

ARTICLE

The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault's Lecture Series *L'Herméneutique du Sujet*

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ABSTRACT: The 'late' Foucault and his purported 'return to the subject' is a much discussed issue. Over the past twenty years, various suggestions have been made as to how to integrate Foucault's ethics into his oeuvre as a whole. This paper holds that there is a 'conceptual continuity', rather than a break, between Foucault's earlier works on normalizing power, and his later works on ethical self-constitution. On the basis of a conceptual framework, which is developed in Section II, a reading of two themes concerning certain practices of the self is offered in the following sections (namely, dietetics and spiritual guidance). The material, drawn from the recently published lecture series *L'herméneutique du sujet* as well as from other published works, is related back to Foucault's ideas on the process of 'subjectivation', in order to support the claim that 'fabrication' and 'self-constitution' are but two aspects of subjectivation.

I. Introduction

While in his earlier works, Foucault deals with topics such as "Man's death" in the western "epistêmê", or with mechanisms of how subjects are "fabricated" and subjugated by disciplinary power, in his later works, beginning with the second volume of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault develops an ethics that is based on a model of aesthetic self-fashioning. It is based on concepts such as "aesthetics of existence", "ethics of the self", or "care of the self".¹ These very concepts, along with the theories they are

1 The notion of "aesthetics of existence" refers to an understanding of ethics that derives from the philosophies of post-classical Greece and the Roman Empire, and these are the same sources that Foucault uses for his re-interpretation. The idea it refers to was called "ethics" in Antiquity, in the sense of a personal "ethos" (cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame (Indiana): University of Notre Dame Press, 2nd edition 1984), chap. 4) The idea of "Art", which is implied by the term "aesthetics", was always understood as an "imitation of life" in ancient philosophy (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1. 1447a). Hence, life itself cannot be interpreted as an "Art" in the sense of "aesthetics". The ancient notion of "*tekhnê tou biou*", i.e. the "art of living", bears a different use of the term, as in "the art of woodcarving", (cf. Julia Annas, "Virtue as a Skill," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 3 (1995): 227-243). While the idea behind it clearly derives from ancient

embedded in, have given rise to the hypothesis of a “return of the subject” in Foucault’s later philosophy.

The “late Foucault” is probably one of the most widely discussed topics in research published on Foucault. A popular view on this late period holds that at some point in his oeuvre, Foucault turned away from analysing the power/knowledge mechanisms that *fabricate* subjects, and turned to analysing how subjects *constitute* themselves.² This view sometimes implies the idea that these notions, “constitution” and “fabrication”, refer to two *distinct* phenomena.³ In this paper, I will argue against this view. Instead of a “return of the subject”, I will advocate the view that on the theme of subjectivity, we find a conceptual continuity traversing the whole of Foucault’s oeuvre, rather than a rupture that separates the “early” from the “late” Foucault.

Assuming we granted the idea that the “subject” in Foucault’s later work is ontologically different from the one we find in his earlier work, we would have to assume that at the respective point in Foucault’s oeuvre, there is some sort of turn or even rupture in his thinking. And this can in turn be evaluated either positively or negatively. Those that have criticised Foucault

thought, the notion of “aesthetics of existence”, which plays on the ambiguity of the word “art”, is a Foucauldian term. Recently, another aspect of this notion has been pointed out by Joseph Tanke (cf. his “Cynical aesthetics: A theme from Michel Foucault’s 1984 lectures at the Collège de France,” *Philosophy Today* 46, 2 (2002): 170-184). Tanke reports Foucault’s comparison of the way of life of the early Cynics to that of contemporary artists, pointing out that the forms of likening one’s life to one’s thinking involved in both of them are essentially the same. This is an idea that may also be implied to Foucault’s notion of the “aesthetics” of existence.

2 Cf. Peter Dews, “The Return of the Subject in the Late Foucault,” *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989): 37-41; Jerold J Abrams, “Aesthetics of self-fashioning and cosmopolitanism: Foucault and Rorty on the art of living,” *Philosophy Today* 46, 2 (2002): 185-192; Ian Burkitt, “Technologies of the Self: Habitus and Capacities,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, 2 (2002): 219-237.

3 Cf. Thomas Flynn, who holds that the philosophy of the late Foucault “fills in a gap in ‘structuralist’ historiography, namely, the absence of the individual, responsible agent”, p. 538 of his “Truth and Subjectivation in the later Foucault,” *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 531-540; furthermore: Tina Besley, “Social Education and Mental Hygiene: Foucault, disciplinary technologies and the moral constitution of youth,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 34, 4 (2002): 419-433; James D. Faubion, “Toward an Anthropology of Ethics: Foucault and the Pedagogies of Autopoiesis,” Edith Wyschogrod (ed.), *The Ethical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003): 146-165; also: Rob Devos, “The Return of the Subject in Michel Foucault,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76, 2 (2002): 255-280: “In processes of self-constitution the subject is not only target and effect. The individual turns himself into a subject. Here we find an active ‘I’ at work, who does not coincide with himself, but who objectifies himself and forms himself into a subject” (p. 278); Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living. Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 180.

for participating in the eradication of the subject in his earlier works will be likely to acclaim his return to the subject.⁴ Others may see it as an inconsistency in the global layout of Foucault's philosophy.⁵ An interesting attempt to avoid this second-level debate altogether has been made by Richard Bernstein⁶ and (more recently) Amy Allen⁷, who simply argue that there had never been a "death of the subject" in Foucault's philosophy at all, and that hence, there is no "return" of it either.⁸

My argument is inspired by one of Foucault's own remarks. Foucault scholars tend to locate his turn at the point where he focuses on ancient philosophy, i.e., from the second volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1984), seen from the perspective of all his published works. However, various texts published earlier hint at a period of transition. The question is, how far back do we have to push Foucault's entry into his last period? One of Foucault's own statements during an interview is enlightening about this matter:

I am currently rereading the manuscripts that I wrote for this history of morals, and which concern the beginning of Christianity... I must say that it poses a problem for me, because this break did not appear progressively. It was in a very abrupt manner, from 1975-1976, that I completely abandoned this [former] style, insofar as I had it in mind to write a history of the subject, which would not be that of an event that would have taken place one day,

4 Famous critics of Foucault's philosophy, some of which remain unreconciled even with his late period, include: Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1987), chap. 9 and 10; Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1991), chap. 4.6; Thomas McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," *ibid.*, *Ideals and Illusions: On Deconstruction and Reconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1991); Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault," David Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," *Foucault: A Critical Reader*.

5 Cf. Flynn, "Truth and Subjectivation in the later Foucault".

6 Richard Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1992), 154.

7 Amy Allen, "The anti-subjective hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the death of the subject," *The Philosophical Forum* 31, 2 (2000): 113-130.

8 Another interesting contribution to the debate – which would actually render the debate itself superfluous – was made by Frédéric Gros, the editor of Foucault's lecture series on *L'Herméneutique du Sujet* (cf. his "Sujet moral et soi éthique chez Foucault," *Archives de Philosophie* 65, 2 (2002): 229-237). Gros does not think that what has come to be called Foucault's "philosophy of the subject" was part of Foucault's own philosophy. Rather, we should take notions such as "technologies of the self" and "relation to self" as a "reading grid for historical phenomena" (229: "*grilles de lecture de phénomènes historiques*"). However, numerous statements made by Foucault in essays or interviews suggest that his interest in the "technologies of the self" goes beyond a purely historical one.

and of which it would have been necessary to describe the genesis and the outcome.⁹

Going by Foucault's own recollections of the progress of his work, we would have to reassign at least the lecture series "*Society must be defended*" (1975/76), to the last period of Foucault's thinking, thus locating it *beyond* the alleged turning point in his philosophy.¹⁰ This volume, mainly concerned with the workings of discipline in society, would then form part of his last period. This suggests that when he turned to re-interpreting ancient moral philosophy, Foucault was in fact not doing something completely unprecedented. We seem to have gotten the categories of classification wrong. What Foucault himself saw as his last turning point was the project of writing a "history of the subject", as he mentions in the above interview, and not his turn to ethics.¹¹ Seen from the broader perspective of his "history of the subject", the mechanisms and techniques of how subjects constitute themselves as moral agents are inseparably linked to his analyses of the techniques of "subjection" or "subjugation" ("*assujettissement*").¹² Foucault himself seems always to have thought of the moral self-constitution as a derivative of, or a complement to, the constitution of subjects through normalizing power and subjugation. The genesis of the subject essentially includes these two sides: subjection and self-constitution. Prompted by the above chronological observation, I will explore this idea further by way of a conceptual argument.

A recently published lecture series, held by Foucault at the Collège de France in the session of 1981 to 1982, entitled *L'Herméneutique du Sujet*¹³, sheds

9 "Le retour de la morale," *Dits et Ecrits* (= DE) IV, no. 354, 697: "Je suis en train de relire les manuscrits que j'ai écrits pour cette histoire de la morale et qui concernent le début du christianisme [...] En relisant ces manuscrits abandonnés depuis longtemps, je retrouve le même refus du style des Mots et les Choses, de *L'Histoire de la Folie* ou de Raymond Roussel. Je dois dire que ça me fait problème, parce que cette rupture ne s'est pas produite progressivement. C'est très brusquement, dès 1975-1976, que je me suis tout à fait départi de ce style, dans la mesure où j'avais en tête de faire une histoire du sujet, qui ne soit pas celle d'un événement qui se serait produit un jour et dont il aurait fallu raconter la genèse et l'aboutissement." (Note: this and all subsequent translations are mine, S.H.).

10 The case with the other works from this period, i.e., *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), is doubtful. Thorough scholarly inquiry would have to be conducted into the question of how far Foucault's preliminary studies for these works actually date back in time.

11 Cf. also: "Le sujet et le pouvoir," DE IV, no. 306, 222sq., and: *L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001 [orig. published in 1984]), 12 et seq.

12 Cf. Wilhelm Schmid, *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Lebenskunst: die Frage nach dem Grund und die Neubegründung der Ethik bei Foucault* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 82; and: James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought* (New Jersey/ London: Humanities Press, 1990), 123.

13 Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet, Cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)*, édition établie sous la direction de François Ewald et Alessandro Fontana, par Frédéric Gros (Paris: Seuil/ Gallimard, 2001).

new light on this relation between (heteronomous) constitution and (autonomous¹⁴) self-constitution of subjects. It contains numerous recurring themes of “discipline” and “surveillance”, which I will point out in order to corroborate the thesis that fabrication and self-constitution of subjects are but two sides of the same coin, and that hence, there is no ontological difference between the subject in the “early” and the “late” Foucault.

II. The Conceptual Framework of Subjectivity

First, the notion of “*assujettissement*”¹⁵, well known from earlier works, reappears in Foucault’s later texts. It initially referred to the influence of normalizing power on individuals, which in turn “produces” or “fabricates” subjects. In the later texts, it appears again in the analysis of ethical self-constitution by way of ascetic practices. This is especially evident in one of the readily accessible texts, *The Use of Pleasure*.¹⁶ Foucault says that for a given type of action, there are different possible ways to “conduct oneself” (“*se conduire*”). Two instances of a given type of action may be identical in respect of the positive properties that we may use to describe either of them; they may also be identical in respect of a moral law that they seem to abide by. However, the *relation to self* (“*rapport à soi*”) that is involved in each of the two instances may be different in significant ways. This is the way that an individual submits to a certain rule of conduct.¹⁷ By employing the idea of “*assujettissement*” (i.e., of submitting to a rule) for his analysis of ancient ethics, Foucault analyses ethics in terms of his models of power and government, well known from his earlier period. The difference, here, obviously does not lie in the area of the “content” of the practice of self-government, but rather in its “attitude”.¹⁸ This is what ultimately determines whether a given practice – disciplinary as it may be in either case – serves as a “practice of freedom” or of subjugation.

14 This term is to be taken as the opposite of “heteronomous” in a conventional, and not in a Kantian sense.

15 This is generally translated as “subjectivation”. Two considerations seem to advise against this translation. First, Foucault himself uses the French term “*subjectivation*”, the translation of which would result in ambiguity between this and the formerly mentioned term of “*assujettissement*”. Second, the French term “*assujettissement*” has a dominant aspect of “submitting-to”, “subjection”, or even “subjugation”, as with a tyrant ruling over his subjects.

16 *L’Usage des Plaisirs*, 33-37.

17 Foucault uses the character of King Nicocles to illustrate his point: whereas he is faithful to his wife because he strives for self-mastery, the commitment to marital faithfulness in Christian doctrine was based on divine commandment.

18 Christoph Menke, “Two Kinds of Practice: On the Relation between Social Discipline and the Aesthetics of Existence,” *Constellations* 10, 2 (2003): 199-210 (208 *et seq.*).

Second, in Foucault's conception of an "aesthetics of existence", the notion of "discipline" that he employed to analyse the "disciplinary society" plays an equally important role. When Foucault speaks of an "art of living", he refers to the ancient "*tekhnê*" with its set of secondary virtues. "*Tekhnê*" implies proper training and exercise in order for a person to bring it to perfection. And we can actually observe Foucault using the same schema on these ascetic practices, exercises and techniques, as he used in his analysis of the disciplinary conditioning of behaviour. (Foucault uses the term "*dressage*", which refers to the taming of animals.) Disciplinary practices decompose human life and recompose it on the support of a very powerful structure.

Third, we can follow the ramifications of Foucault's notion of "surveillance" into his later texts. Of course, the instances of this notion have by then undergone some variations. But we may still say that the idea of "spiritual guidance" in the later texts occupies the position of what is called "surveillance" in the earlier works. "Spiritual guidance" is Foucault's concept for the ancient teacher-student relationship. The conceptual link between discipline and surveillance is already being pointed out in *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault writes that "the exercise of discipline requires a device that constrains by the game of the gaze".¹⁹ The supervisor's gaze can either be direct, as when the supervisor is a perceivable presence for the person being supervised, or else the gaze can be indirect, as in the case of the famous "panopticon" which Foucault analyses at length. Here, the supervisor's presence cannot be perceived by the person being supervised. This second case marks a turning point because it can give rise to the third form of surveillance, which is the imaginary gaze: independently of the fact of whether the supervisor is present or not, the supervised person acts under his imaginary gaze, because the supervisor's presence or absence cannot be known by the supervised person. In this third case, individuals are being trained to discipline *themselves*. Here again, we find the same model in Foucault's analysis of spiritual guidance: the master can be in direct contact with his student, or in an exchange of written correspondence, or again the student can be asked to write regular reports for the attention of an imaginary addressee. This conception of spiritual guidance is, of course, drawn directly from the ancient sources: consider, e.g., Epictetus' famous exhortation to his disciples, saying that they should live as if he was constantly watching them.²⁰ The common denominator of all of these examples is a certain conception of "power".²¹ And this is what allows us to find a continuity between Foucault's

19 *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 173: "*l'exercice de la discipline suppose un dispositif qui contraigne par le jeu du regard*".

20 Reported in Seneca, *Epistulae*, 32, 1.

21 Richard Lynch also argues for a continuity in Foucault's conception of power (cf. his "Is power all there is? Michel Foucault and the 'omnipresence' of power relations," *Philosophy Today* 42, 1 (1998): 65-70). However, his analysis focuses on power relations

earlier works on normalizing power and later works on ethical self-constitution. A subject arises through various modes of “subjectivation”, some of them through normalizing power mechanisms, others through technologies or practices of the self (“*pratiques de soi*”). But the subject really is and remains only a “hollow gap” in the field of power relations.²² This conception rests on two premises, one of which I will call the “Nietzschean theory of power”²³, the other of which is the premise of “anti-essentialism”. According to the latter, every entity is determined by something else with which or whom it is in a relationship of power. From a genealogical perspective, that which allegedly is a thing’s essence is constructed from “the other”, or from an “*altérité*”, as Foucault puts it. The core of things, their essence, really is formed by the “outside” (“*le dehors*”). Thus, since there is no such thing as a substantial subject, since man does not possess an immutable human nature, mankind’s subjectivity needs to be constructed, as Foucault says, “piece by piece from figures other than themselves”.²⁴ Hence, the question of who we are, i.e., the question concerning the subject’s essence, is not a matter of *metaphysics*, but of *interpretation*, where this term has to be taken in a very specific sense:

If to interpret means to seize, by violence or by deceit, a system of rules that does not have any essential signification in itself, and to impose upon it a [new] direction, to bend it to a new will, to insert it into a different game and to submit it to secondary rules, if so, then the destiny of humanity is a series of interpretations.²⁵

in the “social landscape”. As I will argue in this paper, the full scope of Foucault’s conception of power is revealed only by interpreting it as a quasi-metaphysical notion. On Foucault’s analytics of power, cf. also: Hinrich Fink-Eitel, “Michel Foucaults Analytik der Macht,” Friedrich A. Kittler (ed.), *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften. Programme des Poststrukturalismus* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1980): 38-78; and: Roger Deacon, “An analytics of power relations: Foucault on the history of discipline,” *History of the Human Sciences* 15, 1 (2002): 89–117.

- 22 The term is drawn from: Kirsten Hebel, “Dezentrierung des Subjekts in der Selbstsorge. Zum ästhetischen Aspekt einer nicht-normativen Ethik bei Foucault,” G. Gamm, G. Kimmerle (eds.), *Ethik und Ästhetik: nachmetaphysische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1990): 226-241.
- 23 Foucault explicitly refers his own model to Nietzsche’s theory, which he calls “*l’hypothèse de Nietzsche*”, Michel Foucault, “*Il faut défendre la société*”, *Cours au Collège de France (1975-1976)*, édition établie sous la direction de François Ewald et Alessandro Fontana, par Mauro Bertani et Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1997), 17.
- 24 “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” *DE* II, no. 84, 138: “pièce à pièce à partir de figures qui lui sont étrangères”.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 146: “Si interpréter, c’était mettre lentement en lumière une signification enfouie dans l’origine, seule la métaphysique pourrait interpréter le devenir de l’humanité. Mais si interpréter, c’est s’emparer, par violence ou subreption, d’un système de règles qui n’a pas en soi de signification essentielle, et lui imposer une direction, le ployer à une volonté nouvelle, le

Just as much as Nietzsche is in opposition to classical hermeneutics in the wake of Schleiermacher, interpretation for Foucault is a power game. And this is where the Nietzschean theory of power comes into play. By using the above terminology, we can say: individuals are being interpreted or interpret themselves, not in the sense of discovering their innermost essence, but in the sense of being submitted to relationships of force or voluntarily applying them to themselves.²⁶ Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow call this the “malleability” of individuals.²⁷ They are, so to speak, the malleable material on which the processes of subjectivation are at work.

One may wonder why I have so far spoken about “relationships of power”, since at least in one respect, we would conventionally assume a unidirectional model of power. This is seemingly the case in relationships of domination: one person or group exercises power over another person or group. However, when speaking of “force”, we are theoretically compelled to analyse not *a* force, but a *field* of forces. This phenomenon is well known from elementary physics, and I will call it the principle of action and reaction. Let us stay within the conceptual field of the above quoted notion of “malleability” and consider the following example: if we use a hammer to strike a blow at a block of marble, that block would immediately shatter into pieces if it did not in some way offer resistance. That is why shattering a block of marble with a hammer may be quite an exhausting task. It is this physical effect of two forces encountering each other, according to the principle of action and reaction, which enables a sculptor to sculpt a block of marble into a new shape. Thus, shape or form is the effect of an encounter of two or more forces. The philosophical version of this idea derives from Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze puts it this way: “Every force is in a relationship with others, in order either to obey or to command. That which defines a body is this relationship between dominant and dominated forces”.²⁸ This observation of Deleuze’s also applies surprisingly well to Foucault, considering the latter’s analysis of the “fabrication”²⁹ of “docile bodies” in *Discipline and Punish*.³⁰

faire entrer dans un autre jeu et le soumettre à des règles secondes, alors le devenir de l’humanité est une série d’interprétations.”

26 Hence, Schmid calls Foucault’s theory of subjectivation an “exoteric theory of subjectivity” (Schmid, *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Lebenskunst*, 248 et seq.).

27 Cf.: Hubert Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (University of Chicago Press, second edition, 1983), 143 et seq.

28 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1973), 45: “Toute force est en rapport avec d’autres, soit pour obéir, soit pour commander. Ce qui définit un corps est ce rapport entre des forces dominantes et des forces dominées.”

29 “Il faut défendre la société”, 39.

30 Cf. Foucault’s remarks on power in: “L’intellectuel et les pouvoirs,” *DE IV*, no. 359, 750sq.: “Le pouvoir, c’est essentiellement des relations, c’est-à-dire ce qui fait que les individus, les êtres humains sont en relation les uns avec les autres, non pas simplement sous la forme de la communication d’un sens, pas simplement sous la forme du désir, mais

Deleuze uses a slight variation of his terminology in his book on Foucault. There, he writes that “form is a compound[ed] of relationships of force”.³¹

The process of self-constitution is situated in a field of forces and starts out through a relationship to others, which in turn aims at producing a relation to self (“*rapport à soi*”). This is achieved by way of certain ascetic technologies of the self, which one practices first under supervision of a master. This relationship is then replicated inside the subject, who will eventually take a “transcendental position” towards him- or herself.³² This is evident when we consider that in ascetic practices, *one* works on *oneself*. The ethical relationship to oneself, i.e., self-constitution, is actually a “fold-back” (“*repli*”) of the force.³³ Force, which is to govern and dominate others, is being bent back on the subject itself. Deleuze calls this the “self-affection” (“*auto-affectation*”) of the force. Thus, self-constitution is derivative of the governmental mode of power. In this respect, we need to remember that “force” is not a good or an item that can be possessed, it is a field-effect. Self-affection can only take place after the force has been established in a field of relationships with others.

This is why the mode of the relationship to others that the subject practices will be the primordial determining factor of the mode of the relation to self that is being aimed at. After all, the relationship between the self (“*soi*”) and the other (“*autrui*”) will be reconstructed within the subject in order to become the permanent support for the care that the subject has for him- or herself. So indeed, as Menke goes on to claim in the above quoted passage, “practice itself is ambiguous”.³⁴ There is no difference in content between disciplinary and ethical practices. Because Foucault conceives of (ethical) self-constitution by the same principles that underlie the (heteronomous) constitution of subjects, both phenomena are equally subordinate to a common species, which is “subjectivation” in general. Interestingly, this latter notion had been the subject matter of Foucault’s thinking long before his alleged “ethical turn”. My intention so far has been to point out how Foucault’s earlier and later thinking on subjectivity are compatible and continuous, and more specifically regarding my present argument, how

également sous une certaine forme qui leur permet d’agir les uns sur les autres et, si vous voulez, en donnant un sens très large à ce mot, de se ‘gouverner’ les uns les autres.”

31 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 131: “forme est un composé de rapports de forces”.

32 Cf. *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 56. Newman calls this the “fictional division” inside the subject while involved in ascetic practices (cf.: Robert J. Newman, “*Cotidie meditare*. Theory and Practice of the *meditatio* in Imperial Stoicism,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, part II, vol. 36. 3: 1473-1517 (1480)).

33 Already, in the text “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”, dating from 1964, we can read that Foucault defines “*profondeur*” as “*une plie de la surface*”, an idea which was to become the leitmotiv in his ethical thought, 15 years later.

34 Menke, “Two Kinds of Practice...,” 208 *et seq.*

Foucault's account of the "fabrication" of subjects through disciplinary power carries over into his late work on ethical self-constitution.³⁵

I have tried to provide a conceptual framework for the theme of "subjectivation", drawn from a variety of sources in Foucault and research on his work. This section should be taken as a theoretical guideline for my discussion of Foucault's actual analyses, and not as a theory for its own sake. In the following sections, I will propose a reading of two conceptions that form part of Foucault's aesthetics of existence: "dietetics" and "spiritual guidance"³⁶. Both are ascetic practices, used for the goal of ethical self-constitution that we find in Foucault's latest texts. My aim will be to point out the novel perspective that *L'Herméneutique du Sujet* provides for understanding these concepts, sometimes referring to other later works by Foucault, sometimes drawing from the above-mentioned lecture series itself.

35 My conceptual analysis establishes that the notion of "subjectivation", along Foucault's own lines, equally comprises the aspects of "fabrication" and ethical "self-constitution". The argument that I put forward in my paper explicitly holds that – in contrast to rivalling interpretations of Foucault's later thinking on ethics – ethical *self-constitution* implies the same practices – in terms of "content" – as the *fabrication* of subjects. An interesting question, which I unfortunately cannot deal with in the present paper, would be whether my argument is reversible. This is to say that, if I have successfully demonstrated how themes from the earlier work carry over into Foucault's later thinking, is it also true that some form of self-subjectivation can be found in his earlier work on normalizing power? Along with this goes the question of whether the two aspects of subjectivation, which I have viewed conceptually, are actually fully developed in every instance of the theme, or whether this is only the case in Foucault's later work. I wish to thank my anonymous referees for drawing my attention to this point.

36 There is rich evidence and documentation of Foucault's interest in issues of education and education policy from very early on in his career. In 1965, Foucault ran for the post of Vice Director of Tertiary Education of the Humanities in the French Ministry of Education (*DE I*, "Chronologie," 27 [January 1965]); in the end, he was not elected, allegedly because of a campaign that exploited his sexual orientation (*ibid.* [May 1965]). Theoretical evidence in this issue can be found above all in a text from 1984, where Foucault takes a retrospective view on his activities in that field ("*L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté*," *DE IV*, no. 356, 727: "*Prenons aussi quelque chose qui a été l'objet de critiques souvent justifiées: l'institution pédagogique. Je ne vois pas où est le mal dans la pratique de quelqu'un qui, dans un jeu de vérité donné, sachant plus qu'un autre, lui dit ce qu'il faut faire, lui apprend, lui transmet un savoir, lui communique des techniques; le problème est plutôt de savoir comment on va éviter dans ces pratiques – où le pouvoir ne peut pas ne pas jouer et où il n'est pas mauvais en soi – les effets de domination qui vont faire qu'un gosse sera soumis à l'autorité arbitraire et inutile d'un instituteur, un étudiant sous la coupe d'un professeur autoritaire, etc. Je crois qu'il faut poser ce problème en termes de règles de droit, de techniques rationnelles de gouvernement et d'éthos, de pratique de soi et de liberté*").

III. Dietetics

Dietetic practices are an example of disciplinary practices applied by the subject to him- or herself. The relevance of dietetics for a philosophical way of life was discovered in Antiquity (remember the dietary rules of the Pythagoreans), and was certainly brought to Foucault's attention by the works of Nietzsche.³⁷ In dietetics, philosophy associates itself with medicine, and to be more specific, with a type of medical science that was more common in Antiquity than nowadays, one that is concerned with instructions and precepts on how to live a healthy life. Such an art of living combines philosophy, as a therapy of soul and mind, and medicine, as a therapy of the body. This is why Nietzsche, whose philosophy is certainly less of a doctrinal system than it is an art of living, calls the proper philosopher a "philosopher-physician".³⁸

According to Foucault, the link between philosophy and medicine was wrought at the "golden age of self-concern", which he situates in the first and second centuries A.D., i.e., during the epoch of Hellenistic philosophy under the Roman Empire.³⁹ At that time, the "self-concern" (*"epimeleia heautou"*) had become coextensive with the human lifespan, whereas in the epoch of Plato it had been a task solely for young men during their education as citizens and possible future rulers. Thus, since one was supposed to practice self-concern throughout one's life, philosophical practice was assimilated to some sort of medical practice⁴⁰, and, to be more specific, to prophylactic medicine.⁴¹ The aim was to maintain and to fully develop a state of health and physical fitness that may never have been present in the individual, but was nonetheless indicated by the natural constitution of the individual, as a sort of *telos*.

Medicine was, therefore, not conceived of simply as a technique of intervention, appealing to remedies or surgery in the case of illness. As a form of knowledge, it was also meant to define a way of life, a mode of reflective relationship to oneself, to one's body, to food, to waking and

37 Cf. for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Aurora*, book five, no. 553.

38 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Foreword, no. 2.

39 *L'herméneutique du sujet*, 79.

40 *Ibid.*, 94.

41 Cf. Wolfgang Detel, *Macht, Moral, Wissen, Foucault und die klassische Antike* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), 121. It is quite interesting that this term itself does not appear in Foucault. It is evident that "dietetics" as part of a philosophical way of life can only belong to prophylactic medicine, since it is concerned with structuring human life with the goal of development, growth and self-fulfilment, and not with treating illnesses that can never be predicted with certainty. To use the stoic terms, we can say that the object of prophylactic medicine, i.e. ,the structuring of our way of life, "depends on us", whereas the object of therapeutic medicine, i.e., illnesses, "does not depend on us".

sleeping, to different activities and to the environment. Medicine had to propose, by way of a diet, a voluntary and rational structure of conduct.⁴²

The link between philosophy and medicine was strengthened by what Foucault calls the “identity of a conceptual framework”.⁴³ The central notion in this respect is the Greek term “*pathos*”, which can be translated as “passion” and “illness” alike. Remember that in most of the schools’ doctrines, a philosophical way of life was defined as a life lived according to reason (“*kata logon zên*”). Thus, “passion” was to be extirpated from one’s life through practicing philosophy. In the same way, medicine and dietetics were supposed to keep away illnesses, and above all to prevent possible pathological affections from turning into chronic diseases. The analogy was made that the development of an illness into a chronic disease is structurally comparable to the development of a “passion” into “vice” (the latter of which is, quite evidently, the opposite of virtue, in the sense of “*arête*”).⁴⁴ Foucault cites two examples of this view of philosophy and medicine from Antiquity: in his *De Vita Contemplativa*, Philon of Alexandria mentions the philosophical school of the “Therapists”, who had retired to the hinterland of Alexandria to practice their way of philosophy as a “cure of the soul”. And again, Foucault cites Epictetus, who frequently calls his philosophical school an “*iatreion*” (a clinic), and summarizes his maxim as: “So, before you embark upon memorizing syllogisms, ‘heal your wounds, put a stop to the fluctuation of your humours, calm your spirit!’”⁴⁵ In the lineage of these ancient exponents, “diet”, as Foucault says, “is a whole art of living”.⁴⁶

So what is actually covered by the discipline of dietetics? Foucault follows Hippocrates (or whoever is the author of book IV of the *Epidemias*)

42 *Le souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001 [orig. published in 1984]), 136: “A ce titre la médecine n’était pas conçue simplement comme une technique d’intervention, faisant appel, dans les cas de maladie, aux remèdes ou aux opérations. Elle devait aussi, sous la forme d’un corpus de savoir et de règles, définir une manière de vivre, un mode de rapport réfléchi à soi, à son corps, à la nourriture, à la veille et au sommeil, aux différentes activités et à l’environnement. La médecine avait à proposer, sous la forme du régime, une structure volontaire et rationnelle de conduite.”

43 *L’herméneutique du sujet*, 94-96.

44 On top of this conceptual link, Foucault argues for an etymological link between the two disciplines through the common term of “*therapeuein*”. Cf. *ibid.*: “Or *therapeuein heauton* voudra dire à la fois: se soigner, être à soi-même son propre serviteur, et se rendre à soi-même un culte.” By pooling three possible meanings of “*therapeuein*,” probably identified in a Greek lexicon, i.e., “to give medical treatment”, “to serve”, and “to worship”, Foucault wishes to amalgamate medicinal and philosophical practices in every occurrence of “*therapeuein heauton*”. However, this does not conform to standard philological methods.

45 *L’herméneutique du sujet*, 96: “Et avant donc de vous lancer à apprendre les syllogismes, ‘guérissez vos blessures, arrêtez le flux de vos humeurs, clamez votre esprit!’”

46 *L’usage des plaisirs*, 133: “le régime est tout un art de vivre”.

and states that dietetic rules apply to exercises (*"ponoi"*), food (*"sitia"*), drink (*"pota"*), sleep (*"hypnoi"*), and sexual relationships (*"aphrodisia"*), i.e., to all things that need to be "measured".⁴⁷ Thus, a "diet" has to take into account a host of elements from the physical existence of an individual: "diet, seen in detail, takes on the appearance of a genuine timetable".⁴⁸

In fact, dietetics demands two types of vigilance exercised over the body and its activities: first, it demands a "serial vigilance":

Activities are not simply good or bad in themselves; their value is in part determined by those activities that precede them and those that follow, and the same thing (a certain food, a type of exercise, a hot or a cold bath) will be recommended or advised against, depending on this or that other activity that one has just done or is obliged to do.⁴⁹

"Serial vigilance" is attention paid to sequences of activities or elements. To take an example from everyday life: it is probably not a good idea to go for a 10km run after having a copious meal, whereas running in general is highly recommendable.

The second type of vigilance is "circumstantial vigilance", which is attention paid to the external world, to its conditions, elements, and sensations. It comprises: "the climate, of course, the seasons, the hours of the day, the degree of humidity and dryness, of heat or cold, the characteristics of a given region, the situation of a town". It is essentially a "medical perception" of the world⁵⁰, in which every element of the medium in which the individual is placed is seen as having a certain positive or negative effect. Foucault quotes an example drawn from Antyllos: from the perspective of circumstantial vigilance, it makes a difference whether one lives in the countryside or in the city. In both cases, the geographical implantation will also be important. Let us say that one lives in the city: one has to take into account the neighbourhood one lives in, the situation of the house, and the layout of the rooms (street side or courtyard side, ambient climate of each individual room, etc.).⁵¹ The same goes for a dietetic analysis of time: Foucault mentions Athenaios's breakdown of time, going from ages to years, seasons, weeks, days, times of the day and finally to hours. To take but one example, Athenaios offers certain recommendations for the season of "winter", namely

47 Cf. *ibid.*, 134.

48 *Ibid.*: "le régime, quand on le détaille, prend l'allure d'un véritable emploi du temps".

49 *Ibid.*, 140: "Les activités ne sont pas simplement bonnes ou mauvaises en elles-mêmes; leur valeur est pour une part déterminée par celles qui les précèdent et celles qui les suivent et la même chose (une certaine nourriture, un type d'exercice, un bain chaud ou froid) sera recommandée ou déconseillée selon qu'on aura eu ou qu'on doit avoir telle ou telle autre activité."

50 *Le souci de soi*, 138.

51 *Ibid.*, 138 *et seq.*

to seek out enclosed, covered and warm areas, to wear warm clothes, to breathe with a part of one's clothing in front of the mouth, etc. He gives recommendations likewise for nutrition and physical exercises that are appropriate for this season.⁵²

The two types of vigilance thus constitute two distinct orders: the first one, "serial vigilance", refers to a *homologous* series, i.e., a series constituted by elements of the same type, namely the activities of one individual. The second one, "circumstantial vigilance", refers to a *heterologous* series, i.e., to the interferences between the subject and the medium in which he or she is placed, in both a spatial and temporal sense. Both of these two orders function according to the principle of decomposing their elements into smaller units. In order to find the right dietetic measure for a given activity in a given situation, we have to merge the two series and combine the serial and the circumstantial values of a given element to find out its resulting value in a given situation.

At first glance, this mechanism bears a striking similarity to the disciplinary practices I have mentioned earlier. What exactly does this "similarity" consist in? Just like the mechanism of serial and circumstantial vigilance, discipline decomposes an activity into smaller units, and arranges them in a coordinate plane of time and space; it also divides space into functional units and allocates one of these units to an individual exercising a certain activity, at a certain moment within the timetable. Discipline decomposes activities, space, and time into smaller units and combines these results to develop a timetable. This is what Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, calls "*quadrillage*": the dividing-up of space and time, and the allocation of certain functional spatio-temporal units to certain types of individuals or activities. We can now see precisely wherein lies the "similarity" mentioned above: dietetics – as an example of an ascetic self-practice – is based on disciplinary practices, just as the "*dressage*" of soldiers or prisoners is. Both are, so to speak, identical in "content". The aim is to render certain activities more efficient, and furthermore to make other activities possible at all, namely the ones that will only function properly when exercised within a disciplinary framework. Discipline engenders a new type of activity. The link between disciplinary and dietetic practices is evident, and we can even say that dietetics belongs to the type of activities that are not possible outside a disciplinary setting. An art of living in terms of ascetic self-practices is essentially dependent on disciplinary mechanisms.

52 Cf.: *ibid.*, 139 *et seq.*

IV. Spiritual Guidance

Before we continue our inquiry, we need to remember that the relationship to others, e.g., in spiritual guidance, is in fact the primary stage of self-constitution, whereas genuine self-practices, such as the above-mentioned dietetics, are actually secondary. Hence, the subject will have internalised an “attitude” through relationships to others, before exercising any self-practices at all. Foucault analyses the conception of education that was predominant in the ancient schools of philosophy. There, the master did not play the role of a “professor”, he would not teach his students a certain body of knowledge. On the contrary, his task was to participate in the development of a relation to self within his student. This is the idea of education in the sense of “spiritual guidance” that Foucault follows for his conception of an aesthetics of existence:

But what defines the position of the master is that which he is concerned about, which is [precisely] the care that the one whom he is instructing can have for himself. As opposed to a professor, he is not concerned about teaching the person whom he instructs certain proficiencies or abilities, his aim is not to teach him how to talk, his aim is not to teach him how to get the better of the others, etc. The master is he who is concerned about the concern that the subject has for himself...⁵³

The master teaches his student to care for himself, through ascetic exercises.⁵⁴ *Ascesis* itself is only a means of development and transformation, of course. It does not come with a doctrine. This is why Foucault distinguishes between two “layers” (“*couches*”) of ascetics. The first is meant to develop a link between knowledge (“*mathêsis*”) and practice (“*askêsis*”). He uses the Greek term “*paraskeuê*”, i.e., “preparation”, to refer to this first layer.⁵⁵ Teaching and instruction are located here because the student needs to learn a doctrine and to acquire it through “incorporation” (to use a Nietzschean word). Even at this stage, instruction is not detached from spiritual and ascetic practices. The “*paraskeuê*” aims at transforming the subject’s entire being, not only his or her knowledge and proficiencies.⁵⁶ This first stage, the preparation, ties the subject

53 *L’herméneutique du sujet*, 58: “Mais ce qui définit la position du maître, c’est que ce dont il se soucie, c’est du souci que celui qu’il guide peut avoir de lui-même. A la différence du professeur, il ne se soucie pas d’apprendre à celui qu’il guide des aptitudes ou des capacités, il ne cherche pas à lui apprendre à parler, il ne cherche pas à lui apprendre à l’emporter sur les autres, etc. Le maître, c’est celui qui se soucie du souci que le sujet a de lui-même...”.

54 Spiritual and ascetic exercises were a means commonly employed in moral education in Antiquity. Numerous treatises on spiritual exercises seem to have been in circulation (cf. Diogenes Laertios, *Vitae* VII, 166 *et seq.*). However, very few have been preserved. Prominent examples are the treatises “*peri askêseôs*” (“on exercise”) by Epictetus (*Diatribae*, III, 12) and Musonius (*Musonii reliquiae*, ed. Hense, Leipzig 1905).

55 *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 306.

56 *Ibid.*, 301 *et seq.*

to an acquired truth, in the sense of a link between self-knowledge and self-concern.⁵⁷

Foucault follows a definition of “*paraskeuê*” given by Demetrius, which is reported in Seneca.⁵⁸ First, “*paraskeuê*” is meant to prepare for the events of life. It is not meant primarily to train the student for the position of orator or lawyer. It is rather concerned with teaching elementary and readily accessible techniques for coping with accidents and misfortune, for succeeding in life in a very general sense, and for abiding by a philosophical way of life.

Second, “*paraskeuê*” is concerned with the object that is being taught, with a doctrine and its elements, propositions, or discourses (“*logoi*”). This is not to say that the type of education that Foucault analyses here always adhered to a specific school doctrine. In fact, in spite of rivalling doctrines, the Hellenistic schools were quite close to each other in respect of ethics and spiritual practices. Teaching could be quite eclectic.⁵⁹ An important criterion for the “*logoi*” to be taught, however, is that they all be principles for action and general behaviour. Thus, learning and internalising a “*logos*” essentially means developing a respective ethos.

And third, “*paraskeuê*” is concerned with teaching so-called “*logoi boêthoi*”, i.e., “helpful precepts”.

57 Foucault discusses the link between the Delphic dictum of “Know thyself!” (“*gnôthi seautôn*”) and the Hellenistic principle of “care of the self” (*L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 18: “*epimeleia heautou*”; Plato uses the term “*epimeleia tês psychês*” in *Apologia* 29d-30c). According to him, the former is subordinated to the latter. By trying to transform our being through ascetic practices, we may achieve a kind of “harmony” between our acts and our thoughts. Foucault calls this a “feedback-effect” of truth (“*effet de retour*”). In Antiquity, this phenomenon was not limited to ethics only. Ancient epistemology was linked with spirituality. If we seek access to a certain truth, we may be required to perform spiritual exercises, and to work in order to transform ourselves and our epistemological structure. Only afterwards will certain truths be accessible to us. The modern concept of epistemology, which is that of scientific method, is completely different. What is required for knowledge of the truth, is a set of methodological rules and a standard configuration of the epistemological subject (i.e., one must not be intoxicated, dreaming, or affected by mental delusion etc.). Philosophers of our time have often been puzzled by what is called the Socratic “moral intellectualism”, i.e., the idea that no one who actually knows the good will act wrong. It is often taken to imply a statement about human nature, and this causes perplexity. However, we can also interpret this statement in the line of an “ascetic epistemology”: if we take for granted that at the time of Socrates, “true knowledge” did not merely mean computational registration of given data, but appropriation of a truth through ascetic and spiritual practices, then the idea of “moral intellectualism” does not seem so odd any more. Habitualised practical truth is directly linked to action, in the sense that the subject has exercised this implication through meditation, training and ascesis. The purportedly puzzling statement is really only a remark about spirituality in virtue ethics.

58 *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 306-317.

59 Pierre Hadot, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 414 *et seq.*

Paraskeuê is the structure of the permanent transformation of true discourse, firmly rooted in the subject, into principles of behaviour that are morally admissible. Or again, paraskeuê is the element of the transformation of logos into ethos.⁶⁰

The “helpful discourses” are being learnt so that one will have them always “at hand”, or to put it in a military metaphor that Foucault uses: so that one is “armed” with them.⁶¹ This is connected to an interesting concept of agency. When the subject internalises a helpful precept (which is related to action in a situation of immediate urgency), the precept itself becomes so deeply anchored in the subject, that in a real-life situation it is no longer the subject who acts, but the *precepts* themselves.⁶² The idea is that spontaneous action takes the place of conscious deliberation. The fact that Foucault seems to conceive of some sort of quasi-agent within the actual agent is suggested by the metaphors of corporality that he uses:

The role of writing is to constitute, along with everything that reading has constituted, a ‘body’ (*quicquid lectione collectum est, stilus redigat in corpus*). And this body we must understand, not as a body of doctrine, but rather – following the oft-evoked metaphor of digestion – as the body itself of the one who, transcribing his readings, has appropriated them for himself and made their truth his own. Reading transforms what is seen or heard into “forces and blood” (*in vires, in sanguinem*). It becomes a principle of rational action inside the writer himself.⁶³

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- 60 *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 312: “La paraskeuê, c’est la structure de transformation permanente des discours vrais, bien ancrés dans le sujet, en principes de comportement moralement recevables. La paraskeuê encore, c’est l’élément de transformation du logos en éthos.”
- 61 *Le souci de soi*, 137sq.: “On reconnaît là facilement un des principes essentiels de la pratique de soi: être armé, pour l’avoir toujours sous la main, d’un ‘discours secourable’ qu’on a appris très tôt, qu’on se répète souvent et qu’on médite régulièrement. Le logos médical est de ceux-là, dictant en chaque instant le bon régime de la vie.”
- 62 Foucault (*L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 309) calls the “*logoi boêthoi*” “action induction schemes”. Paul Rabbow (*Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (München, 1954), 124) compares them to a constant “ringing in your ear” (this is how he translates the Greek metaphor of “*enaulon*”). Alexander Nehamas (*The Art of Living*, 95 et seq.) seems to endorse a similar view. However, Pierre Hadot is highly critical of this “quasi-behaviouristic” interpretation. In his study on Marcus Aurelius (Pierre Hadot, *La Citadelle intérieure. Introduction aux Pensées de Marc Aurèle* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 53), he writes that the “*logoi*” are rather condensed versions of longer demonstrations. They serve as mnemonic devices meant to bring the soul into the same disposition it was in while grasping the truth of the original demonstration. And this state of disposition is naturally believed to motivate to action.
- 63 *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*, 422: “Le rôle de l’écriture est de constituer, avec tout ce que la lecture a constitué, un ‘corps’ (*quicquid lectione collectum est, stilus redigat in corpus*). Et ce corps, il faut le comprendre non pas comme un corps de doctrine, mais bien – en suivant la métaphore si souvent évoquée de la digestion – comme le corps même de celui qui, en

Thus, in following Foucault on this point, the *logos* of the acquired doctrine is literally transformed into a kernel of agency within the agent.

Inside the structure of "*paraskeuê*", there are three basic techniques of learning and teaching, which are all understood through the model of ascetic practices: listening, reading and writing, and speaking. It may seem odd at first to think of these three activities as "ascetic practices". 'What is there to be practiced in listening?' we may ask, even more oddly, 'What kind of asceticism is there to it?' Let us look at the three concepts and consider their ascetic relevance.

Listening is the fundamental practice of the student in the process of education. Foucault uses two terms from Seneca and Epictetus to describe hearing as the most passive ("*pathêtikos*") and the most logical ("*logikos*") of all the senses. That is to say that hearing is the primordial pathway for acquiring logically or linguistically structured knowledge. We can listen to what people teach us before we are able to read it. It is also to say that we cannot help but hear, even if we make an effort to divert our attention from an undesired source of sound. Combining these observations brings us to the conclusion that we actually have to practise our listening. Because, first of all, listening to philosophical lectures is not the same thing as listening to gossip in the street. Philosophical discourse has a logical structure to it that we might not grasp without sufficient training.⁶⁴ And second, we must learn to stay focussed on the main object of attention, which is usually the lecturer or teacher.

Listening requires the exercise of three practices: "silence", an "active stance", and "attention". Foucault emphasises the awareness that the exercise of silence does not only imply remaining silent and attentive while another person is speaking. It even implies remaining silent for some time after the other person has finished. This is to assure the greatest possible internalisation of the newly acquired doctrines. It is obvious that in this model, the emphasis is not so much on liberal discussion or some sort of teamwork investigation. The idea is quite simply that when the lecturer speaks, the students are supposed to listen and to internalise what is being presented.

Concluding these observations on the art of listening, it is interesting to see that Foucault sees it as the main pathway to acquiring knowledge. We might wonder why reading does not appear in this first stage of "*paraskeuê*".

transcrivant ses lectures, se les est appropriées et a fait sienne leur vérité: l'écriture transforme la chose vue ou entendue 'en forces et en sang' (in vires, in sanguinem). Elle se fait dans le scripteur lui-même un principe d'action rationnelle."

64 Foucault uses Epictetus' term "*lexis*" instead of "*rhetorics*" (or "*rhêtorikê tekhnê*"). The latter seems in contemporary usage to refer to a linguistic structure of discourse. In Antiquity, however, it was associated with the effort of talking somebody into something, rather than convincing the audience with arguments.

The idea underlying this choice is again Foucault's model of spiritual guidance, which rests on the basis of a direct teacher-student-relationship. According to this model, we learn through the spoken words of a teacher, not by reading books. In fact, Foucault says that throughout the Hellenistic period, students were encouraged to "read little". However, there are reported cases of teachers giving written discourses and treatises to their students to study, or making recommendations on what to read. We can find examples in Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*, which Foucault deals with in the same lecture. But we must not forget that in Antiquity, these treatises (such as *Letters and Consolations*) were always directed at an addressee. When Seneca writes treatises for Lucilius, for example, because he cannot see him in person, he constantly uses the second person address. Thus, even knowledge acquisition through reading rests on a personal encounter with one's teacher, albeit a *virtual* one in this case.

From my observations on listening, we can infer that in Foucault's model, reading and writing serve a different purpose than what we usually suppose them to do. As we have seen, according to this model, one does not read in order to learn something new. What was read in the period that Foucault analyses? Teachers recommended summaries and florilegia, i.e., anthologies of literary extracts.⁶⁵ Next we have to ask: how were these texts produced? This is where reading is linked to writing, for the recommended practice was to take notes during reading or immediately after, which in turn produced new summaries and florilegia. The ancient term for this type of text is "*hypomnêmaton*", which alludes to its use as a mnemotechnical support.⁶⁶ We have one famous example of a "*hypomnêmaton*", which was published even though it was never intended to be: the *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius.⁶⁷ The unifying principle in these types of texts is not a linguistic or logical structure. Instead quotations are drawn from various sources and taken out of their original context. The principle which determines choice and arrangement of these quotations is rather the demands of the student's process of subjectivation. One chooses doctrines in respect of one's needs for exercise in a certain field or one's level of progression in philosophy in general. This constitutes a *circular*, or rather a *spiral* system of reading and writing. There is hardly any new data being introduced at any point into the system. Most of the time, it revolves around itself and may be described as an autopoietic machinery of what is already known. The aim is not to acquire

65 Often, school heads or senior philosophers wrote standard anthologies of the basic school doctrines for their disciples. Remember, for instance, the "*tetrapharmakos*" (the "four-fold medicine") of the Epicureans.

66 Foucault mentions *hypomnêmata* in *L'herméneutique du sujet*, 343. A more detailed analysis can be found in: "Écriture de soi," *DE IV*, no. 329: 418-423.

67 Pierre Hadot puts forward this interpretation of the "*Meditations*" as an example of a "*hypomnêmaton*" in his study *La citadelle intérieure*, 64 et seq.

knowledge (as is the case when we nowadays read a book or a newspaper), but rather to meditate what one knows already in order to internalise it.⁶⁸

Why does Foucault focus on this very specific concept of reading and writing? I think this emphasis is indeed required in order to conceptually grasp reading and writing as tools of meditation rather than tools of information exchange. These two activities are part of what Foucault calls the “meditation of *logoi*”. The term is to be understood in one of its classical senses as meaning “to practise” or “to exercise oneself” in some activity, rather than “to think or to reflect upon”, which has come to eclipse the first definition nowadays.⁶⁹ In this respect, the Latin term “*meditare*” is a translation that combines the aspects of the two Greek terms “*meletan*” and “*askein*”, from the latter of which the word “*ascese*” derives. Hence, “meditation of *logoi*” does not mean “reflecting upon elements of doctrine”, but rather “practising elements of doctrine”. Along the same lines, meditation in Foucault’s terms is a means of self-transformation, an ascetic practice, or as he puts it: “*un jeu effectué par la pensée sur le sujet*”.⁷⁰

With the practice of speaking in the educational process, we finally find ourselves on the side of the master. Foucault adopts the ancient idea of “*parrhêsia*” to insert a rectifying mechanism into his model of spiritual guidance. The term refers to “*veridiction*”, i.e., truthfulness, sincerity and straightforwardness in conversation. It implies the ideal of not trying to manipulate one’s interlocutor, but to speak for the sake of argument and the content of the discourse. Roman philosophers translated the term “*parrhêsia*” as “*libertas*”, and Foucault uses either “*franchise*” or “*franc-parler*” (the latter more frequently) to refer to this idea. The exercise of “*parrhêsia*” involves practising to give well-formed and comprehensible lectures that focus on the subject matter and not on rhetorical adornment. Also, the lecturer is to set aside any personal intentions of gaining advantage through what he might say, but to focus on the needs of his students and to instruct them to their advantage.

The process of education as it is presented in Foucault’s analyses essentially involves ascetic exercises and is often described in terms of an anticipatory enactment of real-life situations under the vigilant eyes (or the

68 Pierre Hadot, “Réflexions sur la notion de ‘culture de soi’,” *Michel Foucault philosophe* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 263, criticizes Foucault’s view of writing as a “technology of the self”. He claims that according to a philologically faithful interpretation of the ancient sources, the exercise of writing was instead meant to approximate the subject to a *logos* of the “*kosmos*” or of a universal human community. Thus, writing is rather a technique of self-dilation than of self-concentration.

69 Cf. Cicero, *De oratore*, 1. 61. 260: “Demosthenes perfecit *meditando*, [my italics, S.H.] ut nemo planius esse locutus putaretur.” (Demosthenes achieved through *exercise*, that nobody else could be considered a more even-measured orator.)

70 *L’herméneutique du sujet*, 340.

imaginary gaze) of a master. The connection to ascetic self-practices, which I have presented in the previous section by way of an example, is that during his training the student not only acquires and internalises a certain body of doctrine (in the above discussed manner), but also performs ascetic exercises, sometimes again aimed at internalising certain “*logoi*”, sometimes intended to anticipate and practice possible situations of urgency in everyday life (the loss of a beloved person, financial ruin, and other calamities). To put it metaphorically, if we can say that disciplinary mechanisms are the “content” of ascetic self-practices, then the process of spiritual guidance represents first the “mode” of their acquisition, and will later on settle into a stable “attitude” of the subject involved in those practices. As I have emphasized in the opening lines of this section, spiritual guidance constitutes the primary stage of self-constitution, while genuine self-practices (like dietetics) will build on the attitude and the way of life that the student has adopted. These two stages of ascetic self-practices are interdependent. Remember how Foucault insists that “the exercise of discipline requires a device that constrains by the game of the gaze”, an important principle that I have discussed in some detail in Section II of this paper. According to Foucault, disciplinary practices, including ascetic self-practices, involve a characteristic “fold-back” of the outside force. Through self-discipline, the subject attains a transcendental position to him- or herself, the mode of which is prefigured in the master-student relationship. Having internalised the master’s gaze, the subject involved in self-practices now becomes his or her own supervisor.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show the terminological and conceptual continuity between Foucault’s earlier analytics of power and his later works on ethical self-constitution. I have developed a theoretical argument in order to show this conceptual continuity. In a next step, I tried to put forward evidence to support my thesis. In this respect, I discussed the ways in which Foucault analyses the dietetic practices through the mechanism of two types of “vigilance”, which decompose the variables of the individual and the medium. Hence, they function by the same principle as the “disciplinary practices” formerly known from *Discipline and Punish*. In a further step, I have tried to point out how the process of spiritual guidance and the teacher-student relationship seem to follow a strictly hierarchical model, which functions by the principle of “surveillance”. This is yet another avatar from *Discipline and Punish*, reminding us of the “panopticon” and the related surveillance techniques. My theoretical argument and both of the model cases (i.e., dietetics and spiritual guidance) that I have offered as its benchmark and support, were meant to show and clarify the intrinsic relation of “fabrication” and “self-constitution” within the process of subjectivation. Each of the two

model cases represents one of the two interdependent aspects of “discipline”. My discussion of dietetics as an example of an ascetic self-practice was meant to show how we find the characteristic mechanisms of disciplinary “*quadrillage*” both here, and in the “*dressage*” of prisoners and soldiers that Foucault had analysed in his earlier works. The process of spiritual guidance, discussed in the subsequent section, represents the stage where the subject internalises an “attitude” of self-surveillance through constant (real or imaginary) supervision by a master.

The “return of the subject” hypothesis, which I have discussed in Section I of this paper, becomes untenable when seen in the light of new material such as *L’Herméneutique du Sujet*. Exponents of this view seem to be trying to isolate certain notions and conceptions in Foucault, that in fact form part of a larger project, namely a theory (or as Foucault says: “history”) of subjectivity in general. Thus, I think that future research in this direction should try to interpret the “late” Foucault’s ethics not in opposition to his earlier works, but rather as a conceptual complement to them.

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