt-makers and bottle-ale sellers.”

¹⁷⁰ Barbour & Frost, p. 12, ‘Puritans and Quakers knew that this “universal pastorate” of the papacy from 400 through 1400 had bred paternalism and greedy bishops.’

¹⁷¹ Barbour & Frost, p. 26.

¹⁷² Power, p. 60.

¹⁷³ Barbour & Frost, p. 62.

¹⁷⁴ Power, p. 59.

governor of Pennsylvania and political figure in England, tied the two continents together.

Penn, a second generation Quaker, set up the Charter of Pennsylvania granted by Charles II in 1681 and reduced the death penalty for crimes from over 200 to just two: murder, and treason.¹⁷⁵ Clearly, Penn recognized that in order for the religious experiment of Pennsylvania to succeed, there must be a break from the traditional practices of an English penal code. It is here that one can see how Quaker resistance takes a political form. In addition, with the persuasion of William Penn, under King James II, Parliament passed the Toleration Act of 1689, and, while not granting to Quakers the rights of full citizenship, or releasing them from paying mandatory Tithes to the Anglican Church, acknowledged their importance as a social force.¹⁷⁶ The Quakers and Puritans, 'had earned the trust and respect of all English people' because of 'their morality and nonviolence under persecution.'¹⁷⁷

Though Foucault is correct about some aspects of Quaker society in the eighteenth century, the resistance of early Quakers of the 1650s was marked by an egalitarian refusal of special respect for magistrates and royalty, a refusal to take oaths,¹⁷⁸ and as a precursor to feminism, the free participation of women in leadership.¹⁷⁹ This set them apart from both their Puritan forbears and English polity. In addition, 'Puritans, Anglicans, and Catholics had all assumed that all Englishmen should belong to one national Church.'¹⁸⁰ The Puritans, unable to see their vision of the Church fulfilled in England, founded a colony in New England where the disputes between the Quakers and Puritans could be seen more starkly. It was because of disputes over models of governing that the Puritans believed that Quakers should be removed from New England. Before the English enforcement of the Toleration Act of 1689, Puritan New England hanged four Quakers. 'The ostensible grounds for these penalties were not the Quakers' religious dissent per se but their seditious qualities:

¹⁷⁵ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 28. In Penn's charter for Pennsylvania, 'The criminal code was enlightened compared to England's, with capital punishment provided only for treason and murder, not the numerous offenses that brought the death penalty in England.'

¹⁷⁶ Barbour & Frost, p. 70.

¹⁷⁷ Barbour & Frost, p. 70.

¹⁷⁸ Hamm, p. 22, 'Friends refused to take any kind of judicial or legal oath. They responded by asserting that Christians should speak the truth at all times and in all circumstances, and that an oath implied a double standard.'

¹⁷⁹ Hamm, p. 23, 'Their refusal to defer to authority, the power and public roles of Quaker women, and their opposition to oaths all seemed direct challenges to the Puritan social order.'

¹⁸⁰ Barbour & Frost, p. 16.

failure to take oaths, to obey laws, to doff their hats to magistrates, and to serve in the militia. Clearly, reasoned the Puritans, Quaker beliefs would undermine all government.¹⁸¹ Quaker reaction to this persecution was a sense of confirmation that their beliefs were correct.

Foucault is not incorrect to point to dissent as having political consequences, but he is mistaken to think that the dissent was altogether politically motivated. Attempting to trace the genealogy of pastoral power through the Church to ostensibly governmental authorities, Foucault misses a key to the emergence of Quaker society. Puritan and Quaker dissent, though it was characterized by a mistrust of Roman Catholic authority and found expression in political institutions, nevertheless was motivated by the desire to become more essentially Christian than the highly politicized Catholic or Anglican rule they dissented from. Though some streams of the Puritan expression of this dissent still retained formal ruling structures, the Quaker innovation centred around a more distinctively egalitarian polity. Foucault is correct that the dispute centred around the Roman Catholic pastorate, but didn't account correctly for the motivations of the development of some of those groups of counter-conduct under examination.

I contend that though Foucault correctly describes some central features of counter-conduct with respect to power relations, he doesn't account for the reasons *those* features were adopted instead of others. It is with respect to these motivations that *The Journal of John Woolman* becomes important. Foucault is correct to recover a description of the modes of escape from pastoral power, but misses the positive motives for adopting those modes. In Woolman's *Journal* we find positive rationales. These rationales are best explained in Foucault by looking at the problem of freedom and discourses about techniques of the self found in his ethical work. Woolman adopts rules for his own behaviour that promote both freedom and social responsibility; they promote a way of living that fully engages the self and society.

2.4.2. John Woolman

Absent from Woolman's *Journal* are any references either to the overweening power of the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, or to the Puritans, though certainly those religious contexts are part of the background of Quaker dissent.¹⁸² The

¹⁸¹ Barbour & Frost. p. 51.

¹⁸² What is missing in Foucault's account of the Quakers is the connective tissue that begins with

connective tissue of Quaker origins in dissent also does not appear in Woolman's *Journal*. As an individual, Woolman—in the process of conducting a relentless internal accounting of his own motivations and behaviours—arrives dynamically at a form of life that satisfies his sense of appropriate ethical conduct. It is here that Foucault's analysis of the genealogy of power, a description of the driving forces behind the emergence of the Quaker ethic, must become part of the analysis of the project of a historical ontology of the self. John Woolman provides an example of the confluence of Foucault's analysis of power relations with the analysis of freedom and enlightenment.

One of the innovations in the Pennsylvania charter, in addition to the reduction of crimes leading to capital punishment, specified that people would be given the freedom of religious conviction. The attitude embodied in this charter contrasts with the treatment of Friends before the establishment of Pennsylvania who 'met bitter persecution at the hands of sects already settled in the Colonies.'¹⁸³ One must observe here the forces at work in Colonial America in order to see how the resistance of the Quakers to both religious and political force was elaborated. A mode of resistance in the Quakers develops into personal techniques of the self as a form of resistance to patterns of life that are antithetical to Quaker egalitarian foundations. Woolman and his compatriots are conscious of the equality of American Indians and Negroes with people of European descent. The *Journal* recounts numerous times when the mistreatment of Woolman's fellow human beings distressed him. The development of techniques of truth-telling within Quaker polity to respond to mistreatment of the American Indian and Negro—and to move anti-slavery propositions into the political sphere—mark the last part of Woolman's development.¹⁸⁴

dissent in the 1650s and results in a mature form of Quaker counter-conduct present in eighteenth-century Colonial America. It would be unfair, though, to expect a genealogy of this sort when all Foucault wished to do was illustrate a single point about internal policing of societies independent of the state.

¹⁸³ *Faith and Practice of the Religious Society of Friends of Philadelphia and Vicinity* (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Store, 1926), p. ix.

¹⁸⁴ This is a natural place to suggest Foucault's move to *parrhesia* (bold speech) was the inevitable outcome of the conversion to truth through techniques of the self as he describes in his last three years at the Collège de France. Bernauer gives some insight into this phenomenon: 'It is this dangerous cultural complex in western culture that creates the need for a way of speaking which is able to distance itself from the religious realm of dogmatic faith and the production of truth in the modern sciences, both natural and human. It is in the perspective of this problematic and need that we are better able to appreciate Foucault's quest for another way of speaking truthfully in his last lectures on

The first part of Woolman's life in New Jersey, and subsequent young adult development as a member of colonial Quaker society, though not well documented outside of Woolman's journal, is known in its broad outlines. From the age of sixteen to the age of nineteen, 'he vacillated between experiencing God's judgment and mercy and "giving way to youthful vanities."¹⁸⁵ After that he became convinced that he must commit himself to obeying God. At the age of thirty-six he began to write his journal, which retrospectively recounts some of his earlier activities. In what follows I describe two examples of how Woolman's spiritual 'exercises' helped him make practical decisions and two examples of his social and political activity. The goal of Woolman's spiritual exercises is freedom, and the tools he uses to decide how best to obtain it are compatible both with sound reasoning and traditional Quaker principles. This is a model of an enlightened decision procedure, which for Kant¹⁸⁶ results in the discovery of one's duty, and which for Foucault requires the elaboration of an historical ontology leading to the development of one's self as a moral agent.

The first of these events, which could be understood as conduct determined by a spiritual exercise, concerned Woolman's decision to reduce the amount of time he spent on work so that he may be free to minister. The second is the decision to travel to England in steerage¹⁸⁷ both to save money and to avoid the 'superfluity' of passage in a cabin. These two incidents took place twenty-four years apart yet in them I find a steady purpose and technique of the self which educated Woolman and motivated his entrance into public life. These two examples are by no means unique. His *Journal* tells of many such incidents. But these will serve as representatives of a life lived out in freedom and aimed toward the discovery of duty that required resistance to contemporaneous power relations.

The decision to reduce his workload was motivated by the felt requirements of his Quaker worldview which interfered with the ordinary course of business growth. What, in fact, is the spiritual technique Woolman used to decide to put off growing his business? Foucault gives us a few clues from the Epicureans, when he speaks of

parrhesia.' James Bernauer, 'Confessions of the Soul: Foucault and Theological Culture', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 557-572, (p. 563).

¹⁸⁵ Barbour & Frost, p. 131; JJW, p. 25-28.

¹⁸⁶ Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 48. 'Morality, on Kant's account, is not a certain set of considerations, identified by their content, but a way of deliberating: the categorical imperative, as I will argue later (4.2.4), is part of the structure or *logic* of practical reason.'

¹⁸⁷ The sailors lived in steerage, the lowest and most miserable part of the ship. Poor passengers used this.

the mature individual using an equipment or *paraskeue*. '*Paraskeue* is precisely what will make possible resistance to every impulse and temptation that may come from the external world. [...] It is the exact opposite of *paideia* [culture],'¹⁸⁸ and is constituted by a knowledge of the world, a *phusiologia*, which in the Quakers is informed by a sensitivity to the spirit's guidance, the Christian scriptures, and a grasp of coherent rational responsibilities derived from them. The spiritual technique displayed by Woolman consisted of a synthesis of these words, influences, and reasons into a plan of action in a logical and justifiable form. What Woolman called exercise in many places in the *Journal* is the process of working out first, the form of the decision and then the requisite timing of the action. Not only did Woolman arrive at a decision after this exercise, but he could explain why he decided what he did. For Woolman as a Quaker this technique is unique only in the degree and scope of its application. Woolman left very little out of the equation and subsequently required a good bit of deliberation for even simple decisions.

Woolman's application of an exercise is clearly different from the Epicureans, in that the Epicureans did not include in their equipment a sensitivity to the leading of the spirit, and that the *paraskeue*, at least in Foucault's description did not appeal to texts. However, any attempt to gain knowledge of the world must include study of some texts, otherwise each learner would be forced to start from the beginning, repeating all the same experiments and blunders as those who went before. Woolman's appeal to the spirit for positive guidance is also different from the purely negative Socratic gift of God, arguably a spiritual effect, that prevented Socrates from carrying out an intended speech or plan of action.

Woolman's decision to limit his money-making work was determined by his desire to remain available to do what the spirit led him to do. He felt that pursuit of financial gain was a dead end that included responsibilities and obligations preventing him from ministering. Further, the occupation of tailoring and sales would force his involvement in the advancement of an excess of superfluity, a whole accompaniment of vain and unnecessary accoutrements beyond what was absolutely required to get along in society. Also, since he felt called to minister, he wanted to be free to do so. This was a personal decision with no necessary public considerations. He did this for himself, to advance his availability to God.

¹⁸⁸ HS, p. 240.

In this first decision Woolman decided to forego any sustained engagement of his efforts toward material prosperity to avoid the entanglements that greed forces on a business person. He tells us, ‘My mind through the power of Truth was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly, so that a way of life free from much entanglements appeared best for me, though the income was small.’¹⁸⁹ He notes in Manuscript C, in terms familiar to the Enlightenment era, that ‘with the blessing of Providence [a man] might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving.’¹⁹⁰ Woolman engaged in this spiritual exercise leading to modest, frugal living, saying ‘that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.’¹⁹¹

Woolman’s public activism was the direct result of his intentional formation of his private life. He concerned himself with the same Quaker egalitarian values he brought to his private encounters. In Woolman and his contemporaries’ public activity, an egalitarian polity within Quaker society became public policy as shown toward American Indians and Negro slaves. This shows a consistent Quaker testimony lived out in public, even though the Quakers in Pennsylvania had given up their positions in government.¹⁹²

In addition to the Quaker virtue of simplicity, Woolman aimed at the freedom afforded only by undistracted attention to the True Shepherd, to the Truth that can be learned only by following the Light Within. He was certainly being responsible not to live outside his means, but also was able to respond to his moral feelings. Participating in the life filled with all the trappings of the rich Quaker business persons of his age, he believed, would damage his sensitivity to the Truth. For example, Woolman recounted: ‘When I eat, drank, and lodged free-cost with people who lived in ease on the hard labour of their slaves, I felt uneasy.’¹⁹³ Woolman took this feeling seriously. This feeling told a truth about slavery, and Woolman’s care in setting up his own living circumstance gave him a moral authority unavailable to those living on the labour of slaves. This example gives us a view of a technique of living that provides first, Woolman’s consideration of his own rational and spiritual freedom, and second affords empathy for his fellows living as slaves. Third, though

¹⁸⁹ JJW, p. 35.

¹⁹⁰ JJW, p. 35.

¹⁹¹ JJW, p. 35.

¹⁹² Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 139.

¹⁹³ JJW, p. 38.

Woolman is aware of his own youth and comparative insignificance, he is troubled so deeply by the mistreatment of slaves that he speaks privately to abusive slaveholders, trying to convince them of their wrongdoing.¹⁹⁴

The Christian Scriptures do not explicitly oppose slavery, and justifications for the perpetuation of the institution of slavery were often bolstered by appeal to the Scriptures. But the Quakers took the Scriptures as secondary guidance, a testimony of God's working in history. Primary guidance was the sole responsibility of the individual following the Light Within. Individual techniques of the self like those of Woolman, to remain undistracted by external influences in the attempt to discern the truth, are marked by continuous lifelong effort. 'We were taught by renewed experience to labour for an inward stillness, at no time to seek for words, but to live in the spirit of Truth and utter that to the people which Truth opened to us.'¹⁹⁵ And, near the end of his life Woolman wrote a letter to a friend saying, 'When I followed the trade of a tailor, I had a feeling of that which pleased the proud mind in people, and growing uneasy, was strengthened to leave off that which was superfluous in my trade.'¹⁹⁶ This continuity in thinking about living a life constrained from excess is evidence of a persistent spiritual technique.

In the second example, Woolman, near the end of his life booked passage to England in order to travel among the Quaker meetings there. His friend, Samuel Emlen, Jr. who was to travel with him, took passage on the same ship in a cabin. But Woolman, 'feeling a draught in my mind toward the steerage of the same ship,'¹⁹⁷ believed that if he were to travel on that ship, he should do so in steerage. This was not the end of his decision-making process. The owner of the ship, John Head, also a Quaker, tried to convince Woolman not to take passage in steerage, citing the hardship that it would be. Woolman, though troubled by possible hardship, recognized that the cabins were fitted with some 'superfluity of workmanship' which added to the cost of the boat and therefore to the cost of the cabin,¹⁹⁸ and so decided that it was best, for economy, to reside in steerage for the journey. Woolman noted that these superfluities were meant to cater to the vanities of the passengers, an

¹⁹⁴ JJW, p. 38.

¹⁹⁵ JJW, p. 42.

¹⁹⁶ JJW, p. 191.

¹⁹⁷ JJW, p. 163.

¹⁹⁸ JJW, p. 164.

attitude he thought to be contrary to ‘that wisdom which is pure.’¹⁹⁹ He confirmed, in the face of their protests, both for himself and for his friends that he would not take passage in a cabin.

From an initial feeling, ‘a draught’ as he said, Woolman found rational justifications coherent with his general sensibility of participation with those in society who were suffering while the wealthy prospered. When he finally took passage on the first day of the fifth month of 1772, he felt satisfied that his proceedings were not in his ‘own will but under the power of the cross of Christ.’²⁰⁰ But the determination of what constituted being under the power of the cross of Christ was personal, rational, social, within the techniques and practices under which Woolman subjected himself continuously. Further, his sensitivity to the spirit served as motive for the discovery of justifications. The moral techniques he subjected himself to both provided the possibility of being sensible to guidance of the spirit, and also the context for interpretation of that guidance. These techniques also have an effect in the Society of Friends as he communed with people of similar demeanour in the mid-eighteenth century. The two following examples tell the story of the personal and social struggle Woolman had making decisions about the American Indians and the colonial slaves.

In 1755, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in the French and Indian War that impinged on the borders of Pennsylvania, the Quakers, a minority in the legislature at that time, ‘withdrew from Pennsylvania’s General Assembly *en masse* rather than support a vote for troops and war taxes.’²⁰¹ Though the Quakers abandoned political power in Pennsylvania rather than bowing to English force over this issue, some of their number still refused to pay the tax. They did this risking imprisonment because they opposed both the war against the American Indians and the inevitable profiteering and misuse of funds raised by taxation.²⁰² Woolman struggled over the issue of paying the war tax and decided to refrain from doing so: ‘To refuse the active payment of a tax which our Society generally paid was exceeding disagreeable, but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful.’²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ JJW, p. 165.

²⁰⁰ JJW, p. 165.

²⁰¹ Foster, p. 139.

²⁰² JJW, pp. 80-82.

²⁰³ JJW, p. 77.

Woolman recounted a three-week journey he took in 1763 to the wilderness parts of Pennsylvania seeking an opportunity to reconcile the colonists with their American Indian neighbours.²⁰⁴ Becoming acquainted with some Indians in 1761, Woolman was convinced that the same divine power of guidance he himself claimed was present in the Indians.²⁰⁵ Here Woolman appeals to a universal law of human nature guided by his Quaker training. But this perception must reside in some sensibility beyond mere training, as evidenced by the negative way some fellow Quakers treated the Indians and negroes.²⁰⁶ Woolman's behaviour could not have been attributed to Quaker training alone. However, the forms of Quaker discipline set up the conditions under which Woolman could advance.²⁰⁷

After the realization that the Indians also felt the touch of the divine, he felt drawn to visit them, but waited until he thought the time was correct.²⁰⁸ When in 1763 he believed the time for the journey had come, his wife was deeply concerned, but Woolman, after further consideration recounted:

...my mind became settled in a belief that it was my duty to proceed on my journey, and she bore it with a good degree of resignation. In this conflict of spirit there were great searchings of heart and strong cries to the Lord that no motion might be in the least degree attended to but that of the pure spirit of Truth.²⁰⁹

Without trying to sort out either the foundation of Woolman's spiritual exercise or what in fact constituted the Truth, he believed it possible to have both a legitimate connection to his conscience and a sensibility of truth greater than that which he himself could arrive at merely through reason. Reason certainly had its part to play, and the reformulation of humankind's relation to God for the Quakers of the eighteenth-century Quietists²¹⁰ is indicative of the age of Enlightenment in attitudes arguably similar to the results of the Pietist upbringing of Immanuel Kant. For

²⁰⁴ JJW, p. 11.

²⁰⁵ JJW, pp. 122-23.

²⁰⁶ Woolman's terms referring to Native and African Americans were the *lingua franca* and are not used with disrespect.

²⁰⁷ JBR, p. 321, 'The self forms itself, but it forms itself within a set of formative practices that are characterized as modes of subjectivations. That the range of its possible forms is delimited in advance by such modes of subjectivation does not mean that the self fails to form itself, that the self is fully formed. On the contrary, it is compelled to form itself, but to form itself within forms that are already more or less in operation and underway.'

²⁰⁸ JJW, p. 122-23.

²⁰⁹ JJW, p. 124.

²¹⁰ Barbour & Frost, p. 132. Quoting the *Journal* they say, 'Quietism merged with rationalism in picturing God as an "Inward Principle," the "divine wisdom," and "invisible incomprehensible Being" of whom "no language" can be "equal" to convey a "clear idea." A person's "harmony" with God shows in "universal love" and "right order."'

Woolman as for Kant, practical wisdom was the ground upon which truths of reason were to be tested. In addition, for Woolman, an unalloyed pure conscience was like Kant's good will, the ground for appropriate derivation of duty. While Kant struggled with the technical expression of this rule, Woolman struggled with the relations between peoples affected by it as reflected in his ethical struggle to act according to that rule.

Woolman's struggle was not to break out of the bonds of law, as if freedom's task was to allow any behaviour whatsoever, but to behave freely on truths that were by his account often problematic, transgressive, or resistant to normally accepted behaviour.

With respect to slavery, the *Journal* tells of Woolman's journey toward both a theoretical and practical resistance to the forces of slavery before the American Revolutionary War. Though at first Woolman allowed the fact of slavery, fair treatment of slaves was important to him. 'Often, when entertained in a slaveholder's home, he insisted upon paying the slaves for their services.'²¹¹ A poorly treated slave was, to Woolman, a sign of the corrupt character of the owner.²¹² He tried to persuade the slaveholder either to treat slaves better, or free them. He was deeply disturbed that some of his fellow Quakers held slaves. His view as a Christian forbade counting people as property.

In 1758, through a series of yearly assemblies of the Quakers in Philadelphia, Woolman and others persuaded the assembly to recommend that their fellow Quakers free their slaves. John Greenleaf Whittier in 'An Appreciation,' written as a preface to the 1871 edition of Woolman's *Journal*, said 'The annual assemblage of the Yearly Meeting in 1758 at Philadelphia must ever be regarded as one of the most important religious convocations in the history of the Christian Church.'²¹³ Woolman said nothing during the whole meeting while other issues were being discussed. When the slavery issue came up it was at first agreed that members of the Society of Friends should not buy slaves. But appealing to the purity of God, Woolman and his compatriots convinced the assembly to 'induce Friends who held slaves' to set them free and provide for them.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Foster, p. 138.

²¹² JJW, p. 38.

²¹³ John Greenleaf Whittier, 'Introduction' in *The Journal of John Woolman*, (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1871), p. 16.

²¹⁴ Whittier, pp. 19.

The context for those moral techniques, both guiding personal and political behaviour as illustrated by the four examples above, were under Quaker discipline as well as a judgment of the truth consistent with a grasp of the rationalistic movement within the Enlightenment. It is here that I find the concern for freedom in Kant and Foucault fulfilled. In Kant, the political movement within the Quaker assemblies, made way for the possibility of enlightenment by legislating freedom for slaves. Woolman demonstrates a philosophical ethos, both in the exercises of his life as techniques of the self and in the practice of journaling in the compilation of a historical ontology of himself consistent with Foucault's requirement of the development of a historical ontology. Woolman transgressed the ordinary expected practice of his contemporary colonials and Quaker brethren by breaking moral barriers to equitable treatment of all people, often against the recommendations of those who normally agreed with him. Woolman and his fellows in the anti-slavery movement exemplify in practice the individual and social moral ideal detailed by Kant and the practical techniques endorsed by Foucault.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at Foucault's views of enlightenment. The quest for enlightenment was the central theme and the force behind a development of resistance into various sub-cultures, what Foucault called counter-conducts, such as that of the Quakers. My engagement with Immanuel Kant and his observations of the Enlightenment was an attempt to locate Foucault's concerns with the abuses of reason and rationality, so that I would be able to develop a narrative about the development of the self in Foucault's aesthetic terms. An aesthetic development of the self does not reduce the need for both clarity and consistency in the project, but it provides flexibility to examine other features of self-development in terms of the techniques of the self that I illustrated with John Woolman. The introduction of Christine Korsgaard's account of Kant's Categorical Imperative, was meant to allay some of Foucault's concerns about the mishandling of reason, and to modify Kant's account so as to admit the possibility of a conflict of duties, a conflict of reasons that in Foucault's analysis seems impossible to avoid. The discussion about reason of state was meant as a context to reintegrate Kant with his own history and development. (His development did not take place in perfect liberty, but rather under the specific pressures and powers that constituted eighteenth-century Prussian political reason of

state.) The discussion of reason of state was also a means to explain resistance, critique, and the development of counter-conduct.

The elaboration of Quaker religion and politics of the seventeenth century shows that even under reason of state, a group of individuals, agreeing on some basic precepts, can successfully integrate their lives on terms different from and opposed to reason of state. Though in conflict with the state, by force of moral culture, they changed that political culture and the reason of state that supported it in favour of tolerance of religious differences. From this scenario Woolman enters as a product of Quaker moral culture and colonial freedoms. Woolman, following the precepts and intention of Quaker morality in his own self-development, uncovers problematic practices—political, social, and religious—that contradict the very spirit of his own maturing sensibilities. Exercising himself deeply to do the right thing and have the right attitude, (in Foucault, the philosophical ethos,) turned outward transforming Quaker culture, and helped set the course of anti-slavery reform in America for the next two centuries. Woolman's life and *Journal* were certainly a permanent critique of his historical era.

Though in Foucault, the quest for enlightenment had no preset goal, the development of the Quaker expression of enlightenment, though unpredictable, on reflection seems inevitable. Just as the reasons of state could not be reduced to formulae, one could not predict the forms that counter-conduct would take. Neither can one predict the sort of techniques of the self that will be required for an adequate response to the pressures and powers that impinge on the souls of modern people.

The next chapter of this dissertation will be an examination of Foucault's analysis of techniques of the self, and of the reasons why thinking of self-constitution in terms of these techniques is more useful for the discovery of freedom than attempting to derive human goals by means of a reductive teleology for human development under the guidance of some supposed universals of human experience.

Chapter 3: Technologies of the Self

3.1. Introduction

Foucault uses the term ‘technology of the self’ to speak about a cultural form, a way of life practiced with a constellation of techniques of the self centred around the care of the self.¹ So a technology of the self could be construed as an ethos, or worldview, whereas the techniques would be individual methods used that have the goal of self-mastery.² ‘Foucault defines these technologies of the self as a certain number of practices and techniques through which individuals *actively* fashion their own identities.’³ For example, Foucault speaks of the technology of the self practiced by the Pythagoreans, and ascetic components such as dietary requirements as individual techniques within that ethos.⁴ Foucault gives ‘the word “ascetical” a very general meaning, [...] of an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being.’⁵

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Foucault’s work with an eye to extracting a technology of the self, a certain mode of being, as a philosophical ethos.

For Foucault philosophy was a spiritual exercise, an exercise of oneself in which one submitted oneself to modifications and tests, underwent changes, in order to learn to think differently. This idea of philosophy as a way of life, [...] of ethics as proposing styles of life is one of the most forceful and provocative directions of Foucault’s later thought.⁶

I will look at the technique of writing specifically as an example of how those techniques of the self fit into a philosophical ethos whose goal is the care of the self, and has as a result self-mastery.

3.1.1. Context Within This Dissertation

In the first chapter of this dissertation I examined the movement of Foucault’s thinking from the early to the later writings along with some difficulties the movements of his thinking forced to the surface. Within the overall context of his writings, the second chapter focused on the issue of resistance to power and the elaboration of freedom within the context of a discussion about the Enlightenment

¹ HS, pp. 46-48.

² FAE, p. 12, ‘For the individual in Classical antiquity [...] it was the ideal of self-mastery; a self-mastery which, moreover ensured one’s mastery over others.’

³ FAF, p. 3.

⁴ HS, p. 48

⁵ FF, p. 2.

⁶ CCF, Arnold I. Davidson, ‘Ethics as Ascetics,’ p. 131.

and the difficulties in its definition. Also in the second chapter I laid out the transition from his discussions of power in the early and mid 1970s to his treatment of ethical government and individual freedom in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I used the example of the seventeenth-century Quaker John Woolman to connect resistance to power to the elaboration of an ethos leading to freedom; this is an ethos structured around techniques of the self, exercises of purification, guidance, and ministry.

In this chapter, after outlining Foucault's ethical works, I will discuss specific techniques of the self as they are related to the acquisition of knowledge, as they give the practitioner a right to knowledge on the basis of self-transformation. Using the technique of writing, which is one of the techniques of the self outlined by Foucault in his examination of the Ancients, as a background I will give four examples of self-transformation: the Ancients, Foucault, and in the twentieth century, Emma Goldman, and the Freedom Writers.

In the next chapter I will trace a movement of critique within modern ethics that has led to a philosophical ethos, an eclectic methodology, and a new way of thinking about knowledge within techniques of the self, which is new to our age. I believe these techniques of the self are present and yet undefined in Foucault's work in the 1980s, and Foucault presciently marked the transition, the movement toward these techniques. These techniques are ethical at their core because they mark a return to the legitimation of knowledge on the basis of a movement toward freedom, a return to the self as a core spiritual concern for possible authentic engagement with the self, others, society, and the world.

3.1.2. Foucault's Ethical Practice and Theory

Foucault demonstrated practical ethical concerns by his participation in the student rebellions of the late 1960s and early 1970s in France and by his engagement with projects associated with political treatment of disenfranchised peoples in the prisons of France and the United States in the 1970s. But Foucault's theoretical work on ethics was a slow development, rising out of some of his practical concerns with French polity. By the middle of the 1970s Foucault had developed a theory of power relations as a critique of Western civilization. In the mid to late 1970s Foucault looked for a positive mechanism whereby the relation between resistance and power formed the structures of modern society. In *Security, Territory, Population*, the lectures of 1978, Foucault drew up a sketch of the process of the social development

of the structure of the modern state as the effect of some strategies of enclosure adopted from pastoral power. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the lectures of 1979, Foucault, in an extended treatment of twentieth-century liberal economic theories, discussed a theory of human behaviour that could lead to mutual cooperation between social architects and the population aimed at profitably building an economic structure within society. In *The Government of the Living*, the lectures of 1980, Foucault examined the question: ‘How was a type of government of men formed in which one is required not simply to obey but to reveal what one is by stating it?’⁷ Within the matrix of religious and political forces society had become, Foucault intensified his focus on the problem of formation of the subject. It is within this context that Foucault examined some of the connections between governmentality and the political and religious disciplines of early Christianity. In *Subjectivity and Truth*, the lecture series of 1981, Foucault asked a number of questions revolving around the problem of the establishment of the subject within its overall contexts of knowledge and experience, institutions and schemas. He suggests that

The guiding thread [...] is constituted by what one might call the “techniques of the self,” which is to say, the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge.⁸

The content of *Subjectivity and Truth*, an examination of ancient literature and culture, became a substantial part of volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality*. In this series of lectures Foucault moved his focus away from problems of the relations of power to a discussion of the elaboration and formation of the subject through technologies of the self.

This collection of lecture series from 1978 to 1981 includes a discussion of the acts and thoughts of subjects as determining factors in the formation of society, the relation of the self and society, and finally, a preliminary examination of the formation of the self. This mutual production of social structures and subjects became the general focus of his work because of his increasing concern with the subject; this

⁷ EST, p. 81.

⁸ EST, summary of the 1981 lecture series: ‘Subjectivity and Truth,’ p. 87. Also, ‘But 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 own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and in this 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 “techniques of the self.”’ EST, ‘Sexuality and Solitude,’ p. 177. This essay was written around the same time as the *Subjectivity and Truth* lecture series.

is what he described in the 1980s as the central project of his work.⁹ ‘Another way of understanding Foucault’s new concern with the self’s relation to itself is to think of it [...] as at the intersection of two themes that he had previously treated, namely, a history of subjectivity and an analysis of the forms of governmentality.’¹⁰

3.2. Foucault’s Ethical Writing Project

In this section I will survey what have come to be recognized as Foucault’s ethical writings. I will briefly outline Foucault’s lectures, books, articles, and interviews and summarize how his ethical position is characterized. Though the lectures preceding the series of 1982, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, include elements of an ethical world view—especially the series of 1981, *Subjectivity and Truth*—it is explicitly in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that Foucault considers the formation of the subject in terms of *epimeleia heautou*, the care of the self.¹¹

In addition to *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, I will survey essays, lectures, and interviews that organize and reorganize Foucault’s ethical position. I will look at his English language lecture entitled ‘Technologies of the Self’¹² given in October of 1982 at the University of Vermont. This lecture is both an overview of the material delivered in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* as well as a further development and refinement of that same material.

3.2.1. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*

3.2.1.1. Purpose of the Lecture Series

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, the lecture series of 1982, Foucault devoted his effort to elaborating the problem of development of the subject, of self-knowledge in terms of care of the self. He began the series by asking, ‘In what historical form do the relations between the “subject” and “truth,” [...] take shape in

⁹ Power, p. 327. ‘Thus it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research.’ Spoken to Dreyfus and Rabinow in 1982.

¹⁰ CCF, Arnold I. Davidson, ‘Ethics as Ascetics,’ p. 126.

¹¹ The Collège de France lecture series *Subjectivity and Truth* is not yet publicly available in either French or English, so the final two published volumes of *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*—second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*—will have to stand as representatives of Foucault’s later works.

¹² TS, pp. 16-49. Also found in EST, pp. 223-51, amended and with annotations to reflect the edition found in *Dits et écrits*.

the West?’¹³ He answers by taking up ‘the notion of “care of oneself”’¹⁴ or, as he says,

a very complex, rich, and frequently employed Greek notion which had a long life throughout Greek culture: the notion of *epimeleia heautou*, [...] care of oneself, attending to oneself, being concerned about oneself.¹⁵

He notes that philosophy has not paid much attention to *epimeleia heautou*, and has instead devoted its attention to ‘the famous Delphic prescription of *gnothi seauton* (“know yourself”).’¹⁶

Know yourself was one of three postulates of prudence one should consider before posing a query to the god. Foucault corrected a mistaken general trend of interpretation by saying that ‘know yourself’ was a reminder to the supplicant that ‘you are only a mortal after all, not a god, and that you should neither presume too much on your strength nor oppose the powers of the deity.’¹⁷ Foucault reminded us that in philosophical texts, the Delphic pronouncement, whatever its meaning might be, is always associated with Socrates, and ‘in some texts [...] there is [...] a kind of subordination of the expression of the rule “know yourself” to the precept of care of the self.’¹⁸ Foucault justified this partly by the discursive Socratic practice of waking people to care for themselves,¹⁹ and partly by referring to the commentators Proclus and Olympiodorus who suggest that one should start their studies of Plato and Platonism with the *Alcibiades I* where Plato outlines the necessity of giving attention to the care of the self [*epimeleia heautou*] to Alcibiades.²⁰

The Stoics, Cynics, and Epicureans also placed the primary weight for the philosophic ethos on the care of the self. Foucault thought that the care of the self is not only a cultural phenomenon in the Greek and Roman era, but that it is also ‘an event in thought,’²¹ and that the historian of thought must grasp ‘when a cultural phenomenon [...] actually constitutes within the history of thought a decisive moment that is still significant for our modern mode of being subjects.’²²

¹³ HS, p. 2.

¹⁴ HS, p. 2.

¹⁵ HS, p. 2.

¹⁶ HS, p. 3.

¹⁷ HS, p. 4.

¹⁸ HS, p. 4.

¹⁹ HS, pp. 7, 8.

²⁰ HS, p. 170.

²¹ HS, p. 9.

²² HS, p. 9.

So, to discover an early part of the formation of the Christian West, Foucault traced the lineage of the care of the self from the Greco-Roman world into the Christian world where it acquired a new and divergent meaning from the Socratic practice of waking people up to the care of the self.

In the process of elaborating this genealogy of the care of the self, Foucault enumerates three categories of description useful for understanding the care of the self. First, ‘the *epimeleia heautou* is an attitude toward the self, others and the world.’ Second, *epimeleia heautou* is a ‘form of attention, of looking. [...] The care of the self implies a certain way of attending to what we think and what takes place in our thought.’ And third, what is most important for this thesis, is that ‘*epimeleia* also always designates a number of actions exercised on the self by the self, actions by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself.’²³ It is within this process and the resultant change that one gains the ability, the right to comprehend the truth.

Foucault gave two reasons why ‘know yourself’ took precedence in Western culture over the care of the self. The first is found in Christianity which due to its austerity toward the self in the service of others, redefines the care of the self by prescribing behaviour that denies the self in a ‘morality of non-egoism.’²⁴ More important for Foucault was the second reason, what he called the ‘Cartesian moment.’²⁵

The Cartesian moment came into play in two ways. First, by ‘requalifying the *gnōthi seauton*’ and second, ‘by discrediting the *epimeleia heautou*,’ Descartes ‘in the *Meditations*, placed self-evidence (*l’èvidence*) at the origin, the point of departure of the philosophical approach. [...] This] made the [dictum] “know yourself” into a fundamental means of access to truth.’²⁶ Discrediting the care of the self is more complicated. The Ancients, with the exception of Aristotle, never considered that ‘knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth.’²⁷ Knowledge was always tied to the ‘spiritual’ conditions under which it could be possible.

Foucault outlined three conditions of this spirituality. First,

²³ HS, pp. 10-11.

²⁴ HS, p. 13.

²⁵ HS, p. 14, and Edward McGushin, ‘Foucault and the Problem of the Subject’, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 623-648, (p. 638).

²⁶ HS, p. 14.

²⁷ HS, p. 17.

that the truth is never given to the subject by right. [...] It postulates that the truth is never given to the subject by the simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*), which would be justified simply by the fact that he is the subject and because he possesses this or that structure of subjectivity.²⁸

Second, one must be changed before the truth becomes available. 'There can be no truth without a conversion or a transformation of the subject.'²⁹ Third, when one has in fact been transformed, contact with the truth itself transforms the subject.³⁰ So, one must set up the conditions where truth becomes possible through a set of exercises and changes to one's practice, through techniques of the self.³¹ 'Spirituality is a care of the self which transforms one in the necessary way to gain access to the truth.'³²

The use of Descartes *Meditations* by Foucault must be qualified by the structure of the *Meditations* as literature. Edward McGushin makes a good case³³ that despite the results of the *Meditations*, described here as Foucault's Cartesian moment, Descartes meant them as a spiritual exercise. The project of engaging in doubt as the *Meditations* require: giving time, effort, and consideration to the problems with belief is every bit as difficult as the work of self-examination required by the Socrates of Alcibiades. With this caveat in mind, let's proceed now to an examination of the results of the Cartesian moment.

When, in the history of thought after the Cartesian moment, knowledge became available without the requisite spiritual exercise, those spiritual exercises were disqualified with the conversions they implied. Foucault reminded his readers that there remain conditions for knowledge after the Cartesian moment, though, without conversion. First, one must not be insane, and second, one must possess the requisite cultural conditions such as education and retain a broad range of moral attitudes, such as disinterestedness. This will lead finally to the constitution of an objective view within the subject. But these qualifications 'do not concern the subject

²⁸ HS, p. 15.

²⁹ HS, p. 15. Also CCF, Arnold I. Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics,' p. 137: 'But this achievement can only be attained through the arduous path of spiritual exercises that require nothing less than a transformation of one's way of life. It is this self-transforming, life-transforming *askésis* that makes Socrates, and every other true philosopher, *atopos*.'

³⁰ HS, p. 16.

³¹ HS, p. 15.

³² FA, p. 39, and Edward McGushin, 'Foucault and the Problem of the Subject', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 623-648, (p. 635), 'Spirituality was a singular way of experiencing the relation between the subject and the truth that lay at the basis [of] care of the self. [...] Further, spirituality implies that it would be impossible to transform oneself ontologically without this transformation resulting in ontically manifest effects or consequences.'

³³ Edward F. McGushin, 'Foucault's Cartesian Meditations', in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 45:1.177, (March 2005), 41-59.

in his being: they only concern the individual in his concrete existence.³⁴ After the Cartesian moment the cultural and moral qualifications no longer have anything to do with the qualifications of the subject but only with external conditions for the acquisition of knowledge. The acquisition of truth entails no necessary transformation of the subject. The subject, suggests Foucault, who comes into contact with the truth without spiritual transformations, cannot be saved by it.³⁵ In this way, knowledge became separate from spirituality. The care of the self ceases to be a necessary qualification for knowledge when only ‘objective,’ external, cultural qualifications are required.

With many caveats about the actual time of the Cartesian moment,³⁶ Foucault reminded his audience that the process of the transition away from work on the self as a criterion of truth, is found many times, in many writings and authors. There is no abrupt moment of transition, though there are indicators that the Cartesian moment is at hand. ‘The disengagement did not take place abruptly with the appearance of modern science. The disengagement, the separation, was a slow process whose origin and development should be located, rather, in theology.’³⁷ Foucault traced early evidence of the disengagement and separation to Aquinas, who, under the influence of Aristotelian rationality, set up the conditions of a rational theology, separating knowledge of God from necessary work on the self.³⁸ Foucault suggested then, that starting with Kant, one can begin to look at the process of the transformation found in the Cartesian moment after the tide had already changed.³⁹

³⁴ HS, p. 18.

³⁵ HS, p. 19.

³⁶ This treatment of timing for the event of the Cartesian moment is consistent with what Foucault does in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* concerning the emergence of discursive formations.

³⁷ HS, p. 27.

³⁸ HS, pp. 26, 29, 191.

³⁹ HS, p. 28. For example, the examination of Kant and Foucault in the second chapter of this dissertation is an effort to distinguish the explicit purposes of Kant and Foucault’s readings of enlightenment to show first, that there is a distinction between Kant’s explicit purpose in the *Groundwork* and the requirements of morality in the face of evil. Kant’s objectifying moral rationality must be subjected to the care of the self to enable the self to preserve its own autonomy. Second, Foucault required one to free oneself through the construction of an historical ontology. Freeing oneself requires formation of the self by the self by attention to breaking through, crossing over, even transgressing socially determined constraints in order that one may begin to think differently, to think new thoughts, eventually to construct a new social milieu.

Korsgaard’s reconstruction of Kant illustrates first, the deep puzzle of an enlightenment trend toward an objectifying rationality, one that on Foucault’s account marks the Cartesian moment. Second, it illustrates that when Kant is positioned in a real-world ethical dilemma he must choose an ethical solution that poses a conflict between components of his rational ethical system in favour of self preservation at the cost of another’s autonomy.

The change is not absolute even though the physical sciences, in some fashion, reject as false science those practices which have at their core a spiritual exercise requiring conversion.⁴⁰ But the demarcation between a spirituality and a science is not quite as simple as that, for example, within the psychoanalytic or Marxist communities where ‘There has been an attempt to conceal the conditions of spirituality specific to these forms of knowledge within a number of social forms.’⁴¹ So there is a movement away from spiritual exercise as being the qualification for knowledge, but some social models that lay claim to rational objectivity—and make claims to scientific authority—are constituted by techniques of elaborating the self on par with a form of spirituality similar to that of the Ancients discussed by Foucault.

The theological and rational movement away from spiritual forms of qualification for knowledge is perhaps the reason why debates about ethics in the late twentieth century became so important. Ethics as a discipline was revitalized by disputes centred around practice, subsequent to the rise of emotivism of the early twentieth century. This revitalization was evidenced by critique of the rationalist bent of ethical theory and a renewed interest in Aristotle and the Ancients with many attempts to reengage spirituality with ethical theory in one form or another. Foucault’s effort to re-establish the groundwork of Ancient ethics along the lines of the care of the self is an important contribution to this dialogue.

3.2.1.2. Summary of Three Models

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault traced the movements of three models of the care of the self in ancient thought and practice: first, the Socratic-Platonic moment, second, the Hellenistic culture ‘of the cultivation of the self,’ and third, the forms of Christian asceticism as they differ from their predecessors in purpose and practice.⁴² Foucault’s research led him to believe that the Platonic and

Though Korsgaard’s proposal does not achieve, or attempt to achieve, a return to the spiritual techniques Foucault proposes as constituent elements and requirements of knowledge, she nonetheless poses the moral dilemma that would require their implementation when one might choose to transgress Kant’s formula of humanity with the result of causing some regret. (CKE, p. 153)

It may be, as Foucault says, that ‘there has been an attempt to conceal the conditions of spirituality specific to these forms of knowledge within a number of social forms. (HS, p. 29)’ In the context of this remark, Foucault is not speaking of ethics, but rather near-sciences like Marxism and psychotherapy. Ethics cannot be thought of as a science, even though, for example, Kant, Mill, and the neo-positivists made great efforts to ground ethical theory and practice in reason, logic, first principles, and linguistics, much as one would do to justify a scientific proposition.

⁴⁰ HS, p. 28.

⁴¹ HS, p. 29.

⁴² HS, p. 30.

Christian models—‘the model of recollection and the model of exegesis—have obviously had an immense historical prestige which has hidden’⁴³ the Hellenistic model. Foucault’s innovation was to highlight some of the connections between the three models, while at the same time privileging the emphasis on the care of the self as a unifying theme within the Hellenistic model. The Hellenists were not so much concerned with the Delphic, Platonic, or eventually Christian versions of the *gnōthi seauton* (know yourself) as they were with the practices that lead to a stable life. The Hellenists concerned themselves with a technology that defined a flourishing life and whilst not ignoring knowledge of the self or the cosmos, it was focused on developing the art of living, and the methods for bringing all the threads of human thought, desire, and practice under the dominion of the self. But the emergence of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics in the fifth to third centuries BCE as part of the flourishing of Greek philosophy drew much from the pre-Socratics with respect to their cosmology, and from various streams of Pythagoreans, Platonists, and others. With respect to practice, Foucault suggests that Greek society in the time of Plato already took the ‘care of the self’ to be a general prescription that is defined and developed in the dialogue *Alcibiades I*.

3.2.1.2.1. Model One: Platonic

Foucault justifies his discussion of the centrality of the Platonic practice of the care of the self by suggesting that the *Alcibiades I* was Plato’s primary text. If one wishes to study Plato, one must start with the *Alcibiades*.⁴⁴ Further, Foucault referred to the place in the *Apology* where Socrates describes his job as that of stopping people in the street and reminding them to care for their souls.

In the *Alcibiades* Socrates confronts Alcibiades with the fact that he does not have the *tekhnē*, the art, ‘the know-how (*savoir*)’⁴⁵ to rule the state because the men who were to be teaching him this art, instead, used him for sexual favours without fulfilling their social responsibility to instruct him. Even though Alcibiades was old enough to have learned this art, his lovers had abandoned him before imparting this knowledge. So Socrates took up the challenge of spurring Alcibiades to care for

⁴³ HS, p. 256.

⁴⁴ HS, p. 170. Both Proclus and Olympiodorus, second-century Neo-Platonist commentators, ‘agree that the *Alcibiades* [...] should be placed at the head of Plato’s works and that the study of Plato and Platonism, and so of philosophy generally, should be approached through this dialogue.’ Note: I will henceforth refer to *Alcibiades I* as *Alcibiades*.

⁴⁵ HS, p. 35.

himself. It was an uncomfortable moment for Alcibiades to discover that though he was in a position to rule Athens, he was not qualified.

By using the *Alcibiades*, Foucault wanted us to see three things about the care of the self in Plato. First, caring for oneself required knowing oneself. One must know one's limitations, one's strengths. One must have an honest estimation of oneself.⁴⁶ *Gnōthi seauton* (know yourself) in this context 'is given in a weak form. It is simply a counsel of prudence. [...] Socrates asks Alcibiades to reflect on himself a little, review his life, and compare himself with his rivals.'⁴⁷ Second, the care of the self was a project for the young. It was part of the process of training that would enable a young aristocrat to take his place in Athenian politics. The exercise of caring for the self was not one that had to be continued throughout one's life. It was preparatory. Third, the care of the self was not for everybody; it was reserved for those who were to be part of the political process. 'The need to be concerned about the self is linked to the exercise of power.'⁴⁸

In addition to these three characteristics, Socrates posed the problem of the nature of this self which is in need of being cared for. 'It seems to me that the outcome of the argument of the *Alcibiades* on the question, "What is oneself, and what meaning should be given to oneself when we say that one should take care of the self?" is the soul as subject and not at all the soul as substance.'⁴⁹ The second problem Socrates posed concerned what was required to take care of one's soul. The answer to this query is more difficult than to the first, but it is also more useful.

Well before the time of Plato there were practices of the self—techniques or methods that set up the conditions for knowledge of the truth, whereby one could qualify for access to the truth. 'Rights of purification, [...] techniques for concentrating the soul [...] and] techniques of withdrawal'⁵⁰ are typical. In addition, 'a fourth example, [...] is the practice of endurance, which is linked, [...] to the concentration of the soul and to withdrawal (*anakhōrēsis*) into oneself, and which enables one either to bear painful and hard ordeals or to resist temptations one may be

⁴⁶ This is not unlike the advice given to the Roman church by Paul. 'For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.' Rom. 12:3 NASB

⁴⁷ HS, p. 35.

⁴⁸ HS, p. 36.

⁴⁹ HS, p. 57.

⁵⁰ HS, p. 47.

offered.’⁵¹ Foucault does not attempt to draw up an exhaustive list; these are only representative samples. But their use can be seen in the Pythagoreans, Platonists, Stoics, Epicureans, Neo-Pythagoreans, and Neo-Platonists of the Hellenistic era.⁵²

These techniques cannot be implemented by the self without some guidance. What is required is a master, a guide. ‘The care of the self is actually something that always has to go through the relationship to someone else who is the master. One cannot care for the self except by way of the master.’⁵³ Socrates plays the master to Alcibiades when he fosters Alcibiades’ care of himself. And it is in this way that Alcibiades must learn to be his own guide, to evaluate himself in light of one greater than he. In the *Alcibiades*, Socrates recommended that ‘to see oneself, one must [...] look at oneself in the divine element: One must know the divine in order to see oneself.’⁵⁴ So, one improves by being transformed by the truth through looking at a reflection of oneself in the divine element.⁵⁵ One therefore becomes fit to rule since ‘taking care of the self and being concerned with justice amount to the same thing.’⁵⁶

To sum up, the Platonic position is that the care of the self is the ‘spiritual movement of the soul with regard to itself and the divine.’⁵⁷ Obtaining the reflection of the self in the divine and the divine in the self characterizes the outcome of techniques that qualify the self for access to the truth, to justice, and to the right to rule.

3.2.1.2.2. Model Two: Hellenistic

Foucault shifts his focus from Plato and the Platonists to the second model of the care of the self in ancient thought and practice within the first and second centuries CE, that of the Roman and Hellenistic world. Three characteristics of caring for the self⁵⁸ in the *Alcibiades* have disappeared from the prescriptions found in the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics. First, caring for the self becomes a project for anybody and is recommended to everyone without regard to status. It is not confined to the elite, to the aristocrat, or to those being groomed to rule. Second, ‘the specific activity of governing others no longer seems to be the *raison d’être* for being

⁵¹ HS, p. 48.

⁵² HS, p. 50.

⁵³ HS, p. 58.

⁵⁴ HS, p. 71.

⁵⁵ HS, p. 71.

⁵⁶ HS, p. 72.

⁵⁷ HS, p. 77.

⁵⁸ Found in the third paragraph of 3.2.1.2.1.

concerned about the self.’⁵⁹ Instead, being concerned with oneself is an end in itself. It is enough that one flourishes under self-care. Third, ‘the care of the self is plainly no longer determined solely in the form of self-knowledge.’⁶⁰

In the Hellenistic age there are now two terms that characterize the techniques of the self used in the care of the self. Self knowledge is not as it was in Plato the goal of either of these two terms. Instead the techniques are directed toward an art of living (a *tekhnē tou biou*) whose goal was the well-regulated life. The Hellenists promoted an art of living for any class of person; however, as in the salvation religions—such as Christianity—whilst many are called, few are chosen. There is a universal appeal with the recognition that not everyone will take on the clothing of the community. ‘The appeal has to be made to everyone because only a few will really be able to take care of themselves. And you see that we recognize here the great form of the universal appeal that ensures the salvation of only a few.’⁶¹

As with earlier expressions of the care of the self in both Pythagorean and Platonic practice, in order for one to advance in self-care one needs a guide, a master, and a community.⁶² Often the authority of a speaker is directly related to their connection to the original master. What characterizes techniques of the self in the Hellenists that take place under the guidance of a master? Broadly they can be divided into two forms of work on the self categorized as meditation and exercise.

The first term, *meletē*, is characterized by Foucault as a constellation of ideas that have to do with meditation and the practices surrounding meditation. Second, *gumnazein*, or exercises, have to do with practices that prepare one for any event in life. However, what is called *meletē* can also include exercises and is sometimes indistinguishable from what is also included in *gumnazein*.⁶³

In the Greek phrase ‘*epimeleia heautou* (the care of the self and the rule associated with it),’⁶⁴ the root of the word *epimeleia* can be traced

to a series of words such as *meletan*, *meletē*, *meletai*, etcetera. *Meletan*, often employed and coupled with the verb *gumnazein*, means to practice and train. The *meletai* are exercises, gymnastic and military exercises, military training.

⁵⁹ HS, p. 83.

⁶⁰ HS, p. 84.

⁶¹ HS, p. 119.

⁶² HS, p. 135.

⁶³ HS, p. 84.

⁶⁴ HS, p. 8.

Epimeleisthai refers to a form of vigilant, continuous, applied, regular, etcetera, activity much more than to a mental attitude.⁶⁵

In these exercises, Foucault identifies ‘four families of expressions,’⁶⁶ defining four categories of exercise. First, ‘Turning around to look at the self, [... second] examining oneself, [... third] one must treat oneself, cure oneself, conduct amputations on oneself, lance one’s own abscesses, etcetera.’⁶⁷ These three movements include both legal and religious obligations to oneself. ‘The fourth nebula or group of expressions contains those which designate a certain kind of constant relationship to the self, whether a relationship of mastery and sovereignty [...] or a relationship of sensations.’⁶⁸ What is important for the Hellenistic thinkers is not that one should meditate on a text and revelation as one finds in Christianity, but rather that the object of these exercises is the self,⁶⁹ as Foucault suggests, the constitution of the subject.⁷⁰

In the Hellenistic age, turning around to look at the self, the first category, encompasses such exercises leading to conversion to the self,⁷¹ and salvation.⁷² The second category, a project of examining the self is not as it is in Christianity, the process of exhaustively categorizing the movements of the soul, but rather as Foucault finds in Seneca and Plutarch,⁷³ the process of cataloguing the data of one’s life—even in the form of writing an account of the day’s events as an accountant might make entries into a ledger. The purpose of this data-keeping is to examine and adjust one’s behaviour, not through the forms of repentance from sin, but in the form of a continuum of improvements. The practice of writing, which will be examined later, is one part of this process of constituting the subject, along with listening and reading.

The third category of exercises defined in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* is that of self therapy. There is a tradition conceiving of philosophy as therapeutic,⁷⁴ and a longstanding association between medicine and philosophy. Foucault, quoting Plutarch, said ‘medicine and philosophy have, or more precisely are, *mia khora* (a

⁶⁵ HS, p. 84.

⁶⁶ HS, p. 85.

⁶⁷ HS, p. 85.

⁶⁸ HS, pp. 85-86.

⁶⁹ HS, pp. 133, 185.

⁷⁰ HS, pp. xxiv, 57.

⁷¹ HS, pp. 190, 207-210, 257-59.

⁷² HS, p. 119-20, and EST, p. 207-21 ‘Self Writing.’

⁷³ HS, pp. 360-63.

⁷⁴ HS, p. 336.

single region, a single country).⁷⁵ One subjects oneself to philosophy lectures, to a master, so that one may cure, heal, and improve oneself. Different from the Platonic project of preparing aristocratic youth for a life of leadership, the Hellenistic and Roman philosophers considered that the use of and exposure to philosophy was to continue throughout one's entire life. Correction and adjustment of one's life through listening, reading, and writing was the project of a lifetime.

The fourth and final category of exercises are those leading to self-mastery, and to a sense of satisfaction with oneself, of pleasure in the self. Characteristic of this category of effects brought about through the care of the self are evidenced by the writings of Seneca and Aurelius. They are instructive of lives, that though not perfected, are nonetheless engaged in a process, a practice that fruitfully encompasses their worlds, their relations, and their selves. Seneca and Aurelius are exemplars of how it might be that one could live maturely in that age.

To sum up: the Hellenistic societies centred around the care of the self are egalitarian in appeal, even though not everyone is capable of taking advantage of entrance into the community. The care of the self takes place within that therapeutic community under the guidance of a master. The aim of the practices of meditation and exercise is to achieve conversion to the self through the process of listening, reading, and writing—thereby producing a mature practice that has as its object the self, within a well regulated regimen of behaviour.

In *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, Foucault outlines moral problems within the Greco-Roman world that spawned a vigorous industry of ethical writing from which Foucault draws a moral schema. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault narrates the movement of this ethical writing as it is absorbed into the Christian sphere, the third model of care of the self. He suggests that the Hellenistic morality is suited to a project of self-control, austerity, and self-restraint, but that the project of third- and fourth-century Christianity under the auspices of care of the self repurposes the ethics of the Hellenists whose morality Christianity adopted.

3.2.1.2.3. Model Three: Christian

The third model of the care of the self in ancient thought and practice is Christianity. Though Christianity of the East does not so strictly follow the patterns Foucault outlines, especially within the Hebrew Christian community, the Christian

⁷⁵ HS p. 97.

West, as birthed within the Greek Early Church Fathers, does. It is within the Christian West that conversion becomes so important, where ‘*metanoia*, this sudden, dramatic, historical-metahistorical upheaval of the subject’⁷⁶ stands at the centre of concern for the self.

A fundamental element of Christian conversion is renunciation of oneself, dying to oneself, and being reborn in a different self and a new form which, as it were, no longer has anything to do with the earlier self in its being, its mode of being, in its habits or its *ethos*.⁷⁷

Hellenistic and Roman conversion is not a form of destruction of the original self as is found in Christianity, but rather, a turning toward the self, a freeing of the self as one frees a slave.⁷⁸ Christianity requires the denial, destruction, renunciation, and burial of the self, that one be born again to a new life, a life whose self is generated by an association with God. So Christian conversion requires not a return to the care of the self, but the destruction of the self and subsequent rebirth to a life guided by the Scripture and revelation.

Foucault’s concern for the form Christianity takes in the West, his concern for *metanoia* (repentance) as a renunciation of the self, comes from an analysis of the Greek Early Church Fathers and a practice of monasticism modelled on Platonic and Greco-Roman technologies of the self, as marked by the fusion of Platonic and theological concerns within Plotinus and the neo-Platonists. The Greek New Testament word which is most often translated into in English as ‘sin’ is *hamartia*. This is a word in common use by the Hellenists to mean ‘missing the mark;’ it indicates an error in judgment or behaviour, a mistake.⁷⁹ This word for the Hellenists implies a need to return to the care of the self, a need for conversion to the self. For Christianity of the West it implies a mistake in judgment or behaviour against God. It also implies a judgment against the self which requires a conversion from the self, a ‘trans-subjectivation,’ and an analysis of the movements of desire. Foucault indicates the difference between the Christian and the Hellenist view of conversion, that the

⁷⁶ HS, p. 211.

⁷⁷ HS, p. 211.

⁷⁸ HS, p. 213.

⁷⁹ Steven Shankman, Stephen W. Durrant, *The Siren and the Sage: Knowledge and Wisdom in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 113. ‘The *hamartia* or tragic mistake made by the Athenians was to follow the immoderate policy of Alcibiades and launch the disastrous expedition to far-off Sicily.’

Hellenists ‘conversion is a long and continuous process that I will call a self-subjectivation rather than a trans-subjectivation’⁸⁰ as Christian *metanoia* implies.

As with Plato, and the Greco-Romans of the first two centuries CE, Christianity also requires a form of spirituality that qualified one to receive the truth. ‘With Christianity then we have a schema of the relation between knowledge and care of the self that hinges on three points: first, circularity between truth of the Text and self-knowledge; second, an exegetical method for self-knowledge; and finally the objective of self-renunciation.’⁸¹ The circularity between the truth of the text and self-knowledge begins first to define the Christian self in terms of its failure to accord to the principles of purity defined in the Scriptures. Knowledge of the text defines precisely the failure of the individual in his or her efforts to meet God’s demands stimulating a turn of behaviour and compliance with the text. So the text becomes a route to self-knowledge. And self-knowledge in turn through the text qualifies one to understand the text better. The text is both the door and the object to be discovered when one qualifies to open the door.

In the second point of Foucault’s schema mentioned above, the analysis of the motivations and movements of the self takes place within an exegetical model which was, ‘developed in confrontation with the Gnostic model.’⁸² Foucault defines the Gnostic model as essentially Platonic, and that ‘knowledge of being and recognition of the self are one and the same thing. Returning to the self and taking up again the memory of the true is one and the same thing for the Gnosis.’⁸³

The ‘function (or anyway, effect)’⁸⁴ of this confrontation with Gnosticism was to assure the great caesura and division with regard to the Gnostic movement, and its effect within Christian spirituality was not to give knowledge of the self the memorial function of rediscovering the subject’s being, but rather the exegetical function of detecting the nature and origin of internal impulses produced within the soul.⁸⁵

Under the Platonic and Gnostic care of the self the goal of self-knowledge was conversion to the self while for Christianity, self-knowledge through the decipherment of internal impulses was instrumental in constructing the self after the model of the text and moving one forward to a renunciation of those motivations

⁸⁰ HS, p. 214.

⁸¹ HS, p. 256.

⁸² HS, p. 256.

⁸³ HS, p. 256.

⁸⁴ HS, p. 257.

⁸⁵ HS, p. 257.

whose origin was in the self. Christianity, though distinguishing itself from a Gnostic/Platonic model, nonetheless adopts a form of the care of the self where knowledge of the self is primary.

The third point of Foucault's schema mentioned above defines the goal of Christian techniques of the self. These techniques are a product of both one's relation to the Text and the exegetical model surrounding the practices that lead to renunciation. 'The fundamental principle of Christian asceticism is that renunciation of the self is the essential moment of what enables us to gain access to the other life, to the light, to truth and salvation.'⁸⁶ One cannot take the old life into the new. Conversion requires a death of the old self and resurrection into a new self.⁸⁷ In contrast, such a truncation of the self does not characterize Hellenistic conversion to the self, nor the techniques one used to purify the self or bring the self under control.

The Christian model can be summarized as having three movements: first, a process of *metanoia* or repentance which requires the death of the old life and the beginning of the new. Second, there is an exegesis or exhaustive and detailed cataloguing of the soul's movements leading a person to, third, the renunciation of the self that one might be reborn in a new life. The Platonic model, in which an image of the self is discovered in the reflection of the divine, where knowledge of the self is recollection of what was previously known before birth leading to conversion to the self is unlike Christianity. It is in this regard that 'Foucault's development of the "care of the self" theme and its aesthetics of existence is, in part, a corrective to the experiences of self-renunciation.'⁸⁸ Christianity requires that knowledge of the self leads to the renunciation of the self, and the adoption of a new life altogether.

Unlike the Hellenistic model of the last two centuries before Christ, the first two centuries CE Greco-Roman care of the self produced a meticulous morality designed to guide the life toward adoption of the self as the primary object of care. Christianity, adopting the morality of the Hellenists,⁸⁹ transformed it with its

⁸⁶ HS, p. 250.

⁸⁷ Christian baptism is characterized as a death to the old and a resurrection into the new life, Romans 6:4. As well Paul invokes the substitutionary death of Christ for all people to say that all have already died in him. Then the life one has in Christ is brand new, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

⁸⁸ James Bernauer, 'Confessions of the Soul: Foucault and Theological Culture', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 557-572, (p. 568).

⁸⁹ HS, pp. 257-58. 'We might consider it [the Hellenistic model] to be no more than a sort of archaeological curiosity within our culture, were it not for the fact—and this is undoubtedly the paradox to be grasped—that an exacting, rigorous, restrictive, and austere morality was developed within this neither Platonic nor Christian, but Hellenistic model. Christianity certainly did not invent

techniques of the self, to exegete the soul and its movements and desires and use that morality as a method of subjecting the self to a matrix of power relations in the form of pastoral power.

3.2.1.3. Hellenistic Techniques

Foucault made no effort to enumerate exhaustively the techniques of the self as found in the Hellenists because the point of discussing them was not to acquire a catalogue that one might practice today. The point of spelling out their use was to provide the connection between motivations for care of the self,⁹⁰ and self-mastery. So, Foucault showed how this played out in the three models, Platonic, Hellenistic, and Christian with the purpose of segregating the Hellenistic model because its primary tools were not directed toward self-knowledge, but self-maintenance, the refinement of an art of living whose sole end was mastery of the self. For the Hellenist, the process of self-mastery required the effort of the whole person throughout his or her life. The reason one converted to the self was not to become a just ruler, or to renounce the self, but to care for the self throughout one's life. Subsequently the Hellenistic model can serve as a better guide to the acquisition of skills whose purpose is an enduring practice of the care of the self.

For Foucault, what sets the stage for Hellenist morality literature was an effort by the Hellenists to address fairly common moral quandaries. Even though the problems of citizens were ordinary, they were persistent and often unresolved. A moral rule emerges from this technology circumscribing the behaviour of an individual, a group, a community. Foucault attempted to come to terms with the arts of living as practices, techniques of the self found in the Hellenists, because of the historically successful adoption of this form. However, Foucault did not attempt to adopt particular ancient techniques of the self to the modern world because the problems the Hellenists addressed are not at all those that faced Western culture of the late twentieth century.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the attitudes of attention to the self and attention to avoiding what is dangerous adopted by Hellenistic culture may be useful in forming techniques of the self appropriate to the late twentieth century, or any age.

this morality, because Christianity, like all good religions, is not a morality. At any rate, Christianity is a religion without morality. Well, it was this morality that Christianity utilized and repatriated, first of all as a strong support explicitly taken in from outside [...] and then that it adapted, fashioned, and honed precisely through those practices of the exegesis of the subject and self-renunciation.'

⁹⁰ Such as the rights and qualifications for access to knowledge.

⁹¹ EST, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics,' p. 256.

The attitudes, forms, and motivations of the Hellenists encompass both goals and practices, and the four forms defined above: turning toward the self, self examination, self therapy, and self-mastery, contain both conversion to the self and a form of salvation. Within the exercises defined as *meletē* and *gumnazein*, attention of the individual is focused on *listening*, *reading*, *writing* and *speaking* as essential to this ascesis, this exercise, ‘as subjectivation of true discourse.’⁹²

The Ancients suggested that *listening* is the only way one can begin to learn, first, because all the other senses permit the entrance of vice, while second, only through the entrance of the *logos* can virtue enter. And, the *logos* is only expressible in rational language.⁹³ Listening is not an art (*tekhnē*) because *tekhnē* requires knowledge. Even the negligent listener, who has no knowledge, comes away from a philosophy lecture with living seeds of knowledge. Foucault quotes Seneca as saying that, ‘there will always be something to show because the *logos* enters the ear and then the *logos* carries out some work on the soul, whether the subject likes it or not.’⁹⁴ But for the attentive listener, one who has engaged the project of advancing in knowledge, there is more.

Foucault reminded us of two rules for listening, for the purpose of focusing one’s attention. First is the acquisition of the skill of discrimination between types of speech. Roughly, if one cannot tell the difference between true and false speech, between the *logos* and flattery or rhetoric,⁹⁵ then one cannot acquire an art of living.⁹⁶ Second is the acquisition of a facility for memorizing true speech so that it might refashion the listening subject. So, first there must be a facility for acquiring the truth and then a facility for making that truth part of the self.⁹⁷

Reading provides ‘an opportunity for meditation.’⁹⁸ But this exercise of reading a text

does not involving trying to [think about] what it meant. It does not develop in the direction of exegesis⁹⁹ at all. The *meditatio* involves, rather, appropriating [a thought] and being so profoundly convinced of it that we¹⁰⁰ both believe it

⁹² HS, p. 333.

⁹³ HS, pp. 335-336.

⁹⁴ HS, p. 336.

⁹⁵ HS, p. 373.

⁹⁶ HS, p. 350.

⁹⁷ HS, p. 351.

⁹⁸ HS, p. 356.

⁹⁹ Foucault refers to either exegesis of texts or the self.

¹⁰⁰ The ‘we’ in this text refers to the writer of the text and the reader.

to be true and can also repeat it constantly and immediately whenever the need or opportunity to do so arises.¹⁰¹

It is easy to see how this exercise of meditation, designed to collect a compendium of useful phrases that one could use as ‘an equipment of true propositions for yourself, which is really your own,’¹⁰² can function as the beginning of a moral structure. When one comes to the place in life where these phrases could be used, the phrases must be immediately available, ready to hand.

But if reading is an experiment in the production of a catalogue of apt responses, then *writing* must naturally ensue.

Reading is extended, reinforced, and reactivated by writing, which is also an exercise, a component of meditation. [...] For simply by writing we absorb the thing itself we are thinking about.¹⁰³

Epictetus recommends reading, writing, and training (*gumnazein*) as part of the project of self-mastery.¹⁰⁴

Foucault breaks writing down into a number of categories. First, what he calls *hupomnemata*, or technically, recordkeeping. This is writing for the self. He cites Seneca and Plutarch as practitioners of this sort of exercise.¹⁰⁵ Then, second, with respect to *hupomnemata* Foucault gives examples of correspondence and how Seneca used his *hupomnemata* as a means of communicating the skill, the art of living to Serenus in *De Tranquillitate Animi*.¹⁰⁶ Here, writing serves a therapeutic function. The goal of Seneca’s writings is to assist Serenus to settle himself, to come to a place of mastery of himself, to be undisturbed when passions trouble or disquiet him. So first Seneca used the *hupomnemata* as part of a technique to master himself, then as an example for his correspondents, a method to help them master themselves. It is, as Foucault says, a ‘spiritual correspondence.’¹⁰⁷ So in the Hellenists and Romans of the first two centuries, listening, reading, and writing are all part of the exercises leading one to an art of living, and part of what qualifies one to speak. This speech, both in correspondence and conversation, has certain characteristics that make up the *ethos* of

¹⁰¹ HS, p. 357.

¹⁰² HS, p. 358.

¹⁰³ HS, p. 359.

¹⁰⁴ HS, p. 359.

¹⁰⁵ TS, p. 27, ‘One of the main features of taking care involved taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed.’

¹⁰⁶ HS, p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ HS, p. 361.

the speaker, the qualifications that give a speaker both the freedom and boldness to speak.

The Greek word for bold or free speech, *parrhēsia*, translated to Latin as *libertas* ‘seems to be primarily a moral quality that [...] is demanded of every speaking subject.’¹⁰⁸ The exercises that make up *meletē* and *gumnazein* are part of what qualifies one to speak. Foucault notes that Plato writes in the *Laches* that two generals came to Socrates for advice because Socrates’ life and speech were consistent.¹⁰⁹ Socrates qualified as one who could give advice because his integrity was not in question. His acts were in accord with his words. He lived out his life in terms of his morality. Socrates was one who could speak freely, and when he spoke, he spoke the truth. The art of a *parrhēsiastes* (one qualified to speak the truth) depended on having mastered the self, a result of practising the art of living. The function of the exercises noted above was to give a person an intimate connection to the truth, that one would conform to that truth. ‘The ascesis [exercise] constitutes, therefore, and its role is to constitute, the subject as subject of veridiction.’¹¹⁰ The subject performing the exercises not only qualifies as having passed the test of truth, but is the bearer of that truth having become conformed to it.

The arts of living, techniques of the self, and the practice of subjectivating oneself to the truth are found by exercising four techniques: listening to refocus the attention, reading, writing to establish the self in relation to the truth, and finally fearless or free speech as a demonstration of self-mastery. Foucault made a considerable effort to discuss writing and its place in caring for the self. As a technique of the self its use has changed over the centuries, but it has become for humans in the twenty-first century one persistent technique for the constitution of the self as subject. Like the Hellenistic appeal to writing as a technique within the culture of the care of the self, writing and publishing in the many venues available today has become a large part of the project of self-transformation from the catalogue of exercises available to the modern person. Later on in this chapter I will examine writing as a technique of the self.

The Hermeneutics of the Subject lecture series serves to give the most in-depth view of the value of the Hellenistic culture of the self and the structure of the

¹⁰⁸ HS, p. 366.

¹⁰⁹ FS, p. 100.

¹¹⁰ HS, p. 371.

exercises leading to self-mastery. Foucault is not denying the far-reaching effects of the Christian and Platonic structures surrounding and justifying the care of the self. Rather, by exposing the culture of the self within the Hellenists, Foucault overturns the notion that *gnōthi seauton*, knowledge of the self, was the goal of ancient culture, a view that was further entrenched by the ‘Cartesian moment.’ He replaces that notion with a view that morality, instead of being grounded in knowledge of the self as the object of self examination or, knowledge of the human self as an object of science, is grounded in techniques of self-mastery.

3.2.2. *The History of Sexuality*

I choose to ignore *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* because its concern rests generally more with the genealogical works of the early 1970s in which Foucault examined power relations. In addition, the era of its subject matter is the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, the era on which Foucault spent almost all of his previous effort. The publication of that volume precedes the movement of Foucault’s focus toward ethical problems, toward the problems of self-constitution. This demarcation is not a strict one. Certainly evidence of the tenor and substance of later works exists in Volume I. However, the era of the subject matter of Volumes II and III was the ancient world. Foucault did not abandon his interest in the second millennium CE but rather was explicitly hunting for a rationale for the social structures by which it was formed. He believed he found that rationale in the Hellenistic philosophies of the care of the self. There may be evidence for the claim¹¹¹ that Foucault attempted to trace the lineage of modern technologies of the self from its predecessors, including Hellenistic ethics, through forms of pastoral power as transmitted to the present by the Church. But first, in *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault sought to re-examine the moral foundations of contemporary late twentieth-century Western culture.

The project of *The Use of Pleasure* ‘was to learn to what extent the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.’¹¹² The trained and presumed predispositions of the late-twentieth-century West needed something to jar reasoning loose. *The Use of Pleasure* is an effort to force fresh thinking. The transition between Volume I and Volume II is

¹¹¹ The unpublished fourth volume of *The History of Sexuality: Confessions of the Flesh*.

¹¹² HS2, p. 9.

marked by a sense that freedom became a goal of ethical self-construction instead of primarily an ‘historical constant.’¹¹³

3.2.2.1. Volume II, *The Use of Pleasure*

In order to discover the forms of relations of power within the Ancients, Foucault’s study of the use of pleasure focused not on ‘a history of sexual behaviours nor a history of representations, but a history of “sexuality”’¹¹⁴ and all the social connections implied in the experience of sexuality, ‘where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture.’¹¹⁵ In order to accomplish this he found that studying the social rules in Ancient culture was insufficient to comprehend the complexity of these relations. The rules themselves are the product of the social interactions under question and therefore can’t be seen as their own origin. Foucault wished to tease out of the social interactions under examination, the problems faced by the Ancients, and the methods they used to ameliorate those problems. What Foucault has called the technologies of the self, or ‘arts of existence’ are just such methods. What Foucault means by the arts of existence 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 meets certain stylistic criteria.¹¹⁶

However, because of difficulties writing a history of ethical problems based on practices of the self, Foucault was forced to start with a history of the practical texts of the era, texts that formulated rules, that defined interdictions of practice.¹¹⁷ These systems of morality both in the Greco-Roman and Christian world are the surface texts that point to the problem of sexuality in the ancient world. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault asks the question with respect to the body, the wife, boys, and truth, ‘How did sexual behavior [...] come to be conceived as a domain of moral experience’¹¹⁸ subject to prohibitions and interdictions? Rules of conduct cannot have emerged fully formed at the beginnings of social consciousness. As with any set of

¹¹³ FAE, p. 169.

¹¹⁴ HS2, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁵ HS2, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁶ HS2, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁷ HS2, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ HS2, p. 24.

practices in a domain, the formulation of rules must be the residue of social experimentation.

For example, within the Hebrew Scriptures, the history of moral development in the Israelites is the product of experimentation, of discovering the parameters of God's tolerance for behaviour. The practical proscriptions against idolatry are not taken seriously by the Israelites as an absolute prohibition from the time of Moses until the time of the return from exile in Babylon in the fifth century BCE, almost twelve hundred years later. Yet within that time, many Hebrew writers attributed the failure of Israelite society and its kings to idolatry. The law proscribing idolatry emerged in Moses, and there are indications that the use of idols was to be avoided even prior to that in the time of Jacob, son of Isaac. But until the destruction of the national identity of Israel and subsequent exile into Babylon, the Israelites did not take the proscription seriously. When they finally began to observe the rules about idolatry they layered it with practical prohibitions and interdictions that pressured social compliance, fully fleshing out practical principles intended by the original commandment. They put a fence around the law so that even a leaning toward idolatrous practice was proscribed.

Similarly, Foucault's examination of the practice of sexuality within Western culture follows the progress of an experiment with sexual practice and the social milieu surrounding it, the formation and transformation of the moral rules and behaviours surrounding the problem that sexuality posed to those civilizations. The Hellenistic experiment did not take place, however, under the guidance of any divine command as did the Israelite experiment with idolatry. The Hellenistic experiment takes place as an internal cultural dialogue about morality.

The term 'morality' is ambiguous.¹¹⁹ It connotes both the codes and proscriptions of a public law or private system, and the actual practices of individuals in relation to those codes. It is not a fixed compendium of permitted and prohibited behaviours any more than it is a catalogue of actual behaviours in relation to the codes. Morality changes within a social context through history. That does not mean Foucault is claiming that morals are relative, but rather that they are not a fixed target specifiable in terms of codes. Nor are the justifications given for the codes absolute *or* relative. Modern moral theory often poses the question about that double term: 'are

¹¹⁹ HS2, p. 25.

moral values relative or absolute?’ Foucault is not asking that. He is only asking about the practices and the justifications of the Ancients, about the techniques of the self used as methods of developing and then mastering the self, and in the case of Christianity, of renouncing oneself, and being mastered.

The theme of self-development as a form of art as described in *The Use of Pleasure* is central to the Greco-Roman practices of the self and central to Foucault’s treatment of a Greco-Roman/Hellenistic answer to the problems raised by the use of pleasure within the writings about dietetics, economics, and sexuality as forms of pleasure. As with *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault traces the theme of the care of the self within three models: Platonic, Hellenistic, and Christian; and as with *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he examines the rationality of the Hellenists, and the genealogy of some of their central moral themes leading to the development of late-twentieth-century society.

One thing Foucault takes from the Hellenists concerning self-development is a sense of the importance of avoiding danger, of avoiding the trouble associated with living a careless life, of avoiding the life of a *stultus*, one who ‘is defined by this nonrelationship to the self.’¹²⁰ Foucault does not equate danger to evil.¹²¹ The problem of evil is too closely associated with an essentialist view of human being, and is tied to a Christian narrative of the fall that attributes evil to being, a view in conflict with Foucault’s view of freedom. So, the form of the problem is defined in terms of the danger of certain choices.

The problem of dietetics¹²² illustrates the non-universal, temporal, and spatial locus of learning to avoid danger through a certain attention to the self. Eating, in general, cannot be judged evil in any universal sense since one must eat to live. But eating too much or too little, or eating the wrong things can risk one’s good health, and diminish one’s strength. The same sort of illustration can be made both for the relation between husband and wife (economics),¹²³ and for sexual behaviour (erotics).¹²⁴

¹²⁰ HS, pp. 131, 133. Seneca defines the *stultus* as ‘someone who has not cared for himself. How is the *stultus* characterized? [...] we can say that the *stultus* is first of all someone blown by the wind and open to the external world, that is to say someone who lets all the representations from the outside world into his mind.’

¹²¹ EST, p. 256.

¹²² HS2, p. 95.

¹²³ HS2, p. 141.

¹²⁴ HS2, p. 185.

Consistent with the avoidance of facile and misleading universalizations of history, Foucault redefined ethical language in *The Use of Pleasure* in terms that avoided equating ethics to universalizing rules, and instead focused on practices of self-formation¹²⁵ leading to an autonomy unavailable in a heteronomous system. What this does is link autonomy and freedom to the care of the self. There is no sense that people are judged by a universal rule that they can only posit, but not accomplish. So the sense that *hamartia* (sin) is an absolute that cuts people off from God and/or nature, as traditional Christian doctrine suggests, is meliorated. What is required then is not salvation in a religious sense,¹²⁶ in which one must be redeemed from oneself as Christian techniques of the self required, but a conversion or return to the self, to regard mastery of the self as an attainable goal. In ‘this salvation of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, the self is the agent, object, instrument, and the end of salvation.’¹²⁷ Absent in this evaluation of the self is the requirement that Christianity imposes, the denial of the self through self-examination and renunciation of the old life, the life of the flesh. In the Greco-Roman mode of ethical conversion to the self, a death of the self is not required. One must only redirect one’s life.

In Plato the conversion to the self is the explicit project Socrates sets out to accomplish. In the Stoics, one is wakened to life, to a responsibility for the self, for a lifelong project of self improvement. Foucault notes however, that since the care of the self is one primary goal of Christian conversion and life in the community, Christianity becomes a method of the care of the self, a method derived in part from the Hellenists. Christianity may have adhered to the theme of the care of the self which it found in Greco-Roman society, either explicitly as one more path toward a lifestyle compatible with Christian salvation, or functioning as the underlying ethos in a world from which Christianity could no more disassociate itself than the twenty-first-century West can from scientific technology as given within the social milieu.

In the three domains of rules Foucault examines in *The Use of Pleasure*: dietetics, economics, and erotics, he describes the movement from an organically developing society toward the problems of society which examines its own behaviour. Subsequently he considers the rules intended as governance of persons within the society and the lasting debates that arise from those rules. In this way Foucault teases

¹²⁵ FF, p. 71 ‘Foucault’s notion of self-formation is always in the context of a struggle for freedom within an historical situation.’

¹²⁶ HS, pp. 180-185

¹²⁷ HS p. 185.

out the problems of social and ethical development within the Greco-Roman society. He is interested in the dialogue of social interactions in Greco-Roman development and in the transformations leading to the formation of rules. This dialogue guides Foucault's adoption of ethical principles for the evaluation and demarcation of dangerous behaviour.

3.2.2.2. Volume III, *The Care of the Self*

Foucault, in *The Care of the Self* elaborates the themes surrounding the care of the self within the social milieu that he began to expose in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and *The Use of Pleasure*. He examines the centrality of the ethos of the care of the self within the first two centuries CE with respect to society, to the body in relation to the self, in relation to a man's wife, and a man's relation to boys.

The first part of *The Care of the Self* opens with a discussion of Artemidorus' dream interpretation manual from the second century CE. Foucault reveals through standard dream interpretations the state of social ethics at the time of Artemidorus' writing. 'The book by Artemidorus thus constitutes a point of reference.'¹²⁸ Artemidorus is not making any explicit outline of social ethics, but by writing a dream interpretation manual, he exposes the characteristics of the underlying milieu.¹²⁹ Foucault describes the Greek milieu Artemidorus assumes. The '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, and so on.'¹³⁰

In the second part, titled 'The Cultivation of the Self,' Foucault outlines the texts and attitudes of the Hellenistic and Roman writers as they attempt to come to grips with the state of affairs Artemidorus outlines. It is precisely the problems arising out of living that drove the Greco-Roman writers to call into question the paths of life assumed as part of the privilege of free men, which was arguably a narrow class of persons.

A mistrust of the pleasures, an emphasis on the consequences of their abuse for the body and the soul, a valorization of marriage and marital obligations, a disaffection with regard to the spiritual meanings imputed to the love of boys: a whole attitude of severity was manifested in the thinking of philosophers and

¹²⁸ HS3, p. 3.

¹²⁹ HS3, p. 36 'But in these themes that develop, become accentuated, and gather strength, one can discern a different type of modification: it concerns the way in which the ethical thought defines the relation of the subject to his sexual activity.'

¹³⁰ EST, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress.' p. 258.

physicians in the course of the first two centuries. It is visible in the texts of Soranus and Rufus of Ephesus, in Musonius or Seneca, in Plutarch as well as in Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius. Moreover, it is a fact that the Christian authors borrowed extensively—with and without acknowledgement—from this body of ethical thought.¹³¹

In this passage Foucault outlines first, the problematic ethos of the free Greek world, then traces a rough and schematic genealogy of the ethos of the care of the self through the development of ethics in the Hellenists and Romans and its subsequent importation into the Christian pastorate. The rest of *The Care of the Self* examines this genealogy in a more detailed manner.

The importance of the book does not lay with Foucault's focus on technologies of the self, but rather with the extensive literature exposing the ethical structures of various schools of thought. As a result Foucault can show that the implied and assumed ethics of the society underwent a shift in emphasis both toward the care of the self, away from the assumed sexual and moral privilege of an aristocracy and toward a more egalitarian account of one's life and one's relations. Foucault is not explaining the techniques that made this movement possible as he did in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. Instead, there is evidence throughout the book of the association of one's care of oneself with practices of self-modification, austerity, and behavioural adjustment. In *The Care of the Self*, Foucault outlines the development of moral thought within the Greco-Roman and Christian world, which leads to a more thoroughly austere and egalitarian moral social structure.

3.2.3. Essays, Lectures, and Interviews

Two things can be noted about the amount and variety of literature generated by Foucault. First, Foucault was always careful about what he allowed to be published, and second, he edited all interviews thoroughly. Arnold Davidson, notes that the great precision with which Foucault answered the questions put to him by his interviewers might seem remarkable. But one must understand that before the interviews were published, Foucault not only edited his answers, he also edited the questions.¹³² That effort, to appear in print in such a fashion as to avoid quibbles about what he meant, is certainly part of the stylistics of Foucault's method, part of an intentionally undertaken development of his self. This might be the reason Foucault

¹³¹ HS3, p. 39.

¹³² Arnold Davidson, speaking at the 2009 U.S. meeting of the Foucault Circle at Duke University in Chicago.

stipulated in his estate that nothing previously unpublished was to be released to the public.

Understanding the chronology of the release of these pieces also tells us that Foucault found certain themes to be persistently interesting and useful.¹³³ Many of these writings and lectures are more focused and refined than the early research that characterizes the Collège de France lecture series. They are more telling of his conclusions than the sometimes, self admittedly, rambling effort of the lectures. The lecture ‘Technologies of the Self’¹³⁴ given in Vermont in 1982 is one instance of this trend of refinement in his work. The research done for *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* exposed him to the problems, context, and specificity of the themes, and later, in the Vermont lecture Foucault refined and elaborated the structures within which technologies of the self operated.

In ‘Technologies of the Self,’ Foucault conceives the project for the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* as a way of discussing the connection between sexual prohibitions and the interdictions of sexual behaviour in relation with one’s ‘obligation to tell the truth about oneself.’¹³⁵ So Foucault conceived the project ‘of a history of a link between the obligation to tell the truth and the prohibitions against sexuality. How had the subject been compelled to decipher himself in regard to what was forbidden?’¹³⁶ All of that effort is put to use in the production of the self. So the ‘technologies of the self,’ the methods one uses in the process of self-formation

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and soul, thoughts, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality¹³⁷

become the central focus of his examination. Much of the lecture is an effort to distill the essential points of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, starkly exposing the themes

¹³³ Among these themes are writings associated with his struggles with the problems emerging from a twentieth-century relationship with the Enlightenment and the constitution of our selves as free persons as found in the collection of essays *The Politics of Truth* edited by Sylvère Lotringer, and the problems associated with religion and Christianity in particular as found in the collection of essays *In Religion & Culture* edited by Jeremy Carrette. The small Semiotext(e) volume *Fearless Speech* is a lecture series given in Berkeley that traces the genealogy of the use of the constellation of meanings of the word *parrhesia* in the ancient Western world. The volume *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, the English volume containing a variety of a broad range of his ethical works, collects many of these themes under one cover.

¹³⁴ TS, p. 16.

¹³⁵ TS, p. 16.

¹³⁶ TS, p. 17.

¹³⁷ TS, p. 18.

found in ancient philosophy, the Hellenists, and the Christians of the first few centuries. Among those themes is the persistence of a concern for the self, even though the techniques and goals differ between groups. ‘As there are different forms of care, there are different forms of self.’¹³⁸ This is true also of the project of self-development that Foucault pursues in the essay ‘Self Writing,’¹³⁹ and ‘What is Enlightenment?’¹⁴⁰

The most structured and structuring essay ‘On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,’ an interview with Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus in April of 1983¹⁴¹ provides many clues about how to proceed with Foucault’s ethical thought. In this essay Foucault reinterprets the whole corpus of his work as primarily concerned with the subject within the matrix of three historical ontologies of the self along the lines of Truth, Power, and Ethics. What Foucault provides in this interview is a distillation of his work up to that point and hints about the direction of his future work, including further elaborations of his work on the subject. I have used this essay in this and previous chapters to bring out the structure of Foucault’s thought and movement toward a mature view.

3.2.4. Summary

Throughout this section I have summarized Foucault’s writings on ethics with the explicit purpose of singling out the role of the technologies of the self as defining spirituality as a conversion to the self that gives one the right to knowledge. The lecture series *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* is the central work for a characterization of the technologies of the self. Foucault emphasises the writing of *hupomnemata* and its various Ancient uses as well as writing the self as a technique of his own self-creation. Significant in the process of writing is not the actual writing product but the formation of the self the writing was designed to support. Foucault claims that the purpose of the writings of the Ancients within a small society of correspondents is the formation of a philosophical *ethos*. The purpose of Foucault’s writing is the formation within himself of a philosophical *ethos* suitable for the late twentieth century, being fully cognizant of Modernity, with the aim of constructing an historical ontology of his self. That object, the historical ontology, generates the

¹³⁸ TS, p. 22.

¹³⁹ EST, p. 207.

¹⁴⁰ POT, p. 97.

¹⁴¹ EST, p. 253.

philosophical *ethos* which reconstructs a history without universals and ideals and provides a structure for beginning to think differently about the problems of an era.

Avoiding ideal history not only prevents teleological interpretations of events, but forces events to be understood conditionally within their own temporal structures. Avoiding ideal history forces historians to contextualize their remarks without any supposition of fit into a universal history. This consideration does not deny the existence of causality, it only forces a recounting of the details of transitions without requiring that they have a determined end point. Any evaluation of cause and effect in some historical transition must then be after the fact and not a presupposition underlying the research.

Writing becomes a properly historicized account of a transformative research journey, the product of which is a temporally relativised account of both the historical objects and an historical ontology of the movements of the writer's thought and practice through the research.

In section 3 of this chapter I will examine further the theme of self-writing, of the elaboration and development of techniques of the self through the use of writing by looking at the work of the Ancients, claims about Foucault's own writing, and by considering what the generation following Foucault's death may have discovered.

3.3. Techniques of the Self

Is it possible to specify practices that fulfil the same purpose for today as the techniques of the self fulfilled in Foucault's view for the Ancients? The following examples give a positive answer. There are techniques today that fulfil the same purposes of spiritual practice that qualify one for access to knowledge. But in addition to investigating the following spiritual exercises, I wish to examine whether those same spiritual exercises are the means whereby one creates an historical ontology of the self, the central requirement of Foucault's account of enlightenment.

3.3.1. Writing in the Ancients

The exercise I will focus on for this section is writing, one that was in widespread use throughout the Hellenistic age, throughout history, as well as our own. I will not focus on the entire panoply of spiritual exercises in the Hellenistic toolbox because the writing project is an object sufficient to illustrate the relations between the technique itself and the project of the writer in writing. Writing is the

lasting concrete evidence that introduces a reader to the *ethos* of the writer. The ethos of

taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity. That is not a modern trait born of the Reformation or of romanticism; it is one of the most ancient Western traditions. It was well established and deeply rooted when Augustine started his *Confessions*.¹⁴²

Foucault suggested that ‘as an element of self-training, writing has [...] an *ethopoietic* function: it is an agent of the transformation of truth into *ethos*.’¹⁴³ For an example of writing as an exercise of taking care of oneself in the Ancients I will look at Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*,¹⁴⁴ a Manual, or Handbook. It is a distillate of Epictetus’ thoughts meant as a primer to Stoic thinking. It functions as a look into the Stoic worldview, practice, and community relations. I am also using it because it has a limited scope and illustrates what I believe Foucault was aiming at in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and *Technologies of the Self*.

The Encheiridion reveals that the practice of the self called upon techniques of reason to resolve the problems of everyday life and to promote a worldview that aimed at tranquillity in the face of the difficulties and transitions of life. It tells how one might begin to take control of one’s life and move it in a direction that promoted healthy mental attitudes and physical practices. This is precisely the kind of spiritual practice Foucault defines in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. The techniques of the self prescribed in *The Encheiridion* are aimed at conservation of the self and the reproduction of useful practices.

Foucault discusses the function of writing itself as an exercise on the self from the writer’s view when he discusses the *hupomnemata*, correspondence, and as part of a common didactic of ascesis in the philosophical schools of the era. *The Encheiridion* is written from the position of the master who wishes to persuade learners ‘that they should adjust their desires and their attitudes toward’¹⁴⁵ ideal conditions of being human, so that they would not expect ‘to have certain desires satisfied, and [live] with the idea that such desires were not worth satisfying anyway.’ To that end, the production of *The Encheiridion* is part of a philosophic ascesis of its

¹⁴² TS, p. 27.

¹⁴³ EST, p. 209.

¹⁴⁴ Nicholas P. White, *Epictetus: The Handbook (The Encheiridion)* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), hereafter *Encheiridion*.

¹⁴⁵ *Encheiridion*, p. 8.

writer Arrian who wrote it as part of an exercise of acquiring an equipment or *paraskeue*.

The Encheiridion is the recollection of Epictetus' student Flavius Arrianus, or, as he is commonly known, Arrian. Though Epictetus is thought to have written nothing himself, his student took up the task of reproducing Epictetus' teaching in the eight books of *Discourses*, of which four remain, and *The Encheiridion*, a compilation of extracts from the *Discourses*.¹⁴⁶ Arrian writes to Lucius Gellius in an introduction to the *Discourses*, that he didn't intend the *Discourses* to be publicly distributed, but rather,

whatever I heard him say, the same I attempted to write down in his own words as nearly as possible, for the purpose of preserving them as memorials to myself afterwards of the thoughts and the freedom of speech of Epictetus.¹⁴⁷

Arrian writes the *Discourses* to equip himself with the *logos* of Epictetus as part of a strategy to reinforce the teachings. The project of writing was itself for Arrian part of the method used in his own project of self-mastery. So it is not only the contents of the text itself that provide the tools for mastery but also the project of writing the things he remembered. Writing is, for Arrian, part of the spiritual exercise leading to self-mastery. The same can be said of Michel Foucault, and indeed he says so of his own projects.

3.3.2. Writing in Foucault

Foucault suggested that he used his own research projects and books to script, or write himself, saying that, 'intellectual work is related to what you could call "aestheticism," meaning transforming yourself.'¹⁴⁸ He did not frame the problem of becoming one's self in terms of discovering an essential person, which implies an indefensible teleology. Rather, the self becomes an aesthetic construction constituted by the free exercise of the will. That doesn't imply, as I mentioned before, an unrestrained libertinism, but a process of self-management leading to mastery, an ascetic engagement with techniques, the purpose of which is to corral representations, desires, and forces within the social relations of power. Foucault characterizes the spiritual exercises of the Ancients as ascesis but does not use the term 'asceticism' to

¹⁴⁶ *Encheiridion*, p. 8

¹⁴⁷ George Long, *The Discourses of Epictetus with the Encheiridion and Fragments* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ EST, p. 130.

describe these practices because ‘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.’¹⁴⁹

One can also talk about the movement of Foucault’s work within his books as a path of discovery. He does not write a book with the conclusion in mind already. In an interview with Italian journalist D. Trombadori he said, ‘I write a book only [...] because I still don’t exactly know what to think about this thing I want so much to think about, so that the book transforms me and transforms what I think.’¹⁵⁰ His methods, contents, and conclusions are uncertain until finished. This can be plainly demonstrated by a quick perusal of the works up to 1978 when this interview with Trombadori took place. The long-standing quibbles about what precisely Foucault was doing in any of his works are part of what makes nailing down any genealogy or structure to his method so difficult. Each work has its own method explored within the work itself, which often is only defined in later interviews and writings.

Foucault did not follow a pattern but let the work itself define patterns dynamically. In this way Foucault was not only forming his ideas, but his person, if it is true that a person is at least partially constituted by what one thinks. Foucault certainly considered that to be true; he said that ‘this transformation of one’s self by one’s own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience.’¹⁵¹ Echoing various analyses by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Foucault suggests that the acquisition of truth follows the process of changes within a person’s life. It is not so much the external relation to power with which the individual is concerned but rather self-formation.¹⁵² Foucault speaks of the game of truth as the play involved in writing the self. Certainly his writing efforts were part of a struggle to come to grips with the truth.

In addition, negatively, Foucault thinks that the inability to write, or produce a work is a sign of madness.¹⁵³ The absence of work as the product of life reveals spiritual poverty in an individual. Without work, Foucault suggests, a person can

¹⁴⁹ EST, p. 136.

¹⁵⁰ Power, pp. 239-40. ‘When I begin a book, not only do I not know what I’ll be thinking at the end, but it’s not very clear to me what method I will employ. Each of my books is a way of carving out an object and of fabricating a method of analysis. (Power, p. 240)’

¹⁵¹ EST, p. 131.

¹⁵² EST, p. 282. ‘These games of truth no longer involve a coercive practice, but a practice of self-formation of the subject.’

¹⁵³ HM, ‘Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre,’ pp. 541-49.

never form his or her self. Macey recounts that Foucault mourned the suicide of his friend Jacques Martin whom Althusser and Foucault named ‘*philosophe sans oeuvre*, a philosopher with no works,’¹⁵⁴ explaining that for all Martin’s brilliance, he was depressed and incapable of productive activity.

But writing can be more than merely an escape from madness; it can lead to a more coherent life. It provides an organizational technique, to escape from seemingly insurmountable and inevitable social pressures; it allows for the formation of a life different from the current one, the formation of a moral character profoundly different from the previous one. In the next section I will mention one feminist example where the writing of correspondence became a means of self-formation, then examine one instance of character formation through the writing of diaries or journals. Though there are many suitable examples of journaling, *The Freedom Writers Diary* is a particularly good one because the transformations of the self through writing exercises are explicit. Many times the writers speak openly how their lives have been changed.

3.3.3. Modern Writing

Kathy Ferguson tells the story of Emma Goldman¹⁵⁵ as an example of how writing is a formative exercise. ‘Emma Goldman crafted herself as an example of anarchism in life.’¹⁵⁶ Through voluminous correspondence she both revealed her persistent form and held herself in the exercise of writing as an means of struggling against the forces of government that would gloss over injustices.¹⁵⁷ Quoting Foucault’s *Technologies of the Self*, Ferguson describes Goldman’s self care as ‘something much more serious than the simple fact of paying attention. [...] It is always a real activity and not just an attitude.’¹⁵⁸ So Goldman’s private exercises of self care in her correspondence contributed to the formation of her public self, her persistent anarchic ideology, and her careful critique of those who, on her terms, misunderstood her.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 25, 26.

¹⁵⁵ *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, ed. by Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges, ‘E.G.: Emma Goldman, for Example’ (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), hereafter FFF, pp. 28-40.

¹⁵⁶ FFF, p. 28.

¹⁵⁷ FFF, p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ FFF, p. 32. and TS, p. 24.

¹⁵⁹ FFF, p. 36.

The book *The Freedom Writers Diary* is the story of one group of students at Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. I want to look at this as a simple, obvious case where writing is demonstrated as one of the decisive turning points for a group of students.¹⁶⁰ The official prognosis for these students was failure, but through the attentiveness of one teacher, these individuals transformed themselves into socially adept adults. I am not so much interested in the form of writing, whether it is journaling, as it is in this case, or research on arcane objects of historical interest as it is in Foucault's, or the *hupomnemata* of the Ancients intended as a self-directed spiritual exercise, but rather on the effects of writing itself. I wish to answer the question whether it is possible to write an historical ontology of oneself, as Foucault requires as a part of a project of enlightenment. I answer affirmatively. Writing in journal form fulfils the requirement of writing history, subjective in its production, but providing in duration, access to an objective view of the changes within oneself, the changes of what is possible and hoped for along with the stubborn realities of being human we all experience.¹⁶¹

Consistent with Foucault's analysis of the techniques of the self in the Ancients, Erin Gruwell, as teacher, acts as the master of these students. By design, modern education assumes the asymmetries between teacher and student. The many failures within the educational system demonstrate that this relationship is not well understood. However, Gruwell did understand her role if the project she promoted is to be taken as evidence, though the performance of that role had unexpected social costs for her and her students. One price was the persistent disdain and resistance of some of her fellow teachers who complained that Gruwell requested and obtained the privileges of a teacher with much greater seniority.

Journaling is not the only technique Gruwell used, but it was central to the movement of the students from the position of victim toward the mastery of the self many of them demonstrated later. Five stages of their development can be noted. These stages are similar to those Foucault discovered in his study of the Ancients, both Christian and Greco-Roman. Even though there are similarities with the ancient stages of development the modern ones take on a distinct shape. Seeing the transformation of these young lives reminds me of a remark made by Martin Buber,

¹⁶⁰ The Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999), hereafter FWD.

¹⁶¹ FWD, p. xv. 'Writing about the things that happen to us allows us to look objectively at what's going on around us and turn a negative experience onto something positive and useful.'

‘The “wicked” become a revelation when they are touched by the sacred basic word.’¹⁶² These children, many who were damaged terribly by those around them, found a route to self-mastery. But that route was marked with terrible revelations.

These revelations are part of the first category of their writing exercises, that of therapeutic techniques. There are at least three distinct sorts of therapeutic exercise displayed in the journaling assigned by Gruwell as a form of reacting to literature and life circumstances: confession,¹⁶³ catharsis,¹⁶⁴ and conversion to the self.¹⁶⁵ In order to engage the students who were, at the beginning, recalcitrant and inattentive, Gruwell used books that told stories relating to the stories of the students from times and cultures that were unlike the circumstances of those students. The focus of the first two years of her work with the students was to break down stereotypes¹⁶⁶ and create empathy. The lives of her students were persistently marked by racism of one kind or another, even though the reasons for the original animosity between races were no longer understood.¹⁶⁷ So, Gruwell introduced the students to a wide variety of Holocaust literature, including Elie Wiesel’s *Night*; *The Diary of Anne Frank*; and the diary of a young girl from contemporary, war-torn Sarajevo, Zlata Filipovic. In addition, Gruwell introduced them to resistance literature, including *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker; *Durango Street*, by Frank Bonham; and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.

The fourth technique Gruwell used was the creation of community.¹⁶⁸ By writing, the students were encouraged to correspond with people who had direct involvement with the Holocaust, including a local Holocaust survivor, Gerda Seifer, and Miep Gies, the woman who harboured the Frank family during World War II. Seifer was able to visit the class and tell them about the Holocaust from personal experience. Gies, at the invitation of the students, travelled to Southern California from Amsterdam to spend time with the class. They also invited Zlata, who at the time was living in Ireland with her parents. As it turned out, Zlata was the same age

¹⁶² Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), p. 67. The primary word here is ‘Thou,’ which is, in Buber’s parlance the word one speaks to God, wherever and whenever one finds him, in nature, prayer, or people.

¹⁶³ FWD, p. 33, Diary 15; p. 67, Diary 34; p. 263, Diary 139.

¹⁶⁴ FWD, p. 34, Diary 16.

¹⁶⁵ FWD, p. 264, Diary 140. This diary contains all three therapeutic exercises. These are only samples of numerous instances throughout the book.

¹⁶⁶ FWD, p. 270.

¹⁶⁷ FWD, p. 96, Diary 46.

¹⁶⁸ FWD, p. 276.

as the Freedom Writers. She accepted their invitation and arrived with her parents for a week in Southern California. The students began to feel that they were part of a larger world that had been struggling with the same sorts of problems they were living with every day. Through association with the Holocaust literature, their reflections on it, and the people they met, they began to broaden their perspective, enlarge their community, and abandon their stereotypes.

The students began to see their writing as a means of changing their world. Writing, during their time at high school, became a means of empowerment, a route to the mastery of their selves. Instead of being victims, they began to see themselves as free individuals responsible for their own futures. This emancipation came with some serious side effects. Parents were often not interested in accommodating their children's new-found liberty, and tensions at home ran high when children sought to break free to become something different from traditional expectations. For some families, the child's movement was just too much too soon. One student recounted the fear she had asking her father if she could participate in extracurricular activities. He always said 'No!' when she asked, so she stopped asking. Then, when it was time to go to Washington D.C. with the class, her father was in Mexico. She asked her mother, who permitted her to go. The student suppressed her fear because of the chance for liberty; and because of the elation she felt in her freedom, didn't say anything about possible future repercussions for taking the trip.¹⁶⁹

The fifth and last technique practiced by the class was that the students became catalysts for change.¹⁷⁰ With the new perspective the Freedom Writers gained through their exposure to a wider world came a sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves. With Gruwell, and John Tu, a local businessman, they organized a relief effort for Zlata's people in Bosnia who had suffered the effects of a long war against its citizens. This effort to reach out to the less fortunate was marked by the learned tolerance for difference and empathy that was a result of their exposure to literature and the working out of their own difficulties, part of which is expressed in their writing.

I wish to emphasize the part writing played in this scenario. In an era when computers were finding their way into schools, the computer lab at Wilson High School had an insufficient number of computers for all the students in any class. John

¹⁶⁹ FWD, p. 162, Diary 80.

¹⁷⁰ FWD, p. 276.

Tu, the local businessman who had become interested in the progress of the students in Gruwell's class, donated thirty-five computers to help them with their writing, enough for each student to have his or her own. Many of the students really didn't have much of a home life, and preferred to stay at their computers writing and editing than going home. A number of times the students and Ms. Gruwell had to be kicked out of the building by security when the building needed to be closed. At one time they all had to crawl out the window to avoid the guard after the school had been closed for the night. Gruwell persisted, against the inertia of contemporary education, to help the students master themselves and succeed at integrating into a broader society than they could have imagined in their earlier years.

Throughout the book, writing both communicates these techniques and is the technique itself whereby the individuals defined themselves. Though the school and context are different from those Foucault writes about, the power of writing as a technique of self-constitution comes through clearly in the abandonment of unhealthy lifestyles, the salvation through a conversion to the self, and the promotion of techniques of the self profitable not only for the individual, but also for the wider society.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated some of the themes which Foucault thought would be important in any analysis of the Ancients. The first is that the care of the self was more important than knowledge of the self; the second is that establishing this fact requires a selective historiography focused on ethical writings. The third is that spirituality was the prerequisite of knowledge and was obtained by means of techniques of self-modification under the direction and guidance of a master.

I have drawn from these themes the idea, which Foucault himself suggested, that every age and every culture has its own set of techniques of the self. From this I have extrapolated the conditions whereby one can recognize one of these techniques. In that context I drew parallels between writings of the Ancients, Foucault himself, and a group of contemporary high school students to demonstrate that writing as a technique of self-care, of self-development, still functions along recognizable lines from the Ancients to ourselves.

I have not attempted to encompass all techniques of the self in every age, but rather focus on demonstrating the similarities between the Ancients and ourselves with Foucault's mediation. This will give me a context within which I will be able to extrapolate from a series of problems in contemporary ethical writings, techniques of the self that are not unlike those Foucault defined in the Ancients and those I have identified in Foucault and *The Freedom Writers*.

The important thing to remember about Foucault's version of the process of self-elaboration through self-care is that, even though it is an aesthetic project, it is also an ethical one. It is an aesthetic project in that self-care has no specific goal in mind; it is not teleological. And it is ethical in that it takes place through the elaboration of freedom, the discovery of limits, and the creative exploration of those limits and what lies beyond them. Foucault asks the question about limits and explores transgression as a method of redefining the self and writing an historical ontology of those limits. What Foucault does not do is articulate any philosophical structure for self-constitution of an individual. His remarks are leading and suggestive, especially when he is motivated to explain his own behaviour. But it is not a coherent program of the sort that could be attempted as a rule of living, as a spiritual technique. The closest he comes to a sort of personal technique can be understood biographically and is evident in three major biographies: Eribon's, Macey's, and Miller's. Eribon speaks of the change of Foucault's life in the early 1980s, how he moved toward a tranquillity of mind having found solace in Seneca's writings. Macey describes the care with which Foucault projected himself, while Miller recounts Foucault's own project of scripting the self in great detail. All three writers capture some sense of the persistent intentionality with which Foucault describes his own self-construction.

Part of what it is to write a biography is to examine the cause and effect relation between actions and their results. What is helpful in Foucault's remarks is that he consciously took the project of writing as a method of self-construction, and in that, his books are part of his own biography. Foucault's books become not only the articulation of his research and conclusions, but also an articulation of his own formation. The goals he had in mind for his writing display, after the fact, a certain movement toward the development of a human ontology—not precisely a universal theory but a certain historical regularity, marked by 'a suspension of ontological

certainty,¹⁷¹ within his own behaviour articulated as the need for self-development and elaboration.

In the next chapter I will explore one aspect of human ontology that represents a fair account of a motivation for an ethos sympathetic to Foucault's intended outcome for a historical ontology. I will set up a rough distinction that is implicit in Foucault between strong theory and a weak theory. This will permit making some generalizations about the limits of human perception, rationality, and theorizing. After that, I will look at how a weak ontology, implicit in weak theory, fits Foucault's work, especially in the material related to *The Government of Self and Others*¹⁷² about Plato's seventh letter. In examining the seventh letter, Foucault makes a direct connection between the spiritual qualifications for knowledge and an ethos that permits Platonic philosophical knowledge. In other words, the possibility of philosophical knowledge requires attention to one's moral qualifications in an ethos developed through techniques of the self. 'The philosopher transforms his life into truth and transforms truth into a living reality in his character and actions, in his very body — *aletheia* becomes *ethos* through *askésis*.'¹⁷³

By examining James Rachels' moral theory, I advance a technique of reasoning for our age within an ethos that qualifies a person for the discovery of knowledge. I illustrate this ethos by recounting the journey of Miroslav Volf in *The End of Memory* toward remembering rightly a sequence of events with his captors. The tension between his inclinations and the need for his own wholeness requires a technique of reason within an ethos whose goal is the redemption not only of his memories, but of the people that perpetrated violence against him.

¹⁷¹ JBR, p. 302.

¹⁷² Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), hereafter GSO.

¹⁷³ Edward McGushin, 'Foucault and the Problem of the Subject', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31/5-6 (2005), 623-648, (p. 636).

Chapter 4: The Movement From Weak Ontology to Ethical Technique

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that a movement toward ethical technologies of the self is driven in part by a need for self-mastery. Whether the ethical technology is one designed with the purpose of setting into place a formal decision procedure as we find in James Rachels' moral theory, or a work of self-transformation as we find in Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory*,¹ the conditions for advancement in these projects rely on the production of a certain ethos in the person who recognizes the many ways the project may go wrong. The production of this ethos is the work of the self on the self that makes advancement in the project possible.

As a result of this research, I will offer a technique that takes into account the results of weak theory, and incorporates the ethical project of self-construction as a goal. The ethos that is a result of this project of self-construction is characterized as a porosity or vulnerability to experience. Morality on this account again becomes a qualification for knowledge. The world is no longer judged from the perspective of a detached Cartesian rationality, but transforms the individual within a discipline of self-formation.

The theme I wish to explore in this chapter is an ontological one; authentic self discovery forces a recognition of a deep weakness in our apprehension of the world and ourselves. What we are, embedded within our world cannot be apprehended merely as a matter of a theorizing, scientific, or formulaic *logos*, but as a recognition that entanglements of our reflective consciousness within the world do not permit us to ground our knowledge in any specifiable wholeness.² We are left with a drive toward wholeness without knowledge of ontological boundaries, boundaries of our thoughts and actions, the constitution of our very selves. Whether we characterize the entanglements of our reflective consciousness in Foucauldian terms around the nexus of power relations, or in scientific terms around the nexus of our relation to the material universe, it may be impossible to demarcate successfully

¹ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). I refer to his extensive appeal to the problems of human striving toward fullness in the early and later parts of this book.

the limits of the self in relation to the world. It may be impossible to explain the restless striving for completeness, for fullness, for knowledge of ourselves and the world without also recognizing the inherent limitations of our theorizing.

Techniques of the self stand as markers in the process of developing access to forms of wholeness without theoretical foundations. Foundations *per se* may not be available, but mastery of the self implying mastery of the lived world through techniques of the self are rewards for an autonomous search for wholeness.

The path I take in this chapter will be, first, to mark out a distinction between strong and weak ontology then demonstrate the movement to weak ontology nascent in Foucault by referring to analyses found in earlier chapters of this dissertation. After some general remarks about Foucault I will turn to a passage in the lectures of 1982-1983, *The Government of Self and Others* where Foucault interprets Plato's epistemological method described in the *Seventh Letter* as one that I extrapolate as being parallel to modern discussions of weak theory. Specifically, Foucault following Plato interprets the process of acquiring knowledge of the thing itself as a process requiring *tribē* or friction;³ this word is used and the state is also described by Aldo Gargani, a process rather than an end-point, incapable according to Plato of correct annunciation in any *logos*. The payoff of this discussion is a characterization of weak ontology that shows a movement in Foucault from weak ontology to techniques of the self. Characterizing Foucault in terms of weak ontology resolves some tension between his earlier and later works and sets up some connecting points between his narratives on knowledge and power relations that lead to a focus on technologies of the self. Specifically, the limitations of human knowledge serve as a context and motivation for striving toward self-mastery.

In a discussion of James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, I will observe the structure of one possible movement in weak theory, that which promotes the development of an ethical project by defining the role of a rational technique, a

³ GSO, p. 251, 'When the good quality soul undertakes this slow, lengthy, arduous work of going up and down through the other forms of knowledge, when he has practiced what Plato calls *tribe*—in the strict sense: rubbing or friction—knowledge of reality in its very being thereby becomes possible.' Following is the quote from Plato examined in Foucault: 'After much effort, as names, definitions, sights, and other data of sense are brought into contact and friction one with another, in the course of scrutiny and kindly testing by men who proceed by question and answer without ill will, with a sudden flash there shines forth understanding about every problem, and an intelligence whose efforts reach the furthest limits of human powers.' Plato *Letters 7 in Logos Virtual Library*, <<http://www.logoslibrary.org/plato/letters/07.html>> [accessed 5 July 2010]

decision procedure for discovering what moral obligations ensue in any particular case, without pretensions to any universal apprehension of moral duty.

After the discussion of how weak theory in Foucault led to technologies of the self, and the ethical technique of Rachels, I will give an example of a modern technology of the self sympathetic to weak theory and to the critique of a Cartesian rationality embedded in postmodern thought.⁴ Unlike the techniques of the self I described in the previous chapter, the practices of listening, reading, writing, and speech, the technique I specify will be a rational one, part of a studied *ethos* that permits exploration of reality within the limitations of human knowledge. I justify expressing this as a technique partly because the seeds of it are already contained in Foucault, and partly because it follows from the works discussed in the next section of this chapter. The result of practicing this technique is the development of an *ethos* that responds to Foucault's call for developing an attitude toward the self and its mastery,⁵ and takes as some of its instruments the developments of weak ontology within James Rachels' *ethos*.

4.2. Weak Ontology

Weak theory is not a claim about the weakness of some theory, but a claim about the weakness of human theorizing. It is a claim about human inability to apprehend existence transparently, or if one can apprehend existence well enough, about the expression of that apprehension as being incompletely characterized by any written or spoken thought. Weak theory is therefore a claim about human being, a claim about the limitations of human thinking and expression. It is an ontology. So, weak theory is a weak ontology. The claim of weak ontology is not a sceptical claim, however, but a claim about the impossibility for human beings to have transparent flawless access to reality itself and to any corresponding expression of that reality. It is not a claim about the impossibility of knowledge.⁶

It may be helpful to start this discussion with a view that though not strictly the definition given for weak theory by some Italian and American philosophers⁷ nonetheless sets up an instructive contrast with 'strong' theory. Lee Smolin details

⁴ See Chapter 1.3.2 of this dissertation.

⁵ POT, 'What is Enlightenment?' p. 97.

⁶ I refer here to all the cautions about knowledge derivable from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, as well as other parts of his work. He is not denying knowledge, rather denying it is absolute. This plays well with Foucault's treatment of knowledge.

⁷ Italians: Gianni Vattimo, Aldo G. Gargani, and Pier Aldo Rovatti; American: Stephen White.

some problems with physics through the narratives of its practitioners, their successes and failures, triumphs and defeats. He does not define weak theory, instead, he suggests that what philosophers are doing in the late twentieth century is *not* strong theory.

The Italian philosophers have what I think is an interesting way to refer to the transition taking place in the twentieth century in philosophy. They refer to what they call strong theory and weak theory. Strong theory is what the philosophers aspired to do before this century, which was to discover by rational reflection and argument the absolute and complete truth about existence and elaborate these truths into complete philosophical systems. Weak theory is what philosophers have been doing since Wittgenstein and Gödel taught us the impossibility of doing this.⁸

A decade later,⁹ Smolin traces some problems with the discipline of physics that lead him to conclude that science cannot be characterized as following any particular reasoning process, or experimental practice. ‘Success in science is to a large extent driven by courage and character. [...] Science progresses because it is built on an ethic recognizing that in the face of incomplete information we are all equal.’¹⁰ As a theoretical physicist and cosmologist Smolin encourages a move toward humility and caution in the knowledge enterprise in the face of the difficulties faced by any scientific explanation of the universe. Though he is generally optimistic about the product of scientific research, the history of scientific practice tempers that optimism.

Even a cursory review of scientific theorizing over the last few centuries reveals how often theory has been wrong, even when a contested theory has had some explanatory power and predictive success. Models of scientific theorizing, from Cartesian rationalism and Baconian empiricism to modern theories of physics, biology, and psychology all betray their limitations, their inability to exactly correspond with reality. These methods lack exact knowledge, not because the questions they asked have been incorrectly posed, but because of an inherent inability of human theorizing exposed in the failure to solve once and for all lasting riddles and puzzles thrown up in the face of the persistent effort of scientific practitioners.

In its strongest form Smolin’s sentiment about scientific theory is that the scientific theoretical enterprise can only roughly produce experimental results, and

⁸ Lee Smolin, *The Life of the Cosmos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 297-98.

⁹ Lee Smolin, *The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a Science, and What Comes Next* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006).

¹⁰ Smolin, *the Trouble with Physics*. p. 306. Notable here is Smolin’s conclusion that it is not a scientific method that founds scientific practice, but rather an egalitarian ethic.

those do not count as formal theoretical proofs. In all probability theories do not grasp reality correctly at this moment. Smolin's appeal to weak theory is a response to the history and practice of science in its attempt to know the universe. The cogency of his critique of foundations is necessary, first, because much of mankind's greatest intellectual effort has been spent in various scientific projects, and second, scientific research has often been treated as a secure foundation.¹¹

I refer to Smolin to suggest that weak theory is not confined to philosophical, historical, or ethical discourse. Smolin gives us a view of a problem with the human enterprise of knowledge acquisition and expression in general. The effects of Smolin's insight about the physical sciences suggest that theorizing should move toward a modest and critical rational attitude. So Smolin's reference to weak theory is a way of saying that theorists must mistrust absolute totalizing claims about reality. Now, let us move beyond Smolin's use of weak theory to an evaluation of some remarks by the Italians he refers to because it may be useful if we can specify what this claim of weakness is.

Giovanna Borradori in *Recoding Metaphysics*¹² provides access to some expressions of weak theory. Weak theory is a general term meant to describe some aspects of human character, and defined by Borradori it is a choice of an attitude promoting weak thought. Weak thought as outlined by Borradori is in

clear-cut opposition to the Cartesian-rationalist tradition, with which it identifies *tout court* the totalizing root of the innovative and revolutionary "ideologies" of modernity. This "weakness" (*debolezza*) of thought is in fact taken up as the product of "a rationality which must de-strengthen itself within, cede ground, have no fear of drawing back, ... must not remain paralyzed by the loss of the luminous, unique and stable Cartesian reference."¹³

These remarks extracted from the Italian thinkers Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti define limitations of human being as *weakness*, and *distance*, respectively. Aldo Gargani describes the problem of the human knowledge enterprise in terms of *friction* between the self and reality.¹⁴ Stephen White, an American,

¹¹ I am referring to the Vienna Circle and the practitioners of positivism, but not only that project. Many disciplines like that of the positivists of the twentieth century have assumed the tautology that the truth of statements and their associated provability need no further theoretic or evidentiary support.

¹² Giovanna Borradori, *Recoding Metaphysics*, ed. by Giovanna Borradori, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), hereafter RM. This is collection of essays from late twentieth-century Italian philosophy.

¹³ RM, pp. 6-7. She quotes Vattimo and Rovatti.

¹⁴ RM, p. 13.

speaks of the ‘stickiness of subjectivity’¹⁵ which is contrasted with ‘the idea of subjects striving toward frictionless forward motion.’¹⁶

White reminds his reader of the deep entanglement of the knowing self with its human realities and makes a case for the suspension of prejudice, of generalized judgements arising from the ‘disengaged self,’¹⁷ Comparing a certainty of the truth arising from a ‘categorical positing [...] of human nature or telos [with] existential realities, most notably language, mortality or finitude, natality, and the articulation of “sources of the self”’¹⁸ White suggests that our existential groundedness, instead of needing to be dispensed with for the construction of an objective truth of the world, must inform the limited constructions of any possible worldview. A weak ontology on this account non-reductively captures an engagement with reality that forbids a ‘crystalline conviction of the truth.’¹⁹

Vattimo reflecting on Heidegger and Nietzsche²⁰ suggests that there may be no absolute ground to found a metaphysics on. A *hermeneutic grounding* appears to be the only ground available.²¹ It only becomes available at ‘the nth metamorphosis of the hermeneutic circle,’²² when one can go no further. One finds a hermeneutic ground as a persistent residue of possible interpretations. It must not be taken as truth, or foundational, but more like a working hypothesis, amenable to adjustment. This ground is weak in the sense that it never achieves correspondence with reality, and must stop short because the ideal of correspondence is unachievable. The weak grounding in reality Vattimo offers arises from a weak ontology.

Pier Aldo Rovatti uses two metaphors to describe human experience that emerge from use of the word *scarto*.²³ He defined *scarto* as a swerve or sudden jerky movement. The first metaphor arising from this term is that of the river that does not proceed in a straightforward fashion. It swerves. ‘The river does not follow a direct route. Its tortuous course is also experience, which is almost always the longest path,

¹⁵ Stephen K. White, ‘Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection,’ in *Political Theory* vol. 25, issue 4, August 1997, p. 507.

¹⁶ Stephen K. White, ‘Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection,’ p. 507.

¹⁷ Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), hereafter SA, p. 8. ‘The disengaged self’ is also a central feature of Charles Taylor’s discussion of the ‘buffered self’ in *A Secular Age*, pp. 37-38 and *passim*.

¹⁸ SA, p. 9.

¹⁹ SA, p. 9.

²⁰ RM, Gianni Vattimo, ‘Toward an Ontology of Decline,’ pp. 63-75.

²¹ RM, Vattimo, ‘Toward an Ontology of Decline,’ p. 69.

²² RM, Vattimo, ‘Toward an Ontology of Decline,’ p. 73.

²³ RM, Pier Aldo Rovatti, ‘Maintaining the Distance,’ pp. 117-18.

made up of curves and bends.’²⁴ The second metaphor is that of the tightrope humans must walk to cross the abyss, and the precarious equilibrium one must maintain to do it successfully. One misstep, ‘a small movement, a *scarto*, is sufficient to lose it.’²⁵ Rovatti asks whether it is possible to avoid that small movement that disrupts our equilibrium, and to stand above the curves of the river that characterize our normal experience.²⁶ He concludes that it is not possible. The *scarto* is inevitable in human being.

Rovatti suggests that a non-foundational rationality²⁷ admitting the *scarto* provides a necessary distance,²⁸ though that distance couldn’t be called objectivity. There is no time when people couldn’t be surprised by experience, but they are buffered from the actual surprise by the distance provided by admitting the possibility that experience can surprise and turn our perception in unexpected ways. The human being cannot separate itself from the entanglement of being in the world. Human experience of being in the world denies a Cartesian objectivity and entails permanent risk of losing equilibrium. Apprehension of the world for Rovatti is therefore weak.

Perhaps the most telling voice with respect to the line of reasoning I offer about weak ontology is that of Aldo Gargani. First, he rejects the strong theories of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, second, he rejects the ‘cultures of *paradigms*, of the *versions of the world*, and of *conceptual schemes*’²⁹ that developed later to replace those theories. He explains that strong theories require a frictionless mirror in which to see the pure possibility of the origins of their thoughts and actions, and to access the truth of their being.³⁰ Neither correspondence nor coherence define truth, but correspondence and coherence create possible versions of the world that is not the world or thought itself. Instead, thought

is not a specific, autonomous, and independent essence that interprets, that forms ideas, versions, or conceptions of the world. [...] No, thought is the concrete weaving formed from an unpredictable constellation of events, of diverse scenes, of signs of passions; and if these same events, scenes, these different signs, details introduced by chance or accidentals of life, by the

²⁴ RM, Rovatti, ‘Maintaining the Distance,’ p. 118.

²⁵ RM, Rovatti, ‘Maintaining the Distance,’ p. 118.

²⁶ RM, Rovatti, ‘Maintaining the Distance,’ p. 119.

²⁷ Rovatti wishes the reader to recognize that the *scarto* prevents any thorough formalization of knowledge. The scope of what we can possibly know must shrink to acknowledge limitations within the knowledge project.

²⁸ The distance is a form of the impossibility of the observer’s correspondence with the world.

²⁹ RM, Aldo Gargani, ‘Friction of Thought,’ p. 77.

³⁰ RM, Aldo Gargani, ‘Friction of Thought,’ p. 78. This mirror metaphor is reminiscent of some of Richard Rorty’s remarks in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

fragments that each person lives of this existence, were removed, there would no longer remain anything we could call “thought.”³¹

Gargani does not arrive at an idealization of thought in logically strong theory or frictionless reflections of reality resulting in versions of the world dispossessed of persons, but a lived world with all the attendant difficulties, frictions, and accidents. Gargani gives a version of weak ontology that leaves purported strong ontologies lacking in the very characteristics that supposedly made them desirable: an aloof Cartesian subject that permits theoretical coherence and consistency, objectivity and foundations.

The disengaged self described by White, and the evasive and unattainable ground of Vattimo show the failure of foundationalism. Rovatti’s *scarto* prevents the availability of objective truth as correspondence, entailing permanent risk of losing equilibrium. Gargani explains the failure of strategies designed to delineate correspondence and coherence theories of truth. These representative approaches mark the embeddedness of human being that admits and even thrives within limitation. They mark out a space where human ontology lives within constraints that cannot be eliminated.

This survey of weak theory and weak ontology in the last thirty years is indicative of an abandonment of strong theory arising out of a Cartesian moment,³² and a consolidation of a set of problems not yet fully fleshed out in the late Foucault. However, Foucault struggled successfully with the ontological problematic stated in the preceding paragraphs. When Foucault required the construction of an historical ontology as part of the process of self-construction,³³ he acknowledges the deep embeddedness of the self within an historical matrix of power relations and the inability of formal rationality to arrive at a distanced, dispassionate, objective acquisition of either self-knowledge or knowledge of the world. In what follows I provide an extended discussion of Foucault’s relation to weak ontology.

4.3. Foucault and Weak Ontology

In this section, I will trace some movements within Foucault’s methodology that parallel the development of weak ontology. I will refer to work already mentioned in earlier chapters of this dissertation. In addition, I will discuss some of

³¹ RM, Aldo Gargani, ‘Friction of Thought,’ p. 87.

³² HS, p. 14.

³³ POT, pp. 113, 115, ‘What is Enlightenment?.’

Foucault's analysis of Plato's epistemology found in *The Government of Self and Others*, in order to make a connection between Foucault's thought and weak ontology.

4.3.1. Archaeology

One clue that Foucault's archaeology is comparable with weak ontology is in the archaeological method described in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. First, the objects he used and referred to: the archive, positivities, discursive regularities, singularities, etc. are never foundational. Foucault does not attempt to claim for these objects any sort of universality. They are constructions of purposively limited data sets. His intention is to avoid any appeal to universals, idealizations, teleological explanations, or general consensus. From these data sets the archaeological method exposes the emergence and/or disappearance of discursive regularities, the products of human enterprise that may or may not coalesce into sciences.

Foucault critiques historical analyses that attempt to ground their work in certain origins, the continuity of and 'apostolic succession' of ideas, and finally a version of history that is driving teleologically toward the apotheosis of man, under totalized formal rules for progress. Foucault dismisses a version of history that requires the reduction of disparate events and formations in history to a single locus, a single explanatory logos, a single lens through which all history needs to be viewed, an ideological structure privileging a single totalizing idea.³⁴

The seamless world of the history of ideas he critiques, that smoothes over discontinuities, eruptions, and breaks leading to an ideal humanity, becomes implausible when the data of history speak in their own voice. The *death of man* in Foucault's early work is nothing more than a recognition that Cartesian subjectivity as a construct of scientific examination of man is impossible to achieve.³⁵ Subjects don't have access to the world supposed in that view. There is a necessary distance (Rovatti), irremediable friction (Gargani), and stickiness (White) in human apprehension of the subject and the world. Foucault sees this and so chooses in his research to allow historical objects to present themselves as embedded in the world without reductive theoretical structures that weave together an artificial story of origins, continuity, and totalization. The lumbering, clumsy, chaotic, and accidental

³⁴ AK, p. 138.

³⁵ FL, 'The Birth of a World,' interview with Jean-Michel Palmier, p. 67.

progress of man can as easily disappear in Foucault's archaeology as it appeared in the first place because there is no telos, no predictable end of either man or the world in some apocalypse.

One aspect of weak ontology in Foucault's thinking is demonstrated by his distance from the attribution of some transcendently purposive connection privileged by the observing subject.³⁶ He held instead to a more plastic subjectivity. In the early- to mid-1970s that plastic subject was formed by the power relations it was embedded in. In Foucault's ethical writings, the self becomes responsible for forming the plastic subject in the context of ordinary power relations. Foucault did not dispense with this view of man, and throughout his writing appealed to it. Like Smolin, Foucault rejects strong theory, and opts for a limited subject.

4.3.2. Genealogy

The objects Foucault observes in his genealogical research of the early- to mid-1970s at once fill a much larger scope than those aimed at through archaeology.³⁷ As I mentioned previously, archaeological research provides the ground for an accurate though extremely limited excavation of history, while genealogy attempts to capture the movements of history in conjunction with relations of power.

Why didn't he use the tools of his own contemporary society to look at history? The answer is, negatively, that he wished to avoid an anachronistic view of historical social structures³⁸ even though he was not entirely successful in doing so in the *Archaeology*.³⁹ Foucault discovered that archaeology was insufficiently flexible to comprehend the broad features of social relations. It excluded too much. The objects of his genealogical research were also incapable of providing sufficient room for the subject. In *Discipline and Punish* the subjectification of individuals on whom

³⁶ Even as Borradori suggests above.

³⁷ Genealogy is a method that, like archaeology, does not look for 'genesis, continuity, [and] totalization.' (AK, p. 138) Foucault discusses the nature of genealogy as being 'Opposed to a genesis oriented towards the unity of some principal [*sic*] cause burdened with multiple descendants.' (POT, 'What is Critique?' p. 64) While including the archive, the object of archaeology does not confine itself to that archive, or merely to the emergent properties within a civilization that generate discursive regularities. The scope of genealogy is larger, taking into account not only the explicitly archaeological work but also the problems of power as well as ethics, (EST, p. 262) creating an account of society at once more general, as well as more supple and inclusive.

³⁸ Early in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault outlines the project of genealogy with respect to a study of the prison system: 'I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present.' (DP, p. 30-31)

³⁹ Merquior, pp. 62-64, in his chapter on the *Archaeology*.

legalities were forced⁴⁰ within the disciplinary, hierarchical society is too complete. Freedom of choice and movement is severely circumscribed and the individual's very soul is formed by the disciplinary powers. In the objects⁴¹ Foucault examined, the subject is over-determined by the disciplinary apparatus.

Because of the weakness of the subject discovered in these studies, Foucault kept returning to the problem of freedom in the studies of the late-1970s and early-1980s. He moved toward an ethical and aesthetic construction of the self. Though the early genealogical work was not capable of portraying a fully free subject, it did nonetheless open for inspection a weakness in objective science residing within the subject itself, that is, a subject is too deeply embedded in the matrix of power relations to extricate itself, and cannot achieve an objective view.

4.3.3. Discourse on Freedom

In chapter 2 of this dissertation I examined some problems with freedom. I concluded that though Kant's ethical work tended toward a project possible only in ideal circumstances, his call to be courageous enough to use one's own reasoning is central to his view of enlightenment.⁴² Though in the *Groundwork* the virtue of courage is neither essential nor foundational, it seems to be so in the *Aufklärung*. Kant asked us to break the internal boundaries of our self-incurred tutelage, and there seems to be some risk of failure without courage. However, Kant wished to mollify the effects of any possible risk resulting from that lack of courage by binding us to an ideal state where we could remain obedient to the authorities while speaking our mind freely. It is hard to shake the feeling in Kant that if we work hard enough within a state that limits its own power, we can perfect ourselves.

In hindsight, Foucault saw that Kant missed the important element of pervasive power relations within the state. So, in Kant, the objective of enlightenment ceases to concern itself with limiting the power of the state. Foucault then constructed a strategy for forming 'a philosophical ethos consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing through a historical ontology of ourselves.'⁴³ Part of this project of forming an ethos will require that we call into question the presupposed

⁴⁰ Ordinarily, the poor, the working class, the common soldier, and the delinquent are subjects of the disciplinary society. But in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault also outlines a focus on upper-middle class sexuality.

⁴¹ At least the birth of the prison and sexuality.

⁴² POT, p. 29.

⁴³ POT, p. 113, 'What is Enlightenment?'

limits of speech, thought, and behaviour through an experiment in freedom. Doing this will require resistance to pervasive power relations. Resistance will require courage, and it is here Foucault advances beyond Kant. Foucault concluded that this experiment will never be ‘practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value’⁴⁴ because these structures were not available. Weak ontology also does not permit transparent access to any possible formal structures.

As shown by the archaeological project Foucault did not think that there were such things as universal structures or universal values. Trying to impose those structures on a historical ontology would twist the results of research until the history would be history no more and the ontology an ideal incapable of representing human being.

I used the Quakers to explain how a discourse on freedom can take place within a society that had a weak ontology with respect to their view of people. I demonstrated with them, following Foucault’s discussion of counter-conduct, that resistance to power can be effectively carried out, without the requirements of formal state structures and Kantian framed limitations on it. The Quakers appealed to the direct revelation of God and staged their resistance to overweening state and church authority on Biblical and ethical grounds. The friction they endured by retaining a posture of ethical counter-conduct to the state eventually brought them liberty and prosperity, though not without cost. Requiring the direct revelation of God as intervention in their decision-making process shows that the Quakers mistrusted something of their view of reality, and their ability to correctly calculate the outcome of their decisions. This posture is perfectly coherent as an expression of weak ontology. Freedom is possible even without Cartesian objectivity, rationality, or foundational structures of human ontology.

The Quakers sidestepped external social authority altogether by not appealing to the guidance and wisdom of either the state or the Church of England. Guidance from God in the Quaker ethos takes human limitations within ordinary life as foundational. No human has a God’s-eye objective view of reality or truth. The experimental ethos of the Quakers required a posture of dependence on God. In obeying the light within, the spirit of God, they achieved a form of freedom within the world. For Foucault, in any experiment of this kind, the outcome is uncertain,

⁴⁴ POT, p. 113, ‘What is Enlightenment?’

unpredictable, liable to all the friction and swerving that on my account might characterize a weak ontology. But the project of self-constitution carried out by the Quakers shows evidence of the perspicacity of Foucault's insight.

4.3.4. Platonic Epistemology

In this section, I show how Foucault's weak ontology as described through Plato's refusal to write in *Letters: 7*,⁴⁵ requires the development of the self through ethical techniques as part of the process of acquiring philosophical knowledge. Foucault's reflection here describes the failure of formal studies to adequately account for subjective apprehension of reality. The ethos required contains a moral component, concentration, and work.

In *The Government of Self and Others* Foucault lectures on a passage in Plato's *Letters: 7*, 341-345. Foucault follows the argument fairly closely and concludes that Plato was beginning a whole new practice: 'It is the advent of philosophy, of a philosophy whose very reality would be the practice of *self on self*. It is in fact something like the Western subject which is at stake in this simultaneous and conjoint refusal of writing and of *logos*.'⁴⁶ The stakes Foucault refers to here are the price for commitments to a possible ethos found in a Greek worldview. The first ethos Foucault discovered during the late 1970s early 1980s is that the Greeks were primarily concerned with answering how one should take care of the self. The second arose from the dictum 'know thyself' taken from the oracle at Delphi, and was made out to be an ethos of self examination, of self analysis and exploration. Out of practices associated with this internal analysis, Foucault wanted us to see the formation of the Cartesian ego, distanced, dispassionate, objective judge of the world and the self. Associated with the formation of subjectivity along these lines is a belief that the truth of being is capable of being captured in writing and *logos* and the sense, mistaken on Foucault's account, that knowledge acquired by this form of subjectivity leads to the truth of being. Absent from this form of subjectivity based on self-knowledge, is the spiritual qualification outlined by the ancients, specifically by Plato.

The refusal of writing and *logos* in this passage refers to a distinction Plato draws between knowledge of the thing in its very being, which is inexpressible in

⁴⁵ This letter pointed to the insufficiency of Dionysius' knowledge of philosophy, how his claims to competence founded on his own writings fails in Plato's judgment to count as philosophical knowledge. There are other places in Plato's dialogues where writing philosophical knowledge is questioned, such as the *Phaedrus*.

⁴⁶ GSO, p. 245. My emphasis.

writing and *logos*, and a systematic presentation of knowledge ‘in the form of *mathēmata*, [that] cannot in any way correspond to the reality of philosophical knowledge: the constant friction between the different modes of knowledge.’⁴⁷

Mathēmata or formal studies, announce at best some science of a thing. *Mathēmata* can order the examination of the object, but fail to achieve for the auditor or reader a sense of the being in itself, what Plato called philosophic knowledge.

Early in the 16 February 1983 second-hour lecture Foucault quotes Plato who says that anyone who has written or claimed to have knowledge of his studies has ‘no real acquaintance with the subject.’⁴⁸ Here Plato claims also not to have composed any writing about it and promises never to do so because ‘there is no way of putting it in words like other studies (*mathēmata*).’⁴⁹ Instead after long arduous work of ‘instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it [philosophical knowledge] is generated in the soul and at once becomes self sustaining.’⁵⁰

The first crucial feature of this exposition is that philosophical knowledge is knowledge of the very being of a thing and can’t be summarized in a *mathēmata*, a formula to be used as instruction.⁵¹ The second feature is that the process of acquiring philosophical knowledge requires work whose real effort is ethical formation of the self, work on the self that qualifies one for knowledge.

The acquisition of philosophical knowledge can be broken down into five parts. The first three parts of the examination are the name (*onoma*), definition (*logos*), and image (*eidolon*) of the object. The fourth part is knowledge (*epistemē*) of the object which Foucault translates as science.⁵² This includes knowledge (*epistemē*), intelligence (*noūs*), and true opinion (*alethes te doxa*).⁵³ The fifth element of

⁴⁷ GSO, p. 252.

⁴⁸ *Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), Letter VII 341c, pp. 1588-89. Here Plato is referring explicitly to Dionysius who claimed to have philosophic knowledge that he had written in books.

⁴⁹ Plato, Letter VII 341c, p. 1589.

⁵⁰ Plato, Letter VII 341c, d, p. 1589.

⁵¹ This is why Plato criticises Dionysius for his philosophical works. He is saying that Dionysius has missed the point entirely, thinking that writing books shows how qualified one is in philosophical knowledge.

⁵² GSO, p. 250. and Plato, Letter VII 342b, p. 1589.

⁵³ Plato, Letter VII 342c, p. 1589. I don’t know here whether Foucault’s Greek text is the same one I have or not because Foucault calls one constituent of the fourth part *orthē doxa* (GSO, p. 250) or *right opinion*. L.A Post (referred to in this reference) translated the term as *correct opinion*, and the Greek text I have uses the phrase *alethes te doxa*, translated by Bury as *true opinion*. I’m not sure here that any of these translations are adequate. It might also be translated as *revealed* or *unconcealed* or *discovered opinion* since *alethia* is derived from the negation of *lethe* translated as forgetting. Here the

knowledge, knowledge of the thing in its being, takes up the large part of Foucault's discourse. It is this fifth element, philosophical knowledge, that cannot be successfully reduced to formal study, either written, or spoken. Plato, therefore, refuses to do so.⁵⁴ However, Plato gives clues to a technique useful for setting up the conditions for the possibility of experiencing this 'blaze kindled by a leaping spark.'⁵⁵

The first step leading toward qualification for philosophical knowledge is to specify what distinguishes the object in question by a thorough examination of the first three elements. Being the most readily available parts, *name*, *definition*, and *image* must first be examined; they lead to a science that is modified (and modifies the distinctions within the first three elements) as the study progresses. Foucault asks what the agent of the fifth form of knowledge is. He points to one of the elements of the fourth form, *nous*, (mind or intellect,) which according to Plato's *Timaeus* is a divine element of the soul. One must acquire this form of knowledge 'through the coming and going, the ascent and decent through the four other degrees of knowledge and through the instruments that characterize these other forms of knowledge.'⁵⁶ The second qualification, 'that the soul be of good quality,'⁵⁷ leads Foucault to connect the acquisition of philosophical knowledge with the necessity of ethical techniques and the work of the self on the self.

The third qualification for the acquisition of knowledge of the thing in its being is the work surrounding the development of an intimate acquaintance with the thing itself. Foucault roughly translates the term intimate acquaintance (*sunousia*) as 'to live with' or 'cohabit' with the thing itself as the only way to gain that intimate knowledge.⁵⁸ R.G. Bury translates the term as 'communion'⁵⁹ and L. A. Post as 'close companionship.'⁶⁰ Foucault expects, however, that the intimacy necessary to acquire the fifth dimension of knowledge would need 'affinity with, must be *suggenēs* (kin) with the thing itself, with precisely *to pragma* (the object);'⁶¹ this kinship produces through labour a knowledge of the thing in itself. That labour is characterized by a

concept *alethia* is derived in Platonic epistemology as *recollection*. *Plato: In Twelve Volumes*, vol. IX, tr. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 534-35. Hereafter Bury.

⁵⁴ Plato, Letter VII 341c, p. 1589.

⁵⁵ Plato, Letter VII 341c, d, p. 1589.

⁵⁶ GSO, p. 250.

⁵⁷ GSO, p. 251. and Plato, Letter VII 343e, p. 1591.

⁵⁸ GSO, p. 248.

⁵⁹ Bury, p. 531.

⁶⁰ Plato, Letter VII 341c, p. 1589.

⁶¹ GSO, p. 251.

study of virtue and existence by ‘constant practice (*tribē*) throughout a long period.’⁶² It is this constant practice (*tribē*) in moral virtue and science which qualifies the inquirer for knowledge. Foucault focuses on the word *tribē*, translating it strictly ‘as rubbing or friction, [and, more commonly] everything which is exercise, training, [...] through which one gets used to something, practices something.’⁶³ Gargani’s insight is useful here. Having abandoned strong, universalizing theories and the ‘cultures of *paradigms*, of the *versions of the world*, and of *conceptual schemes*’⁶⁴ that followed, Gargani rejects as candidates for philosophical knowledge⁶⁵ the *mathēmata* of modern science, the formal, logical treatments of truth. The frictionless mirrors of a Cartesian self do not represent the ‘lived world with all the attendant difficulties, frictions, and accidents.’⁶⁶ On Foucault’s and Plato’s account, one can attain to knowledge of the thing itself but doing so will require *tribē*, friction, effort to reach the goal. Finally, ‘a flash of understanding [...] blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light.’⁶⁷ Gargani might not dispute the possibility of Plato’s flash of insight, but, like Plato he thinks that it is ineffable.

For Foucault, the ethical exercise on the self, and the work required to reach insight are part of the process of self-construction even as the attainment of philosophical knowledge is for Plato. Foucault was in agreement with Plato’s assessment about the limitations of *mathēmata* and the ethical exercise required to attain philosophical knowledge. Foucault believed that a historical ontology can be constructed that is part of the project aimed at producing a philosophic *ethos* that takes into account the encounter with the thing in itself without specifying it in terms of a frictionless access to truth.

4.3.5. The Ethical Turn

I consider that the ethical turn in Foucault from the late 1970s is compatible with a weak ontology. As a result of his query into knowledge, power relations, and the problems of freedom he adopted a view like that of the weak ontology I have described earlier in this chapter. For Foucault, a recognition of the disengaged subject

⁶² Plato, Letter VII 344b, p. 1591, and Bury, p. 539, ‘Through the most diligent and prolonged investigation.’

⁶³ GSO, p. 251.

⁶⁴ RM, Aldo Gargani, ‘Friction of Thought,’ p. 77.

⁶⁵ in Plato’s parlance.

⁶⁶ Quoted from section II. of this chapter.

⁶⁷ Plato, Letter VII 344b, p. 1591.

in what he called the Cartesian moment, marked a return to ethical techniques, to spiritual practices as the qualification for knowledge.⁶⁸ So a weak ontology, on this account, leads to ethical techniques of self-construction. I am claiming that a weak ontology can be understood as underlying Foucault's historical ontology, through the development of an ethos in an inevitable move toward an ethical and critical engagement with the world.

4.4. From Weak Ontology to Rational Techniques

In the following section I will examine part of the ethical project of James Rachels that represents one possible result a weak ontology permits. Explicitly, Rachels does not aim at a *mathēmata* of ethical truth. Rather he allows that though the individual may strive for ethical truths, the truths acquired are severely limited by circumstance, by the limits of science and human knowledge, and by available rationales. Critical reason alone, for Rachels, is not sufficient to produce a single unequivocal universal ethical rule. Reason, paralleling Plato's use,⁶⁹ does the work of analyzing all parts of a problem, produces an answer to whatever ethical dilemma is posed. That answer is not universalizable or capable of capturing any essential foundational characteristics of ethical decision making.

4.4.1. James Rachels' Moral Philosophy

Though Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* is only one of many introductory ethical texts, it is worth singling out as a paradigm case⁷⁰ of an attitude that favours contingency yet provides fair guidelines for proceeding.⁷¹ It is a text, not unlike Foucault's *oeuvre* or Sissela Bok's *Lying* where history, science, statistics, philosophy, and psychology play on a level field of discourses, where moral axioms in an Aristotle, Kant, or Mill are treated without deference, except as historical objects within an analysis of their fitness. For Rachels, none of these stated historical models for ethics can be accepted without modification, elaboration, and sufficient caveats concerning their weaknesses.

⁶⁸ The subject/object double no longer exists within a weak ontology because the Cartesian subject on which the distinction rested, turned out to be an inadequate description of human ontology.

⁶⁹ Reason constitutes the divine element in the soul.

⁷⁰ I am not referring to Thomas Kuhn's multifaceted use of the word 'paradigm' here, but rather to an ordinary sense.

⁷¹ A weak ontology is not a limit on ethical problematization but a cautionary note about ideal solutions and closed systems. Weak ontology in ethical thought requires that a critical function should persist even when a solution to a problem has been found and one should remain open to more evidence.

The keystone of Rachels' ethical project is a *minimum conception of morality*.⁷² For Rachels, the minimum conception is foundational. It is surprisingly free of ethical rhetoric but rich in historical and practical implications. For the moralist, however, each statement within the minimum conception reflects the most successful results of ethical thought proposed through the ages.⁷³ The minimum conception contains two elements: 1. reasoning, as stated above; and 2. concern for the interests of others. Reasoning is a process, not a particular rationality, while concern for the interests of others focuses on a thorough identification with the people subject to the ethical decisions being made. Rachels, though he considers moral theories as methodologically useful, tests their suitability in each case by how that theory addresses concern for the interest of others.

Rachels' moral philosophy centres around the development of fitness or aptness principles for deciding what one must do based on the minimum conception; This is conducted with an awareness that decisions must proceed without complete information, or knowledge of actual consequences, without the law of God, or any particular *logos*. Rachels does not privilege any system or axiom, but pleads in the final chapter of *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* for the cooperation of every feature of moral life in the decision-making process.

Rachels' conclusion has three parts: principles, methods, and attitudes. First, *principles* arise as the residue of a critique of salient historical principles and practices, and though not provable in terms of scientific evidence, still compel in terms of recommended behaviours.⁷⁴ One such principle is *impartiality*, part of Rachels' minimum conception: 'The basic idea is that each individual's interests are equally important; from within the moral point of view, there are no privileged persons.'⁷⁵ The scope of impartiality reaches to groups of people as well. Through an examination of history this principle compels us to recognize that all people have at

⁷² EMP, p. 13.

⁷³ Rachels believes that principles like the Golden Rule, and respect for persons without being foundational are required because ethical systems and decisions that do not include them can be shown to be deficient on the same grounds that relativist ethics can, in which the ethical relativist cannot explain why some behaviours are preferable to others.

⁷⁴ EMP, p. 47. There is no appeal to foundations here, only a durable persistence of considerations from multiple perspectives.

⁷⁵ EMP, p. 13.

one time or another been subject to proscriptions⁷⁶ justified by some moral or physical difference seen as marking an inferiority by the dominating group.

Second, Rachels introduces reasoning as his *method* in the discussion about the principle of impartiality. ‘Morality is, at the very least, the effort to guide one’s conduct by reason.’⁷⁷ This part of the minimum conception is similar to John Hospers’ criterion of human freedom and responsibility. For Hospers, a person can be counted responsible to the degree that an ‘act can [be] (or could have been) *changed by the use of reasons*.’⁷⁸ Rachels does not specify any particular reason or rationale, nor does Hospers, no universal principle of reason, no philosophically ramified structure in human nature, such as the logic of sentences, or a unified grammar, as if there was a universal law of moral reasoning. Rachels leaves out any specification of a universal that reasoning will arrive at, but rather promotes reliance on a primitive human ability to discriminate between good and bad reasons for doing things, ‘to do what there are the best reasons for doing—while giving equal weight to the interests of each individual who will be affected by what one does.’⁷⁹

Individuals are not specified. In the narrow sense, the minimum conception prohibits treating other humans as less worthy of consideration than ourselves. In a broad sense this criterion carries the weight of all possible human and non-human individuals, not even preventing acknowledgment of either animals or artificial persons in the deliberation about what we ought to do. The minimum conception of morality contains no inherent distinction specifying that relative intelligence bears the weight of concern about interests. The minimum conception does not specify a threshold for what counts as intelligent life, or that the decision ultimately rests on relative intelligence. For example, we may find good reasons not to go ahead with a plan when doing so will harm some semi-sentient life, or a mentally challenged

⁷⁶ *Proscription* <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proscription>> [accessed 29 December 2010] (para. 1) ‘(Latin: *proscriptio*) is a term used for the public identification and official condemnation of enemies of the state. It is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a “decree of condemnation to death or banishment” and is a heavily politically-charged word frequently used to refer to state-approved murder or persecution. Proscription implies the elimination *en masse* of political rivals or personal enemies, and the term is frequently used in connection with violent revolutions, most especially with the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution.’

⁷⁷ EMP, p. 13.

⁷⁸ John Hospers, ‘What Means This Freedom?’ in *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 9th ed., eds. John R. Burr and Milton Goldinger (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2004), p. 59. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁹ EMP, p. 13.

human. Instead of a formal system the minimum conception is a conception about what it means to be a conscientious moral agent

who is concerned impartially with the interests of everyone affected by what he or she does; who carefully sifts facts and examines their implications; who accepts principles of conduct only after scrutinizing them to make sure they are sound; who is willing to “listen to reason” even when it means that prior convictions may have to be revised; and who, finally, is willing to act on the results of this deliberation.⁸⁰

The need for impartiality required by the minimum conception therefore avoids the objection to modern moral theories posed by Michael Stocker who suggested that their ‘externality-ridden universes [...] are devoid of all people.’⁸¹ Decision procedures based on universes of logical concerns⁸² are not informed by how one should address concern for the interests of others.⁸³ So, when Rachels requires this concern, individual persons become the central feature of decisions related to them.

The minimum conception turns out to be less concerned with the rules of reasoning than with the need for work of the self on the self in a project of becoming a conscientious moral agent. Unfortunately, the moral agent in the attempt to produce a systematically correct version of ethical truth has no access to foundations. The moral agent must be satisfied with a provisional, experimental ethos. Rachels recognizes that the ethical project is an unfinished one, and developing reasoning skills is part of that process of maturation in the moral agent. Ethical decision-making resides in the moral agent, not in a theory of morality.⁸⁴ Ethics on Rachels’ account then becomes a technology of the self.

Reasoning, in Rachels, is a distinctly human ability, and as such must be part of the psychologically apt treatment of humans. ‘Rational thinking consists in giving reasons, analyzing arguments, setting out and justifying principles, and the like.’⁸⁵ The broad scope of this reasoning method, therefore, relies on critical thinking about

⁸⁰ EMP, p. 13.

⁸¹ Michael Stocker, ‘The Schizophrenia of Modern Moral Theories’, in *Ethics: The Big Questions*, ed. by James P. Sterba (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), p. 154. An externality-ridden universe is for example, a worldview that makes people responsible for following a higher law or absolute principle irrespective of the consequences to people.

⁸² As in an ethical system like Aristotle’s, Kant’s, or Mill’s.

⁸³ Sissela Bok in *Lying* addresses a similar deficiency by appealing to the principle of Publicity. When a proposal has been advanced that would require lying to an individual or group, the proposal must be vetted by people representing the intended target. Outsiders of diverse backgrounds and commitments must be consulted before adopting or rejecting that proposal. She also uses a form of the golden rule wherein I ask myself whether I would wish to be lied to if I found myself in a similar position.

⁸⁴ Modern treatments of ethics have turned often to the conversation about virtue, the development of the virtuous self, and about training that leads to becoming a better person.

⁸⁵ EMP, p. 47.

real problems at hand, and it deals with real relations between people. It must remain dynamic as opposed to responding to moral dilemmas by recommending pre-scripted formulae that give a list of remedies. Diagnosing persons by a method like this treats people as if they were mechanical devices.

The promise of making the right decision is not assured using Rachels' method, but the likelihood of eliminating many sub-optimal decisions is greatly increased. One never gets the sense reading Rachels that he has found the absolutely precise answer. One does get the sense that as humankind stumbles along in the youth of its rationality, it will be less dangerous for people if they attend to his form of moral reasoning.

Summarized in the conclusion to the final chapter of his book, Rachels recommends his theory of ethics as a medially plausible one, open to refinement. 'It is instructive to remember that a great many thinkers have tried to devise such a theory, and history has judged them to have been only partially successful.'⁸⁶ But Rachels does think he has done better than his predecessors.

Here, we arrive at the third part of his ethic; as important for Rachels as the form of his recommended ethical method is the *attitude* in which it is proffered. Deeply conscious of the fallibility of human reasoning and the process of justification, Rachels has constructed a method that delicately balances reasons and motives while guarding the interests of the ethical reasoner in relation to the interests of others. One must foster the attitude of a person in the middle of the process of refining his own moral sensibilities. Humility of a sort becomes necessary, because the absolute and universalizing claims of past theorists, though helpful, are in retrospect incomplete. Humility is required when considering the consequences of ethical decisions because of a persistent concern for the interests of others. Rachels, however, is not averse to optimism. He thinks we have come a long way from our predecessors, and keeping the correct attitude about our accomplishments will prevent overconfidence and the failures it brings.⁸⁷

Of the principles, methods, and attitudes that comprise Rachels' programme, I find that the attitudes he recommends encapsulate a dimension of ethical thinking that

⁸⁶ EMP, p. 202.

⁸⁷ I imagine keeping the correct attitude is a matter of many small adjustments, using techniques of the self like the one I offer later in this chapter.

carefully takes into account the characteristics of being human within a space weak ontology defines.

Rachels is first sceptical, then pragmatic. He is not, however, pessimistic except in the sense that though there will be development in moral philosophy, that improvement may take a very long time. Rachels is pessimistic only in that there is no suggestion that we will complete the task of drawing up a moral system, only that humans will slowly improve their grasp of correct moral reasoning. He is sceptical of absolutes, pragmatic in the development of methods, and insistent on holding attitudes that permit transformation of our theories and methods by the facticity of our being in the world as it is freshly described with each moment of human maturation. In addition to being sceptical, pragmatic, and capable of conceiving the evolution of moral theory alongside the transformations of human society, Rachels, like Foucault, implicitly permits the critique of his own theory recognizing the weakness of his position as arbiter of truth. Rachels permits the probability of new knowledge and discovery, a better grasp of what it means to be human than currently exists.

Cultivation of an ethos through the techniques Rachels requires for his moral theorizing is what I wish to offer as the framework for a technology of the self, not only concerning morality, but for all human theoretical enterprises.

4.4.2. Moving Toward Rational Techniques

What would be required for the construction of rational techniques? Part of that must be to set up the mode of discrimination for the choices we make when observing, listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Keeping the characteristics of a weak ontology in mind, this will mean that modesty should guide the flexible criteria for the choices we make and the weight we give to our observations. I am not proposing a comprehensive definition for rationality in general. That is outside the scope of this work. I am reflecting partly on the sorts of choices Foucault made, mentioned in some remarks I made in the Introduction,⁸⁸ where he refused to engage in polemics,⁸⁹ offer an unstudied opinion, or treat the results of his own efforts as fixed within one interpretative matrix. I am reflecting on the modesty of Foucault's proposals concerning the results of his own work. What I have classed as weak theory

⁸⁸ Section 0.2.

⁸⁹ James D. Marshall, 'Philosophy, Polemics, Education', in *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 26.2, (March 2007), 97-109. Marshall examines two contemporary examples of the difficulties posed by polemical attitudes. First of polemics exclude real dialogue and conversation in favour of combat with the intent to overthrow the position of the interlocutor.

in Foucault is carried out in a form of practice that itself can be characterized as a rationality, a posture of engagement in the world, a technique of reasoning about the world that constructs the world outside the parameters of strong ontologies.⁹⁰

Weak theory itself is a cautionary note, a critical instrument that forces a recognition that there is no simple, trivial, smooth movement from observation of the world, the self, or others to a knowledge of the same. On what terms, then, can weak theory be embodied in a method, a technique, a positive structuring heuristic that retains its critical function but allows the production of a rationality that can function as a momentary stopping place for evaluating regularities of the self and the world? This stopping place could never be characterized as a formalized rule, or even a science, but as Foucault suggests in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* perhaps, an *epistemologization*,⁹¹ a structure of rationality capable of organizing thoughts and observations, but one that could return again to its primitive precursors, or disappear entirely. Using the language of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* the stopping place would be a discursive formation, an agglomeration of evidences of a movement discovered within the archive, not a science as Foucault interpreted in *The Archaeology* but an *epistemē* or system of beliefs,⁹² perhaps, interpreted as the fourth element of knowledge in Plato's sense, composed of knowledge (*epistemē*), intelligence (*noūs*), and right opinion (*orthē doxa*).⁹³

Foucault outlines four stages in the development of discursive formations in *The Archaeology*. None of these stages are necessary or inevitable, but are categories that roughly outline the formation of discursive practices.⁹⁴ Foucault describes them in terms of thresholds: positivity, epistemologization, scientificity, formalization.⁹⁵ For example, the rational techniques embodied in Rachels' ethic have, on my account, crossed the threshold of epistemologization. Foucault suggests that when

a group of statements is articulated, claims to validate (even unsuccessfully) norms of verification and coherence, and when it exercises a dominant

⁹⁰ FF, p. 73, 'Foucault's treatise, as it is encountered in his writings, constitutes a practice which educates his readers into an ethical responsibility for intellectual inquiry. It provides not an obligatory conduct but a possible escape from an intellectual milieu unnourished by ethical interrogation.'

⁹¹ AK, p. 187

⁹² I also do not wish to take the sense Foucault gives in AK that an *epistemē* is the single underlying rationality of an age that J. G. Merquior critiques in chapters 4 and 5 of *Foucault*.

⁹³ GSO, p. 250.

⁹⁴ I say this with all the caveats about Foucault's archeological project in place.

⁹⁵ AK, pp. 186-187.

function (as a model, a critique, or a verification) over knowledge, we will say that the discursive formation crosses a *threshold of epistemologization*.⁹⁶

Rachels articulates a group of statements, found within the minimum conception of morality that function as a method. It includes the principle of respect for persons as the distillation of historical ethical theorizing and a critical scientific rationality that I outlined above in the previous section. He uses the minimum conception as a validation test for ethical systems. Any ethical system that is unable to reason through to a solution, for example, a system relying on theological commands, is incapable of satisfactorily resolving some ethical dilemmas. It fails the coherence test. In addition, any ethical system that doesn't respect persons, like some forms of utilitarianism, will fail Rachels' test as well because it will privilege one people group over another, or one individual over another.

Following Foucault's schema above, the norm of verification Rachels promotes is critical reasoning grounded within the facticity of human behaviour, privileging persistent human behaviour in history, for example, the human drive for freedom, resistance to domination, and the rejection of some forms of behaviour like lying and murder that are incapable of promoting human flourishing.

A useful coherence is achieved by Rachels through a critique of moral systems with an eye to the adoption of principles, like respect of persons, that retain persistent sensibility without also forcing any particular set of ethical rules.⁹⁷ Again, Rachels relies on the persistence of forms of human behaviour to promote the usefulness of rules like the Golden Rule, Kant's Principle of Humanity, or Mill's Principle of Utility (properly contextualized) as adjuncts to critical thinking about moral problems.

When Rachels asks what a satisfactory moral theory would look like,⁹⁸ he provides a model of the procedures one must follow to ensure compliance, not only with the minimum conception, but with the process of judging the adequacy of moral rules within the constraints of the social context. Rachels' rational technique takes human weak ontology into account, the inability to discover or construct a scientific or coherent formalized ethic that forces the elements of our practice that most affect our community to be primary features of our ethic. So the discursive formation of

⁹⁶ AK, pp. 186-187.

⁹⁷ Persistent sensibility is shown by the negative consequences for human society of removing these principles from a moral theory.

⁹⁸ EMP, chapter 13.

Rachels' ethic crosses the threshold of epistemologization as a form of heuristic procedures for ethical decision making, but never achieves a scientific or formalized knowledge.

On Rachels' account the history of ethical philosophy has many examples of prematurely turning ethical practice into a science or a formalization, even though at the time of the formation of ethical systems, adequate characterization of human being was not available.⁹⁹ Rachels promotes an attitude or ethos within his rational technique of ethical decision-making that permits the possibility of advancing ethical theorizing. It is this rational technique that indicates a wider movement of thought in this age that provides, in the face of our weakness, friction, distance,¹⁰⁰ or stickiness¹⁰¹ a temporary public shelter from which to proceed with our investigations, but not only our investigations. This gives persons a temporary place within which they may practice an ethic derived by those investigations.

Beyond choosing to take the step toward ethical techniques, Pier Aldo Rovatti suggests that the ethical turn may be inevitable.¹⁰²

With the name "ethics" we can try to mark a border or a line that identifies the overall attitude with which these philosophies take leave from the traditional concepts of truth and knowledge. Ethics thus comes to indicate the dominating tonality, a shifting in the way of thinking.¹⁰³

This may mark, in Foucault's parlance, a turning away from the subject/object double of a Cartesian subjectivity of knowledge and a return to ethical techniques of the self on the self, to spiritual practices as the qualification for knowledge. So, weak theory leads to rational techniques in a move toward an ethical and critical engagement with the world.

In the following section I outline a form for a rational technique, a method for the production of a philosophical ethos permitting a weak ontology while engaging the lived world in a thoroughgoing fashion. This technique will permit the subject to

⁹⁹ I refer, for example, to Kant with the contrast between the universal declarations in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*, and his provincial declarations in the *Anthropology*.

¹⁰⁰ RM, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ SA, p. 8, and, 'Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection,' p. 507

¹⁰² Like the ethics of care found in Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), Rovatti may be appealing to ethical responsibility generated by necessity. In Gilligan, the difference between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care is marked by the way in which moral responsibility is assumed. In the ethic of justice moral responsibility is taken on as a rational choice between alternatives. Its foundation may best be described in Kantian terms where one chooses to perform one's duty. Gilligan suggests that much of moral obligation does not come on people in this way. Instead, obligation often comes like the duty of a mother to her child. The relationship is not one of rationally chosen duty but the necessity of care.

¹⁰³ Aldo Pier Rovatti, 'In Praise of Modesty,' in *Contemporary Italian Philosophy*, p. 187.

engage the world on its own terms, fully cognizant of the limitations of human apprehension, while permitting also the development of the self in freedom.

4.5. A Rational Technique

I want to propose a technique that can be used as a discipline, a propaedeutic to theorizing. This rational technique is ethical¹⁰⁴ because its discovery and practice requires a philosophical ethos, a formation of one's being with an attitude that rejects first the limitations of universalizing and problematically tidy systems preferring the 'quasi-chaos'¹⁰⁵ of experiences of a 'confused and superabundant life'¹⁰⁶ as William James describes it. This ethos requires a partial suspension of belief. A suspension of belief is necessary to prevent fixing knowledge of the world and our selves in universalizing terms that appear to resolve conflicts in data, but serve to insulate the observer from conflicting data. This is one lesson of Foucault's *Archaeology*. All the data of experience in its uninterpreted state can be set aside but should be kept accessible. That data should be allowed, even required to intrude on theorizing in a fashion that may be inconvenient, as a reminder not of the fixity of data but the persistence of the world, of the emergence of the world at the moment of its observation. This effort at keeping data present should help the observer avoid any facile reductionism. That is not to say that research mustn't be reductive, but that prematurely limiting what may be included in a study will produce knowledge that would fail a simple sceptical query that takes as its background a wider world of inquiry.¹⁰⁷

The acquisition and development of this ethos takes place as a matter recognizing when useful models of theorizing reach their limitations. This ethos should be seen as a kind of porosity to the world that does not accede to some universal applicability of principles seeing as how the structures of human theorizing are at best temporary structures, maps to organize observations.

¹⁰⁴ The technique is ethical in Foucault's sense where he reflects on the formation of the self by the self as a qualification for philosophical knowledge.

¹⁰⁵ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln, Nebraska : University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ James, p. 39, paraphrased.

¹⁰⁷ For example, there is a tendency, widespread in the United States, to justify belief in a young earth by appealing to the biblical text. The sceptical inquiry of the geologist, or astronomer should put this quibble to rest, except that often the young earther will not accept the evidence of geology by claiming that science doesn't produce reliable knowledge.

It is well known that the observer transforms the data in observation, but this technique requires that the subject submit also to the process of observation with the sort of focus Plato and Foucault define as a form of relationship with the observed object. This relationship transforms the observer's sensibilities. I reflect here on Plato's requirement of communion, or as Foucault says,¹⁰⁸ an affinity with the object, a form of interaction that implies transformation of both the observing self, and the object observed.¹⁰⁹ I will characterize this as a form of vulnerability, denying first the disengaged self and, second any *mathēmata* of an object that claims to have given a comprehensive account of the thing in its being, that claims to have systematized Plato's philosophical knowledge. What emerges from this communion is, rather, a practitioner, a self engaged with the world, explicitly embedded in reality, grounded in Plato's philosophical knowledge out of which springs the possibility of further engagement with the world.

This technique of vulnerability does not deny the usefulness or force of theoretical productions emerging from engagement with the world. It only requires that theoretical productions be held in suspension with respect to their qualification as foundations for knowledge. Whatever practical use or benefit can be made of them should be the project of further exploration, the sort of exploration, first, that has fostered the fruitfulness of modern science, and second, the contemporary meditations on ethics that have made some progress against the background of failed over-optimistic ethical speculation.

It is undeniable that modern science has been fruitful. Astronomy has given us a universe to replace the cosmology of our ancestors, medicine has given us cures for many historically common killers. It is unnecessary to further rehearse the prodigious advances of modern scientific endeavours. It is not the practical consequences of scientific enquiries that are problematic, only the failure of theoretical enterprises that have gone wrong through holding to mistakenly chosen foundations.

¹⁰⁸ GSO, p. 251.

¹⁰⁹ For the transformation of the object, I refer to twentieth-century physics, especially Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, that discovered that the observer changes the object by observing it. Also the intuition that the observable universe springs into being when it is observed. "The truly creative nature of any forward step in human knowledge," we know, "is such that theory, concept, law, and method of measurement—forever inseparable—are born into the world in union." from John Archibald Wheeler, "Information, Physics, Quantum: The Search for Links" found in *Complexity, Entropy and the Physics of Information, SFI Studies in the Sciences of Complexity*, vol. VIII, ed. by Wojciech H. Zurek (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1990), p. 17.

In philosophical ethics, the advances of James Rachels, for example, reveal an openness to the possibility of transforming the theoretical enterprise, a vulnerability to new explorations that take the best of historical principles into account without falling to the temptations of closed and exclusive ethical theorizing. Though I believe it may be possible to demonstrate this for scientific inquiry, and Lee Smolin's research is an example of how this might be done, I will use an ethical project of this past decade to show how a concern for the persistence of data can move a person toward an ethic of self-care.

An exploration of a historical ethical problem that may be fruitfully categorized as a form of the ethical porosity and vulnerability to data I recommend, is found in a book by Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*.¹¹⁰ Though Volf offers a solution to the problem of memory through his own engagement with Christianity, I believe the difficulties he faced formulating that solution can be extrapolated for use by anyone facing similar circumstances. Even though I think it is possible to extrapolate his method, I'm not sure he would countenance schematizing it, treating it as a technique separable from his account of divine intervention. With respect, I find methods within his practice that can, in a spirit of generosity, produce the sort of resolution toward which he aimed.

Volf in *The End of Memory* reconstitutes a form of historical ontology that writes the self in terms that accurately characterize his embeddedness in the world in relation to a specific offense against him. Suffering persistent interrogations at the hands of 'Captain G.' during 1984 in Yugoslavia because he was a Christian theologian and ostensibly because his wife was an American suspected of being a CIA agent, Volf, though not physically tortured, experienced fear, sometimes paralyzing fear.

I feared the seeming omnipotence of these evildoers. [...] I was trapped and helpless, with no ground of my own on which to stand. Or from which to resist. Trembling before the false gods of power, I was something, all right. But as a person, I was nothing.¹¹¹

His captors faced him with an extensive dossier of his activities, reminiscent of that of a Foucauldian patient in *Discipline and Punish*. Volf's soul was shaped by his captors' scrutiny and cruelty.

¹¹⁰ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

¹¹¹ Volf, pp. 3-6.

After the fact, Volf had a choice how to respond: react in kind, or deflect the evil by loving his captor. The choice of forgetting the offense doesn't arise, because of the persistence of memory of the captivity itself. Here Volf finds solace in taking seriously that ethical innovation introduced by Jesus, 'love your enemies.'¹¹² Then Volf offers a rationale for this move.

To triumph fully, evil needs two victories, not one. The first victory happens when an evil deed is perpetrated; the second victory, when evil is returned. After the first victory, evil would die if the second victory did not infuse it with new life.¹¹³

Choosing to deflect the evil through non-retribution motivated by love, Volf nonetheless encounters the difficulty of the persistent memory of the evil done to him. This is the dilemma he set out to explore in the book.¹¹⁴ Love, in this circumstance is higher than either hating or disregarding Captain G. So Volf asks what it would take to actually love Captain G.? The call to love is the principle under which Volf chose to operate. This principle, that would present itself as a further elaboration of Rachels' minimum conception under the principle of respect for others, moves Volf to consider the interests of Captain G. as well as his own. Volf's method will be memory itself, with a set of conditions that prevent it from overthrowing reason or overthrowing the observations themselves by way of revenge or self destruction.

The call to remember, ubiquitous in the late twentieth-century West as a response to crimes against people, was not the problem for Volf. Volf remembered what was done to him. The problem for him was *remembering rightly*. Volf suggests at the outset of his examination that remembering rightly involves not only what is right for the victim, but also what is right for the victimizer and society in general.¹¹⁵ Memory under this definition is broader than Volf's subjective recollection.

To contextualize the project of remembering rightly within my proffered technique, the ethos Volf creates is one that is compatible with a weak ontology. Volf struggled to remember rightly because of the problems with observation, and as Foucault described, because of his embeddedness 'within a historical matrix of power relations and the inability of formal rationality to arrive at a distanced, dispassionate, objective acquisition of either self-knowledge or knowledge of the world.'¹¹⁶ Volf is

¹¹² Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:35: Bible.

¹¹³ Volf, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ Volf, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Volf, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Section 4.2.

aware that any simple human response, such as revenge will not answer the depth of the evil done to him. He is conscious of the weakness of human anger and the difficulty of preventing the escalation of violence. His response takes into account human connectedness and embeddedness in the world alongside all the painful residues of his torture. Volf provides three different distinct effects that require a response in the dilemma of remembering rightly: First, aspects ‘that concern primarily the wronged person,’¹¹⁷ aspects of the intrusion of memory into personal space and time. He asks himself ‘how much of my projected future would Captain G. colonize’¹¹⁸ in the expected recurrence of memory? The question here is how much and in what way Captain G. will be permitted to form the internal structure of Volf’s future self.

Volf’s choices here were choices about self-formation. Would he leave the effort to the dominance of his memories or transform himself into a person who has transcended those memories, without also forgetting? Part of the difficulty Volf faced is that he was responsible for his own mental and moral health. To allow his future to be dominated by memories formed by the demands of his own unconscious reactive disposition seemed like the wrong course to take. To rein in the demands of an undisciplined disposition in a principled way, to become the arbiter of his own mental and moral health was the project that commended itself to him. At that time he made this choice, though Volf was a Christian, he realized that the decision to overcome the abuse of the Yugoslavian system was his. He expected that God would help him and reported that God did. But the work on himself had to be taken on voluntarily, and he carried it out successfully with a great deal of effort.

The second effect concerns the abuse against him in a wider social setting. How will Volf choose to see the world? Will the world become an essentially negative world? ‘Would I be allowing the abuse to whirl me down into the dark netherworld, the memory of the abuse having darkened my world, and the darkened world having made me remember the abuse even more negatively?’¹¹⁹ or would his experience be interpreted as an anomaly in an essentially good world.

The third aspect concerns the effect of the struggle to do justice to the memory of the wrongdoer. ‘Knowing how faulty memories generally are, and being aware of

¹¹⁷ Volf, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Volf, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Volf, p. 13.

victims' proclivities and blind spots, I could not fully trust even myself¹²⁰ to remember rightly, and judge correctly. Volf refrains from making a judgment then, preferring to put it off till the eschatological judgment of God. But irrespective of God's judgment, Volf believes his task lies in listening to the truth of Captain G. and honouring his personhood even while Volf rehearses the mistreatment narrative.¹²¹ Volf recounts moments when he realizes how badly the reconstructed narrative could go wrong, when mistreatments are exaggerated by the effects of the damage done within his memories. To misremember would be to wrong Captain G. 'The devil is not in "facts," large or small, but in their interpretation. It was as though a warped mind was reading a plain text and coming up with the most bizarre interpretations that somehow managed to account for the facts.'¹²² Volf here required that the facts themselves are essential to the account, and that they must remain, but that interpretation is the weak link to remembering rightly.

This may seem obvious, but Volf's hesitancy to rush to judgment is indicative first of his recognition of the deep weakness of human memory, and second, a recognition of the entangled nature of actions performed and attitudes held in relation to others. Volf avoids any simple, or obvious resolution to the dilemma posed by the generous fairness he himself requires. The consequence Volf is looking for is an ethical construct for remembering correctly. Volf does not wish to bring Captain G. to account for his crimes. That is beyond the scope of his investigation. He is hunting for a technique of the self that will resolve his subjective memory in truth, taking account of his own reactions within his personal turmoil holding to the supposition that the evil behaviour of persons in the context of a problematic social construct can be redeemed within a fair narrative of the events. Volf wished for the facts of the interrogations to remain while he first put the memory of them into a perspective that respected both the social context of socialist Yugoslavia within the wider world, and the life of Captain G.

Volf neither wished for an absolution of Captain G.'s crimes where he would be characterized as an unwitting pawn of an evil regime, nor did he wish to place Captain G. at the nexus of blame for the crime, as if all his actions were self-serving and independent of his social context. The social context is far too complex to permit

¹²⁰ Volf, pp. 13-14.

¹²¹ Volf, p. 14.

¹²² Volf, p. 14.

either option. Though Volf's memory of Captain G.'s interrogation remains very two-dimensional in the power relation that subjectified Volf, the truth of Captain G. remained to be reconstructed in his ordinary humanity. Obtaining this perspective that would effectively distance Volf from the persistent memory of the crimes committed against him is set as the goal of a technique that allows first, the facts to remain facts, while the interpretation unfolds as a matter of permitting the facts to find their ordinary equilibrium. Though Volf recounts the 'small scale rebellion'¹²³ erupting in himself as he meditated on the prospect of loving Captain G., it is a testament to the persistence of his ethical porosity to permit the work of struggle within memory that could lead to resolution with the facts of the crime still in place.

How can Volf's project of remembering rightly be understood in terms of the technique I offer? Principles, methods, and attitudes provide a porous apprehension of the facts of the matter, forming a decision procedure that takes as its context a weak ontology. The primary principle Volf offers is Christ's injunction to love one's enemies. This prevents Volf from rushing to judgment or devising vengeance. It also equalizes the humanity of Captain G. with Volf's own.¹²⁴

The method Volf offers is that of remembering. But remembering is not an unalloyed good. Volf enumerates many ways that remembering can go wrong. Like reasoning in Rachels, Volf's remembering must be focused on the facts, and in addition held strictly to the task of reconstructing not only his own experience but that of his interrogator, Captain G.

The formation of Volf's attitude is that of being deeply aware of the limitations of human being, how quickly human projects can become derailed, how psychological damage can make it difficult to carry out the project of remembering truthfully. It is the attitude of humility with an ethical porosity in the face of these obstacles that transforms the project from mere remembering to remembering rightly.

4.6. Conclusion

Not a science, but an experiment, ethical techniques modelled on a necessary modesty force the exclusion of formalizations from the discussion of justifications for behaviour. Though reductionist science reveals much of knowledge that we have come to take for granted, it conceals the implications of the reductionism that

¹²³ Volf, p. 17.

¹²⁴ Volf, p. 15.

marginalized man, turning him into an object. In 1929 Joseph Wood Krutch suggested that ‘science displaces one after another the myths which have been generated by need, [and] it grows more and more likely that [man] must remain an ethical animal in a universe which contains no ethical element.’¹²⁵

Ethical projects such as emotivism, born out of positive science are the formal results of searching in the bleak reductive atmospheres of the hard sciences for human motivation. Coming up empty, the conclusion of positivism is that moral feeling is nothing more than a conventional emotional throwback to religious or tribal practices that don’t belong in the modern age. When desire is reduced to interactions of pheromones and lovesickness to psychosis, persons are reduced to gray machines. For Krutch, this is an intolerable state of affairs. Rachels dispenses with the certainty of a formalized science to reintegrate humans into a practical theory of ethics, moulded on a deeply conditioned, weaker theory assuming a necessary human embeddedness in the world.

Rachels does not promote ethical absolutes, necessary empirical foundations, ethical sciences, or formalizations because their reductionism disqualifies them from declaring the truth about human epistemic and ontological weakness. Though not a doctrine of sin, weak theory is a doctrine of human contextualization which is incapable of being transcended. Metaphorically, humans don’t find themselves in a place with an impenetrable ceiling in a room with definite structure but in an ocean from which one cannot find the shore with a horizon that moves further beyond our reach as we move toward it. The project of ethics in Rachels becomes a project, not a theory, a set of techniques, not universals. Gone is the certainty of a theoretical ethical gestalt, in favour of a set of well exercised rational techniques for deciding at any one time, what should be done.

Foucault struggled in the 1960s to announce a response to a form of critique exemplified in Anscombe’s ‘Modern Moral Philosophy.’¹²⁶ The tendency of moral philosophy at that time was to assume the authority of a universal in the form of God without actually having a God. Foucault struggled to dispense with the need for a universal. In the 1970s Foucault announced a theory of power relations that morphed eventually into his ethical programme of self-development in the late 1970s and early

¹²⁵ Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1929), p. 10.

¹²⁶ G. E. M. Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy,’ in *Ethics, Religion and Politics: Collected Philosophical Papers*, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), III, p. 26.

1980s. Foucault's work is a cautionary note from which emerged a variety of critiques.¹²⁷

Rachels re-evaluated and integrated the best of past and present ethical theorizing with an eye to the data, and created a method that advanced modestly the project of ethical decision making. Rachels gave us a technique of ethical rationalizing that can improve our chances of correctly deciding what to do.

The technique I offer acknowledges the results of weak theory, while incorporating the ethical project of self-construction as a goal. One result of this form of self-construction is a porosity or vulnerability to experience in an ethos that sets in place moral (Plato) and spiritual (Foucault) requirements as a qualification for knowledge. It requires a non-reductive empiricism, a persistence of facticity, not as foundation, but as a force on our consciousness of the persistence of the world.

In the final chapter of this dissertation I will review the procedures and summarize the content of the preceding chapters. In addition, I will note the strengths and deficiencies of my work with an eye to further research possible for techniques of the self, and give a rationale for the direction I took in this work.

¹²⁷ Foucault criticized Marxism, structuralism, postmodernism, universalizing theories of history, French conservative political culture, psychiatry, psychology, power relations, gay relations, dominant epistemological assumptions, etc.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

Foucault's work has provided useful guidelines to work with. First, the variety of his interests revealed connections between many problematic domains. Second, the intersection of history, aesthetics, philosophy, ethics, and political theory inside Foucault's growing precision of thought through the three decades of his writing uncovered many broad truths about the human enterprise. Third, Foucault's ethos in which he intended not to speak about things he had not studied¹ and found solidarity in action for social projects about which he cared deeply² showed a sense of academic restraint alongside action and writing for the causes he engaged. 'Foucault's writings constitute a practice that educates their readers into an ethical responsibility for intellectual inquiry.'³

The latter part of the twentieth century was a time of fundamental change within national and world communities. For example, political leaders in the United States since the 1960s and 1970s began to be held accountable for their public and private behaviour with respect to their sexual, financial, and political mores. And, for example medical professionals fell under increased scrutiny for behaviour that was permitted a few decades before.⁴ Alongside increased observation of leaders came a dramatic increase of fine-grained surveillance of ordinary people in society.⁵ Foucault is prescient, first, in challenging the assumptions of historical research that lent credibility to established relations of power invested in institutions of Western society. For example, Foucault discovered plausible links between pastoral power within Christianity and the emergence of police forces in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. The police assumed the right to stand as moral authorities over the public as if they were invested with divine objectivity. The challenges to the dominance of police showed themselves in the formation of counter-conduct like that of the Society of Friends, the Quakers.

¹ EST, 'Sexual Choice, Sexual Act,' p. 142.

² Power, 'Interview with Michel Foucault with Italian journalist D. Trombadori 1978,' p. 244. Also, Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, tr. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 238-41.

³ FOF, p. 17.

⁴ This accountability is due partly to the failure of leadership to hold itself accountable for its own behaviour and the resultant loss of public trust.

⁵ Foucault noted architectures of surveillance, such as the Panopticon, that set up the conditions for transformation of the soul. Today, the resolution of details about individuals approaches persistent public surveillance through financial tracking, facial recognition, etc.

Second, Foucault unpacked for public inspection ubiquitous power relations as persistent grounds of the social milieu, drawing attention to connections between knowledge and power. Third, without abandoning the results of his previous research,⁶ he explored the problems of individual freedom, even experimentally by transgression⁷ in his movement toward the care of the self in an ethos that required lifelong attendance to techniques of the self the goal of which was self-mastery.

Researching Quaker counter-conduct which Foucault merely mentioned⁸ proved to be a fruitful ground for the discussion in this dissertation about resistance within power relations but also a place to observe the conscious working out of the life of John Woolman in the eighteenth century under the rigorous constraints of sensitivity to principle and guidance of the *light within* as a full-featured technology of the self. Beginning with observations of Quaker resistance to church and state, a life cycle of the development of techniques of the self whose consequences have had lasting impact on the socio-political outworking of politics of the United States emerged. The payoff of individual techniques of the self leading to self-mastery, became for Woolman the slow steady migration to a world where justice is possible, at least in principle. Unsuccessful, or minimally successful experiments in resistance to power that had their origins alongside the Quaker dissent in England⁹ were of minimal use for this dissertation because, though they are instructive on some account, their failure as social movements betrays their inability to gauge rightly the temper of their times and the touchstones of power relations. It may have been chance and timing that made it possible for the Quakers to prosper eventually, but there is evidence that the Quakers understood their circumstances often enough to persist, even when their unpopular actions occasionally resulted in their unjust deaths.

As a model for this dissertation, Foucault in his lectures in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* neither adopted an ancient technology of the self for his day nor suggested that technologies of the self were unnecessary. The Greco-Roman world and Foucault's world had little in common, making problematic the adoption today of ancient technologies of the self. But it also appeared that there must be some

⁶ Foucault nonetheless moderated the goals of his methodology.

⁷ Eribon, p. 328. Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁸ Power, 'Truth and Juridical Forms,' p. 60.

⁹ Barbour and Frost, pp. 18, 19. I am referring to the Diggers and Ranters specifically, but also the Puritans. I do not use the Puritans as an example because of the wide range of beliefs within their ranks. The Quakers, though more radical in some ways unified themselves in basic principles which they worked out in the first few generations of practice.

individual techniques of the self generalizable from the ancient ones that could aid moderns in taking on the project of governing the self.

Modern writing has many cognates with ancient techniques of writing that fulfilled Foucault's spiritual requirements—qualifying the individual for knowledge. Not contextualized in the same culture of elite Athenian or Roman society—academic, technical writing was explicitly for Foucault an instrument of self-construction. Journaling also became for the high school students of *The Freedom Writers Diary* a means of self-mastery, and writing in many forms serves similar purposes today. Writing as a technique of the self used for self-mastery is explained in chapter three. In chapter four I offered two examples of ethical writing, Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, and Volff's *The End of Memory* to demonstrate how self-mastery could be achieved in contemporary writing.

In the latest published English language lecture series *The Government of Self and Others* I found a link between Foucault's techniques of the self and a Platonic model of knowledge. Foucault's exposition of Plato's work gave a justification for recommending a rational technique along the lines of a weak ontology that preserved a sense of the difficulty of objective knowledge and yet permitted the possibility of legitimate apprehension of the truth, at least in principle, within a technique of the self, a practice of research under the constraints of ordinary human limits.

5.2 Summary and Results of the Research of This Dissertation

5.2.1. Chapter Summaries

In the first chapter I examined Foucault's methodology for consistency and coherence. Foucault's critics often misrepresented his views, for example, when it came to the controversy over structuralism. However, when Foucault's critics had a point, he was amenable to change, such as when he acknowledged problems with the goals of the archaeological method. Foucault's treatment of historical objects in the method that became genealogy was much subtler than many of his commentators gave him credit for. Some interviews support this. As well, reading and research which has not been explicitly included in this dissertation supports this, especially the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, where Gary Gutting surveys Foucault's accomplishments only by reference to his published books. None of the interviews, lectures, or biographies are even mentioned by Gutting, and those sources

expose much of the subtlety of Foucault's work, especially when part of Foucault's project is the production of his own life as an art. Little discussion of that art as a whole of Foucault's life shows up in his major published works. That is not to say the books are unimportant, but the books need to be seen within a broader context. The books are objects in themselves with their own trajectories. This examination is not a rough psychologising of Foucault's life, an attempt to piece together clues to his intentions. He was fairly explicit about those intentions, even if only after the publications of his major works.

Foucault was not consistent in any formal sense, and not in any sense that might try to unify his oeuvre under a single comprehensive heading. Foucault's consistency was found in the progress he made in life toward the development of an ethos that was at once scholarly and experimental, challenging the boundaries of convention to provide space in which he could work.

Foucault was also coherent, but discovering that coherence has been a result of this project, not a presupposition under which the research began. His coherence does not appear as a set of formal properties, but rather becomes visible in terms of a style of life where Foucault is both at ease with himself and fully engaged with his work. I find Foucault's coherence a matter of a consciously constructed then integral social imaginary,¹⁰ a ground of experience and work that became second nature. James Bernauer sees coherence in Foucault's work even within 'the variety of subjects he has explored.'¹¹ Rajchman sees Foucault's work as coherent also, but as a form of scepticism designed 'to avoid, the coherence of a single method or doctrine.'¹²

In the second chapter I engaged a number of puzzles about freedom and the Enlightenment. Foucault took up the task of evaluating Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung* because that essay seemed to be at the temporal fulcrum of a transition to Modernity

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *The Secular Age*, p. 159. The following is a short explanation of the social imaginary. This comes from a book review of Taylor's *Social Imaginary* by Steve Crocker in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online* January-February 2005 <<http://www.cjsonline.ca/reviews/socialimaginaries.html>> [accessed, 25 March, 2011], 'The social imaginary [...] is a more elusive set of self understandings, background practices, and horizons of common expectations that are not always explicitly articulated, but that give a people a sense of a shared group life.'

¹¹ FOF, p. 3, 'His work is neither a maze nor does it demand a leap in the dark; the variety of subjects he has explored notwithstanding, there is a remarkable coherence to a body of work that spanned thirty years.'

¹² John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 2.

within the Enlightenment era. Foucault was not entirely satisfied with Kant's answer, because, in part, Kant didn't seem to grasp the problems associated with ubiquitous power relations. For Kant, rational discourse was the model of adjudication between parties in power relations, instead of resistance, rebellion, and counter-conduct which established freedom, terms not included in Kant's exposition. Foucault takes Kant's motto for the Enlightenment (*Sapere aude!*) seriously. But, Foucault's reading of that motto includes the possibility of transgression against the established order, even rebellion against the results of reason when reason restricts self-development.

'Foucault's research and reflection' led him to discover 'routes of escape'¹³ from this self-incurred tutelage. Responding to Kant's motto, Foucault counts the cost of daring to reason with a better apprehension of the price that must be paid for one living within ubiquitous power relations.

It appeared Foucault had too narrowly characterized Kant, so I appealed to the critique of Kant's ethic by Christine Korsgaard. She exposes some problems Kant's ethic poses for Foucault. In that critique, she thoroughly justifies from Kant's wider *oeuvre*, transgression against the Principle of Humanity, when keeping it amounts to a conflict of duties.

From the more nuanced version of Kant offered by Korsgaard, I laid out Foucault's movement of resistance resulting in counter-conduct as a response to unbearable power relations. I illustrated this by examining the origins and practices of the Society of Friends, the Quakers. I demonstrated the development of a culture based on a rule separate and distinct from English law and the Anglican Church. From founding principles at odds with authorities, the Quakers in their second generation moved toward an egalitarian polity that condensed into a unified entity still at odds with English law, but tolerated as another form of life within its borders because of the moral insight and upright behaviour of its members. With the establishment of William Penn's colony in North America, the Quaker form of Christianity evolved toward what has been called quietism.

John Woolman emerged within third-generation Quaker society in the quietist culture of the American Colonies. Long considered one of the classics of American literature, *The Journal of John Woolman* stands squarely within a number of

¹³ FF, p. 46.

traditions¹⁴ that illustrate Foucault's concept of self-formation. With a sense of right and wrong reminiscent of the practical functioning of Socrates' divine gift,¹⁵ Woolman's objectification of the problem of self creation within his *Journal* is reminiscent of the writings of Seneca and Aurelius in its focus on self-development.

In the third chapter I laid out a schema of Foucault's ethical movements. Foucault's ethical work is in itself too large a project to include merely as an illustrative study. I left out of that study any focus on epistemology because the thrust of Foucault's work was more concerned with the ethical techniques of the ancients than with their epistemology, and I wanted to discover what Foucault intended doing by exposing those techniques. As well, in this ethical study Foucault distinguished himself from the stream of thought following the Cartesian constitution of the self as objective observer. Foucault wrestled ownership of the traditional frame of Greek thinking (as self-knowledge) away from the Cartesian hegemony. Foucault and others, such as Pierre Hadot¹⁶ and Martha Nussbaum,¹⁷ discovered a more consistent frame of Greek thought, one which Plato, the Stoics, and the Epicureans considered central, that of the care of the self. The command to 'know thyself,' then, properly becomes an admonition to have a humble estimation of oneself in the face of the gods, not as self-knowledge became later, the sole function and goal of the philosophical enterprise. Know thyself returns in Foucault's reading as part of the project of self-care, not the drive for self examination and analysis, or the exegesis of the self it became in early Christianity.

The form and content of *The History of Sexuality*, volume I falls within a genealogical discussion of Foucault's Classical and Modern ages—as does *Discipline and Punish*. The concern of these works is not so much ethical construction of the self as it is social construction of the self. The last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* are works whose core is the examination of external evidence of a genealogy of the care of the self, and of writings on the transformation of Greco-Roman ethical practice. These works are, however, highly refined exposés of problematized sexuality, and not centrally focused on techniques of the self. Foucault does discuss techniques of the self with respect to diet and sexual practice. But he

¹⁴ Both Quaker and Enlightenment.

¹⁵ Plato, *Apology*.

¹⁶ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, tr. by Michael Chase (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1999).

¹⁷ Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

wrote about those techniques merely as illustrations for the genealogy. The chief texts for examination of the origin and reasons for the techniques precede these books.

In the lectures, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault examines techniques of the self and their deployment in the Hellenistic world as part of the theme of self-care. I found models for techniques of the self in this series, but also shifts in Foucault's explicit thinking about the primacy of self-constitution. The problems of self-constitution begun in his earlier aesthetic works find their fullest expression in this lecture series, the results of which are found in the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*.

I discovered specifiable techniques of the self in Foucault and his ethos, which, I believe emerged out of his own practices such as writing. The technique of self-constitution by means of writing can be found in many places, and the examples I used, including Foucault's, could be characterized in much the same way Foucault characterized the ancient practices. Writing in some cases is a technique of self-constitution that transforms the individual, often making the individual stronger, and more capable of facing the challenges of life through self-mastery.

In the fourth chapter, I needed to extract some of Foucault's discovered tools for my own project. The first clue for proceeding was found in a general statement by Lee Smolin that charted a general trend in Western thought toward a weak ontology in the late twentieth century; this is an ontology modelled roughly on the difficulties and limitations of human cognition and practice.

Smolin does not deny the power of the scientific project, and as a practicing scientist, the philosophical consideration was a way of putting his own work into perspective. He developed a personal ethos of humility as a response to the puzzles of his own scientific endeavour. The Italian and American thinkers I drew into the discussion outlined features of human rationality that described limitations inherent to any human being that could be recognized and compensated for, but never transcended. Further, their theories didn't exclude advancement in human knowledge, but forced a realization that perception of the truth is evanescent, and its discovery is the result of much work on the self. An ethos appears in this literature, not unlike the one I found in Foucault—a posture, an attitude as a response to weak human ontology.

In Foucault's discussion of Plato's seventh letter in *The Government of Self and Others* an explicit connection emerges between the acquisition of knowledge and

a particular kind of ethos, one that qualified the observer for an unveiling of philosophical knowledge, the truth of being. That text is an explanation of Foucault's remarks about spirituality being the qualification for knowledge. Foucault describes how Plato refused to sully his contact with the truth by writing or speaking of it as if one fully comprehended it, and regarded the relation to truth as sacred. Plato, and Foucault with him, did not deny that truth can be known, but rather they claimed that the road to truth is arduous and the truth itself is a prize won at great personal cost. No transparent, frictionless access to reality is available.

On this account I rejected reductionism as a method of discerning the whole of reality. Reductionism provides access to an abstracted form of truth, which is in Plato's terms, a *mathēmata* or study. But the truth of a *mathēmata* is inevitably incomplete, even though it might prove useful. The best reductive and formalized truths are merely a synecdoche of reality and must be taken as limited and provisional. Smolin rejected strong ontologies because their claims to certainty could not be supported by the available evidence.¹⁸ This is the same reading Plato and Foucault give to *mathēmata*. Because of this, I offered, instead of an impregnable fortress of coherent formalisms, a technique that ensured a sense of vulnerability, a porosity to experience and thereby eventually to the possibility of truth.

Examining Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory* served to illustrate first that an ethos of vulnerability was suitable for a comprehensive examination of the truth. Second, examination of and discovery of the truth required intimate contact with all the features of the object under observation. The moral component driving Volf's ethos retained a full-featured concept of respect for other persons, a requirement of Rachels' minimum conception. Volf carried out the examination of his own memories under a weak ontology, with the recognition of how easy it is to lose sight of the goal. Volf's arduous project of remembering rightly had as its goal the redemption of himself and his persecutors in a spare truth that permits, encourages, and eventually requires the return to a conversation. He therefore set up road blocks in the form of

¹⁸ Underdetermination in Scientific Theory, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-underdetermination/>>, [accessed 25 March, 2011] 'At the heart of the underdetermination of scientific theory by evidence is the simple idea that the evidence available to us at a given time may be insufficient to determine what beliefs we should hold in response to it.' Also, 'W. V. O. Quine suggested that such challenges applied not only to the confirmation of all types of scientific theories, but to all knowledge claims whatsoever, and his incorporation and further development of these problems as part of a general account of human knowledge was one of the most significant developments of 20th Century epistemology.'

moral signposts to prevent himself deviating from his final purpose, so he could rightly remember the truth of his tale without corrupting the details. In this way Volf could reconcile with Captain G. and find a way to bridge the gap between their mutual humanities. Volf's project required that he find a way to distance himself from his role as an interlocutor within the confines of the historical act of interrogation, and move toward a relationship with Captain G. as men within the human race.

5.2.3. Further Research Required

The focus of this project is constrained to techniques of self-construction. So, in the first two chapters a set of problems are posed that are resolved in the third and fourth. The specific focus on ethical techniques is a result of research both in Foucault's mature work and ethical problems of responsibility for self-construction. The attempt to show a genealogy of Foucault's own work towards the ethical was a way of framing a discussion about human projects in general. Therefore, I treated Foucault's work of the 1960s and early 1970s in a strictly technical fashion to show progression and movement in Foucault's own theorizing that would lend itself to supporting the ethical thesis of this dissertation. There is a continuity between my work and Foucault's in relation to weak theory and this dissertation does not exhaust the possibility of research in those relations.

Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* poses the problem of the search for wholeness or fullness. There are fruitful connections to explore between the ethical deliberations of the ancients and a modern quest for fullness. David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*¹⁹ explores the problem of wholeness in terms of the awakened consciousness of the first modern people. Bohm lays out the problem of the human condition in terms of the contrast between wholeness and fragmentation, a contrast suggesting that modern humans lost their sense of wholeness at the moment they realized they were not exclusively part of nature.²⁰ The story Bohm tells bears a striking resemblance to the Adam and Eve story without the metaphorical or problematic historical trappings of the biblical text. And, despite the difficulties posed by the Adam and Eve account, the problem of emergent intelligence is a puzzle that remains. Bohm's story, without answering questions about the origin of people, or classifying original sin, nevertheless imagines a world similar to our own, and poses

¹⁹ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 2006), first published in 1980.

²⁰ Bohm, p. 2.

the problem of the search for wholeness that bears a striking resemblance to Taylor's expression of the human desire for fullness.

A study of the genealogy of ethics in the twentieth century would be an interesting search, one that would show an increasing reliance on the persistence of data, with a turn toward statistical methods instead of foundational and universalizing ones. Using the parameters of my discussion of weak ontology in this dissertation would be a good place to begin looking at the various streams of ethical thought.

A cause for optimism with respect to research on Foucault is that many of his Collège de France lectures have not yet come out in English. There will still be plenty of work to do on Foucault in the future. The most problematic but desirable possibility of future Foucault scholarship is the release of the Christian book, the fourth book of the *History of Sexuality: Confessions of the Flesh*. Though Foucault required that nothing not yet published be released from his estate, its publication may only be a matter of time because of increased pressure for its release and the decreasing concern with Foucault's worries about his reputation. In addition, because so much is already known about Foucault's released material related to this work,²¹ there will be a body of literature already in place to receive it.

5.3. Conclusion

The most fruitful insight I found in this research was the discovery of weak ontology. As a form of critique, the refreshing honesty it forces on any discussion encourages the possibility of dialogue. The *megalopsychia* (great-souled person) becomes the one who can facilitate a conversation between opposing views. In a society where often a failure of civility marks the behaviour of both politics and religion, a conversation is clearly needed. A weak ontology levels the playing field. As a critical instrument, weak ontology challenges political and academic hegemonies over territory whose acquisition is problematic at best. As a methodology weak ontology promotes tentative and pliant instruments for the exploration of data. This is a methodology that will remain sensitive to the persistence and movement of human thought and promote research conscious of its limitations within a context that enables the growth of knowledge. That is the sort of technique of the self I proposed at the end of the fourth chapter.

²¹ For example, Jeremy Carrette's volume: Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. by Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), and *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*, ed. by James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

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