

CHAPTER THREE

The Body AND THE Aesthetics OF Existence

INTRODUCTION

The self is not just the mind, but also involves the body and in the postmodern world, the aesthetics of existence are inexorably linked with the commodification of our world and existence. Our relationship to commodities and the self is no longer based on 'need,' but more on a desire that can never be satisfied so we seek new objects to consume in a system where choices are infinite, and desire and pleasure become integral parts of material and social production that in turn produce or construct more desire/pleasure (Baudrillard, 1998). Commodifying pressures result in an increasing importance being placed upon the appearance and presentation of the body as constitutive of self-identity, on possessing 'desired' goods and the pursuit of particular lifestyles. The idealised corporeal images of youth, beauty, health and fitness support body maintenance and related industries ensuring that the body is attractively packaged, marketed and sold. Health no longer simply involves caring for the body and seeking its optimal functioning, but involves disciplining its appearance, movement and control so that it looks presentable and hence becomes marketable all the while transmitting a whole host of codes/signs about the values and attitudes of the owner of such a body. Today, the firm, well-toned and muscled body indicates a 'correct attitude' implying personal qualities such as determination, willpower, energy. It displays the ability to 'make something' of oneself and an asceti-

cism that is to a certain extent a denial of self—at least a denial of impulses to indulge the self—a self-discipline that controls desires to overindulge in epicurean pleasures. It shows that one ‘cares’ about oneself and about how one appears to others. Whilst in premodern times, bodily discipline and asceticism was sought to serve spiritual ends through repressing the temptations of the flesh, today the concern has shifted to the aesthetic cultivation of outer appearance and the hedonistic expression of desire.

On one line of body criticism that we might christen ‘body aesthetics’ the body becomes the site for a range of critical practices in the arts and humanities for the investigation of cultural representations, constructions and inscriptions of power and hierarchies of value. This includes the investigation of the sociopolitical context of procedures for ‘body contouring’—liposuction, abdominoplasty, lifts, nips and tucks—as well as the philosophical significance of the search for the perfect body through methodologies and means that historicize the body and provide it with a history. Body aesthetics may also focus on ethnic and cultural specificity of bodies in relation to aesthetic traditions and ideals, and the intimate connection between medical practice, politics and aesthetics on the understanding that ‘design is politics.’ It may also involve a kind of projection into posthuman forms of prosthesis, exosomatic development, and the virtual body. From this perspective, we can analyze the social pathologies that cause *disorders of bodies* (rather than the *self*) especially those that are amenable to political economy such as eating disorders (at both ends of the spectrum—‘obesity’ and ‘anorexia’), the death-denying emphasis on the exercised body, the ‘healthy’ body and the plethora of diet routines promoted by fitness clubs, the pharma-industry, body shape and the fast food industry, and the relation between aesthetics and sports, and so on, but that is beyond the scope of this book. It is clear however, that body aesthetics is a complex field embracing normative, historical and scientific elements.

Ontological questions are raised concerning the nature of bodily order and corporeal transgression. Despite the Enlightenment’s making rationality almost a cult or a virtue, paradoxically, it has irrationally overestimated rationality’s power to control either the emotions or the body. Bodies are clearly subject to discipline and control through discourse—i.e., to (rational) management and control—and through institutions such as prisons, asylums, factories and schools. On the one hand the rational impulse is for discipline, control and order and on the other hand the corporeal impulse is of chaos and transgression, being sensual rather than ascetic, fluid rather than static, volatile rather than fixed. Nietzsche (1956) reminds us that the will or passions are stronger than the mind, threatening to overturn the rationally ordered world. But this is to continue to promote the old dualisms rather than a more integrated sense of embodied subjectivity. Since our transgressive

bodies/recalcitrant minds will always find points of resistance and escape, understanding and incorporating a contemporary philosophy of the embodied self provides a more optimistic view of the body and the emotions in contemporary society, opening space for new possibilities.

Michel Foucault was drawn late in life in *The History of Sexuality*, to study the 'arts of the self' in Greco-Roman culture as a basis, following Nietzsche, for what he called an 'aesthetics of existence' (Foucault, 1980a). By this, he meant a set of creative and experimental processes and techniques by which an individual turns him- or herself into a work of art. For Nietzsche, it was above all the figure of the musician that best represented the mode of creative self-transformation, although he also talked of the philosopher-artist. By contrast, Foucault in his famous essay 'Writing the Self' emphasized the writer and writing. Yet, at the same time, he was also to question the notion of the author and the author-function. Foucault, while rejecting the phenomenological account of the subject, held on to the body as a site of power relations occupying a spatial-temporal location in development of Western institutions. The aesthetics of existence was also part of Foucault's genealogical strategy to move us from the concepts and discourses of 'desire,' 'lack' and 'repression' that have controlled sexuality in the modern era.

This chapter explores Foucault's notion of the aesthetics of existence by focusing on processes of ethical self-constitution—an aesthetic 'sculpting' of the self—and, in particular, the ways in which we come to shape our lives through the capacity of choice-making. The chapter begins by emphasising the consistency of an approach from an 'aesthetics of existence' to Foucault's life and his relations to questions of the self in the history of madness. It then examines Foucault's work on the body, including the notion of embodiment, which becomes the basis for exploring Foucault's thought in relation to feminism, the female body, conceptions of masculinity and the male body as well as raising some questions concerning contemporary body politics.

WHO IS FOUCAULT?

The question 'who is Foucault?' has more often been asked than 'why Foucault?' For instance, James D. Faubion begins his edited collection of Foucault's work in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* with exactly that question, to which he answers:

The possibilities seem endless: structuralist, idealist, neoconservative, post-structuralist, antihumanist, irrationalist, radical relativist, theorist of power, missionary of transgression, aestheticist, dying man, saint, or, if nothing else post-modern (Foucault, 1998a, p. xiii).

These labels designed to answer the ‘who’ or ‘what’ of Foucault, are, of course, not necessarily mutually contradictory, but they are *not* categories or descriptions that Foucault would apply to himself. And Foucault was very testy and vitriolic against those who ascribed him positions he did not hold or those who offered descriptions of him that did not fit. In his Foreword to the English edition of *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1973, p. xiv), he wrote:

In France, certain half-witted ‘commentators’ persist in labelling me a ‘structuralist.’ I have been unable to get it into their tiny minds that I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterise structural analysis.

He acknowledged ‘certain similarities’ between his own work and that of the ‘structuralists.’ He went on to suggest, given the problematic of structuralism that emphasized the unconscious and a decentring of the author, that it would be strange for him to claim that his work was independent of conditions and rules of which I am very largely unaware’ (Foucault, 1973, p. xiv). Elsewhere, he denied he knew what the term postmodernism meant, or indeed, even the meaning of the term ‘modernity’ (Foucault, 1998c), yet he granted that structuralism had a determinate meaning, although only in retrospect. In the same interview, he was to remark: ‘I have never been a Freudian, I have never been a Marxist, and I have never been a structuralist’ (Foucault, 1998c, p. 437). In another autobiographical comment, Foucault proceeds negatively, by noting how others have classified him and by taking considerable enjoyment from casting aspersions on these descriptions:

I think I have been situated in most squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal etc. An American professor complained that a crypto-marxist like me was invited to the U.S.A., and I was denounced by the press in Eastern Europe for being an accomplice of the dissidents. None of these descriptions is important by itself; taken together, on the other hand, they mean something. And I must admit that I rather like what they mean (Foucault, 1984d, pp. 383–84).

These denials, labels and self-descriptions raise an issue immediately concerning the construction of ‘self and others’ in relation to the descriptions we accept or deny, or even those that we have thrust upon us, despite our best efforts to shape the ways in which we are perceived or received. Self-descriptions are complex entities often containing narrative elements, whole roles or parts of which are prescribed in larger scenarios, or even in the distribution of multiple roles and the speaking and acting chances of which we avail ourselves. Yet to treat these self-descriptions or such ascriptions as simply narrative *humanist* constructions, with the actor at the centre, tends to ignore many of the quasistructuralist objections Foucault entertained

about the 'author.' Already we can see an incipient ethos for a form of counseling that avoids the pitfalls of humanist narratives—the commitment to essentialist categories and chronological life-histories that mark the passage of the hero or heroine (or antihero) according to the privileged voice of the author or biographer.

Foucault once famously remarked: 'The coming into being of the "author" constitutes the privileged moment of individualisation in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences' (Foucault, 1998b, p. 205). Such a statement is doubly paradoxical when applied to Foucault himself for the so-called 'disappearance or death of the author' significantly is not something that applies to Foucault, either as a scholar who during his productive life initiated new inquiries and approaches, or as the convenient name for a body or corpus of 'work' that connects with contemporary movements and goes beyond them. Nor is it apt for the consideration of Foucault and his role in contemporary 'theory,' when the processes of reification and canonisation of both the man and his work began even before his death in 1984. (Saint Foucault—the Left have a tendency toward hagiography; another form of canonisation). Yet Foucault also was acutely aware of the Nietzschean trope of an 'aesthetics of existence' and the ways in which we can or should remake ourselves. These are the principles of *self-constitution* and transformation, at once ethical and political, applied as much to the citizen, the consumer, and the student as to the public intellectual, the writer, and the theorist. If it is the case that we can remake ourselves through art, through writing, especially utilising spiritual exercises initiated by the Greeks in the Western tradition, using the arts of self-reflection through artistic techniques of reading and writing, then why not through everyday conversation and interaction?

Clearly, Foucault remodels himself and his thinking changes and evolves throughout his life. Indeed, he was forever reformulating what he saw as his own 'project.' In their study of Foucault's work, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) propose four stages: a Heideggerian stage (typified by his study of madness and reason), an archaeological or quasistrukturalist stage (characterised by *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things*), a genealogical stage and, finally an ethical stage. The shift from the archaeological to the genealogical stage in Foucault's writings is well represented in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977), a work that has direct relevance to educational theory. Like *The History of Sexuality*, *Discipline and Punish* exhibits a Nietzschean genealogical turn focused upon studies of the *will to knowledge* understood as reflecting both discursive and nondiscursive (i.e., institutional) practices and, in particular, the complex relations among power, knowledge and the body. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault is concerned with the body as an object of certain disciplinary technologies of power. He examines the genealogy of forms of punishment and the development of the modern penal institution, discussing in turn

torture (beginning with the gruesome account of Damien the regicide), punishment, discipline, and the prison.

In the early 1980s, Denis Huisman asked François Ewald to reedit the entry on Foucault for a new edition of the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*. As the translator, Robert Hurley remarks in a footnote to the text ‘Foucault,’ ‘The text submitted to Huisman was written almost entirely by Foucault himself, and signed anonymously “Maurice Florence”’ (p. 458). Foucault begins that text with the following words: ‘To the extent that Foucault fits into the philosophical tradition, it is the *critical* tradition of Kant, and his project could be called *A Critical History of Thought*’ (Foucault, 1998d, p. 459). Later he defines a critical history of thought as,

an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject to object are formed or modified, insofar as those relations constitute a possible knowledge [*savoir*] . . . In short, it is a matter of determining its mode of ‘subjectivation’ . . . and objectivation . . . What are the processes of subjectivation and objectivation that make it possible for the subject qua subject to become an object of knowledge [*connaissance*], as a subject? (Foucault, 1998d, pp. 450–60).

He describes himself as undertaking the constitution of the subject both as an object of knowledge within certain scientific discourses or truth games we call the ‘human sciences’ (both empirical and normative) and as an object for himself. This is the history of subjectivity insofar as it involves ‘the way the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where it relates to himself’ (Foucault, 1998d, p. 461), such as in the history of sexuality. Already, counseling as a narrative ‘art of the self’ or a scientific discourse plays the truth game and from Foucault’s point of view can be considered as one means of constituting the subject.

It is the kind of self-description that Foucault gives elsewhere. In an interview a year before his death, Foucault (1983) ‘confessed’ to Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus that his real quarry was *not* an investigation of power but rather the history of the ways in which human beings are constituted as subjects, a process that involved power relations as an integral aspect of the production of discourses involving truths.

My objective . . . has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects . . . The first is the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of the sciences . . . In the second part of my work, I have studied the objectivising of the subject in what I shall call ‘dividing practices’ . . . Finally, I have sought to study—it is my current work—the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. For example, I have chosen the domain of sexuality . . . Thus it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research.

It is true that I became quite involved with the question of power. It soon appeared to me that, while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex (Foucault, 2000, orig. 1983: 326–27).

Paul Veyne commented after Foucault's death that in his very first lecture at the Collège de France, Foucault contrasted an 'analytic philosophy of truth in general' with his own preference 'for critical thought that would take the form of an ontology of ourselves, of an ontology of the present'; he went so far, that day, as to relate his own work to 'the form of reflection that extends from Hegel to the Frankfurt School via Nietzsche and Max Weber' (Veyne, 1997, p. 226). Veyne warns us not to take that circumstantial analogy too far and he puts us on a course that connects Foucault strongly to Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Foucault undoubtedly was strongly influenced by his readings of both Nietzsche and Heidegger and indebted to them for ideas that led him to emphasize and unpack the conceptual and historical relations between notions of truth, power and subjectivity in his genealogical investigations. We can talk here then of Foucault's Nietzsche or Foucault's Heidegger—how Foucault remakes Nietzsche and Heidegger, how he *uses* them in his work. Conversely, we might talk of Nietzsche's Foucault or Heidegger's Foucault, for their work or some selection of it, transformed the Foucauldian corpus, the *body* of Foucault.

FOUCAULT AND THE HISTORY OF MADNESS

The growing avalanche of Foucault-inspired papers in counseling, health, social work, sociology and psychoanalysis and every branch of psychotherapy, from gay therapy through identity issues of self-formation to family therapy, testifies not only to the power of Foucault's work and its continuing legacy but also an intense fascination with the man himself.¹ This ought not be surprising given Foucault's paradoxical self-referentialism as the basis of his speaking, reading and writing, and also the way in which his life presents and represents itself, calling out for some form of analysis consistent with his philosophy. And this is so, despite his protestations and Barthesian tropes concerning the status of author, his Heideggerian-inspired questioning of humanism and the human sciences, and his declaration that 'Man' is a recent invention.

He was fond of referring to and quoting his colleague and friend Pierre Hadot, who occupied the Chair of Hellenistic Studies at the Collège de France, that philosophy was a *way of life*. Autobiographically speaking, Foucault's life and career presents itself as one, from the earliest stage, tied to limit-experiences and the possibilities for self-overcoming found in transgressive sexual pleasures. This is to

free himself, so James Miller claims, from the fascism of the self. There is a nugget here for a systematic counseling philosophy based on the concept of limit-experiences.

Also, from the earliest point in his career, Foucault located his work self-consciously at the interstices of psychology, history, medicine, criminology, literature and political philosophy. He received degrees in both psychology and philosophy; studied with Jean Hyppolite from the age of nineteen; and wrote four works in the early period, each detailing the discursive practices involved with the production of knowledge in psychiatry (*Folie et déraison*, 1961), clinical psychology (*Maladie mentale et psychologie*, 1962), medicine (*Naissance de la clinique*, 1963) and the human sciences (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966).² His very first works, then, concerned the crossovers between phenomenology and existential psychology evident in his introduction to the Heideggerian, Ludwig Binswanger's *Traum und existenz* (*Dream and Existence*), published later as 'Dream, Imagination and Existence,' and *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (1954).

Foucault turned to Husserl's phenomenology to critique Freudian dream interpretation for reducing the meaning of symbolic content to semantics and thus missing the full expressive content of dreams. (Might narrative therapy run the danger of paying too much attention to the story and not enough on the image or the expressive contents of word-based images?) Yet while phenomenology is a more adequate account, he maintained, it is still tied to the Cartesian project that reduces knowledge to self-knowledge. It cannot therefore move outside its solipsistic orbit to take account of the understanding of language, represented better in the structuralist linguistics of the time that decentred the speaking and writing subject and thus also called into question the entire *subjective turn* and the humanism it implied that dominated French philosophy from Descartes to Sartre. To reduce the problem of the interpretation of dreams (or of the subject or of the subject's story) to self-knowledge is to ignore the rules written into language that structure our consciousness and help make us human beings of a certain kind. This 'grammar of the self' is largely unconscious, the 'deep grammar' of the culture and language that weighs on us heavily when we are born into a culture.

Foucault's own critical project took shape in reaction to phenomenology, structuralism and hermeneutics, although he participated in the existential phenomenological movement for a brief time. This wedded him to the emerging international and poorly named 'anti-psychiatry' movement led by David Cooper and the Glaswegian-born, R.D. Laing. Against hermeneutics, he argued the world had its own structures. Against structuralism, he argued the materiality of linguistic practices constitute meaning. Against phenomenology, he argued for the non-foundational historical construction of social phenomena. Considered as an

application to forms of counseling based on narrative, there is a pressing question: What are the hidden narratological structures that form our narrative conscious and shape not only our self-descriptions, but also our perceptions of the world?

Foucault's reception in the English-speaking world was mistakenly aligned with both existentialism and phenomenology. R.D. Laing edited the first English translation of Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* in a series entitled 'Studies in Existentialism and Phenomenology' for the Tavistock Institute. As Daniel Burston (2002) documents, 'Foucault had divorced himself from phenomenology some five years earlier, but Laing stubbornly insisted on regarding him as a phenomenologist.' And further, as Burston reports, while 'Laing's regard for Foucault never wavered . . . Laing's esteem for Foucault was never quite reciprocated' (<http://www.janushead.org/4-1/burstonpol.cfm>). By all accounts, their meeting finally in 1975 was badly strained.

Existentialism and phenomenology in different ways considered madness and mental illness as a *property of a subject* rather than as a social category historically constructed. This was a major difference between the existentialist understanding and the poststructuralist innovation. Foucault, for instance, in *Folie de déraison* demonstrated the conceptual shifts that the category of 'madness' underwent as it replaced 'leprosy' as the disease of the outcast and shifted its status from divine inspiration in the Renaissance to physical exclusion and confinement in the seventeenth century. In this archaeological history of knowledge 'madness' focused less on the human attributes of the knowing subject as a reasoning, rational and autonomous self than on the *history of social categories* that had material effects. The history of madness, Foucault argued, was closely tied to the history of certain concepts and could not be divorced from the history of reason itself, a history in the modern period at least also part and parcel of the history of the subject. In the Renaissance, for example, Foucault maintains madness was experienced as a lens through which to view the terrifying phantasies of the night represented brilliantly in the paintings of Bruegel and Dürer, *and* also as the ironic counterpart to reason as in Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly*. With the 'great confinement' of the classical age, Foucault draws our attention to practices revealed in manuals and records that pinpoint a different experience *and* moral evaluation. 'Madness' becomes part of the category of 'unreason' and condemned as an 'orginary choice,' involving especially idleness over work, that requires administrative control for fear of contagion.³ Again, here we might construct a genealogy of counseling that problematises its own originary concepts in the unquestioned humanism of those that predated and later led the human growth potential movement, especially in the U.S.A.

For Foucault, then, madness or mental illness cannot be seen as a *natural fact* to be studied scientifically in order to yield both its status as disease and its treat-

ment. It emerges rather as a cultural and historical construct, the product of certain *knowledge practices* in medicine and psychiatry, supported by a grid of administrative routines and techniques. Thus, the history of madness must be written in terms of the history of reason, rationality and the subject and the metavalues of freedom and control, knowledge and power. If this is the case for Foucault, then we can appreciate that his analysis of the claims of psychoanalysis and medicine to treat the suffering of the afflicted will similarly be both historical and political.

Foucault, for instance, is very suspicious of the claim that psychoanalysis can *liberate* individuals from suffering. He believes that this idea of liberation and the whole ideological baggage of 'individual freedom' has played a pernicious role in the history of human freedom, disguising and veiling the intrusion of *disciplinary* power. Disciplinary power is a kind of power that operates outside the state through the disciplines, techniques and forms of knowledge associated with the rise of the human sciences. This is perhaps most pronounced when it comes to the area of sexual freedom and its control and regulation through modern regimes of sexuality. It might also be argued that forms of counseling as developed in schools participated in sustaining this disciplinary power.

THE AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE

In his earlier works on institutions, such as his analysis of asylums, the clinic, the hospital, the prison and the school, Foucault emphasized external constraints on the individuals through the disciplinary power of the disciplines. In his later work, Foucault develops a framework to theorise the self, which not only allows for the exercise of individual agency, but also recognises in it the ethics of *self-constitution* and 'arts of the self.'

For instance, in his now-famous argument concerning 'care of the self,' Foucault (1990) recognises freedom as the ontological condition of ethics. Ethics is seen to be the practice of liberty. In the Western tradition, taking care of oneself requires a certain kind of knowledge of oneself, first made clear in the Delphic invocation 'To know oneself' as an ultimate goal. To take care of one's self then requires a knowledge of the self and its truths. In this way, Foucault links ethics to the game of truth through the *discursive production* of truths about the self. Foucault argues that the subject is not a substance but rather *a form*, which is not always identical to itself. There are many locutions in our language that testify to this condition: 'He is not himself today'; 'She is beside herself,' etc. Ethics, then, for Foucault, becomes a *practice* or way of life that gives freedom the form of an ethos. Historically in the West, the subject has given form to his/her life through the pursuit of freedom

revolving around the concern for truth, a game with a set of principles and rules of procedures that enabled the subject to escape domination if only (s)he knew how to play the game properly. This is a truth-game in which the stakes could not be higher: self-survival, self-assertion (in the original sense), self-mastery. It was a game that linked the ethical constitution of the self to the practice of freedom through the pursuit of truth. Games of truth in modernity took many different forms that emerged culturally in a broad variety of related practices: not only portraiture and self-portrait, biography and autobiography, but also more specifically forms of taking, reading and writing involving essential spiritual practices in Greco-Roman times that later shifted to confession, where the centrality of truth and truth-telling (*parrhesia*) was paramount.

The same sorts of concerns for truth and truth games in pursuit of an 'aesthetics of existence' drives Foucault's (2001a) discussion of *parrhesia* or truth-telling in early Greece. Truth-telling is a speech activity revolving around four questions—'who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power.' It emerged as distinct philosophical problems with Socrates and was pursued in his confrontations with the Sophists in dialogues concerning politics, rhetorics and ethics.

Chapters 5 and 6 elaborate further on parrhesia. Foucault further states

My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity . . . What I wanted to analyse was how the truth-teller's role was variously problematised in Greek philosophy. And what I wanted to show you was that Greek philosophy has raised the question of truth from the point of view of the criteria for true statements and sound reasoning, this same Greek philosophy has also raised the problem of truth from the point of view of truth-telling as an activity (Foucault, 2001a, pp. 65–66).

Foucault's interest in the self sought to understand the Nietzschean project of aesthetic self-transformation as an ethical and political project and above all a matter of understanding the relationship to oneself. By contrast with Nietzsche, Foucault substituted political concepts for aesthetic ones and democratic aspirations for culturally elitist ones. Self-transformation and creation thus is a process within post-modern, liberal democracy that might be taken up by anyone at all and frequently is, as in the relation of forms of freedom tied to thought and expression and these to the notion of democracy: freedom of thought and freedom of expression as the basis for educational self-transformation. Foucault provides us with an approach that enables us to understand both how *liberal subjects* constitutes themselves through choice-making, where freedom is the necessary first premise of an historical ontology of ourselves. He also provides us with an understanding of how modern liberalism makes the connection between government and self-government, between

direction from above and self-regulation (or autonomy, where *auto* means 'self' and *nomos* means 'law').

Nikolas Rose, the neo-Foucauldian, argues that in our culture psychotherapies have displaced the older religious techniques of spiritual guidance, because they, along with psychology and related discourses and practices—the 'psy sciences'—have produced knowledges that have transformed human beings into modern selves, which are above all regarded to be free, autonomous and their own agents. He argues:

This modern form of human being is thought to become a self most fully when he or she is able to chose, is able to make a life for themselves in their everyday existence, to become the actor in their own narrative. This notion of the self that is free to choose is not simply an abstract cultural notion, it is embodied in a whole series of practices throughout our society (<http://www.academyanalyticarts.org/rose2.htm>).

Rose considers practices of consumption as the most notable that define the kind of self we are through the choices we make and the goods we purchase, so that modern selves are not merely free to choose but *obliged* to do so. The modern self, as Sartre (1948) writes in *Existentialism is a Humanism* is 'condemned to be free' and the self is shaped by the moral choices 'it' makes. The modern self thus enters a network of obligations; it is *forced* to be free, to make choices and to be responsible, even if the burden of choice-making is overwhelming. The history of a life, one's life, is therefore the outcome of a series of accumulated choices made over a period of time for which we are held responsible. The emergence of the modern self, for Rose as much as for Foucault, is defined through relations of freedom and power. While power can involve coercion, repression and even denial, it can also involve relations of tutelage, mastery and subjection. Power is for Foucault essentially productive or creative and, as Rose comments, it is best seen as action on the action of others (Foucault, 1986), as shaping the conduct of others. Yet this action on the action of others presupposes the freedom of the other. In other words, the political rationality of government in liberal societies depends upon individual freedom and power works most effectively when it 'works by shaping the way in which individuals enact their freedom.'

Consider the application to counseling, which presupposes 'consent' of the subject. On this interpretation counseling consists in 'the ways in which the therapist shapes the way in which human beings enact their freedom' (Rose, n.d.). Counselors employ and provide clients with the means to become subjects. They enable the subject to avail themselves of 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18).

In liberal societies, the freedom of the self and its inescapable necessity for making choices defines our modern sensibilities, subjectivities and increasingly the

institutions of the social market. We would argue that counselors need to become aware of the extent to which 'choice' is no longer innocent and how it is now at the centre of a struggle to define the ethos of public service. Is there a distinctive left conception of choice that can improve the way the poor and the disadvantaged exercise choice in their personal and daily lives? With the shift to a public service based on the ethos of individual consumer choice-making, more and more choosing blurs the line between the public and the private and highlights the centrality and importance of choice-making in an emerging political economy of public service and society more generally, at least in advanced liberal societies. In this new environment, counselors who are given a Foucauldian education will be able to offer their professional expertise as a group who can help to question choice-making, historicise and understand it, in part, as the aesthetic process by which the individual in the modern world becomes a creative choice-making subject able to transcend him- herself and establish a different relationship to him- herself. They may even be better placed to offer this conception of the subject of freedom responsabilising and constituting themselves through choice-making where the guiding ideal focuses on choice-making as the practice of freedom.

Thus, forms of counseling inspired or informed by Foucault's insights must begin with its own historical reflection on its status as a *practice* and a *discipline* to recognise its disciplinary power and the ways in which it has become institutionalised in the matrix of formal and informal juridical, legal rules and supported through a host of bureaucratic routines and techniques. It must also begin to recognise, with the late Foucault, the significance of *choice-making* as the means through which liberal subjects govern and constitute themselves. Counseling is a specific disciplinary formation and body of knowledge and techniques for encouraging the 'client' to *become* a subject. It employs a regime of choice-making techniques to make the subject responsible and to recognise that his/her own freedom is an aspect of the practice of making choices, which also have the capacity to morally shape, sculpt and transform the self. It is important here to note the difference and overlaps between different kinds of choice-making: the moral choice-making of the Kantian ethical subject versus the economic choice-making of classical liberal political economy evident in the figure of *homo economicus*. Recognising the genealogy of choice-making regimes and their historical significance does not take account of how consumer choice-making is also an 'aesthetics of existence' in the sense that our market choices determine what we eat and therefore our body shape, what we wear and therefore how we present ourselves, what we listen to and watch and therefore our 'style,' both personal style (as in self-stylisation) and 'life style.'

FOUCAULT ON THE BODY

The history of subjectivity and the human subject for Foucault was intimately tied to the body. Foucault examines the long Western tradition of the philosophy of the subject by which he means a *problematique* dominating the modern *episteme* that privileges the subject-as-mind as the foundation of all knowledge, action and signification. As mentioned briefly earlier, Foucault was strongly influenced by arguments concerning the body and the importance of space by the phenomenological tradition of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Beauvoir and by structuralist methodologies employed by the Annales School (Bloch, Febvre, Braudel) and Marxist thinkers (Althusser, Lefebvre).⁴ Against the mainstream philosophical tradition, Foucault radically decenters both the traditional Cartesian notion of a unified subjectivity and the Hegelian subject that comes into play only through struggle, the dialectic and politics of recognition. From his very early conceptions the subject is already historicized and materialized in relation to discursive and institutional practices that focus on the body. In other words, Foucault historicizes questions of ontology, substituting genealogical investigations of the subject for the philosophical attempt to define the essence of human nature. In this inquiry then Foucault is aware of the importance of *locating* the subject in time and space by focusing on the body. This move is important in historicizing the body, in disturbing the naturalization of the body and its cultural givenness—a step prior to recognizing its mode of analysis in aesthetics and arts education by focusing on its representation, performance, movement, and cultural signification.

Foucault concentrates the body in modern society and analyses it as a product of power relations. In *Discipline and Punish*, he begins with a powerful description of the torture of Damiens the regicide—‘the body of the condemned’—whose flesh is torn away and whose body is cut, burnt with red-hot pincers and sulphur, and, later drawn and quartered, consumed by fire, and reduced to ashes (Foucault, 1977). Foucault elaborates in detail the gruesome and meticulous approach of the executioner who works on the body to cause maximum pain in the public gaze. He contrasts this very public execution and spectacle with the timetable for young prisoners issued by Léon Faucher eighty years later. The relationship between punishment and the body has changed:

The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property . . . [Now] the body . . . is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions. Physical pain . . . is no longer the constituent element of the penalty (Foucault, 1977, p. 11).

While 'The gloomy festival of punishment was dying out' (p. 8), which also meant the 'decline of the spectacle' (p. 10) and the end of the tortured body, the hold on the body did not disappear entirely. Now this modern punishment worked on the body to strike at the soul and Foucault interprets his goal as 'a correlative history of the modern soul' (p. 23) to 'try to study the metamorphosis of punitive methods on the basis of a political technology of the body in which might be read a common history of power relations . . . (p. 24). As he says more directly in a way that distinguishes him as a political theorist and explains his significance to feminists,

the body is also directly involved in a political field. . . . Power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This is directly connected to the economic system, for the body is both useful and productive. But the body as labour power is possible 'only if it is caught up in a system of subjection' (Foucault, 1977, p. 26).

In short, 'the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (Foucault, 1977, p. 26).

In the same chapter of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes and analyzes a political system with the King's body at the centre. Yet in the nineteenth century, Foucault suggests that the 'body of society' becomes a new principle. The social body is protected through a series of dividing practices involving the segregation of the sick, the quarantining of 'degenerates,' the schooling of boys and girls, and the exclusion of delinquents. In the early interview *Body/Power* (given in 1975) Foucault says: 'the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals' (Foucault, 1980, p. 55). These relations of power do not obey the Hegelian form of the dialectic but rather take the path of a strategic development of a political struggle which involves both the mastery of the body, achieved through an institutional investment in the power of the body, and the counterattack in the same body. We must remember that questions of design and aesthetics are very much a part of these political investigations even if they do not privilege questions of art.

Foucault upsets the normal understanding when he claims that we should set aside the thesis that power in our capitalist societies has denied the reality of the body in favour of the mind or consciousness. In fact nothing is more material, physical, corporeal than the exercise of power. He encourages the question of what mode of investment of the body is necessary and adequate for the functioning of a capitalist society like ours. In the period from the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century the investment of the body by power was 'heavy, ponderous, meticulous and constant' as evidenced in the disciplinary regimes of schools, hospitals, barracks, factories and the like. Then in the 1960s, it began to be realised that

‘such a cumbersome form of power was no longer indispensable’ and ‘that industrial societies could content themselves with a much looser form of power over the body.’ As he insists: ‘One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 58). And this speculation cannot be approached today without reflection upon and investigation of the body as the site of desire, the object of narcissism, and the constant relay of commodity fetish that one finds contemporary fashion, in various forms of the consumption of the body, and in the seemingly endless forms of self-fashioning promised through diet, exercise, sport, and medical procedures that all have come to mark neoliberal forms of body subjectivity under late capitalism.

In ‘Docile Bodies’ that begins part 3 of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault continues the analysis, arguing ‘The Classical age discovered the body as an object and target of power’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). The anatomico-metaphysical approach to the body was supplemented and overlapped by the technico-political, which, through the disciplines, addressed the docility and usefulness of the body. As Foucault puts it

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when *an art of the human body was born*, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful . . . (Foucault, 1977, pp. 137–38, our emphasis).

We can note here already the Nietzschean trope of an ‘aesthetics of existence’ and a ‘physiognomy of values’ as the body manipulated and shape is at once both aesthetic and political.

In the seventeenth century ‘bio-power’ emerged as a coherent political technology based on a new power over life, which takes two main forms: the body as machine and as the regulator of population, which focuses on the reproductive capacity of the human body. The first form of bio-power occurs in the military, in schools and the workplace, and is aimed at a more productive, more disciplined, and useful population; the second occurs in demography, wealth analysis, and ideology, and seeks to control the population on a statistical level. The study of population soon became ‘political arithmetic’ and as administrators needed detailed knowledge about their own state they developed welfare and state mechanisms designed to create a happy, well-fed, healthy and docile population.

In the *History of Sexuality* Foucault examines the power/knowledge *dispositif* of modern sexuality and how the will to knowledge constituted a science of sexuality (‘scientia sexualis’) and a ‘discursive explosion’ producing the truth of sex (Foucault, 1980a). Foucault questions the ‘repressive hypothesis’ and the account of power on which it rests. For Foucault power is exercised rather than possessed, and it is

immanent to economic, scientific, sexual relations. It comes from below rather than from above, and it is both intentional and nonsubjective. Further, power is always accompanied by resistance. Through this perspective, Foucault suggests, we can escape the Sovereign/Law ('juridical') notion of power. Thus, sexuality is not a drive, but a 'dense transfer point' for power relations that work through bodies. Foucault refers to four figures here: Hysterization of women's bodies (hysterical woman); Pedagogization of children's sex (masturbating child); Socialization of procreation (Malthusian couple); Psychiatrization of perversions (perverse adult), that together link the stimulation of bodies and intensification of pleasures with the incitement to discourse and the formation of knowledges (Foucault, 1980a).

His last two books on Greco-Roman sexuality, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, turned to ancient conceptions of the ethical self, comparing pagan and Christian ethics through their approaches to sexuality (Foucault, 1986; 1990). Where the Christian code forbids most forms of sexual activity except within sanctioned circumstances, the ancient Greeks emphasized the proper use of pleasures in moderation but also engagement in the full range of sexual activities. Pagan sexual ethics exemplified an 'aesthetics of the self' where the self became responsible for the creation of a beautiful and enjoyable existence. The role of aesthetics and art in the religious life of the body has still to be unpacked.

THE BODY HAS A HISTORY

That the body also has a history is a central insight that emerged during the 1980s on the basis of a radical concordance of insights derived from the intersection of phenomenology, art history, psychoanalysis, historical criticism, feminist and gender studies, and the whole gamut of postmodern studies. These approaches had simultaneously embraced the linguistic, the cultural and the spatial turns, and together prefigured the rise of a new multidisciplinary that based its objects of study outside traditional disciplinary boundaries (see Peters, 1999c). Body theory and criticism emerged in the 1980s and was given a particular orientation by Michel Foucault's work that helped to make 'the body' a category of social and political analysis and an object of historical analysis. Foucault drew his lessons from the phenomenological tradition of French thought on the body (Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty) that emphasized its materiality and the sociocultural specificity of its embodiedness, inscribed by power relations and at the same time marked by gender, race and class.

Before Foucault, Sartre had written of the empirical ego—the physical-psycho self—as the unifying materiality, differentiating himself from both Kant and

Husserl, who tried to show that the 'I' is the formal structure of consciousness. Beauvoir theorized woman as Other and in a series of philosophical novels had examined the particularities of specific embodied relationships to the Other. *The Second Sex* originally published in 1949 made the sexed body into an object of phenomenological investigation for the first time. Merleau-Ponty, for his part, highlighted the difference between the objective body and the phenomenal body, a difference reflected also in terms of objective and existential space. Drawing on Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty understood the 'lived body' as the site of consciousness and perception, thus avoiding Descartes' mind-body dualism and the reductionism predicated upon it. These were Foucault's immediate inheritances, supplemented by his readings of Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger.

Foucault's form of historical or genealogical analysis recently has led to a range of studies that theorizes the body in relation to its adornment, symbology and representation (art and aesthetics), its age and gender (feminism, gender studies), its extension, pain and repair (medicine), its physical limits (sport), its cultural specificity (anthropology) and its social construction (sociology), its constraints and torture (penology and war studies) and the body as a site and locus for a set of power relations (politics) that runs through all these related fields. These analyses fundamentally disturbed the Romantic essentialism and naturalism that had depicted the body as unity—an unchanging and ahistorical category immune to social and political analysis.

Indeed, it was the combination of aesthetics and feminism that first initiated and propelled body criticism. From the Greek ideal of Venus de Milo to Rubens' *The Three Graces* in the 17th century to the heroin-chic anorexia of the Milano catwalk, female body fashions indicated in a plain manner the changing ideals of 'beauty' and their enmeshment in the politics of desire and consumerism. In a myriad of studies across the range of disciplines and arts the body has emerged as the cornerstone of a new form of criticism, which is at once both historical and materialist: *the body as a site of power, desire, thought, action, constraint, control and freedom*. Foucault also taught us of the power of the Nietzschean trope—the body as a work of art—which also pointed to the notion of self-fashioning and self-stylization of the body.

In part this signals a watershed in cultural theory of the body as a category of analysis, where the body has developed the same ontological status as the notion of *practice*. Both of these are now seen as new sociological and cultural givens that help us to map new constellations of self/body image, concept and assertion, as well as providing means of social, group and collective analysis. The body as a category now customarily feeds theoretical developments in feminism, postcolonial theory, queer theory, gender theory, performance theory, cybertheory, and race theory. At the same time, the history of the body and of body criticism indicates a profound shift in an

understanding of ‘ourselves,’ particularly in the West, from the religious and doctrinal visions that pictured human beings as enduring souls able to survive the rotting of the flesh, emphasizing the shift to a situated material and anatomical body that could be modified, healed, exercised and improved (‘medicalized’) giving rise to the suspicion, as Roy Porter (2003, p. 472) expressed it in *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, ‘the doctrine of mind over matter stood for power over the people.’

EMBODIMENT

Descartes considered that the mind/soul has no physical extension (*res non extensa*) yet possesses the capacity to think (*res cogitans*) while the body has physical extension but no capacity to think. In trying to reconcile the emerging sciences with his Catholic beliefs, the separation of the mind and body provided Descartes with a neat solution. In terms of this dichotomy the mind/soul remained within the domain of theology, and science dealt with the body (Strathern, 1996). Yet, as Wittgenstein (1953) and Heidegger (1962 [1927]) both forcefully argue, Descartes’ mind/body dualism put modern philosophy and the human sciences on the wrong track, one that not only separates the mind and body, privileging the former over the latter, but also encourages the adoption of a broader set of deep-seated dualisms. Fundamentally, the Cartesian dualism repeats and extends a separation of the soul/mind from the body first developed in Plato’s philosophy that encouraged an equation between soul, rationality, and the world of eternal forms on the one hand, and the body, the appetites, and the transitory world of appearances, on the other. The dualism is a form of metaphysics and a source of confusion and nihilism (dissolution and fragmentation) with negative results that bifurcate Western culture (see Heidegger, 1962 [1927]); Wittgenstein, 1953 and other cultural theorists influenced by them e.g., Crossley, 2001; Lloyd, 1984; Peeples, 1999; Strathern, 1996). Such prioritising has assigned power over the latter category (e.g., male over female, rationality over emotion, culture/society over nature, white over black, able over disabled, and so on) that has been used for social and political ends, not least the subordination of women.

In challenging the Cartesian dualism, Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1968) aimed ‘to show that all our mental operations in fact are constrained by the characteristics of our bodies,’ by ‘the influence of spatiotemporal factors on perception, through the concepts of perspective, field, and horizon’ (Strathern, 1996, pp. 36–37). Therefore, ‘once we recognise that there is a mental component in all bodily states and, conversely, a physical component in all mental states, the boundary between mental and other illnesses disappears’ Strathern (1996, p. 4).

The term ‘embodiment,’ which tends to be used interchangeably with ‘corporeality,’ is the new paradigm for the philosophy of the body that has developed from four major sources: the phenomenological work of continental philosophy, feminist philosophy, questions of identity and from the distinction between humans and artificial intelligence (Proudfoot, 2003). It emphasises that all knowledge, rationality and desire is embodied. It focuses on the concrete and the here-and-now and does so by recognising the temporality and finitude of the human subject and also the relations—social, economic and political—that embodied selves enter into. It encompasses the question of intersubjectivity—the embodied and relational view of the self that is essential to the question of education and communication between people. ‘Embodiment’ does not privilege one side of the Cartesian dichotomy (i.e., mind) over the other (i.e., body) but seeks to unsettle the dualism by recognising a new interconnectedness and holism of the mental in the physical and the physical in the mental.

By adopting a materialist social ontology which focuses on the body and cultural practices, where the notion of cultural practice implies a kind of agency of an acting *embodied* self, we begin to reconceptualise the notion of labour as a set of bodily practices with a focus on an *aesthetics of the self*—the presentation of the body and forms of bodily style—in the new knowledge or symbolic economy. The new philosophy of the body, drawing on phenomenology dating from Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1968) would therefore contain the following elements⁵:

1. the *physicality* of the human body, including its neuro-physiological, hormonal, muscular-skeletal and prosthetic components;
2. *continuous bodily activity* including the manifestation and significance of the various dimensions of individuality that mark embodied subjects in the public world;
3. the *lived body*, that is, the body as it is experienced and the embodied nature of knowledge, rationality and the emotions;
4. the *surface of the body* upon which the marks of culture are inscribed. This surface is the flesh, which is “symbolically and meaningfully punctured, incised, decorated, clothed, done up, disguised and stylised” (Schatzki and Natter, 1996, p. 5).
5. the *libidinal body* as the site of desire;
6. the *bio-body* as the home of well-being, health and sexual reproduction;
7. the *productive or labouring body* as the site of intellect and work (energy expended in the reproduction of life);
8. the *social body* as the network of discursive and institutional practices.

These are the important dimensions, which can serve as a basis in the analysis of the schooling of the student body to reproduce and maintain social order.

Schatzki and Natter (1996) argue that social order requires care of corporeality—emphasizing four aspects of the body (its physicality, activities, experiences and surface presentations) where, taking cognisance of gender, ethnic and class differences, bodies are socially contextualised and are constituted as individual subjects. They point out that the body is socially moulded or shaped through a web of sociocultural practices and conditioning within discourses, practices and institutions. For example, social activities like drinking alcohol can produce health conditions that require therapy and/or medical intervention and may construct a gendered discourse that is more accepting of male alcoholism than of female alcoholism.

FOUCAULT, FEMINISM AND THE FEMALE BODY

There is an implicit gender component in Western philosophical thought regarding the mind and the body with a genealogy that extends at least back to the ancient Greeks, to Plato, and has been endorsed in one form or other by the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—through the story of Adam and Eve. This story has positioned the body as shameful, as something to be covered up and laid blame for the breakdown of the relationship between humans and God on women (Khuri, 2001; Peeples, 1999). Religious notions have created, reinforced and been supported by cultural practices that have provided much of the rationale for the deliberate domination of the female by the male. The male has tended to be equated with reason and culture. The female, by contrast, has tended to be equated with the body, the emotions and nature. Moreover, when it has been represented either anatomically and/or philosophically, the body has almost invariably been white and male, which leaves the status and visibility of women and other ethnicities in question (Meyers, 1999). Furthermore, the influential psychoanalytic theories of both Freud and Lacan tend to favour dualistic notions of the body as both sexed and gendered. The effect has been the systematic devaluation and even degradation of anything related to the female such as ‘female’ emotions or the female body and the objectification of the female body which leads to subordination of women in many cultural milieu (Khuri, 2001; Lloyd, 1994; Meyers, 1999; Peeples, 1999; Strathern, 1996). The body, especially the female body, has been hidden and constricted by mind/body dualisms, dress and religious imperatives, therefore both recognising and revealing the body opposes this positioning.

This mind/body separation is echoed in the male/female dualism evident, for instance, in Augustine’s *Confessions* (1992 [orig. 397–401 A.D.]). Following Plato,

Augustine praises intellectual friendship between males and places it above the pleasures of heterosexual intercourse (Strathern, 1996). The effect of such idealisation has been to denigrate the female and her relationships and the relationships between the sexes while re-enforcing the mind. Interestingly, Augustine, as did most of Christianity, ignored the homo-erotic component of the Platonic ideal, effectively denying this by his silence.

Feminist critiques of the mind/body dualism and its reappraisal of the body, especially in relation to the questions of subjectivity and identity, provide a way of talking about the body that does not simply attempt to overturn the dualism in favour of the body (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990, 1993; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Young, 1997). Feminist theories of the body—‘our bodies, ourselves’—have drawn on phenomenology of the body and anthropology of the body (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1972 and Merleau-Ponty, 1962; 1968), as theoretical sources for arriving at a new conception where the body is located as a site of personal identity, social relations and political institutions, that focus on the link between the body as a site of perception and knowledge and its representation or the semantic field of the body.

Feminist scholars have been perhaps the most active in providing a gendered critique of Foucault and, at the same time, responsible for appropriating his work and extending it in positive and useful ways. Feminist theorists, for instance, have developed Foucauldian insights about the relations between power, the body and sexuality. These insights have been developed alongside a strong tradition of body theorizing going back at least as far as Simone de Beauvoir in the 1940s, culminating in the publication of *The Second Sex* in 1949. De Beauvoir was influenced by Sartre but also Henri Bergson’s philosophy of becoming (*élan vital*) and Richard Wright, the African-American writer, whose work of the lived experience of oppressed black people provided a model for analysing women’s oppression.⁶ Phenomenology, structuralism and poststructuralism was developed in new ways by a new generation of French feminists including Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray. Feminists in the U.S., UK, Australia, diasporic intellectuals, and increasingly those in the Third World used this range of resources in philosophy, politics, art history, and in the creative arts, to explore new directions in body criticism focused around the history of body image, the body and visual culture, bodily inscription, mutilation, interpersonal and gender relations, and the control of sexuality. The field is now so advanced and complex that there is no easy characterization of all its strands.⁷

In general, it is probably safe to say that feminists operating with Foucault want to argue that the female body is constituted through its social, medical, symbolic and cultural inscriptions. It can no longer be regarded as a cultural given and can only be understood and interpreted in terms of its cultural meanings, which include the full range of cultural representations—both literal and figurative—and surgical

and cosmetic interventions. The body is a site of representation and inscription of power and its materiality is the space of symbolic value.

Aurelia Armstrong (2003) provides the following useful summary of the way in which feminists have appropriated Foucault insights:

Firstly, Foucault's analyses of the productive dimensions of disciplinary powers which is exercised outside the narrowly defined political domain overlap with the feminist project of exploring the micropolitics of personal life and exposing the mechanics of patriarchal power at the most intimate levels of women's experience. Secondly, Foucault's treatment of power and its relation to the body and sexuality has provided feminist social and political theorists with some useful conceptual tools for the analysis of the social construction of gender and sexuality and contributed to the critique of essentialism within feminism. Finally, Foucault's identification of the body as the principal target of power has been used by feminists to analyze contemporary forms of social control over women's bodies and minds. (See 'Foucault and Feminism' at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/f/foucsem.htm> (accessed 18/5/05).

Foucault's work, although not his alone, has also stimulated interest in related questions concerning identity, subjectivity and resistance. In broad terms it is probably better to say that Foucault-inspired feminist body criticism has fed into a range of 'theoretical modes of exploration of the body' that have developed as 'complementary elements of feminist aesthetics' (see Korsmeyer's (2004) section on 'The Body in Philosophy and Art' in *Feminist Aesthetics* at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-aesthetics/#5> (accessed 18/5/05). Korsmeyer (2004) catalogues the 'gendering of sense experience,' for example, through making food a medium of art works, new genre of performance art aimed at a critique of dominant art-cultural representations and traditions such as the nude and focusing on the 'arousal of disgust as an aesthetic response' through picturing taboo aspects of women's bodies including, menstrual blood and excrement. This exploration of viscous interiority functions as a critique of the imposition of past aesthetic standards concerning 'beauty' that have dominated and repressed women.⁸

MASCULINITY AND THE MALE BODY

Masculinity research is now a field over ten years old. One of the standard texts simply called *Masculinities* by R.W. Connell was first published in 1995. In that introduction to the field Connell traces a history of Western masculinity and provides a theory of masculinities, proposing strategies for the politics of gender equality. He notes that in education the literature attempts to deal with pressing problems of the making of masculinity in schools within the problematic of identity formation in youth, together with issues of discipline and learning problems for boys. According to Connell (2005) rethinking masculinities involves an understanding of gender politics and a stance of profeminism, a commitment to enhancing men's lives, as well

as recognition of diversities among men. It concerns a recognition of the construction of masculinity in everyday life and, in particular, the importance of economic and institutional structures, together with the significance of differences among masculinities and the dynamic character of gender. As Connell (2005, p. 51) comments:

a wholly semiotic or cultural account of gender is no more tenable than a biological reductionist one. The surface on which cultural meanings are inscribed is not featureless, and it does not stay still.

Connell's work and that of others on masculinities has been picked up recently by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005) and developed in the publication *Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality: A Resource Packet* (http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_res.pdf) with the goal of developing

a resource packet on masculinities and male inclusion in gender mainstreaming covering definitions, approaches, application in the refugee context and tools. Male inclusion/masculinities have been a gap in gender mainstreaming efforts and are vital in order to move the gender equality agenda forward.

The Commission notes that

"Masculinity" does not exist except in contrast to "femininity." It is a relatively recent historical product of massive societal change. Certainly, women have always been regarded as different from men—but usually (and no more positively), as in the case of Western Europe pre-1700s, as incomplete or inferior examples of the same character. The stratification and cementing of gender roles along currently understood lines did not take place in large part until later.

The Commission recognizes that 'the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality' is crucial and

urged all key stakeholders including governments, UN organizations and civil society, to promote action at all levels in fields such as education, health services, training, media and the workplace to increase the contribution of men and boys to furthering gender equality.¹ In order to initiate work on gender equality and male involvement therein, critical examination of men's power and privilege and current constructs of "masculinities" are necessary prerequisites.

This is a clear example of the important effects of social science in promoting social change and social justice. The implications are not hard to find for education. For example, consider the following quotation:

Men and boys are, in most cultures, socialized to be competitive, aggressive and dominant. Political and economic power are valued and rewarded. Physically and financially powerful men are viewed as desirable by women and enviable by other men. Men are also, at times,

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socialized to be sexually promiscuous, even sexually irresponsible. Amongst themselves, men often brag about their sexual prowess—long a means of establishing status between men. The role of “stud” has often been coveted and valued in many societies, by both men and women.

The Commission makes reference to Connell’s work several times as a foundation text in the area, but neither source actually mentions Foucault even though Foucault’s studies of the history of sexuality helped to establish that even the most obvious and taken-for-granted sexual categories are social constructs open to investigation and change. Foucault was responsible not only for initiating studies of models of sexuality in ancient times but also for demonstrating that the category of ‘homosexual’ is a social construct scarcely more than a hundred years old.

Foucault argued that pederasty and pederastic education was problematized in ancient Greek culture especially in terms of an intense moral concern with chastity. It is certainly true of ancient Greek texts that there is a shared concern for whether pederasty is right or wrong and whether it should be chaste or erotic. We are less than historically conscious of the way in which pederastic education was an essential part of ancient Greek philosophy partly because the historical record in the modern period has been purged of sources and references and reconstructed in homophobic terms. Homosexuality as a seemingly fundamental religio-sexual category has been carefully constructed and subject to all kinds of ‘medical,’ psychiatric, juridical and legislative interpretations.

This is how *glbtq*, an online encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer culture (<http://www.glbtc.com/>) expresses the point in relation to Foucault’s work:

One of the leading philosophers of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault has had an enormous influence on our understanding of the lesbian and gay literary heritage and the cultural forces surrounding it.

In his explorations of power and his examinations of the history of sexuality, Foucault traces the ways in which discourse shapes perception, focusing often on those individuals and practices considered marginal or abnormal, but finding in them keys to understanding the fragile and imperfect ways that power is deployed by the upper classes, the medical establishment, the scientific community, and the literary and political elite.

In doing so, Foucault successfully challenges our notion of the “normal” and calls our attention to the historical contexts determining the narrow designations that restrict human freedom (http://www.glbtc.com/literature/foucault_m.html).

Certainly, a politics of the body is encouraged as part of the legacy of Foucault’s work. It is an aspect of his work that the educational establishment has yet to come to terms with and only recently a topic for educational theorists. It is also a politics

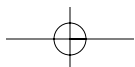
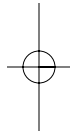
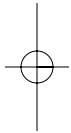


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that applied to Foucault himself and his own body, as Tom Epps in 'The Body of Foucault' (http://www.ccu.net/swarm3/3_foucault.htm) points out so brilliantly:

The human body is a site of extraordinary specialization. Whilst certain cells contribute to the provision of sophisticated transportation, communication or security systems, others, relieved of the necessity to search out nutrition or defend themselves, are able to perform specific localized functions within, for example, the skin, the heart or the brain. . . .

Towards the end of his life, Foucault's body became an increasingly intricate ecology with the relationships between cellular guests, hosts and viral intermediaries delicately balanced. With an immune system diverted into the production of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the functional advantages of maintaining the acutely specialized cellular structures associated with humanity became increasingly tenuous.



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