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CHAPTER ONE

The Culture of Self

PEDAGOGY AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE SUBJECT

Ever since the first moment of institutional philosophy the notion of the self has presented itself as an object of inquiry, as a problem, and as a locus for posing questions concerning knowledge, action and ethics. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in different ways inquired of the self in terms that we might understand today as personhood, or personal identity, although they saw the self as an animated soul. This idea of self as a substance or form seemed dependent upon a *unity* that can act as a source of consciousness, memory and as a basis for self-knowledge. The ancient philosopher Thales asked the question 'what is most difficult?,' replied 'To know yourself.' The invocation 'to know oneself' is also attributed to Socrates and other Greek philosophers as the source of wisdom and the good life. According to the great ancient historian Plutarch 'Know thyself' (*Gnothi se auton*) was inscribed on the lintel above Apollo's temple at Delphi on the slopes of Mount Parnassus in the 6th century B.C. In one sense Western philosophy has been a continuous engagement with the 'problem of subjectivity' and with the self as a locus of both consciousness and experience—a question that is deemed to be open to understanding, analysis and philosophical reflection.

In the modern era beginning with Descartes and Kant the emphasis shifted to a thinking 'I' not only as a source of consciousness and representation but also ulti-

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mately as a source of all knowledge, action and ethics. Sometimes this tradition that has been taken up differently by different philosophers is referred to as the 'philosophy of the subject,' where 'subject,' at least in the premodern sense, refers to the political (or civic) domain of a reigning monarch and anchored in a network of 'rights,' 'duties,' 'responsibilities,' and 'privileges' that characterized the feudal relationship. The notion of the subject also prefigured the modern 'citizen,' which as a concept finds its institutional origin in the Greek *polis* or city state and is intimately connected to exercise of freedom and the pursuit of 'well being.'

In the latter part of his life Foucault stepped back from his study of the regimen of sexual behavior and pleasures in antiquity based on *aphrodsia* to extract from it and study the more general problem of 'the subject and truth.' Foucault was interested in the historical form of the relations between the 'subject' and 'truth' and how it took shape in the West. This concern was laid out most clearly in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (Foucault, 2005) a course of lectures that Foucault gave in the early 1980s and has only recently been published in English. Foucault gives twenty-four one-hour lectures that explore the general problematic of subjectivity and truth based on a historical examination of the privileging of the Delphic precept 'know yourself' (*gnothi seauton*) over 'care of the self' (*epimeleia heaton*). In these lectures Foucault examines care of the self as a new theoretical point of departure interpreting Socrates himself as a master of care of the self. He also examines reasons for the elimination of care for the self in modern philosophy beginning with Descartes's insistence on self-knowledge and the structure of the *cogito*.

In these ancient discourses pedagogy plays a strong and central role and also in Foucault's deliberations as he takes us on a tour of Plato's *Alcibiades* and the contextualization of the first appearance of 'care of the self,' with its political expectations and pedagogical deficiencies. Pedagogy and the problem of education play a central role in Foucault's discussions. For example, he writes in a lecture of 10 March 1982:

> Let's us call 'pedagogical,' if you like, the transmission of a truth whose function it is to endow any subject whatsoever with aptitudes, capabilities, knowledges and so on, that he did not possess before and that he should possess at the end of the pedagogical relationship. If, then, we call 'pedagogical' this relationship consisting in endowing any subject whomsoever with a series of abilities defined in advance, we can, I think, call 'psychagogical' the transmission of a truth whose function is not to endow any subject with abilities, etcetera, but whose function is to modify the mode of being of the subject to whom we address ourselves (Foucault, 2005, p. 407).

It is helpful to see this course in the series of thirteen courses he gave from 1970 to 1984. The first five courses reflected his early work on knowledge in the human sci-

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ences, concerning punishment, penal and psychiatric institutions: 'La Volonté de savoir' (1970–71), 'Théories et Institutions pénales' (1971–72), 'La Société punitive' (1972–73), 'Le Pouvoir psychiatrique' (1973–74), 'Les Anormaux' (1974–75). The remaining eight courses focused squarely on 'governmentality' studies, with a clear emphasis also on the problematic (and hermeneutics) of the subject and the relation between subjectivity and truth: 'It faut défender la société' (1975–76), 'Securité, Territoire, Population' (1977–78), 'Naissance de la biopolitique' (1978–79), 'Du gouvernement des vivants' (1979–80), 'Subjectivité et Vérité' (1980–81), 'L'Herméneutique du subjet' (1981–82), 'Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres' (1982–83), 'Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres: le courage de la verite' (1983–84). *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and the historical form of the relation between subjectivity and truth is a cornerstone in his governmentality studies and appears in recently published form as *Fearless Speech* (Foucault, 2001a).

This coauthored book constitutes the first systematic exploration of the relevance of Foucault's explorations of subjectivity and truth, and its significance for educational theory of what Foucault referred to on a number of occasions as 'the culture of self,' especially in a course of lecture he gave in Berkeley in the early 1980s.[1] The term itself is a curious one because it indicates that we cannot approach the question of the self without locating it within the network of values and social *practices* that come to characterize a culture at a particular time. The notion of the self belongs to a culture and can really only be understood in relation to a culture comprised of values, social relations and practices. These practices and relations change and are constituted very differently in different historical eras. For Foucault there is no such thing as universal necessities when it comes to human nature; indeed, there is no such thing as human nature; nothing that is that we can advance a theory about which is valid for all ages and across all cultures. Even within the Western tradition there have been marked shifts that center around a quite different set of practices.

This book provides the first systematic analysis and development in educational theory of the later Foucault's concern for the historical form that relations between subjectivity and truth in the history of Western philosophy has taken since antiquity. Our joint intention is to use Foucault's insights on subjectivity and truth as a basis for the investigation of contemporary forms of truth-telling in the constitution of the educational subject. Combined with Foucault's studies of governmentality this constitutes a general problematic for the investigation of new forms of subjectivity including, 'the entrepreneurial self' that has come to characterize neoliberalism as a form of governmentality and the neoliberal paradigm of educational policy.

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Michel Foucault in his late work, a year before he died, used the phrase 'culture of self' as the title of his lecture in Berkeley on April 12, 1983, and in the discussion that followed.[2] He used the phrase to explore the theme of the culture of the self as a philosophical and historical question, and philosophy as an activity that taught about the care of the self. Early in that lecture he drew attention once again to Kant's minor essay 'What is Enlightenment?' to emphasize the question 'What are we now?' and more broadly, 'What is truth?' as well as the related question 'How is it possible to know the truth?' Here Foucault employs the term 'historical ontology of ourselves' and views his own later work precisely as an investigation utilizing this mode of historical analysis. Foucault is entranced by Kant's question of the present—'the question of what is happening now' because it bears on what this present actually is and how it might be recognized, distinguished, and deciphered.

In his historical investigations of the formation of ourselves through the history of thought he focuses on three sets of relations: those concerning truth, obligation, and relations to ourselves and to others. In particular, Foucault had turned from his earlier studies of systematic and structural forces that produced the self to examine the relation to oneself and examples of techniques of the self. In these investigations he saw that care of the self (concern for the self) was the main form of ethics in Roman and Greek thought for over a thousand years. For Foucault the concept of 'culture' is central. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault (2005) writes:

> I think we can say that from the Hellenistic and Roman period we see a real development of the 'culture' of the self. I don't want to use the word culture in a sense that is too loose and I will say that we can speak of culture on a number of conditions. First, when there is a set of values with a minimum degree of coordination, subordination, and hierarchy. We can speak of culture when a second condition is satisfied, which is that these values are given both as universal but also as only accessible to a few. A third condition for being able to speak of culture is that a number of precise and regular forms of conduct are necessary for individuals to be able to reach these values. Even more than this, effort and sacrifice is required. In short, to have access to these values you must be able to devote your life to them. Finally, the fourth condition for being able to talk about culture is that access to these values is conditional upon more or less regular techniques and procedures that have been developed, validated, transmitted, and taught, and that are also associated with a whole set of notions, concepts, and theories etcetera: with a field of knowledge (*savoir*) (Foucault, 2005, p. 238).

Around the same time in *Technologies of the Self,* Foucault (1988b) departs from Heidegger's essentialism to focus on *historical ontologies* established through a Nietzschean-styled genealogical investigation. For Foucault,as previously mentioned there are no universal necessities in human nature, but only different technologies through which the subject is created or by which (s)he creates him or herself. Following the work of Nietzsche and the later Heidegger, Foucault reacts

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against the phenomenological and humanist subject to emphasize modes of subjectivation and the way that human beings become subjects. In so doing he transforms Heidegger's essentialism into a historical inquiry, and he distances himself from Heidegger's universalism and preoccupation with essences. From Heidegger he accepts the relationship between subjectivity and technology, although he gives it a historical cast. In particular, he became interested in techniques of self-formation and how the roots of the modern concept of the self could be located in first and second century Greco-Roman philosophy and in fourth and fifth century Christian spirituality. As he says in 'Truth, Power, Self':

> All my analyses are directed against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we still can enjoy and how changes can still be made (Foucault, 1988a, p.11).

He was to remark 'I do believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject.' He explains further, 'I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices' of subjection to or liberation from 'a number of rules, styles, and inventions to be found in the cultural environment' (Foucault, 1988b, pp. 50–51).

Foucault draws our attention to the ways in which technologies have always been part of culture and society and instrumental in questions of self-formation. He aims 'to sketch a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves . . . [and] to analyze these so-called sciences as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.' (Foucault, 1988b, p.17). He outlines four major types of technologies, 'each a matrix of practical reason':

> (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of signs systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, 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 souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18).

Foucault explains that, in antiquity, there were two major ethical principles—'know yourself' and 'take care of yourself.' The former came to displace and obscure the latter because the tradition of Christian morality made self-renunciation the condition for salvation. By contrast, taking care of oneself became presented as an immorality. Also, knowledge of the self, as Foucault (1988b, p.22) explains, 'takes on an ever-increasing importance as the first step in the theory of knowledge.'

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Foucault then proceeds to investigate the theme of 'taking care of oneself' in antiquity, focusing first on Plato's Alcibiades I and, second, on the Hellenistic period and the Stoics, including Seneca and Plutarch. He investigates techniques employed by the Stoics—the disclosure of the self through letters to friends and the examination of self and conscience—and the truth games of early Christianity that led finally to the whole apparatus of confession.

Foucault investigated 'care of self' versus 'know your self' (latter as a means for taking care of oneself) in the Greco-Roman culture of the self which seemed to create a culture based on autonomous selves, though not separate from its political relations, but geared towards care of themselves and principles of self-cultivation. In this culture a set of obligations to the self grew up not as necessarily rule based or authoritarian but rather as the result of a personal choice aimed at a better life and the possibility of a new type of existence. Curiously, this culture was not religious in any institutional or organized sense even though we might still call it spiritual.

Throughout his work Foucault had been concerned with technologies of power and domination, whereby the self had been objectified through scientific inquiry. By 1981, he became interested in how a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. He became interested in those practices whereby individuals, by their own means or with the help of others, acted on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being in order to transform themselves and attain a certain state of perfection or happiness. At this late period of his life he became interested in the Kantian question 'what are we today,' and he indicates that his project on the self was suggested by the late American critic Christopher Lasch and his influential work *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979).

LASCH AND THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM

It is worth dwelling on Lasch's work momentarily, if anything, because it firmly anchors the self in a notion of culture and understands the self by reference to a culture, in this case, as he suggests in the subtitle, 'American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations.' Lasch sums up his provocative thesis in the following statement 'To live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity' (Lasch, 1979, p. 5). For Lasch, writing at the end of the 1970s, an 'intense preoccupying self-absorption defines the moral climate of contemporary American society' (p. 25) where 'Self-preservation has replaced self-improvement as the goal of earthly existence' (Lasch, 1979, p. 53). Lasch is arguing that techniques of the self in a capitalist society based on a consumerist ethic has taken leave of its spiritual base and become replaced by self-preservation or one

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might say, even against Lasch, a kind of 'self-improvement' but of a narrow, instrumental kind. This notion of self-improvement is revealed in an ethic of pleasure and a kind of hedonistic pasttime where 'even the most intimate encounters become a form of mutual exploitation' (Lasch, 1979, p. 65). The main thesis of Lasch's book is that Americans have created a self-absorbed, greedy and frivolous society the intimate heart of which has been transformed by relentless consumerism. The irony is that this self-absorption is not accompanied by increased self-awareness but rather quite the opposite, a thinness in self-understanding and an exploitative relation to others.

Lasch uses the myth and the figure of Narcissus to describe this American culture of the self at the end of the 1970s. The story of Narcissus comes to us in various forms—in the archaic version of the *Oxyrhynchus papyri* (after the archeological site in Egypt and once a prosperous regional city) and in the version related by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that tells the story of Narcissus, a beautiful youth who spurned the affections of Echo, the wood nymph, only to fall in love with his own reflection. As Ovid writes:

> While he is drinking he beholds himself reflected in the mirrored pool—and loves; loves an imagined body which contains no substance, for he deems the mirrored shade a thing of life to love. . . . All that is lovely in himself he loves, and in his witless way he wants himself:—he who approves is equally approved; he seeks, is sought, he burns and he is burnt (Book 3, edited by Brookes More).

While the myth has been referred to and used many times throughout literary history it was given a distinctive stamp in the work of Sigmund Freud who distinguishes between primary and secondary narcissism where the first form is developmental and adaptive occurring during the normal course of growing up and the second form is pathological and a form of neurosis of an adolescent or adult who has not been properly socialized. As infants we are the center of the universe and parents, while 'mythical and awesome,' exist solely to cater for our every need. Secondary narcissism exists where the child does not complete the normal processes of separation from his parents and individuation because of conflict and injuries sustained within a dysfunctional family (although there is some evidence to suggest genetic influence). In the process the child's sense of self-worth and self-esteem is damaged resulting in an obsessive self-infatuation and leading to the exclusion and insensitivity towards others. Narcissism in this sense is the core of the narcissistic personality disorder as defined by *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* that defines the disorder of the self as a group of five of the following characteristics:

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> (1) has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements); (2) is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; (3) believes that he or she is 'special' and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions); (4) requires excessive admiration; (5) has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations; (6) is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends; (7) lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; (8) is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her; (9) shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

Lasch's (1979) innovation is to follow Freud's idea mentioned in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that we might talk not only of sick individuals but also of sick or unhealthy cultures. Lasch also broadens his analysis away from individual disorders of the self to locate narcissism as the core of a new American consumerist culture at the end of the 1970s. As he writes:

> The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a meaning in life. Liberated from the superstitions of the past, he doubts even the reality of his own existence. Superficially relaxed and tolerant, he finds little use for dogmas of racial and ethnic purity but at the same time forfeits the security of group loyalties and regards everyone as a rival for the favors conferred by a paternalistic state. His sexual attitudes are permissive rather than puritanical, even though his emancipation from ancient taboos brings him no sexual peace. Fiercely competitive in his demand for approval and acclaim, he distrusts competition because he associates it unconsciously with an unbridled urge to destroy. Hence he repudiates the competitive ideologies that flourished at an earlier stage of capitalist development and distrusts even their limited expression in sports and games. He extols cooperation and teamwork while harboring deeply antisocial impulses. He praises respect for rules and regulations in the secret belief that they do not apply to himself. Acquisitive in the sense that his cravings have no limits, he does not accumulate goods and provisions against the future, in the manner of the acquisitive individualist of nineteenth-century political economy, but demands immediate gratification and lives in a state of restless, perpetually unsatisfied desire (Lasch, 1979, p. 23).

Lasch diagnoses a culture of narcissism in 1970s America—a consumerist culture that promotes the development of a narcissistic self-disorder. It is this cultural analysis of American self-disorders that allegedly interested Michel Foucault, but the influence was mutual and flowed both ways. Lasch reviewed many of Foucault's books in *The New York Times* and *The New York Review of Books* during the 1970s and 1980s extolling Foucault's work as relevant to cultural historians and describing his work as 'brilliant,' 'a tour de force,' 'innovative and controversial,' suggesting 'What is special to him . . . is his demonstration of how institutions create the concept of illness, crime, insanity or sex.' Later and prophetically in *The Minimal*

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Self (1984) Lasch, no doubt strongly influenced by Foucault, makes explicit that the insights of traditional religion have retained their vitality. Psychic 'survival' is no longer a meaningful goal, rather, as Lasch argues: 'Self-affirmation remains a possibility precisely to the degree that an older conception of personality, rooted in Judeo-Christian traditions, has persisted alongside a behavioral or therapeutic conception.' (Lasch, 1984, p. 17). In *The Minimal Self* Lasch assigns a new significance to religion, suggesting:

> In the history of civilization . . . vindictive gods give way to gods who show mercy as well and uphold the morality of loving your enemy. Such a morality has never achieved anything like general popularity, but it lives on, even in our own enlightened age, as a reminder both of our fallen state and of our surprising capacity for gratitude, remorse, and forgiveness, by means of which we now and then transcend it (Lasch, 1984, p. 6).

Given the renewed religiosity, the rise of fundamentalisms in an age of uncertainty, the return to scripture and its literal truth, and also the growth of faith schools, both Lasch's and Foucault's work provide useful grids of understanding and analytical tools for investigating the return to the 'fundamentalist self' in terms of new religious practices and precepts and also the continued significance of truth-telling practices in processes of self-formation both inside faith schools and in the wider community. The educational self and 'educating the self' become motifs for a differentiated plural society that with the withering of grand ideologies have led to communities of faith exerting their own educational principles, beliefs and practices.

Lasch's work certainly takes Foucault seriously although he deviates from Foucault's analysis especially in the use of Freud. Where they agree on the fundamentals of the importance of *culture* in understanding the self and they both focus on practices of the self, Foucault situates his study in the world of antiquity and Lasch in contemporary American consumer society. Foucault reacts against Freud and the model of repression that suggests the possibility of liberation from oneself through a 'talking cure.' More than Lasch, Foucault wants to revise or reform if not reject the elements that comprise the Freudian model of analysis.

It does not take much imagination to see the relevance of education as forming 'cultures of the self' not only in the senses explicit in Foucault's work (and Lasch's) but also in profiling the great interrelated problems of subjectivity (knowing one's mind) and intersubjectivity (knowing other minds), which stand at the heart of learning, self-formation, identity, culture and ethics. Central to Foucault's account is a philosophical analysis that anchors the ethical self in the practice of freedom. This emphasis is most obvious in Foucault's analysis of what he calls 'care of the self' that pictures freedom as the ontological condition of ethics and ethics as a social practice linked to games of truth.

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ANALYZING CARE OF THE SELF

Paul Rabinow (1997) provides a useful summary of the steps in Foucault's argument about 'care of the self' that are presented here as a series of related premises in summary form:

> *Premise 1:* 'what is ethics, if not the practice of liberty, the considered practice of liberty' (Foucault, 1997a, p. xxv). 'Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes' (ibid.).
>
> *Premise 2:* In the Western tradition, 'taking care of oneself requires knowing oneself.' 'To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths (p. 281); thus, as Rabinow (1997: xxv) points out quoting Foucault (1997a, p. xxv), 'ethics is linked to the game of truth.'
>
> *Premise 3:* Ethics is a practice or style of life and the problem for Foucault is to give 'liberty the form of an ethos' (Foucault, 1997a, p. xxv).
>
> *Premise 4:* The subject 'is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself' (Foucault, 1997a, p. xxv).

As Rabinow (1997: xxvi) explains "'Self' is a reflexive pronoun, and has two meanings. *Auto* means 'the same,' but it also conveys the notion of identity. The latter meaning shifts the question from 'What is the self?' to 'What is the foundation on which I shall find my identity?'"

> *Premise 5:* So the emphasis shifts to the historical constitution of these forms and their relation to 'games of truth.' 'A game of truth is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedures, may be considered valid or invalid.' 'Why truth? . . . And why must the care of the self occur only through the concern for truth? [This is] *the* question for the West. How did it come about that all of Western culture began to revolve around this obligation of truth . . . ?' (Foucault, 1997a, p. xxv).

Rabinow (1997: xxvi) comments: that given these premises, 'one must conclude equally that "one escaped from a domination of truth" only by playing the game differently.'

> *Premise 6:* 'the relationship between philosophy and politics is permanent and fundamental' (Foucault, 1997a).

And finally *Premise 7,* where Rabinow (1997: xxvi) remarks 'Philosophy, understood as a practice and a problem, is a vocation. The manner in which liberty is taken up by the philosopher is distinctive, differing in intensity and zeal from other free citizens.'

In Rabinow's formulation of Foucault's argument, it is clear that the overriding emphasis is on 'care for the self,' and there is no explicit discussion about 'care

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for others' or the possibility of inferring the latter from the former (see Foucault, 1984). Perhaps this emphasis on the centrality of truth in relation to the self is to be developed only through the notion of 'others' as an audience—intimate or public—that allows for the politics of confession and (auto)biography.

Arnold Davidson (1997) makes it clear that Foucault, especially in his later work *The Care of the Self* (Foucault, 1990) drew on the work of Pierre Hadot's work on 'spiritual exercises' especially with regard to what Foucault called 'ethics' or the self's relationship to itself or 'ethical self-constitution.' (Pierre Hadot has held the chair of the History of Hellenistic Studies and Roman Thought at the Collège de France since 1982). Davidson suggests that Foucault's four main aspects of the self's relationship to itself are an appropriation of Hadot's four-fold framework for interpreting ancient thought:

> the ethical substance, that part of oneself that is taken to be the relevant domain for ethical judgement; the mode of subjection, the way in which the individual established his relation to moral obligations and rules; the self-forming activity or ethical work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself into an ethical subject; and, finally, the telos, the mode of being at which one aims in behaving ethically (Davidson, 1997, pp. 200–201).

Hadot emphasized that in ancient schools of thought philosophy was considered to be a way of life, a quest for wisdom, a way of being and, ultimately a way of transforming the self. Spiritual exercises were a form of pedagogy designed to teach its practitioners the philosophical life that had both a moral and existential value. These exercises were aimed at nothing less than a transformation of one's worldview and one's personality involving all aspects of one's being, including intellect, imagination, sensibility and will. Hadot claimed that in the figure of Socrates we find a set of dialogical spiritual exercises that epitomized the Socratic injunction 'Know thyself!' and provided a model for a relationship of the self to itself that constituted the basis of all spiritual exercise. In this model, Hadot draws our attention to the primacy of the process one adopts to a problem rather than the solution. Hadot's (1987) major work *Exercises spirituels et philosophie antique* shows how this set of dialogical relations of the self (with itself) is at the very center of a total transformation of one's being (see Davidson, 1997). It is a model that could both complement and correct certain emphases in Foucault's later thinking about truth and subjectivity.

Foucault's (1997b) essay, 'Writing the Self,' clearly draws on Hadot's work.[3] Foucault's essay analyses a passage from Athanasius's *Vita Antoni* about writing the self that involve 'the actions and movements of our souls as though to make them mutually known to one another, and let us be sure that out of shame at being known, we will cease sinning and have nothing perverse in our hearts' (cited in Foucault, 1997b, p. 234). 'Self-writing' . . . 'offsets the dangers of solitude' and exposes our deeds to a possible gaze; at the same time the practice works on thoughts as well

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as actions, which brings it into line with the role of confession (in the early Christian literature). It permits, at the same time, a retrospective analysis of 'the role of writing in the philosophical culture of the self just prior to Christianity: its close tie with apprenticeship; its applicability to movements of thought; its role as a test of truth' (Foucault, 1997b, p. 235). Reading and writing are part of 'arts of the self' which contribute to what Foucault calls the 'aesthetics of existence' and also a basis for the government of self and others.

READING AND WRITING THE SELF

In his investigations of 'spiritual exercises' in Latin antiquity Hadot (1995, p. 81) describes in the philosophy of the Stoics the way in which 'thought, as it were, takes itself as its own subject-matter' as the basis for an art of living where the individual is transformed into an authentic state of heightened self-consciousness providing both inner peace and freedom. No systematic treatise of these exercises has come down to us and Hadot reconstructs them from a close reading of ancient texts in order to emphasize the consequences of such thought for philosophy itself. By reference to Philo of Alexandria Hadot enumerates the following list: research (*zetesis*), thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*), indifference to indifferent things, meditations (*meletai*), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things, and the accomplishment of duties.[2] The specifically intellectual exercises of reading, listening, research, and investigation provide the substance for meditation, which can be distinguished from attention (the fundamental spiritual attitude of the Stoics), and from the practical exercises designed to create habits. In this context, Hadot analyses the Hellenistic and Roman spiritual exercises in terms of learning to live, learning to dialogue (first brought to Western consciousness in the figure of Socrates), learning to die, and learning how to read. It is especially this last notion that is worth pondering in relation to pedagogy. The quest for self-realization and improvement is the final goal of the spiritual exercises and this goal, Hadot (1995, p. 102) informs us is shared by all philosophical schools of antiquity. Through 'spiritual exercises'—including 'reading' and 'writing'—the self is liberated from its egoism, its passions and its anxieties. This thought must sound so familiar to us late moderns, especially in a post-Foucauldian age, at a time when the self as subject (and object of its own gaze) has been the basis of so much debate in terms of both the Cartesian picture (the self as a unified, transparent, essence) that held us captive and *technologies of self.*

Foucault (1986) drew on Hadot's work on 'spiritual exercises' when he was completing *The Care of the Self,* and Hadot, in a piece entitled "Reflections on the Idea

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of the 'Cultivation of the self'" (Hadot, 1995, pp. 206–13), takes Foucault to task for the inaccuracies of his interpretation of Greco-Roman ethics as 'an ethics of the pleasure one takes in oneself' (Hadot, 1995, p. 207). Foucault (1997b) writes a stunning essay entitled 'Writing the Self' that also, it seems, draws on Hadot's groundbreaking work. Foucault's essay is part of what he calls his studies of 'arts of the self,' which are designed to explore the 'aesthetics of existence' and to inquire into the government of self and others that characterizes his later work.

Foucault's essay analyzes a passage from Athanasius's *Vita Antoni*. The opening sentence of the text to which Foucault refers weighs so precisely on the preceding discussion:

> Here is one thing to observe to ensure that one does not sin. Let us each take note of and write down the actions and movements of our souls as though to make them mutually known to one another, and let us be sure that out of shame at being known, we will cease sinning and have nothing perverse in our hearts (cited in Foucault, 1997b, p. 234).

Foucault notes that this 'self-writing' 'offsets the dangers of solitude' and exposes our deeds to a possible gaze; at the same time the practice works on *thoughts* as well as actions, which brings it into line with the role of confession (in the early Christian literature). It permits, at the same time, a retrospective analysis of

> the role of writing in the philosophical culture of the self just prior to Christianity: its close tie with apprenticeship; its applicability to movements of thought; its role as a test of truth (Foucault, 1997b, p. 235).

These elements are to be found in Seneca and Plutarch but take a different form and are based upon different values. As he says,

> No technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can one learn the art of living, the *techne tou biou,* without an *askesis* that must be understood as a training of the self by the self (Foucault, 1997b, p. 235).

In relation to the ancients Hadot suggests we must *learn how to read* them. Whether it be the dialogues of Plato, the class notes of Aristotle, or the treatises of Plotinus we must learn to take into account the concrete situation in which they were produced. As he writes:

> They are the products of a philosophical school, in the most concrete sense of the term, in which a master forms his disciples, trying to guide them to self-transformation and -realization. Thus, the written work is a reflection of *pedagogical,* psychagogic, and methodological preoccupations (Hadot, 1995, pp. 104–5, our emphasis).

Foucault's work, we would argue, is instructive when investigating modern forms of pedagogy, and the historical transition from church- to state-based forms of for-

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mal schooling. In *The Use of Pleasure,* Foucault talks of technologies of the self as 'models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for deciphering the self by oneself, for the transformation one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object.' (Foucault, 1986, p. 29)

Nikolas Rose comments:

> Western man, Michel Foucault argued, has become a confessing animal. The truthful rendering into speech of who one is, to one's parents, one's teachers, one's doctor, one's lover, and oneself, is installed at the heart of contemporary procedures of individualization. In confessing, one is subjectified by another, for one confesses in the actual or imagined presence of a figure who prescribes the form of the confession, the words and rituals through which it should be made, who appreciates, judges, consoles, or understands. But in confessing, one also constitutes oneself. In the act of speaking, through the obligation to produce words that are true to an inner reality, through the self-examination that precedes and accompanies speech, one becomes a subject for oneself. Confession, then, is the diagram of a certain form of subjectification that binds us to others at the very moment we affirm our identity (Rose, 1989, p. 240).

Foucault reminds us that confession originated with Catholicism. He views it as the principal technology that emerged for Catholicism to manage the sexual lives of believers. With the counterreformation confession underwent a profound change so that it came to apply to not just acts but also to one's *thoughts.* In the 18th century confession developed as a complex technology of secular discourses proliferating in pedagogy, medicine, psychiatry, and literature, and reaching its secular highpoint in Freud's 'talking cure.' Since Freud one might say that the secularization of confession has been 'scientized' through clinical codifications, personal examinations, histological techniques, the general documentation and date collection of personal data, the proliferation of interpretive schemas and the development of a whole host of therapeutic techniques for 'normalization.'

With these new techniques for normalization and individualization we are 'obliged to be free': self-inspection replaces the confessional as new forms of self-regulation become manifest. As Rose writes:

> Writing was one central technique. Not that writing was a new acquisition for technologies of the self; it extends from Socrates' letters to Augustine's confessions. But for the seventeenth century Puritans, the confessional diary, constituted what William Paden terms 'an account book of one's state of sin,' which effected, through the work of writing, a measurement of the self against biblical standards. The diary was a mirror of one's sinfulness, but a mirror one held oneself. The self-inscription of the diary both calibrated one's lapses, and bore witness to the survival of one's faith; the self was to become both sinner and judge (Rose, 1989, p. 220).

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Discipline 'entails training in the minute arts of self-scrutiny, self-evaluation, and self-regulation ranging from the control of the body, speech, and movement in school, through the mental drill inculcated in school and university, to the Puritan practices of self-inspection and obedience to divine reason' (Rose, 1989, p. 222).

Foucault alerts us to the way that modern pedagogies are secular technologies of the self in which self-regulation and self-examination comes to occupy center ground. Philosophy in a *pedagogical sense* is always autobiographical and that, insofar as we belong to a particular form of life, we are compelled to recreate ourselves through narrative. Foucault emphasizes the power/knowledge grid in which we turn the gaze of examination back upon our selves as objects.

In a Foucauldian-inspired investigation we might inquire into the pedagogical cultures within which children learn to tell the truth about themselves, by what means, and how these truth-telling discourses are central to the narrative creation and reconstruction of the self.

Children learn the art of discourse against a background of truth (even in fiction) and also learn the cultural compulsion to tell the truth. Autobiography and truth-telling are central to pedagogical discourses, for every pedagogical interaction also presupposes a background of truth-telling. Autobiography sets up a sense of agency as the child learns to look back and reflect on past actions and decisions. In our Western society children learn to be 'autononomous,' at least insofar as that means responsibility for oneself, one's actions and those under one's care. The role of biography and autobiography is broader than its consideration as a specialist genre within literature, and it is in philosophical forms linked strongly with the becoming of the self, not only through basic social and psychological processes as 'reading' and 'writing' the self but also through other forms of media and representations. Self-representation also takes various forms in the sculptural, plastic and visual arts where we see many different kinds of self-portraiture. In the performing and the visual arts we experience both scripted and unscripted (free expression) kinds of self-representation and self-recognition. These forms find a particular expression during the Florentine Renaissance with what Jacob Burkthardt understood as the birth of modern individualism. Renaissance humanism is best seen as a form of pedagogy rather than a systematic philosophy—'the pedagogy of individualism'—devoted through the liberal arts, through reading and writing, but also through its parts or specific disciplines (rhetoric, grammar, dialectic) (see Peters, 2001). Games of truth and the development of different disciplinary discourses, that through its rules, produced truths were aimed at the development of moral character and the direct shaping of the Renaissance individual both as a city dweller as well as a civic and church subject.

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Almost certainly we are witnessing a shift from the shaping of an individual of classical liberalism—the ethical individual of Kantian humanism—to a market individualism of neoliberalism where the self is shaped as a utility maximizer, a free and contractual individual, who is self-constituted through the market choices and investment decisions that he/she makes. Lasch points to the forms of self disorders that accompanies a culture of narcissism, both narcissistic self and minimal self. In face of increasingly technical and functional forms of literacy and of schooling, we might inquire whether school in an age of consumerism promotes a relation to the self based on truth-telling or whether this relation has been replaced by another primary ethos: happiness, security, survival, success, 'self-improvement,' wealth.

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