

CHAPTER TWO

The Genealogy OF THE Confessional Self

Self-Denial or Self-Mastery?

Of ourselves we are not 'knowers.' . . .

NIETZSCHE, *THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter uses the work on the self, and the genealogy of confession as a technology of the self, of Michel Foucault, the iconoclast French philosopher-historian (1926–1984). Foucault provides us with 'creative, controversial, and original thinking on philosophical-historical-social ideas. Yet he did not propose any grand, global, utopian, or systematic solution to societal ills' (Besley, 2002a, p. 2). Foucault was not a counselor or psychotherapist. Nevertheless he obtained his *licence de psychologie* in 1951 and a diploma in psychopathology in 1952, subsequently working in a psychiatric hospital in the 1950s. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* formed the major thesis for his doctorate (Foucault, 1965). In something of a confession, Foucault states:

In a sense, I have always wanted my books to be fragments from an autobiography. My books have always been my personal problems with madness, with prisons, with sexuality . . . each of my works is a part of my own biography (Foucault, cited in Macey, 1993, p. xii).

In other words, the personal and the philosophical ideas of Foucault are inextricably entwined. Foucault's critique opens up possibilities for us to sort out how we might see, understand and, in turn, negotiate our subjectivity and the power relations in our world.

For Foucault 'technologies of domination' and 'technologies of the self' produce effects that constitute the self, both defining the individual and controlling their conduct. His focus is on questions of subjectivity and the shaping and regulation of identities, on a relational self where intersubjectivity becomes central—a self that acknowledges and is constituted by difference and the Other. Foucauldian philosophical notions of 'technologies' and in particular 'technologies of the self' are derived from Nietzsche's 'genealogy' and Heidegger's understanding of technology. Foucault develops Nietzschean and Heideggerian concepts into 'technologies of the self' in relation to a reconsideration Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity.

The chapter begins with an outline of Foucault's changing understandings about the self. The second section, subtitled 'Nietzsche and Heidegger—influences on Foucault,' explores Foucault's Nietzschean-inspired method of genealogy and the influence of Heidegger's work as a basis for Foucault's understanding of 'technology' in relation to the self. The third section, 'technologies of the self,' provides a genealogy of Foucault's notions of confession that are outlined in *Technologies of the Self* (Foucault, 1988b), with subsections on Classical Greek technologies of the self, Christian religious confessional practices, and medico-therapeutic confessional practices: the secularisation of confession. This chapter argues that confession is a form of truth telling that constitutes the self. Following Foucault, it suggests that confession, as a technology of self, should be based less on an ethic of self-denial than on one of self-mastery. Self-mastery provides a secular model consonant with the demands of a postmodern world that recognises the inescapability of desire and the necessity of pleasure in a new body politics.

FOUCAULT'S CHANGING UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE SELF

Late in his life, when discussing his work in the seminar, *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault said that his project had been to historicise and analyse how in Western culture the specific 'truth games' in the social sciences such as economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology (prisons/criminology) have developed knowledge and techniques for people to understand themselves (Foucault, 1988b).

Foucault never focused specifically on education or pedagogy, although he did make some highly original and suggestive comments in earlier works like *Discipline*

and Punish (Foucault, 1977) which emphasized the application of technologies of domination through the political subjugation of 'docile bodies' in the grip of disciplinary powers and the way the self is produced by processes of objectification, classification and normalization in the human sciences. Other commentators have addressed the relevance of his writings to education and some have applied his methods to educational issues (e.g., Ball, 1990; Marshall, 1996; Olssen, 1999; Baker, 2001; Peters & Besley, 2007).

For Foucault, power is not simply something negative used by one person or group to oppress others but can also be productive, positive, and a set of complex strategies where there is also resistance(s) (Besley, 2002a). For Foucault, power is *power-knowledge* since

power produces knowledge and . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another: that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1977, p. 27).

Although Foucault defended the 'determinist' emphasis in *Discipline and Punish*, admitting that not enough was said about agency, once he redefined power to include agency as self-regulation, through both technologies of the self and ethical self-constitution, he overcame some of the problematic political implications in his earlier work (see Afterword in Rabinow, 1997; Foucault, 1986, 1988a, 1990; McNay, 1992). His later work emphasises self-determination or agency as self-regulation where individuals are continually in the process of constituting themselves as ethical subjects (ethical self-constitution). He emphasized that individuals are continually in the process of constituting themselves as ethical subjects through both technologies of the self and ethical self-constitution, and a notion of power that is not simply based upon repression, coercion, or domination. By this later point Foucault saw individuals 'as self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society,' doing this for themselves without necessarily needing a priest or a therapist (McNay, 1992, p. 4).

In his later works, Foucault not only provided quite a shift from earlier discourses on the self, but also brought in notions of disciplinarity, governmentality, freedom and ethics as well as focusing on corporeality, politics and power and understanding the self in its historico-social context.

Foucault took up Heidegger's critiques of subjectivity and Cartesian-Kantian rationality in terms of power, knowledge and discourse—a stance against humanism that is tantamount to a rejection of phenomenology. Heidegger's influence on Foucault's thinking is discussed in a later section.

Foucault harnessed Heideggerian notions of *techne* and technology, innovatively adding these notions to his understanding the self as technologies of the self in his reconsideration of Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity (Foucault, 1988b). However, unlike Heidegger (1977) who focused on understanding the ‘essence’ or presence of being (*dasein*) Foucault historicised questions of ontology and was not concerned about notions of *aletheia* or uncovering any inner, hidden truth or essence of self. Foucault substituted genealogical investigations of the subject for the philosophical attempt to define the essence of human nature, aiming to reveal the contingent and historical conditions of existence. For Foucault, the self or subject ‘is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself’ (Foucault, 1997a). Self means both *auto* or ‘the same’ and also implies understanding one’s identity. There is no universal necessity of human nature. Once we realise this we will feel much freer than we ever experienced ourselves.

Governmentality (Foucault’s neologism for government rationality) emerges with the development of liberalism and is directed through the notion of policing, administration and governance of individuals (Foucault, 1979, 1991). For Foucault ‘governmentality’ means the complex of calculations, programs, policies, strategies, reflections and tactics that shape the conduct of individuals, ‘the conduct of conduct’ for acting upon the actions of others in order to achieve certain ends. Those ends are ‘not just to control, subdue, discipline, normalize, or reform them, but also to make them more intelligent, wise, happy, virtuous, healthy, productive, docile, enterprising, fulfilled, self-esteeming, empowered, or whatever’ (Rose, 1998, p. 12). Governmentality is not simply about control in its negative sense but also in its positive sense, in its contribution to the security of society. Foucault poses questions about the *how* of government—‘how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 87). Self-government is connected with morality; governing the family is related to economy and ruling the state to politics.

The History of Sexuality, Vol. I (Foucault, 1980a) presents a change from technologies of domination. A common assumption of Western culture, that the body and its desires—its sexuality—reveal the truth about the self is explored in this book. From this assumption it is then proposed that if one tells the ‘truth’ about one’s sexuality, this deepest truth about the self will become apparent and then one can live an authentic life that is in touch with one’s true self. Foucault’s work on sexuality is concerned with problematising how pleasure, desire and sexuality—the regimes of power-knowledge-pleasure—as components of the art of living or an ‘aesthetics of existence’ have become discourses that shape the construction of ourselves as both

the 'truth' of our sexuality is revealed as is the 'truth' of ourselves, as 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1986, p. 11). Chapter 3 discusses Foucault's use of Nietzsche's notion of the aesthetics of existence. Foucault (1988b) points out that since a common cultural feature is the paradoxical combination of prohibitions against sexuality on the one hand and strong incitations to speak the truth on the other, his project became focused on a history of this link, asking how individuals had been made to understand themselves in terms of what was forbidden—i.e., the relationship between truth and asceticism.

In 'The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom' (Foucault, 1997a), an interview in 1984, the year of his death, Foucault explains the change in his thinking about the relations of subjectivity and truth. In his earlier thinking he had conceived of the relationship between the subject and 'games of truth' in terms of either coercive practices (psychiatry or prison) or theoretical-scientific discourses e.g., the analysis of wealth, language and living beings in *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1973). In his later writings he breaks with this relationship to emphasize games of truth not as a coercive practice, but rather as *an ascetic practice of self-formation*. 'Ascetic' in this context means an 'exercise of self upon the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 282).

'Work' completed by the self upon itself is an *ascetic* practice that is to be understood not in terms of more traditional left-wing *models of liberation*, but rather as (Kantian) *practices of freedom*. This is an essential distinction for Foucault because the notion of liberation suggests that there is a hidden self or inner nature or essence that has been 'concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 282). The process of liberation, on this model, liberates the 'true' self from its bondage or repression. By contrast, Foucault historicizes questions of ontology: there are no essences only 'becomings,' only a phenomenology or hermeneutics of the self—the forging of an identity through processes of self-formation.

Foucault (1997a) contrasts two different models of self-interpretation: liberation and freedom, suggesting that the latter is broader than the former and historically necessary once a country or people have attained a degree of independence and set up political society. For Foucault, liberation is not enough and the practices of freedom do not preclude liberation, but they enable individuals and society to define 'admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society' (Foucault, 1997a, p. 283). For example, a person in chains is not free and although they may have some choices, these are severely limited by their lack of freedom. They have to be liberated or freed from their total domination so they have the freedom to practice their own ethics. Ethics is a practice or style of life. Freedom that equates to lib-

eration is therefore a pre-condition of ethics, since ethics are the practices of the 'free' person. Foucault suggests that the ethical problem of freedom in relation to sexuality is politically and philosophically more important than a simple insistence on liberating sexual desire. In other words, he wishes to understand freedom as the ontological condition for ethics especially when freedom takes the form of a kind of informed reflection. This general understanding he begins to outline in terms of the ancient Greek imperative of 'care for the self,' which he discusses in 'technologies of the self—a seminar presented at the University of Vermont in the fall of 1982 (Foucault, 1988b).

NIETZSCHE AND HEIDEGGER—INFLUENCES ON FOUCAULT

Michel Foucault was strongly influenced by his readings of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger and indebted to them for ideas that led him to emphasize the close conceptual relations between the notions of truth, power and subjectivity in his genealogical investigations. He started reading these two philosophers in the early 1950s. Foucault makes clear his intellectual debt to Heidegger, who he says 'has always been the essential philosopher . . . My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger' (Foucault, 1985, p. 8). This is not to say that Foucault was first and foremost a Heideggerian, for he was influenced by many other writers (see Besley, 2002a; Marshall, 1996; Olssen, 1999), but he acknowledges that Heidegger was crucial for his understanding of Nietzsche. Without Heidegger he may not have read Nietzsche whose work he had tried to read, but found that reading it alone did not appeal, 'whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger, that was a philosophical shock!' (Foucault, 1985, p. 9). In a late interview Foucault even described himself as Nietzschean:

I am simply Nietzschean, and I try to see, on a number of points, and to the extent that it is possible, with the aid of Nietzsche's texts . . . what can be done in this domain (Foucault, 1988, p. 251).

While he wrote only one substantial paper on Nietzsche (Foucault, 1977) and nothing directly on Heidegger, it is clear that Foucault's works bear the unmistakable imprints of these two great thinkers. On Nietzsche's influence on Foucault see Shrift (1995). On Heidegger's influence on Foucault see Dreyfus (1998; 1999). Foucault's books are, of course, scattered with references to both thinkers. In regard to Heidegger, it is an interesting question, given his intellectual debts, why Foucault provided little direct acknowledgment of his work or influence upon him.

Nietzsche inspired Foucault to analyse the modes by which human beings *became* subjects without according either power or desire conceptual priority over

the other, as had been the case in the discourses of Marxism (with its accent on *power*) and of Freudianism (with its accent on *desire*). This enabled Foucault to develop novel ways to retheorize and conceive anew the operation of *power* and *desire* in the constitution and self-overcoming of human subjects.

From Nietzsche, Foucault also intellectually inherited the concept and method of genealogy, a conception clearly influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* (Foucault, 1980c, 1984b, 1984c; Nietzsche [1887] 1956). Genealogy is a form of historical analysis that inquires into the formation and structure of value accorded Man, Reason, and Truth through a variety of techniques, including both etymological and *linguistic* inquiry alongside the investigation of the *history* of concepts. See Nietzsche's famous and, apparently, only footnote in the entire corpus of his work, which appears after the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* (orig. 1887; 1956, p. 188).

Foucauldian genealogy is radically different from traditional historical analysis. It is a history of the present, which begins by posing a question or problematizing the present and how a problem is currently expressed by historicizing or re-evaluating the past in the light of current concerns. Genealogy is conducted by moving backward in a process of descent and emergence rather than through evolution or a process of development. It forms a critical ontology of our selves. For Foucault, living in one's own time involved the ethical constitution of self through a critical reflexivity about the culture and forces that operated to constitute it (see Besley, 2002a).

Genealogy challenges the humanist idea that the self is unified and fully transparent to itself and that consciousness is linear, storing memories in the same way as a novel progresses a plot. It also challenges the progressivist agendas of the Enlightenment by emphasizing dispersion, disparity, and difference, taken-for-granted universal 'truths' about life. In *Discipline and Punish*, the body becomes both an object of knowledge and a site where power is exercised (Foucault, 1977). Foucault points out two forms of 'subjugated knowledges' (such as disciplinary networks of power or the arts of existence or the practices of sexuality in the ancient world) that are lowly ranked and considered inadequate for the accepted standards of knowledge and science:

One constitutes previously established, erudite knowledges that have been buried, hidden, disguised, masked, removed, or written out by revisionist histories; another involves local, popular, or indigenous knowledges that are marginalized or denied space to perform (Besley, 2002a, p. 17).

In recovering these knowledges, we can rediscover the history of struggle and conflict and challenge the power-knowledge institutions and scientific discourses

(Foucault, 1980c). It is these subjugated knowledges that the Foucauldian-influenced narrative therapy seeks to harness in developing alternative narratives that challenge the dominant stories in people's lives (Besley, 2002a, 2002b).

For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, genealogy *replaces* ontology. Foucault's investigations into the modes by which human beings are made into subjects are, above all, historical investigations. For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, there are no *essences* of human beings and, therefore, also no possibility for universalist theories concerning the *nature* of human beings. Given that there is no human nature, fixed once and for all—no essential or universalisable nature—there is no question of a *science* of human nature (à la Hobbes or Hume) or the possibility of building other theories (of politics, of education, or of rights) on the basis of this alleged nature. All questions of ontology, in the hands of Nietzsche and Foucault, become radically historicized. Thus, there is no sovereign individual or transcendental subject, but only human beings who have been historically constituted as subjects in different ways at different times.

Any one who has read *Discipline and Punish* cannot help but be struck by the extent to which Nietzsche's discussion of punishment in the second essay of the *Genealogy*—its analysis of debt and its inscription on the body—permeates Foucault's method and investigations of discipline, power and knowledge in the institutions regulated by the emergent human sciences. It is also clear that Foucault broadly accepted Nietzsche's perspectival notion of truth, yet the degree to which we can properly ascribe him Nietzsche's view is fraught with difficulty, given the complexity and changing character of Nietzsche's own views, and the continuing development of Foucault's thought. It is clear that Foucault, at least toward the end of his life, denied neither the classical ideal of truth as correspondence to an independently existing world nor the 'analytics of truth,' even although the early Nietzsche (1979) cast doubt precisely on this ideal. For Nietzsche, as an opening quotation demonstrates, truth is a convenient fiction, merely a belief about the possession of truth. Foucault's innovation was to historicize 'truth,' first, materially in discourse as 'regimes of truth' and, second, in practices as 'games of truth.'

Foucault makes clear his intellectual debt to Heidegger. He took up Heidegger's critiques of subjectivity and Cartesian-Kantian rationality in terms of power, knowledge and discourse. A shift from ontology to the history of Being is reflected in Heidegger's philosophy. Hence Foucault's stance against humanism is a rejection of phenomenology for he sees the subject as being within a particular historic-cultural context or genealogical narrative. Similar to Heidegger, Foucault explored ancient Greek philosophy and took some of his ideas on archaeological method from him—ideas about uncovering that Heidegger derived from Husserl. For Husserl some objects were clearly disclosed in consciousness while others were obscure or on the fringe.

In this respect, one notion that Heidegger focused on was *aletheia* (ancient Greek for 'truth' that included notions of revealing, unveiling or disclosing). Such 'truths' about oneself can involve various forms of confession about the self with thoughts feelings actions being disclosed or brought out of concealment. This stands in contrast to correspondence theories about truth that considers something to be truthful when statements and objects are matched and which are so prevalent in science and in law. In his later work, Foucault harnessed another Heideggerian notion, that of *techne* and technology. Both *aletheia* and *techne* as discussed in Heidegger's, essay 'Questions Concerning Technology' (1977) are explored here (Heidegger's essay was written in 1949 and revised in 1955).

In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger questions our relationship to the essence of modern technology, which, he argues, treats everything, including people, 'as a resource that aims at efficiency—toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 15). Heidegger argued that *aletheia* is the fundamental, first truth because beings or subjects can only be known, encountered or experienced as beings if they are unconcealed and that since statements and their objects are beings, they must come before any correspondence or adequation truth that matches them up. Unlike Heidegger though who focuses on understanding the 'essence' or coming into presence of being or *dasein*, Foucault historicises questions of ontology and in the process is therefore not concerned about notions of *aletheia* or uncovering any inner, hidden truth or essence of self. He too looks to the Ancient Greeks for understandings about self, but not to the pre-Socratics that Heidegger particularly focused on (Heraclitus, Parmenides and Anaximander). Foucault's work, especially the seminar, *Technologies of the Self* (1989) looks to the Stoics and Alcibiades.

In introducing his theme of *questioning* technology, or finding ways of thinking about it, Heidegger warns we are never free whether or not we accept or deny this, but worse still, 'we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 4).

First, Heidegger points out the current instrumental and anthropological definition of technology as both a means to an end and a human activity that manufactures and uses tools of various kinds. However, Heidegger is concerned about our mastering it so that it doesn't slip from human control, about our relationship to its essence, but this is not revealed by an instrumental definition. Second, Heidegger points out that 'wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality' and proceeds to explore the four causes that philosophy teaches: *causa materialis*, *causa formalis*, *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens* (Heidegger, 1977, p. 6).

He points to the importance to us today of Plato's understanding in *Symposium* 205b, 'Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is *poiesis*, a bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*]' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 10). *Poiesis* can be both unaided (*physis*) and aided (*techne*). *Physis* (Greek for nature) is unaided bringing-forth, like a bud blossoming, something within nature and *techne*, aided bringing-forth, involves nature's being assisted by craft persons or technicians. For the ancient Greeks, *techne*—the relationship between nature and human activity—comprised three dimensions, 'the arts of the mind' (thinking), fine arts and 'the activities and skills of the craftsman' (which were not separate for the Greeks) (Heidegger, 1997, p. 13). Heidegger alerts us that until Plato's time *techne* was linked with *episteme*, both words meaning 'knowing in the widest sense . . . to be at home in something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up. As an opening up it is a revealing' (Heidegger, 1977, 13). Furthermore, 'it is as a revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 13). Therefore, 'technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 13). For Heidegger, Greek technology was 'the gentleness of 'bringing-forth' rather than the violence of making this happen'—an important difference between earlier and modern epochs (Young, 2002, p. 40).

Heidegger points out that modern machine-power technology began in the latter eighteenth century, growing out of the modern physical sciences that developed over a century prior, establishing 'the deceptive illusion that modern technology is applied physical science' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23). But this illusion is caused because there is no questioning of our relationship to the essence of modern technology, which Heidegger points out is shown in 'Enframing'[*das Gestell*].¹ Rather than something intrinsically technological or machinelike, Enframing is 'the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23). Standing-reserve is not simply stock that is waiting to be used rather it is the revealing of modern technology that challenges nature to supply or expose energy that is unlocked, transformed, stored, distributed—a resource. In explanation, Heidegger is highly critical of the relationship of modern technology to nature pointing out that the difference between peasant farming and the mechanized food industry means that the earth is not there simply to be tilled but to yield to machines in ways that 'sets upon [*stellt*] nature' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 15). Heidegger holds a somewhat romanticised view of nature and man's relationship to it in earlier times, suggesting that the earlier relationship was more harmonious, respectful and gentle. Heidegger (1977, p. 16) points out that 'setting-upon, in the sense of challenging-forth' happens as 'the energy concealed in nature is unlocked' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 16). This implies a violence or violation that 'is more than mere damage or harm' in modern technol-

ogy (Young, 2002, p. 52). As Julian Young (2002) argues, earlier technological practices were no less violent in their treatment of nature, but because of the nature of their technology the scale is reduced—it takes longer to effect change with handtools although fire can of course rapidly and violently destroy habitats.

Furthermore the earth is not just to be cultivated but to yield coal to be mines, stockpiled and used as steam power for factories and water is now seen as a means of providing hydroelectric power. In this manner modern technology is always an ‘expediting that is always directed from the beginning toward furthering something else’ (Heidegger, 1977, p. 15). It treats everything, including people, as a resource that aims at the efficiency to produce the maximum yield or productivity.

Heidegger quotes Hölderlin, to point out that while modern technology holds high danger for humans (e.g., ecological destruction, nuclear war) at the same time, within it there is a saving power that takes root and eventually grows. He suggests that through reflection people will come to see that ‘all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it’ (Heidegger, 1977, p. 34). Since *techne* once ‘a single manifold revealing’ encompassed the fine arts as part of *poiesis*, ‘the poetical pervades every art, every revealing of coming into presence of the beautiful’ therefore maybe it is the arts that foster the saving power (Heidegger, 1977, 34). What is salient about technology is that:

the human being is, then, essentially, uniquely, and almost always a worker, a technological being engaged in a technological activity. But (the first thinker clearly to articulate this point was Arthur Schopenhauer) work requires that things are represented, that they show up, in work-suitable, ‘ready-to-hand’ instrumental, technological ways (Young, 2002, p. 48).

And in this regard what is new is about modern technology is that in being different from earlier forms it invokes a new understanding of being where humans are not simply subjects who objectify and dominate the world through technology. Rather, as a consequence of modern technology, humans are constituted by this technology. Hubert Dreyfus points out that for both Foucault and Heidegger, it is the practices of the modern world that produce a different kind of subject ‘constituted as the source of a deep inner truth about itself’ (Dreyfus, 2002, p. 18).

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF—CONFESSING OURSELVES: A GENEALOGY

In *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault uses his method of genealogy to first examine the place of knowing the self and care of the self in the first two centuries AD of Greco-Roman philosophy. Then he moves to the fourth and fifth centuries of the

Roman Empire when Christian spirituality and monastic principles were prevalent. This chapter now traces some of these practices or technologies of the self and associated forms of confession. This section outlines three nonlinear phases, namely, classical Greek technologies of the self, Christian religious confessional practices, and medico-therapeutic confessional practices that show historico-philosophic shifts from self-mastery to self-denial and back to self-mastery that Foucault discusses in 'Technologies of the Self' (Foucault, 1988b).

Foucault sets out a typology of four interrelated 'technologies'—namely, technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power (or domination) and technologies of the self. Each is a set of practical reason that is permeated by a form of domination that implies some type of training and changing or shaping of individuals. Instead of an instrumental understanding of 'technology,' Foucault uses technology in the Heideggerian sense as a way of revealing truth and focuses on technologies of power and technologies of the self. In an interview he notes that he may have concentrated 'too much on the technology of domination and power' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 19).

Technologies of power 'determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18). His earlier work emphasized the application of such technologies of domination through the political subjugation of 'docile bodies' in the grip of disciplinary powers and the way the self is produced by processes of objectification, classification and normalization in the human sciences (Foucault, 1977). Nevertheless, for him **both** technologies of domination and technologies of the self produce effects that constitute the self (or subjectivity). Taken together, technologies of domination and of the self define the individual and control their conduct as they make the individual a significant element for the state through the exercise of a form of power, which Foucault coined as 'governmentality' in becoming useful, docile, practical citizens (Foucault, 1988c). In turn, Foucault's two notions of technologies of domination and technologies of the self (1988b) can be used as a means for investigation of the constitution of postmodern youth under the impact of globalisation.

Technologies of the self, are ways the various 'operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being,' that people make either by themselves or with the help of others, in order to transform themselves to reach a 'state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18).

Confession is one such technology and care of the self.

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. 281).

The compulsion to tell the truth is highly valued in Western society. In our contemporary society, which is arguably a ‘confessional age,’ where telling all and telling the truth about oneself rather than keeping secrets is *de rigueur*. For example, on TV talk shows (such as Oprah, Riki Lake, Jerry Springer, Kilroy, Trisha, etc.) people publicly confess their stories of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; alcoholism and drug use; sexual practices, affairs, harassment, and even incest. On websites and through media-based public confessions of some wrong-doing by prominent politicians (e.g., Bill Clinton) we nowadays witness confessional practices affecting mass audiences. This provides us with an interface between the public and personal domains. With the addition of an emphasis on writing confessional diaries, journals, memoirs, autobiographies, as well as confessional fiction, the picture expands. Moreover, many people now opt to see a therapist or counselor for their personal problems. Hence we have confessional practices occurring in both public and private arenas. This poses many questions, such as why are audiences—readers, television audiences, Internet users—so interested in public self-revelation? Why do so many people feel a compulsion to confess? Why do some choose to do so publicly and others privately? How do we know if the confessor is lying by omission or commission, embroidering the truth, or shading it? What is the effect on us of confessing our selves either publicly or privately?

Confession is a deep-seated cultural practice in the West that involves a declaration and disclosure, acknowledgment or admission of a fault, weakness or crime and is expected to be the ‘truth’ that discloses one’s actions and private feelings or opinions. In confessing our selves, an other (real or virtual) is required as an audience that will hear, understand, possibly judge and punish and maybe accept and forgive as they reflect back to us who we are. In confessing, we reveal part of our identity. The role of the other is dialogical and highly ambiguous since it involves plural roles—such as witness, accomplice, recipient, mediator, judge and enabler. Understandably there seems to be a tension between the impulse to confess and, in turn, to reveal the self to others and the desire to keep something hidden.

There are various forms of confession. In its religious form, confession involves the verbal acknowledgment of one’s sins to another. One is duty bound to perform this confession as repentance in the hope of absolution. In the literary sense, ‘confession’ also contains elements of identifying the self in a deliberate, self-conscious attempt to explain and express oneself to an audience. Unlike the public confession, other confessional situations are private ones. For example, the professional counseling or psychotherapy relationship offers the chance of confessing with the assurance that the counselor is bound by ethical conventions of confidentiality. Confession then is both a communicative and an expressive act, a narrative in which we (re)create ourselves by creating our own narrative, reworking the past, in

public, or at least in dialogue with another. Contemporary notions of confession are derived not simply from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and its strategies for confessing one's 'sins' but also from ancient, pre-Christian philosophical notions (Foucault, 1980a, 1988b).

Classical Greek Technologies of the Self—Self Mastery

Foucault examined the first two centuries AD of Greco-Roman philosophy and the fourth and fifth centuries of the Roman Empire when Christian spirituality and monastic principles were prevalent. Foucault argued that the Delphic moral principle, 'know thyself' (*gnothi sauton*) became dominant, taking precedence over another ancient principle and set of practices, 'to take care of yourself,' or to be concerned with oneself (*epimelesthai sautou*) (Foucault, 1988b). According to Foucault, 'care of the self' formed one of the main rules for personal and social conduct and for the art of life in ancient Greek cities. The two principles were interconnected, and it was actually from the principle of care of the self that the Delphic principle was brought into operation as a form of technical advice or rules to be followed when the oracle was consulted. Foucault accepted that the ancient Greek notion of care of the self was an inclusive one that involved *care for others* and precluded the possibility of tyranny because a tyrant did not, by definition, take care of the self since he² did not take care of others. Foucault stated that *care for others* became an explicit ethic later on and should not be put before care of the self (see Foucault, 1984; 1997a).

Foucault argues that over time there was an inversion of the traditional hierarchy of the two ancient principles so that Delphic 'know yourself' became dominant and took precedence over 'care of the self,' to be concerned with oneself and to work to improve oneself. From being a matter of self-mastery in the classical Greek, it changed to an emphasis on learning to shape one's own inner character (Foucault, 1988b).

Such an inversion has continued into modern Western culture partly as a result of 'know yourself' being the principle that Plato privileged and which subsequently became hugely influential in philosophy following Descartes and the Enlightenment emphasis on the thinking subject (*cogito ergo sum*—I think therefore I am) as the first step in epistemology. Foucault argues that 'know yourself' is the fundamental austere principle that influences morality nowadays, because we tend to view 'care of the self' in rather negative terms as something immoral, narcissistic, or selfish and an escape from rules.

Foucault (1988b, p. 27) elaborated on both the Greek (Platonic and Stoic) techniques of self, which 'was not abstract advice but a widespread activity, a network

of obligations and services to the soul' that recommended setting aside time for the self each day for meditation, preparing and writing:

to study, to read, to prepare for misfortune or death . . . Writing was also important in the culture of taking care of oneself . . . taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths as needed (Foucault, 1988b, p. 27).

Using as examples, the letters of Socrates, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, Foucault discusses how writing about the self is an ancient Western tradition connected with care of the self that developed in the 1st and 2nd centuries, well before Augustine wrote his *Confessions*. Writing enabled increased examination and vigilance of one's moods and so intensified and widened how people thought of themselves and promoted self-understanding and self-mastery.

Foucault traces another change in techniques in care of the self that had prevailed in Pythagorean culture and re-emerged under Stoicism in the imperial period. Rather than Platonic style dialogue, a new pedagogical relationship that emphasized silence and listening developed, 'where the master/teacher speaks and doesn't ask questions and the disciple doesn't answer but must listen and keep silent . . . This is the positive condition for acquiring truth' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 32). Perhaps Foucault's emphasis on the centrality of truth in relation to the self is to be developed only through the notion of the 'other' as an audience—intimate or public—that allows for the politics of confession and (auto)biography.

The Stoic techniques of care of the self include first, 'letters to friends and disclosure of self'; second, the 'examination of self and conscience, including a review of what was to be done, of what should have been done and a comparison of the two'; third, '*askesis*, not a disclosure of the secret self but a remembering'; and fourth, 'the interpretation of dreams' (Foucault, 1988b, pp. 34–38). Foucault remarks that, despite being a popular practice, the Stoics were mostly critical and sceptical about the interpretation of dreams. He points out that rather than renunciation, this is 'the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth . . . that is characterised by *paraskeuazo* ("to get prepared")' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 35). Two forms of preparation exercises emerged. One, the *melete*, was a philosophical meditation that trained one's *thoughts* about how one would respond to hypothetical situations. The second, the *gymnasia*, was a *physical* training experience that could involve physical privation, hardship, purification rituals and sexual abstinence. The latter could perhaps be considered a form of self-denial, but was in fact together with the former, a means of overall self-mastery.

It is interesting to note the re-emergence of many of these practices of the self, apart from physical training, in the different helping professions or 'psy' therapies (Rose, 1998) (e.g. psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, counselors, doctors etc) in the 19th and 20th centuries and Foucault does a real service in pointing us to the philosophical and historical roots of some of these.

Christian Religious Confessional Practices—Self Denial

The procedures of confession have altered considerably over time. The impact of Christianity cannot be underestimated in the Western world even though many people may now adopt a more secular view of life. Confession has been profoundly influenced by confessional techniques embodied in protestant and Puritan notions of the self and its relation to God and by Romantic, Rousseauian notions of the self (Gutman, 1988; Paden, 1988). In most religious contexts, the sins that needed to be confessed mostly equated with sexual morality. As a consequence, in time religious confession became the principal technology for managing the sexual lives of believers, for confessing the 'truth' about one's sexual thoughts and behaviours. This aspect is taken up by Freud in his notions of repression and also by Foucault in his three volumes, *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1980a, 1986, 1990). One form of disclosure of the self is confession.

Foucault (1988b) points out that in the first centuries, two main forms of disclosing the self emerged in early Christianity—*exomologesis* and *exagoreusis*. Despite being very different, the former being a dramatic form, the latter a verbalized one, what they have in common is that disclosing the self involves renouncing one's self or will. *Exomologesis* or 'recognition of fact' was a public approach that lasted until the 15th–16th centuries, whereby Christians disclosed themselves through publicly acknowledging both their faith and by recognizing themselves as both 'a sinner and penitent' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 41). If they had committed very serious sins, they would seek penance from a bishop, explaining their faults and why they sought this status. They would remain in a state of penance for several years, observing punishments such as fasting, clothing and sexual restrictions that publicly exhibited or disclosed their shame, humility and modesty until they became reconciled or atoned for their sins. Foucault says that this is not confession as such, 'it was not a way for the sinner to explain his sins but a way to present himself as a sinner' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 42). Foucault, points out the paradox that 'exposé is the heart of *exomologesis* . . . it rubs out the sin and yet reveals the sinner' (Foucault, 1988b, p. 42).

Penance became elaborated around notions of torture, martyrdom and death, of renouncing self, identity and life in preferring to die rather than compromising or abandoning one's faith. Christian penance did not involve establishing an identity but 'a break with one's past identity,' the refusal or renunciation of self, so that

‘self-revelation is at the same time self-destruction’ (Foucault, 1988, p. 43). Whereas for the classical Greek Stoics the ‘examination of self, judgement, and discipline’ that lead to self-knowledge by ‘memorizing rules’ was a private matter, for Christians ‘the penitent superimposes truth about self by violent rupture and dissociation’ through a form of *exomologesis* that is public, ‘symbolic, ritual and theatrical’ but not verbal (Foucault, 1988b, p. 43).

Foucault (1988b) asserts that in the 4th century a different and more important set of technologies for disclosing the self—*exagoreusis* that were derived from some Stoic technologies of the self—emerged in Christianity. Self-examination then took the form of verbalizing exercises or prayers that took account of one’s daily actions in relation to rules (as in Senecan self-examination). With monastic life, different confessional practices developed based on the principles of obedience and contemplation and confession developed a hermeneutic role in examining the self in relation to one’s hidden inner thoughts and purity. Christian hermeneutics of the self imply ‘that there is something hidden in ourselves and that we are always in a self-illusion, which hides the secret’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 46). Furthermore, because evil was believed to be hidden and unstated and ‘because evil thoughts cannot be expressed without difficulty and shame’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 47), the only way to weigh the quality, reality and purity of our thoughts, is to permanently verbalize thoughts or ‘confess’ all one’s thoughts, intentions and consciousness to a master. Since it was only after a verbal confession that the devil went out of the person, confession became ‘a mark of truth.’ However, since it is impossible to permanently verbally confess, the result was ‘to make everything that couldn’t be expressed into a sin’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 48). *Exagoreusis* was ‘an analytical and continual verbalization of thoughts carried on in the relation of complete obedience to someone else . . . the renunciation of one’s own will and of one’s own self’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 48).

The classical Greek practice of *askesis* differs significantly from the Christian counterpart of ascetic practices. Foucault pointed out that for the ancient Greeks the ethical principle of self consisted of *self-mastery*, but by comparison, it shifted to become *self-renunciation* in the Christian era (Foucault, 1988b). In the Greek, the goal is establishing of a specific relationship to oneself—of self possession, self-sovereignty, self-mastery. In the Christian, it is renunciation of the self. Foucault argues that Christian asceticism involves detachment from the world, whereas Greco-Roman practices were concerned with ‘endowing the individual with the preparation and the moral equipment that will permit him to fully confront the world in an ethical and rational manner’ (Foucault, 2001a, p. 55).

Thus the crucial difference revolved around two quite different ethical notions. Self-mastery implied both a control of the passions and a moderation in all things,

but also a worldliness that involved being in and part of the world of the free citizen in a democratic society. Self-renunciation as a form of Christian asceticism involved a set of two interlinked truths obligations: one set surrounded 'the faith, the book, the dogma' and another 'the self, the soul the heart' (Foucault, 1981, cited in Foucault, 2001a, p. 139). The tasks involved in the latter, include first a 'clearing up all the illusions, temptations, and seductions which can occur in the mind, and discovering the reality of what is going on within ourselves' and second getting free from attachment to the self, 'not because the self is an illusion, but because the self is much too real' (Foucault, 1981, cited in Foucault, 2001a, p.139). These tasks implied self-negation and a withdrawal from the world, in what forms a 'spiral of truth formulation and reality renouncement, which is at the heart of Christian techniques of the self' (Foucault, 1981, cited in Foucault, 2001a, p. 139). Confessional practices form a technology of the self—speaking, reading and writing the self—that shifted from the religious world to medical then to therapeutic and pedagogical models in secular contemporary societies (Foucault, 1988b; Peters, 2000).

Medico-Therapeutic Confessional Practices— Confession without Self-Renunciation

Until the mid-16th century confession in the Church was an annual event, so the confession of and surveillance of sexuality was quite limited (Foucault, 1980b). After the Reformation, confession changed profoundly to involve not just one's acts but also one's thoughts. Foucault suggests that the 18th century saw 'brutal medical techniques emerging, which consist in simply demanding that the subject tells his or her story, or narrate it in writing' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 215).

Foucault's work on sexuality is concerned with problematizing how pleasure, desire and sexuality—the regimes of power-knowledge-pleasure—as components of the art of living or 'an aesthetics of existence' have become discourses that shape the construction of ourselves as both the 'truth' of our sexuality and ourselves (Foucault, 1986, p.10).

Foucault argues that Western society, unlike other societies that have an *ars erotica* (erotic art) whereby truth is drawn from pleasure itself, has *scientia sexualis* (scientized sexuality) procedures for telling the truth of sexuality. Sexual confession became constituted in scientific terms through a codification of speaking, speculation about causality, ideas about latent sexuality, the use of interpretation, and the medicalization of the effects of confession (see Foucault, 1980a, pp. 59–70). Power-knowledge resides in confession, not in the person who speaks but in the one who questions and listens. Foucault (1980a) points to the techniques of both the examination and the confessional or therapeutic situation, where a person is required to

speak about their psyche or emotions to a doctor, priest or therapist. This expert in both observation and interpretation would determine whether or not the truth, or an underlying truth that the person was unaware of, had been spoken. To access this inner self or 'truth,' professionals may administer certain 'technologies' for speaking, listening, recording, transcribing and redistributing what is said. This is a means for examining the conscious, the unconscious, and for confessing one's innermost thoughts, feelings, attitudes, desires and motives about the self and one's relationships with others. The professional's expert knowledge might be used to re-interpret and reconstruct what a person says. However, in the therapeutic process, as one gains this form of self-knowledge, one also becomes known to others involved in the process, which can, in turn, constitute the self.

From the medical model of healing, where a patient 'confesses' the problem and inadvertently reveals the 'truth' as part of the diagnostic clinical examination, there was a shift to a therapeutic model where both the confession and examination are deliberately used for uncovering the truth about one's sexuality and one's self (Foucault, 1980a). In the process, the therapy can create a new kind of pleasure: pleasure in telling the truth of pleasure. But speaking the truth is not only descriptive. In confession, one is expected to tell the truth about oneself—a basic assumption that most therapists and counselors continue to make about their clients. In a focus on the techniques of the self, which are designed to explore the aesthetics of existence and to inquire into the government of self and others, Foucault discusses writing the self as a means of counteracting the dangers of solitude and of exposing our deeds to the gaze (Foucault, 1988b, 1997b). At the same time, because it works on thoughts as well as actions, writing the self becomes a form of confession.

Foucault points to the shift of confessional practices from the religious world to medical then to therapeutic and pedagogical models in secular contemporary societies. Over time the movement towards the care of the self *by* the self removes the necessity for dialogue:

A medical model was substituted for Plato's pedagogical model. The care of the self isn't another kind of pedagogy; it has to become permanent medical care. Permanent medical care is one of the central features of the care of the self. One must become the doctor of oneself (Foucault, 1988b, p. 31).

Foucault concluded his seminar on technologies of the self with the highly significant point that the verbalization techniques of disclosing the self through confession have been important in the development of the human sciences where they have been transposed and inserted into this different context 'in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self. To use these techniques without renouncing oneself constitutes a decisive break' (Foucault, 1988b,

p. 49). He implies that instead of knowing the self and in fact denying the self, as occurs in the religious form of confession, the newer therapeutic techniques of the self can use confessional practices without such denial of the self. Instead they use practices that build on the strengths of the self to even develop self-mastery as a form of care of the self. Because language has a performative function, speaking the truth about oneself makes, constitutes, or constructs or forms one's self. By these discursive means and through these technologies, a human being turns him or herself into a subject.

As confession became secularized, a range of techniques emerged in the human sciences—in pedagogy, medicine, psychiatry and literature—with a highpoint being psychoanalysis or Freud's 'talking cure.' Since Freud, the secular form of confession could be argued as having been 'scientized' through new techniques of normalization and individualization that include clinical codifications, personal examinations, case-study techniques, the general documentation and collection of personal data, the proliferation of interpretive schemas and the development of a whole host of therapeutic techniques for 'normalization' (Foucault, 1977). In turn, these 'oblige' us to be free, as self-inspection and new forms of self-regulation replace the confessional. This new form of confession is an affirmation of our self and our identity that involves 'contemporary procedures of individualization' that 'binds us to others at the very moment we affirm our identity' (Rose, 1989, p. 240). In truthfully confessing who one is to others (e.g., to parents, teachers, friends, lovers and oneself, etc.) '... one is subjectified by another ... who prescribes the form of the confession, the words and rituals through which it should be made, who appreciates, judges, consoles, or understands' (Rose, 1989, p. 240). Through speech acts of confession, a person constitutes his/her self.

Foucault writes 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). When the subject is confessing and creating its 'self,' it seems to feel compelled to tell the truth about itself. Therefore, confession involves a type of 'discipline' that '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). Whilst confession is autobiographical, compelling us to narratively recreate ourselves, it is also about assigning truth-seeking meaning to our lives. People can be assisted in this through a whole variety of therapeutic endeavours such as counseling. In secular society, therapeutic forms of confession, where the psychotherapist or counselor could be considered akin to the priest, have replaced the theological form. Although the use of listening tech-

niques and the uncovering of 'self' are similar, the elements of advice, admonition and punishment that are involved in the religious forms of confession are certainly no part of contemporary counseling—a practice predicated on the assumption that the client is telling the truth about him-herself.

CONCLUSION: SELF-DENIAL OR SELF-MASTERY?

The foregoing has argued that confession is a form of truth telling that constitutes the self. Following Foucault, we suggest that confession as a technology of self should be based less on an ethic of self-denial than one of self-mastery. For self-mastery provides a secular model consonant with the demands of a postmodern world that recognises the inescapability of desire and the necessity of pleasure in a new body politics.

Self-denial involves renouncing one's own interests in favour of the interests of others. It also means denying aspects of one's self, self-abnegation, self-renunciation; self-discipline or self-control in not gratifying, abstaining or indulging one's desires or impulses, abstinence, asceticism, austerity and also connotations of selflessness and self-sacrifice. In extreme religious forms it may involve mortification of the flesh.

Notions of self-denial remain prominent in many religious contexts, especially those of a more fundamentalist orientation. For a protestant religious example see John Wesley's sermon 48, Self Denial, at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-048.stm>, which is based upon Luke 9: 23, 'And He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.' In this sermon Wesley points out that 'men who take nature, not grace, for their guide, abhor the very sound of it [denial].' Professor Finney's lectures of 1841 elaborate further on the notion (e.g., http://www.gospeltruth.net/18410E/410317_self_denial.htm). Other websites similarly detail what self-denial is and what it is not (e.g., <http://www.gracegems.org/Books2/traits13.htm>). Such religiously oriented notions of self-denial continue the Christian ascetic tradition that emphasizes the denial of the body and especially its sexuality and desires. A question that arises, which is beyond the scope of this chapter, is if there is a form of counseling that can encompass such a position yet be consistent with the aims of counseling.

Religious and associated philosophical thought is also invoked in many contemporary formulations of self-mastery, but rather than being derived from Christianity, or for that matter the other Abrahamaic religions (i.e., Judaism or Islam), the turn is to Eastern religions or philosophies such as Taoism and Zen Bhuddism. Furthermore, the emphasis tends to be on the whole person, body,

mind, emotions and spirit, rather than one's relationship with God. For example, see 'The Self Mastery Foundation' at <http://www.selfmastery.com/article.asp?pageid=9> which:

incorporates Taoist and Zen spiritual philosophy, with 21st century science, to create a practical program for the modern mind. Our purpose is to develop strong individuals physically, mentally, and emotionally. We teach people to understand and surpass their limitations, and find ways around them to attain their peak performance. A good balance of physical and mental exercises helps create strong individuals. Gradual training programs bring students in touch with themselves and the world around them. Classes and seminars include Martial Arts, Meditation, and Energy Awareness exercises.

The 'Self Mastery International' website declares their purpose to 'promote the resurgence of personal values as a tool for self empowerment and increased personal and professional performance' (<http://www.selfmasteryintl.com/>). Another website, <http://anunda.com/self-mastery.htm>, suggests that through 'self mastery, the seeker becomes a traveller, beyond religion, tradition, the teachings, doctrine and dogma. Spiritual practice is then, a communion with Life in the moment of Living.' Another organisation, the 'Self-Mastery' website (<http://www.livelyup.com/Self-Mastery.htm>), takes a largely Kantian of self-mastery as being a rational autonomous chooser, with mastery meaning

the full command or control of a subject. Therefore, all self-mastery requires is being your own boss or director, the Chairman of the Board for your life, consciously choosing for yourself the thoughts and actions that will make you who and what you want to be. Just seize the controls, instead of being pushed and pulled around by outside factors, and your life is back in your hands.

In similar vein is 'The Top 200 Secrets of Success and the Pillars of Self-Mastery' at <http://www.robinsharma.com/2001ife.html>

By incorporating Eastern religious traditions into their formulations of self-mastery, some of these organisations recognise the body without denigrating or denying it unlike ascetic forms of Christianity. However, Eastern notions tend to promote a transcendental self, which by negating the ego, also negates the self.

Foucault's viewpoint on the self was not a transcendental one. His analysis questions historical necessity and, while he maps the ethical contours of a period, he also provides historical models of the self that can be used to articulate contemporary issues. It might be argued that in the age of global consumer culture the ethical self is neither modelled on techniques of self-denial (Nietzsche's analysis of ascetic practices in *The Genealogy of Morals*) or (Stoic) practices of self-mastery alone—though both may have continuing relevance in certain ways—but rather it is based on an ethics of the 'aesthetics of existence,' a continual shaping, fashioning and presenta-

tion of the body. In an extreme form this speaks of self-indulgence rather than self-denial or self-mastery—what Christopher Lasch (1979; 1984) called the ‘narcissistic self’ and later the ‘minimal self.’ When one is considering the self, self-indulgence and desire tend to be downplayed since they are often viewed as something not quite proper or appropriate, especially by the ‘moral majority’ and people with strong religious convictions. Understandings of desire acknowledge the body, the emotional and include the sexual and maybe even Bacchanalian appetites. Considering the level of discomfort many people seem to have in broaching such aspects of life, and considering the prevalence of the dualism privileging thinking over the body since Descartes’ time, it is perhaps not surprising that in considering self mastery, it is reason that tends to be privileged in what may be viewed as something of an avoidance technique, but one that has serious implications for our culture:

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 . . . 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 (Besley, 2003e, p. 60).

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 an existential value. These exercises were aimed at self-mastery, nothing less than a transformation of one’s worldview and personality by involving all aspects of one’s being, including intellect, imagination, sensibility and will. In the process, the person became a responsible citizen. Socrates provided a set of dialogical spiritual exercises that epitomized the injunction ‘know thyself’ and provided a model for a relationship of the self to itself and a total transformation of one’s being (see Davidson, 1997a). In this model, the process of dealing with a problem takes primacy over the solution (Hadot, 1987). This provides counseling with an ancient philosophical basis or model, at once transformative, ethical, dialogic and pedagogical. It is a model that could both complement and correct certain emphases in Foucault’s later thinking about truth and subjectivity and care of the self. For counseling, an emphasis on process is of prime importance since the solution of problems is generally not the counselor’s responsibility. The emphasis is on processes that enable the person to find the resources to access their own solutions.



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Christianity adopted and modified themes from ancient philosophy but made renouncing the self to the will of God the condition for salvation. Yet paradoxically self-denial required that one know oneself, and this in turn revealed the self. Foucault argues that over time where the ancient principle of care of the self once preceded know thyself (Delphic maxim) these became inverted. Foucault argues for the return of the ancient maxim of 'care of the self' and its components of self-mastery because, since the Enlightenment, the Delphic maxim became overriding and inextricably linked with constituting subjects who are able to be governed.

Foucault's genealogy highlights the politics and ethics in questions of the self, of caring for the self and self-knowledge (or ignorance). Foucault (1988b) argued that a binary of self-denial versus self-mastery had been prevalent at different points of time and thus entailed different technologies of the self and, in turn, different ways of constituting the self. While self-denial and self-mastery are ethical sets, the protocols of which dominate practices of the self, clearly today it may be the case that self-mastery might be achieved through self-denial (and vice versa). Part of the intent behind Foucault's analysis is to alert us to the way things can be otherwise.

Foucault's model of the care of the self in relation to practices of freedom, his account of power-knowledge and his Kantian-like basis for ethics that considers the way in which choices under certain conditions creates who we become, provides a philosophical approach that offers counselors an ethically suitable way of dealing with their clients. This highlights the importance of various technologies of the self, confessing the self through 'writing' and 'reading' the self alongside conversational or dialogical forms and 'talking' or confessing the self. Foucault's understanding of the self's relationship to itself points to various ways that 'psy' science professionals such as counselors can help people to ethically constitute themselves: by ethical work that a person performs on him-herself with the aim of becoming an ethical subject; the way in which individuals relate to moral obligations and rules; and the type of person one aims to become in behaving ethically.

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