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## ARTICLE

### **For The Love Of Boys**

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**ABSTRACT:** Foucault's late studies of classical Greek and Roman texts are significant for the attention they give to the nuances and complexities the authors of those texts attribute to the relations between men and boys. Foucault follows carefully the considerations the classical writers gave to the bodies, pleasures and knowledge that formed and were formed by these relations. His aim is not to capture what was said in these texts but to think with them about what it might have taken, lacking any standard or model, for boys and men, both, to become, in the context of their relations with one another, beautiful examples of what it means to be alive. What interests him, ultimately, is not boys or the ancient pleasures associated with boys but this practice of making one's life admirable, to oneself and to those with whom one associates freely and intimately, in the absence of a given standard or code. If there is a Foucauldean ethics, it can be nothing more or less than this becoming an admirable instance of a life worth living.

**Keywords:** pleasures, practices, self-mastery, love, truth

Critics and commentators have searched the published work, the informal writings and the personal life of Michel Foucault looking for what could be called a Foucauldean ethics.<sup>1</sup> I don't pretend, here, to have found what they may have missed, nor is it my intention to disprove what others have said or to argue for what is "right" when it comes to claims about Foucault's supposed ethics. Foucault himself would likely have had a good laugh at our expense were we to seek his secret in something he has written or said or done. What I want to contribute to this discussion is just my thinking about what might be called an ethics culled from the style of presentation and the focus of Foucault's late studies of ancient Greek and Roman texts. It was clearly not a prurient nor merely personal interest in the love of boys that directed these studies. Yet, in the attention given to these practices by the classical authors, an attention

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<sup>1</sup> There are so many, I cite here only one which shares affinities with what I have to say: Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics," trans. Catherine Porter and Arnold I. Davidson, *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Autumn 1993), 1-9.

wanting in his time, Foucault identifies a resolve, in the absence of any model of perfection, to become an admirable example of what it means to be alive.

Such an admirable life, on his account, amounts to something more than what the ancient Greeks called “living well” and something less than the impossible standard of Socrates who, while claiming to know nothing, says he never does wrong knowingly or Aristotle’s *phrônimos* who always strikes the mean. In the ancient texts, Foucault locates evidence that it was once possible to navigate the space between *enkrateia* and *akrasia* in a way that made a life stand out among one’s peers. And with this discovery he suggests that the same thing might be, though he never says it must be, possible, again. If Foucault had an ethics, I believe it can have been nothing more or less than becoming a beautiful example of a life worth living, not by loving boys, but by fashioning a modern *askêsis* from the general pattern of behaviors recommended by the classical authors who thought about, among other things, the love of boys.

So, while my title draws a provocation from a phrase Foucault no doubt threw out in an effort to diffuse a situation and to distract attention from himself, my aim is not to say that this is really a profound statement and the secret, again, to Foucault’s last thoughts. I take the statement, rather, as a way, more precisely, my way into Foucault’s last published writings and lectures. It guides or directs, as a clue leading to other clues, my readings of these texts and makes of what appears expository in the middle of my essay the kind of writerly reading of Foucault’s texts that Roland Barthes might appreciate, since what I attempt there is not to set the story “straight” but to tell a story Foucault himself might not have anticipated but we might be able to appreciate.<sup>2</sup>

This essay does not suppose that Foucault was right about the Greeks. I have already reported, elsewhere, Gregory Vlastos’s estimation of Foucault reading of Classical literature as the work of a gifted amateur.<sup>3</sup> This essay also does not attempt to promote a specific lifestyle or to associate Foucault with such a life. I have already commented, again, elsewhere, on Foucault’s associations with sad-masochistic sex and, in yet another place, on the difficulties of navigating Foucault’s involvement with HIV/AIDS in these associations.<sup>4</sup> This essay does argue, against the common talk that identifies Foucault with intensities of affect and the multiplication of bodies, pleasures and knowledge that are supposed to counter or resist *les prises du*

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<sup>2</sup> According to Barthes, writing, *écriture*, arranges a meeting of the structures and codes that have formed a writer and a reader and stages the multiplication of meanings sustained by the text a writer and reader share. Barthes calls a text “writerly” when it invites the reader to write meanings into it and “readerly” when the text insists on a single authorial intention (see *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 1-6; and, for the *jouissance* associated with writerly texts, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), *passim*). Following, with other writing (“The Discourse on Language,” trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 215-38, as well as the “Introduction” to *The Archaeology*), it is safe to say Foucault’s texts do not insist on a single authorial intention, and I treat them as writerly in Barthes’s sense.

<sup>3</sup> “Fact or Fiction: Writing the Difference Between Suicide and Death in the Life of Michel Foucault,” *Contemporary Aesthetics*, [www.contemporaryaesthetics.org](http://www.contemporaryaesthetics.org), vol. 4 (2006).

<sup>4</sup> “Folds in the Flesh: Merleau-Ponty/Foucault,” in *Resituating Merleau-Ponty: Essays Across the Continental-Analytic Divide*, Larry Hass and Dorothea Olkowski, eds. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 373-403.

*pouvoir* and *le dispositif de sexualité*. It argues, instead, for a refined economy of the *multiplicité* of bodies, pleasures and knowledge Foucault came to appreciate from a careful study of the ancient games of truth and *askêses* of the body gained in the years spent teaching and writing after the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*.

What Foucault gains most from his way of understanding the recommendations offered by writers in antiquity about the love of boys is the value of restraint for the man, the boy and the *polis* in general. It is this restraint that allows for a refinement of the pleasures associated with love and political association, for an understanding of intensity as refinement rather than a teeming over-fullness. The intensity of affect that can counter the grips of power will be effective only if it is directed and controlled. The love of boys in antiquity is not an exemplar of this restraint. It is just an instance of it that attracted Foucault's attention given what may have been a general interest in the refinement of his own intensities. Foucault's last studies expose us to the possibility of finding our own restraints and setting to work on the refinements of sensibilities that can make of us, as far as possible, a beautiful example of what it means to be alive.

For the journal *Inquiry*, in 1985, Hans Sluga wrote a remembrance of a man who had become, over the course of increasingly regular sojourns to the UC Berkeley campus, a colleague and a friend.<sup>5</sup> Sluga is best known for his discerning and critical interpretations of Gottlieb Frege's philosophy of sense and meaning and, later, of Martin Heidegger's philosophy and politics.<sup>6</sup> So, it was certainly surprising for some that Sluga would dedicate a personal note to the memory of Michel Foucault who had died the year before. Foucault, of course, is best known for his genealogies of the living, laboring and speaking subject, of the subject confined by the asylum, the clinic and the prison, of the subject produced as desiring, as the subject of and as subject to the *dispositifs* of power and sexuality, the supposed dark secret and truth of our selves.

Somewhere on this west coast these two men connected. Both were serious thinkers, of course, and both shared an affection for the city across the bay, San Francisco, where Sluga lived and Foucault stayed while visiting the University of California. Sluga says he often enough gave Foucault a lift to San Francisco and that on the ride home they sometimes discussed Wittgenstein, sometimes the leather scene that especially interested Foucault and sometimes, also, a "strange disease" that "didn't even have a name at the time." "You'd better be careful," Sluga told his French friend.<sup>7</sup> Foucault received similar warnings from a young undergraduate who described his rendezvous with Foucault for *The Daily Californian*<sup>8</sup> as well

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Sluga, "Foucault, the Author, and the Discourse," *Inquiry*, 28, 403-15.

<sup>6</sup> See Hans Sluga, *Gottlieb Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1993), *The Philosophy of Frege*, (ed.), 4 vols., (Garland Press, 1993) and *Heidegger's Crisis; Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 344-5.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Horvitz, "Don't Cry for Me Academia," Interview with Michel Foucault, reprinted in *Jimmy and Lucy's House of K*, no. 2 (Berkeley) (1985), 78-80.

as from his colleague and friend in the English Department at Berkeley, D. A. Miller. By all accounts, these cautions had little effect on Foucault. Even after collapsing “like a kind of rag doll” on a walk to Miller’s car on a warm spring afternoon in 1983, Foucault tells his friend he doesn’t believe in AIDS. “*Je n’y crois pas,*” he says.<sup>9</sup> And, yet, within a year, he would succumb to complications brought on by the retrovirus, HIV.

With others, Foucault found the idea of a disease that would attack you because you were gay hysterical. More generally, Foucault thought, death was nothing to fear. “How could I be afraid of AIDS when I could die in a car,” he asks his undergraduate interviewer.<sup>10</sup> For Miller he described an experience of being hit by a car, lying in the street in a kind of drugged euphoria, feeling that he was leaving his body, thinking he was going to die; it was ecstatic, he says.<sup>11</sup> And, then, returning to the subject of AIDS, he leaned toward Miller and said, “Besides, to die for the love of boys: What could be more beautiful?”<sup>12</sup>

What might Foucault have meant by this, and could it connect with the studies Foucault had been conducting in his lectures at Berkeley and the College de France beginning with *Sécurité, territoire, population* (1977-8) and *Naissance de la biopolitique* (1978-9) and including *Subjectivité et vérité* (1980), *L’Herméneutic du sujet* (1981-2), *Fearless Speech* (1983) and *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres* (1982-3 and 1984)?<sup>13</sup> In what follows, I answer these questions in the course of accounting for Foucault’s account in those lectures of the relation between knowledge and pleasure among the Greeks.

Foucault left us in the last section of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, known in English as an “Introduction” and in French as *La volonté de savoir, The Will to Know*, with a tantalizing proposition.<sup>14</sup>

It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim—through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality—to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges (*savoirs*) in their multiplicity and their possibilities of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality (*le dispositif de sexualité*) ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.

In response to this challenge, studies emerged which pressed the claims of bodies and pleasures marginalized by the normalizing procedures of discipline.<sup>15</sup> But Foucault’s attention, in

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<sup>9</sup> Miller, 349.

<sup>10</sup> Horvitz, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Miller, 350.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “The Subject and Truth” is the title of a series of two talks presented as the “Howison Lectures” at Berkeley in October 1980.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 157, hereafter referenced as *The Will to Know*. *La volonté de savoir* was also the title given to Foucault’s College de France lectures from 1970-1971.

the lectures at the College in the following years, turned to a deeper exploration of what in that last section of *The Will to Know* he called “biopower,” the *dispositifs* or deployments of power that sought a mastery over “living beings” applied at the level of “life itself.”<sup>16</sup>

Foucault used the term biopower “to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of the transformation of human life.”<sup>17</sup> It is on these terms, in terms of its focus on life itself, he said, that sex became the target of power’s deployments and that the management of the body and the population became a central concern of those deployments. So, in the lectures now translated into English as *Security, Territory, Population*, given at the Collège de France in the first months of 1978, Foucault studied the formation of the modern concept of government out of a tactical concern with conducting—leading, directing, administering, supervising—the life of populations.<sup>18</sup> He shifted his attention from the anatomo-politics of the body that occupied him in *The Will to Know*, to a bio-politics of the population, from a focus on the body as machine associated with disciplines to a species body, a social body “imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological process: propagation, births, mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that cause it [sc., life] to vary.”<sup>19</sup> It is the supervision (*pris en charge*) of this entire series, and its extensions, that Foucault now calls a “bio-politics of the population.”

What we recognize as government, today, Foucault argued, carries out this supervision by producing obedient subjects, essentially, subjects who supervise themselves. And this form of conduct, this type of subject, entirely foreign to the ancient Greeks, was produced through a long process accelerated by and culminating in what Foucault calls the Christian pastorate. For our purposes what we need to know, here, is that a form of sovereignty unknown to the Greeks or Romans but modeled on the Hebrew shepherd, *pasteur* in French, was taken over and transformed in the Christian pastor to include the “daily government of men in their real life on the grounds of their salvation” and not just their individual salvation but salvation “on the scale of humanity.”<sup>20</sup> With the institution of Christianity in the Church and, especially, with the retrenchment of this Church through the Counter-Reformation, this government took the form of “a hierarchized pyramid” and “a strongly centralized Catholic Church.” In this

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<sup>15</sup> Ladelle McWhorter’s *Bodies and Pleasures* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), Judith Butler’s *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) among others and including, most recently, Lynne Huffer’s *Mad for Foucault* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Something very different from what Giorgio Agamben has in mind with the concept “bare life.” Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France in 1977-78 were titled *Le gouvernement des vivants*.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Know*, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Know*, 139.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 148.

Church, some men (the pastors) were taught to govern others and some men (the flock) were taught to let themselves be governed by others. Foucault concludes that this pastoral power, “in its typology, organization, and mode of functioning ... is doubtless something from which we have still not freed ourselves.”<sup>21</sup> “Over millennia, Western man has learned to see himself as a sheep in a flock, something that assuredly no Greek would have been prepared to accept.”<sup>22</sup>

Foucault, thus, corrects the genealogy delineated in *The Will to Know* according to which sovereign power leads to pastoral power and disciplinary power leads to the “complex strategical situation in a particular society” he nominally calls “power.” We now have an account of “power” as “governmentality” and the challenge remains, how to counter the grips of power so organized? What bodies, which pleasures, what knowledges must we consider from the point of view of a more fully fleshed out biopolitics of populations? How will the way we respond to this challenge change from the perspective of the obedient but nonetheless desiring subjects we have become? Foucault’s turn to the Greeks in his last writings is to a genealogy of this desiring subject and to a form of subjectivation formed not from a relation we establish to another but from a relation we establish with ourselves.

Out of an account of self-mastery or *enkrateia*, Foucault gives us a critical distance on the present and an indication of what coming from those Greeks may be “residual” in us. Not what lingers, somehow, from bygone days, but what may recur to us, now, in our present situation, what resources we may return to again, what bodies we may have been and want to become, what pleasures we may have used and the forms of knowledge and truth associated with those bodies and pleasures that we may draw on to produce ourselves as noble and brilliant subjects of acts by which we stand out as complete wholes, as an *oeuvre*. Foucault does not present the Greeks as a viable alternative to our Christianized present. He presents instead—and we will want to reenforce this point in our conclusion—an insight into how we have been formed as the subjects we are and a perspective on the claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges there might be for subjects like us who want to be done with the claims of others and the claims of desire and sex for and with others.

The second volume of *The History of Sexuality* series is titled *L’usage des plaisirs* which makes its way into English as *The Use of Pleasure*.<sup>23</sup> No doubt market forces pushed for translating the ambiguously plural French “*plaisirs*” into the singular “pleasure,” but it obscures an important point. For the Greeks, as Foucault tells the story, pleasure was not a single substantive impulse but an array of affects felt across the various domains and sub-domains of the life of the body, the institution of marriage, the relations between men and boys and the pursuit of the truth. In each of these domains, there was a form of problematization, a set of difficulties and proposed resolutions of those difficulties, associated with the use of pleasures in that domain.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *L’ Usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984), *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

We will say, in a moment, more precisely what we mean by “use” here, *chrêsis* in ancient Greek, but to get a sense of the arrays of pleasures and the challenges associated with them, let’s discuss briefly the principal domains that make up what Foucault calls the “quadri-thematics” of pleasures and, especially, sexual pleasures among the Greeks.

With regard to the body, there was a generalized fear concerning the relative vigor of the body and the power that it had to act out its pleasures. A certain prudence and economy was advised. Dietary regimens were recommended that preserved and enhanced that power and, so, the pleasures one could take with one’s body. Sexual pleasures were the main concern, and a certain way of caring for one’s body was prescribed to sustain and enhance one’s freedom to act and to take one’s pleasures as one wished. “Regimen,” Foucault says, “was a whole art of living,”<sup>24</sup> and it included exercise combined with baths, nourishment combined with evacuations, exposure combined with compensation, all in the right measure, all with an aim to making it possible for individuals to face a variety of different situations.

Because the sexual act and the pleasures associated with it were thought to be violent, because the sperm was thought to be drawn from the very life force of the individual, because the life of his progeny depended on the life a man maintained for himself, there was a generalized anxiety associated with the use of pleasures of the body. But this problematization did not lead to a code of behavior nor to the creation of a specifically erotic art of the body. Rather, the goal was to create a technique of existence, to establish a relationship between oneself and the array of pleasures associated with the body and to control, limit and apportion them in the right manner. “Because it was the most violent of all the pleasures, because it was more costly than most physical activities, and because it participated in the game of life and death, it constituted a privileged domain for the ethical formation of the subject,” Foucault says.<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, a subject ought to be able to distinguish himself by his ability to form and direct these violent forces in him “and to make his life into an *oeuvre* that would endure beyond his own ephemeral existence.”<sup>26</sup>

In the marriage relation it was a question of economics. It was not the case, Foucault says, that the Greeks held to an imperative governing the faithfulness of a husband to his wife. It was rather a matter of maintaining an order within the household, an *oikonomikê*, that would extend to the city itself. Foucault quotes Demosthenes as saying, “Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households.”<sup>27</sup> As suggested in this slogan, no sexual relation was forbidden a free man as a consequence of his marriage obligation. The problematization of pleasures associated with marriage and those associated with sexual pleasures were distinct. Being married meant “being the head of a family, having authority, exercising a power whose locus of application was in the ‘home,’ and fulfilling household ob-

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<sup>24</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 143; *Against Neera* 122 (attribution of this text to Demosthenes himself is contested).

ligations that affected [a man's] reputation as a citizen."<sup>28</sup> Because of his role in the family, a free man was expected to limit his sexual options, not because it was forbidden, not because there was an imperative or a code, but because the style he gave his life and the demands of his authority in the family required it.

Foucault gives examples from four texts which discuss in some detail the problematization of the marriage relations; three will interest us here. The first is from Plato's *Laws*. As we might expect from Plato, especially in this text, the injunctions pertaining to marriage are the same for men and women. They are coercive and related not to the internal demands of the household but to the needs of the *polis*. "The good marriage is one that benefits the city and it is for the sake of the latter that the children ought to be 'the noblest and best possible'."<sup>29</sup> There is, thus, a symmetry in this relation, but it does not inhere because of a reciprocity between the man and the woman but because of their equal submission to the law. In this model, the obligation to limit one's sexual activity has to do with "the stability of the city, to its public morality, to the conditions for good procreation" and not to reciprocal obligations between men and women.<sup>30</sup>

In a text of Isocrates addressed to Nicocles, moderation in the marriage relation is tied to moderation in the exercise of political power. Isocrates advises Nicocles to make the moderation of his own household both a model for others and a justification for his rule over others. There is an isomorphism in this text between the good order of the monarch's house and the good order of political rule. Isocrates tells Nicocles,

Let your own self-control (*sôphrosynê*) stand as an example to the rest, realizing that the manners (*êthos*) of the whole state are copied from their rulers. Let it be a sign to you that you rule wisely if you see all your subjects growing more prosperous and more temperate because of your oversight (*epimeleia*).<sup>31</sup>

While even the best of men can become slaves to their passions when it comes to women and boys, Nicocles is advised to set himself as a standard not just to any man but to the best among them.

Finally, there is the author of the *Economics* attributed to Aristotle. As with Plato, we get what we expect here. Man and woman are most appropriately arranged in marriage when they are joined as nature intended, when the man rules and the woman is ruled as in an aristocracy, a constitution where the best rule for the benefit of all who receive benefits, in turn, according to the contribution they make to the whole. Thus, the wife gains more than the children or the slaves in the household, but she remains subordinate to the ruling authority of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 167; Platonis, *Opera*, Tomus V, Tetrologia IX, *Recognovit Breviqtve Adnotatione Critica Instrvxit Ioanne Burnet* (Oxonii: E Typograheo Clarendoniano, 1902), *Laws* 783e, with the English translation used by Hurley from Thomas L. Pangle, *The Laws of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 173; Isocrates *To Nicocles*, 31.



her husband. And when it comes to the sexual relation between them, there is nothing in the wife's position that can demand faithfulness on the part of her husband but rather, subject to his benevolence "there is something in the married woman's situation that calls for restraint and limitation on the part of her husband."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, anything that threatens the privileged position of the wife and compromises the aristocratic constitution of the household also threatens the stability and constitution of the city itself.

So that what we see in the problematics of the marriage relation, as Foucault sees it, is not the beginnings of the rigid codification of conjugal fidelity that will obtain in Christianity and give to married life an imperative supported by a vast institutional hierarchy. With the exception of the Platonic model which will obtain only in the ideal city, the moderation demanded of the husband is not of the same order as that demanded of the wife. In the case of the husband, it is a matter of a choice and a willingness to limit himself relative to a form he gives his life and relative to his status in the public sphere. It amounts to "a refinement whose exemplary value does not take the form of a universal principle" or a permanent commitment but that amounts to "an achievement instead."<sup>33</sup> It is never vis-à-vis the wife that the husband's *sôphrosynê* is measured. "The wife's virtue constituted the correlative and the proof of a submissive behavior; the man's austerity was part of an ethics of self-delimiting domination."<sup>34</sup>

Already, in the discussion of the moral problematization of the body and marriage, we have seen examples of what Foucault calls the *chrêsis* or use of pleasures. *Chrêsis* amounts or, better, contributes to a style one gives one's life using pleasures as a medium. If the body, marriage, and the love of boys and the truth which we have yet to discuss constitute the ethical substance of the subject, *chrêsis* is the mode of subjection of this substance, the form given to this substance in the course of making one's life an *oeuvre*. Again, as we have seen, this style is never among Foucault's Greeks a matter of conforming to a clearly or vaguely defined code. It is a matter of shaping the pleasures that array themselves around an individual's specific needs, around his tempo, the rhythm of his life, and around his status.

In the regimen of the body and, as was implied, in the relations with one's spouse, the limitation of one's needs makes the economy of pleasures easier to manage, easier to shape and style. Having few needs, allows one to focus on the refinement of the needs one has. A limited number of pleasures intensified by skilled use is always to be preferred to multiple pleasures that give only average satisfaction. What stands out and is distinctive in the use one makes of one's pleasures is the artifice, the practice of pleasure capable of self-limitation and self-control. Pleasures enjoyed in the right measure are complemented by pleasures enjoyed "at the right time." Xenophon makes the impropriety of incest a failure of respect for "the principle of the 'right time'" of "mixing their seed unseasonably;" for "people to procreate when they were no longer 'in full vigor' was always 'to beget badly.'"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 59; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* iv, 4., 21-23.

Finally, the style one gives one's pleasures always concerns the status of the persons concerned. As we learn from Plato's *Symposium*, the love of boys among the Greeks is not absolutely honorable or shameful but depends, for the most part, on the men and boys involved.<sup>36</sup> In these relations, moderation was a mark of distinction, a mark that made one, to borrow Alexander Nehamas's translation of the Greek *aretê*, "outstanding among one's peers."<sup>37</sup> As Foucault puts it,

It was a generally accepted principle of government that the more one was in the public eye, the more authority one had or wanted to have over others, and the more one sought to make one's life a brilliant work whose reputation would spread and last long—the more necessary it was to adopt and maintain, *freely and deliberately*, rigorous standards of sexual conduct."<sup>38</sup>

On this model, then, one did not make oneself an ethical subject because one adhered to a universal rule or standard code of behavior but because, as a free man, one used one's pleasures in a way that gave style to one's life, made one's life stand out from others because of its distinction relative to the pleasures one attracted to oneself and the enjoyment one took in them. This, after all, is what Foucault means by an "aesthetics of existence."

Now, how exactly does one accomplish this? What specifically does Foucault think this has to do with the love of boys? How does the use of the pleasures one takes with boys relate to knowledge and the truth? And how can answers to these questions show us how to counter the grips of power or contribute to a critique of the culture of obedience that characterizes modern forms of government?

When it comes to the pleasures an ancient Greek man takes with boys, the problematizations are multiplied. This is not because they involve a forbidden pleasure, as we know, but because they involve a relation between a citizen and one who would become a citizen. A citizen had certain responsibilities, in the first place to comport himself as a free man, but also to cultivate in boys the qualities that would make them free men themselves, capable of comporting themselves as citizens. Socrates disdains in the *Phaedrus* the love given to "soft boys," those too delicate to be exposed to the sun or who are "all made up in rouge and decked out in ornaments."<sup>39</sup> Though it would be, as Foucault says, "completely incorrect to interpret this as a condemnation of the love of boys," one cannot fail to see in it a concern for the possible negative effects of the relations between men and boys including a "definite aversion to anything

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See Alexander Nehamas, "Meno's Paradox and Socrates as a Teacher," in *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3-26.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 60, emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> Platonis, *Opera*, Tomvs II, Tetrologia Iii, Recognovit Breviqve Adnotatione Critica Instrvxit Ioanne Burnet (Oxonii: E Typograheo Clarendoniano, 1901), *Phaedrus* 239 c-d, with the English translation used by Hurley from Plato, *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII*, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin Classics, 1973).

that might denote a deliberate renunciation of the signs and privileges of the masculine role."<sup>40</sup> Hence we have what Foucault calls the "antinomy of the boy" in the Greek ethics of *aphrodisia*: "one would never reproach a man for loving a boy, for desiring and enjoying him ...," but "the boy, whose youth must be in training for manhood, could not and must not identify with that role."<sup>41</sup>

While the Greeks did not differentiate between what we call heterosexual and homosexual associations, they were inclined to think that the pleasures men took with boys demanded a different ethical form, a special stylistics. This form was distinguished by the privileges attaching to the relation, the agonistics, the space and time of the relation and the special reciprocity involved in those relations. In the first place, privilege was assigned by virtue of the age differences and differences in status involved. The boy was, of course, quite a bit younger than the man who pursued him. He had not finished his education, nor had his status in the city been defined. His passivity, which would be an object of concern in a mature citizen, was expected and to his need of assistance, advice and support corresponded the socially, morally and sexually active role of the educated and respected older man. But while there was a pedagogical context to their relations, there was also a complex game of courtship that gave color to their active and passive roles.

These practices, which Foucault reminds us are amply documented in the work of K. J. Dover "defined the mutual behavior and the respective strategies that both partners should observe in order to give their relations a 'beautiful' form; one that was aesthetically and morally valuable."<sup>42</sup> The active *erastes* or lover was expected to show his ardor and to restrain it, to make gifts, to serve as a guide to the sacred precincts of the city, to introduce his *eromomos* or beloved to important citizens and to keep him from being harmed by those who were ignoble; "and all this entitled him to expect a just reward." The passive *eromomos* had to keep from yielding too easily, to guard against accepting too many gifts, favors and tokens of love, to test his lover's worth, but also to show gratitude for what his lover has done for him. Importantly, this game was played out in an open space where lover and beloved moved about freely. It took place in the street or the gymnasium, in the presence of other boys and other suitors. The lover, as a way of cultivating the freedom of his beloved, exercised no authority over him. The boy always had the right to refuse what he was offered, to choose to accept the gifts of rivals, to be coy or play hard to get. "The decision was always the boy's to make," and in this game, initiated by the older man, "one was never sure of winning."<sup>43</sup> "To take something from one's enemy against his will is the greatest pleasure; but when it comes to the favors of boys, the sweetest are those that are freely granted."<sup>44</sup>

The temporality of this game was not guided, as we might expect, by the principle of *kairos*, the right time, but by a limit, specifically an age limit. There was an age when it was no

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<sup>40</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 196; K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

longer considered good for a boy to play this game, to accept this role. We all know that the first beard is the fateful mark of the end of this period. "People criticized not only boys who were willing to play a role that no longer corresponded to their virility," Foucault writes, "but also men who frequented overaged boys."<sup>45</sup> What is contested, then, the source of the anxiety attending this ethics of sexual *aphrodisia*, is virility, and the feminine ambiguity perceived to be a component of the boy's desirability was something "from which the boy needed to protect himself and be protected."<sup>46</sup> And this brings us to another distinct feature of the moral problematization of pleasure in the case of boys. Whereas in the regimen of the body and the economics of marriage the voluntary moderation of the man was based on the man's relation to himself, in the erotic pleasures one takes with boys, there is an implied self-mastery on the part of the beloved as well as the lover, and an implied "relationship between their two moderations, expressed in their deliberate choice of one another."<sup>47</sup> What is this self-mastery in an unequal relation with another that conduces (*conduire*) to moderation? How does the asymmetry in the relation between a man and a boy color the Greek notion of *enkrateia*?

*Enkrateia* is ordinarily a relation an ethical subject takes up with respect to himself. It is a mastery of himself. This is not the same as the Christian sense of this term conceived as a mastery over the inner impulses or over temptations that threaten to overcome one. To this interiority, *enkrateia* generally poses an exteriority that is nonetheless a relation of one's self to oneself. It is the active form of achieving *sôphrosynê*, a power that enables one to resist, struggle and achieve domination in the use of the pleasures arrayed by the life one leads. In the classical arrangement, *enkrateia* is the opposite of *akrasia* and distinguishes the morally upright man from the one who is morally reproachable. The man who is enkratic is not deprived of pleasures nor is he unqualifiably virtuous. He is instead the one who has the strength to face up to his pleasures and use them in a way that maintains his domination over them. *Enkrateia* refers to the sphere of moral problematizations. The enkratic man is the one capable of facing his pleasures and using them freely and in a way that gives a beautiful form to his life. The life of self-mastery is supremely interesting. The life of the virtuous man—or the vicious man—is a bore.

There is a model that I believe represents the conflict and the beautiful form Foucault is attributing to self-mastery in the love of boys. It is grounded in the moral psychology of the first book, section thirteen, of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aristotle describes the soul as divided into a rational and an irrational part and the rational part into a part that holds reason's rules and a part that is deliberative; the irrational part is divided into a part that is vegetative and a part that desires.<sup>48</sup> *Enkrateia* and *akrasia* are concerned with the rational, deliberative and irrational, desiring parts of Aristotle's model of the soul. Now, the desiring part naturally seeks satisfaction. Desire so articulated is *orexis*, and the pleasures it seeks are im-

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>48</sup> Aristotelis, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Recognovit Brevique Adnotatione Critica Instruxit I. Bywater (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1894), 1102a26-03a10.

mediate and fleeting, like those that escape the leaky jar Socrates offers Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*.<sup>49</sup> They are also formless. Only on the condition that they are chosen can the pleasures sought by desire have a form. And choice, *proairêsis*, is a preference; according to Aristotle, it is a preference for what the deliberative part of the soul recommends as an alternative to immediate satisfaction.

As children, our desires are directed and our lives are given form by our parents. By listening to the reasons our parents give for preferring to do this rather than that, we chose to do things which conduce to forming the kind of character which or who can be the basis for our making these choices on our own. By habituating ourselves to doing what we ought, our own deliberative capacities develop and we find ourselves more and more regularly giving ourselves reasons for preferring this act rather than that. And importantly, Aristotle tells us, when we do what we ought, pleasure attends the accomplishment of that act and, Foucault would add, a desire is fueled to do more of the same kinds of acts. Aristotle makes the latter point by associating character with habit and habit with choice which is, of course, a form of desire, not yet the rational desire or *boulêsis* for happiness but a preference for what deliberation presents as an alternative to the fleeting and formless pleasure of mere satisfaction. Good character gives us pleasure. It results from a habitual choice or desire for what conduces (*conduire*) to good character in part because pleasure attends the accomplishment of that end.

When we listen to what reason recommends and we desire and find pleasure in what deliberation presents as a preferable course of action, on Aristotle's model, we are empowered. We master ourselves. We put ourselves in a relation to ourselves and give form to our lives by the pleasures we choose to put in practice. This is not a fixed state of the soul nor a victory won over impure impulses of the flesh. It is a mastering of pleasures presented to us. It is a choice of a use of pleasures that suits the individual we are and the status we seek to attain or maintain. Aristotle would say that the moderate individual is not the one who has no desires but the one who desires "only to a moderate degree, no more than he should nor when he should not."<sup>50</sup> As Diogenes Laertius has Aristippus putting it, "It is not abstinence from pleasures that is best, but mastery over them without ever being worsted."<sup>51</sup> Foucault calls this agonistics of the self with itself the "heautocratic structure of the subject."<sup>52</sup> It is a governing of oneself that requires not only education, *mathêsis* but more importantly an *askêsis*, an exercise of the soul, a way of attending to or caring for oneself.

This *epimeleia heautou*, care of the self, which was a precondition that had to be met before one was qualified to attend to the affairs of others or lead them, included not only the need to know (to know the things one does not know, to know that one is ignorant, to know

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<sup>49</sup> Platonis, *Opera*, TomvsIII, Tetrologia VI, Recognovit Breviqve Adnotatione Critica Instrvxit Ioanne Burnet (Oxonii: E Typograheo Clarendoniano, 190), *Gorgias* 493d5ff.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotelis, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 119a with the English translation used by Hurley from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, revised by J. L. Ackrill and J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, II.8.75.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 70.

one's own nature) [in other words, to "know oneself," *gnôthi seautou*], but to attend effectively to the self, and to exercise and transform oneself.<sup>53</sup>

*Enkrateia*, self-mastery, was a care one took of oneself through an exercise of the soul that brought one into an array of pleasures one had to be able to use *effectively*, freely and deliberately. *Enkrateia* was measured by its success, evident to everyone, of making oneself *a brilliant example of what it means to be alive*.

Only the accomplishment of this end, the publically evident capacity to govern oneself, entitled one to govern others, and as the role of a citizen in the city was to rule and not be ruled, self-mastery was the key to citizenship. Moral *askêsis*, thus, formed a part of the *paideia* of the one who would be free to play a role in the constitution of the city. "It had no need of separate methods," Foucault says; "gymnastics and endurance trials, music and the learning of vigorous manly rhythms, practice in hunting and warfare, concern with one's demeanor in public, acquiring the *aidôs* [or shame] that would lead to self-respect through the respect one showed for others," all of this was a part of the education, of what one needed to know, to be a citizen and a service to one's city.<sup>54</sup> This ascetics was not organized into a school or conceived as a corpus of techniques and practices specific to an "art of the soul." It was, rather, an important part, a crucial dimension of what transpired in the associations of men with boys, by the example a man gave of his mastery of himself and by the actions of the boy which tested the self-mastery a boy aspired to emulate.

As we've already noted, these aspirations were quite complex. What was at stake was a boy's honor and the risk of dishonor and shame was ever present. The *Erotic Essay* of Demosthenes gives detailed attention to the problematization of honor and shame in the relations of boys to men. It was all a matter of reputations, and as much as it was necessary to mind one's conduct while still young, one also had to look after the honor of younger men when one had grown older. The transitional stage, when the boy approached manhood, Foucault remarks, requires the greatest attention. The boy is tested by his lover. The older man will examine the demeanor of the boy's body, being careful to note any *rhathymia* or sluggishness that was a defamatory sign. He will examine his gaze in which *aidôs* and dignity can be read. He will examine his way of talking to test his ability to mix serious talk with casual conversation. He will also examine his acquaintances. The boy was subject to scrutiny on a scale that measured his preparation to become a man.

The Greek boy is pursued by would-be lovers because of the visible mark of his already estimable qualities, and to accept the advances of men, to enter the erotic game, was no disgrace. Not every advance is to be accepted, however, nor is every offer to be refused. The things to which one does or does not consent are never spelled out, no manual exists that gives explicit instructions, but, Foucault says, what one did and did not consent to must have been "common knowledge." And what it is most important to note is that the concern among the Greeks is not with being able to specify a code of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors but

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

“with characterizing the type of attitude, of the relationship with oneself that was required” to be admired by men.<sup>55</sup> The very demeanor of the boy is expected to show his capacity to prefer one advance over another, to prefer to hold his ground rather than yield, to remain strong in the face of the pleasures offered to him, to exhibit firmness and resolve, moderation and a developing mastery of oneself. In their relations with men, Foucault notes, boys come to exhibit a style of life based on a developed deliberative capacity to govern themselves in the face of the pleasures made available to them.

And what is crucial here is that this capacity develops in proportion as the boy becomes fit to be a man, to be active, to play a leading role in his city. And he would not prepare to play this role by being passive in his relations with men, allowing himself to be manipulated and dominated, offering his body to whomever it pleased, and however it pleased them, out of weakness, lust or self-interest.<sup>56</sup> “In sexual behavior,” Foucault writes, “there was one role that was intrinsically honorable and valorized without question: the one that consisted in being active, in dominating, in penetrating, in asserting one’s superiority.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, there was a problem, for boys and men, the problem we referred to above as the “antinomy of the boy.” To delight in and be active in the pleasure one took from a boy caused no problem for the Greeks, but that a boy who would be a free man was an object of pleasure and for that boy to acknowledge himself as such an object was the cause of tremendous difficulties for that boy and the *polis* more generally. And, yet, this noncoincidence was ethically necessary for the Greeks; it is the antinomy that constituted the moral problematization *par excellence*.

The desire that a man had for a beautiful boy was thought to be perfectly natural, but the “feminization” of one of the partners in the pleasures a man and boy took together was thought to be contrary to nature, *para physin*. To resolve this conflict, it was thought that the boy who acted properly in these relations did not share in the pleasure of the sexual relation in the same way that a woman did. He did not enjoy his role or experience pleasure in it. Rather the boy looks on, detached and sober at his lover intoxicated with love. The boy was expected to yield to the man only if he had feelings of admiration and gratitude, feelings that inclined him to want to please his lover. The young man “granted his favors,” Foucault tells us, “through a movement that yielded to a desire and a demand on the part of the other, but was not of the same nature.... The boy was not supposed to experience a physical pleasure,” Foucault continues; “he was not even supposed quite to take pleasure in the man’s pleasure; he was supposed to feel pleased about giving pleasure to the other, provided he yielded when he should—that is, not too hastily, nor too reluctantly either.”<sup>58</sup> There is clearly a beauty in this giving and taking, and there are pleasures abounding and complex, shared and distributed, among the partners in this relation. But where’s the relation to knowledge and the love of truth we promised above?

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 224.

We've seen the knowledge. In the case of the older man, knowledge is there not so much in the pearls of wisdom—about the city, about its constitution, about its sacred precincts, its heroes and its privileged citizens—shared with the boy, but in the share afforded to himself by the *askêseis* or “practices of the self” (*pratique du soi*) that make him more of a man than he was or might have been apart from these relations. His comportment toward the boys he loves makes him aware of his station and aware of the responsibility he has to his city. It makes him more of a man than he would be apart from these practices of pleasure. In the case of the boy, we find knowledge in his becoming a man by negotiating this complex economy that makes him the kind of object of pleasure for men when he is young, prepares him to take a wife and sire legitimate heirs when he becomes a man as well as to impart to those younger than him a model of self-mastery and self-control that will inspire them to become active participants in the politics of the city.

As for the truth? We ordinarily associate truth with knowledge, measuring claims to knowledge more or less dialectically against the standard of the truth. In his writings in the 1970s, Foucault famously associated knowledge with power and at the same time demoted the truth to a network of truths that serve the strategically unstable relations of power. It is somewhat surprising, then, to find, in *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault favorably associating truth with freedom, *eleutheria*, and love. The freedom he appears to favor is, as you must suspect by now, the freedom that comes from being able to do what is best with the pleasures that present themselves for use by an already free man. “To be free in relations to pleasures was to be free of their authority; it was not to be their slave.”<sup>59</sup> But this freedom was more than nonenslavement. “It was a power one brought to bear on oneself” as much as it was “the power that one exercised over others.”<sup>60</sup> Mastery was an active form of freedom and the decidedly “virile” character of moderation. (A man who was not sufficiently in control of his pleasures was considered “feminine.”) And truth constituted an essential element in the moderation that was the goal of that mastery.

In the narrative of the *Phaedrus*, the truth plays a fundamental role in revealing the nature of the human and the divine soul. “The relation to the truth is at the same time,” Foucault writes, “what founds Eros in its movement, its force, and its intensity, and what helps it to become detached from all physical enjoyment, enabling it to become true love.”<sup>61</sup> True love, we recall, is the theme of Plato's *Symposium*. The dialogue proceeds from a discussion of erstwhile amorous behavior to an inquiry into the true nature of love itself, from the question of a boy's honor to the mystery that is the love of the truth of the Form of being Beautiful. What is distinctive about Plato's account is the way he appears to establish the inferiority of the love of beautiful bodies. However, though this love is devalued and inferior, and though the love of beautiful bodies is dangerous, Plato does not exclude the body out of hand nor condemn it for all time. Rather, for Plato, Foucault tells us, “it is not the exclusion of the body that characterizes true love in a fundamental way; it is rather that, beyond the appearances of the object,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 88.



love is a relation to truth."<sup>62</sup> There is a fundamental and necessary connection between the love of beautiful boys and a love of the truth of the Beautiful itself.

But if such Eros is a relation to the truth, then the lover and the beloved can only be joined if both of them are moved in the direction of truth by the force of the same Eros. That is, the beloved must himself become a subject and not just an object in this love relation. Unlike what occurs in the Renaissance art of courtly love, this ancient Greek "dialectic of love" calls for two movements exactly alike on the part of the lover and the beloved; "the love is the same for both of them, since it is the motion that carries them toward the truth."<sup>63</sup> Socratic erotics tries to determine the self-movement, the kind of effort and work on themselves and one another that will enable the lover and beloved to elicit and establish their mutual relation toward the beautiful and the true. This is what Plato attempted to illustrate in the portraits of Socrates, the lover becoming beloved, and Alcibiades, the beloved becoming lover, in the *Symposium*. What is at stake, at bottom and always, is a way of stylizing and, thus, giving shape and form to the love shared by men and boys. It is not simply a matter of a man becoming master of his pleasures but of a man knowing how one can make allowances for the freedom of the other in the mastery that one exercises over oneself and in the true love that one bears for that other.

Near the beginning of the interview with Dreyfus and Rabinow concluded on the afternoon he collapsed before getting to D. A. Miller's car, Foucault is asked "what will come next" after the two volumes in the "sex series," here identified as *L'Usage des plaisirs* and *Les Aveux de la chair*.<sup>64</sup> *Le Souci de soi*, translated into English as *Care of the Self*, is described there as "a book separate from the sex series."<sup>65</sup> "Well," Foucault answers, "I'm going to take care of myself!"<sup>66</sup> In the ellipsis transcribed as following this exclamation, we are tempted to insert Foucault's characteristic laughter, even (especially?) if this interview is conducted just one year before Foucault would succumb from complications brought on by HIV. He was already sick, but in his answer to the question put by Dreyfus and Rabinow, from what we have said above, Foucault was likely referring only indirectly to his health. For the author of *The Use of Pleasure*, taking care of himself entailed primarily knowing and mastering himself, drawing up an array of pleasures specific to his body, intensified by skilled use, enjoyed in the right measure, at the right time and given a style that made his life an *oeuvre*, a brilliant and beautiful example of what it means to be alive.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>64</sup> *Les Aveux de la chair*, an unfinished manuscript, is privately held in the Foucault archive and cannot be published due to restrictions imposed by Foucault's estate. See Jeremy Carrette, "Prologue to a confession of the flesh," in *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, ed. Jeremy Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1-47.

<sup>65</sup> Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," Interview with Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 230-31. See Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Volume 3*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Book, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> Dreyfus and Rabinow, 231.

Foucault's aim was not to become an ancient Greek. As he said, again and again, Foucault was not seeking to retrieve an alternative ethical model, not seeking a solution to the problematics of our time in the solution to the problematics of another time.<sup>67</sup> The "sex series" was an extended genealogy of the desiring subject, the subject who would be persuaded to follow the lead of another, the subject who would obey, the subject who would be a sheep. This subject was compelled to trace the inner workings of a disposition his soul had been taught to internalize, to treat this disposition as his secret truth and to repress that disposition with a heretofore unseen vigilance. Using genealogy to establish a critical distance from the present, Foucault shows that this desiring subject (and this structure of desire as lack) is not natural but an effect of complex and imbricated institutional practices.

It was not always so. For the ancient Greeks, acts and the pleasures associated with them were the most important thing and, after that, desire for the same acts and pleasures. Pleasures, among the Greeks, were associated with the dispositions of the body (not the soul) toward the sexual act, the marriage relation, the love of boys and the truth. Foucault says "there is no exemplary value in a period which is not our period," so if there is anything of value to be gained from this genealogy it can only be as

an example of an ethical experience which implied a very strong connection between pleasure and desire. If we compare that to our experience now, where everybody—the philosopher or the psychoanalyst [or the priest]—explains that what is important is desire, and pleasure is nothing at all, we can wonder whether this disconnection wasn't an historical event, one which was not at all necessary, not linked to human nature or to any anthropological necessity.<sup>68</sup>

It was the analysis of governmentality that led Foucault to refine a concept of the desiring subject—a subject who above all desires to be governed, who desires to obey, who conceives of his desire as lack, who accepts this lack as his truth—and to isolate in a genealogy of that subject the discontinuity in the "natural" and anthropological "necessity" of that subject and, in this genealogy, to establish a critical reflection on our modern times.

In the experiments he conducted in San Francisco and elsewhere, Foucault was arguably attempting to master the pleasures associated with *his* body and *his* acts, to define a restricted array of *his* pleasures, to refine and intensify them, to come to desire just those acts which produced, refined and intensified *these* pleasures. Sluga says about the place of the leather scene in these experiments that "it raised the possibility of power relations that simply didn't run in one direction: the master and the slave could reverse roles, it was an ambiguous relationship."<sup>69</sup> The ambiguity was not in a transfer of power from one man to the other. It was, rather, ideally, reciprocal, with each man modeling a form of mastery of their respective roles for the other. It was also governed by pleasures and acts and not by a desire which re-

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>69</sup> Miller, 345.

vealed the secret of who a man was. If there was desire, it was a desire to order and give form to an array of pleasures that signed a mastery of oneself, that made one's role in this relationship compelling, that more broadly, beyond the parameters of this relation, made one's life a brilliant and beautiful example of what it means to be alive.

To die from these experiments, "for the love of boys," but not just from these experiments, for the love of women or the laws or art and beauty itself, to die for the love of the truth, is to have lived a brilliant and beautiful life. Foucault's life is an instance and not an example or a plan for refining and intensifying an array of pleasures that give form to our own bodies, our own lives, our own loves. Power in the form of government, in variously complex and insidious ways, wants to specify what pleasures are possible, what lives productive, what loves permissible. We counter "the grips of power" when we instantiate in ourselves, make for ourselves a way of life that is outstanding among our peers, distinctive and distinguished, an *oeuvre* that can endure beyond our ephemeral existence. If there is an ethics in Foucault's life and work, it is not the injunction to make one's life a work of art, a static form to be appreciated at a distance. It is rather the aesthetic invitation to become a vibrant, fluid, refined and beautiful realization of what it means to be alive. We would do well to accept this invitation.

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