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EDITORIAL
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The editorial team is pleased to publish this issue of *Foucault Studies* containing three original articles as well as one extended review essay and one book review.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES
The three original articles cover a wide array of themes, such as desire, pastoral technologies and technologies of the self, genealogy, pleasure and joy, philosophy as a way of life, analytic philosophy, analytic critique, Antiquity, Stoic philosophy, self-examination, pleasure and joy, and revolts of conduct.

Herman Westerink (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands) has written the first original article, "The Subject of Desire and the Hermeneutics of Thoughts: Foucault's Reading of Augustine and Cassian in the *Confessions of the Flesh.*" The article argues that Foucault's analyses of early Christian doctrine and pastoral technologies in his *History of Sexuality Vol. 4: Confessions of the Flesh* do not support the contention that an analytic of the subject of desire was established in early Christianity. Even though Foucault himself often presented the volume as a crucial contribution to the study of the genealogy of the subject of desire, no systematic interaction is established here in the works of Augustine and Cassian between the obligation to examine and articulate the truth about oneself and the conceptualization of the subject of desire as a juridical subject.

   The article establishes this claim by discussing Foucault's examination of Augustine and Cassian in the fourth volume of *The History of Sexuality* and by discussing these thinkers and the history of the subject of desire in other crucial writings by Foucault. Whereas Foucault's examination of Augustine focuses on his doctrinal views of the human condition and the association of libido and disobedience to law, there is no indication in Foucault's reading that Augustine's text is relevant for the development of pastoral

techniques for the examination of the involvement of the will in sexual activities and thus for the production of technologies for the hermeneutics of desire. Augustine's doctrine of libido did not include a hermeneutics of desire and an obligation to confess. Likewise, while Cassian's pastoral technologies of obedience and subjection to the will of the spiritual director are organized around the hermeneutics of thoughts, they nevertheless aim at establishing an inner detachment from misleading thoughts through examination of conscience.

Yet, precisely because the monastic ascetic techniques and Augustinian doctrine are different and ambiguous, as also highlighted by Foucault, his readings of Cassian and Augustine can be seen to open up new perspectives within the Foucauldian genealogical project of the history of sexuality. Cassian's articulation of exercises and practices, in which the subjection to the other's will and renunciation of the weakness of one's own will can be seen as instrumental for the formation of conscience, self-examination and self-practices of dissociation and purification, clears new paths for an analytic of modern forms of subjectivity in relation to forms of governmentality. Whereas the practices of obedient subjection to spiritual directors powerfully resurface in the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, technologies for the subjection of the individual to his own conscience strongly come to the fore. This is particularly evident in the Reformation when widespread "revolts of conduct" oppose the sacramental power of the priest-pastor.

In the second original article, entitled "The Use and Misuse of Pleasure: Hadot *Contra* Foucault on the Stoic Dichotomy Gaudium-Voluptas in Seneca", Matteo Stettler (Deakin University, Australia) continues the investigation of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and its relationship to Antiquity. In this case, the investigation moves even further back in time to a discussion of Foucault's relationship to Stoicism and Seneca.

The article highlights that Chapter II of *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, entitled "The Cultivation of the Self", is among both the most suggestive and disputed sections of his *History of Sexuality*. Initially, severe criticism of the chapter was leveled by the specialist in ancient philosophy Pierre Hadot. The classicist rejects Foucault's understanding of Hellenistic-Roman and in particular Stoic ethics as an ethics of pleasure that one takes in oneself. He accuses Foucault of failing to take proper notice of the fundamental Stoic distinction between *voluptas* ("pleasure") and *gaudium* ("joy"). As a consequence, according to Hadot, Foucault not only tends to relegate the notion of *gaudium* to the subordinate status of just another kind of pleasure; concomitantly, he also risks assigning the Stoic philosopher Seneca to the subordinate rank of yet another pseudo-Epicurean.

The article claims that the dispute between Foucault and Hadot is first and foremost a pseudo-controversy. In a close reading of Seneca's oeuvre, the article shows that the dispute goes back to and is conditioned by Seneca's liberal use of two different terminological registers throughout his writings: the register of the *verbum publicum* and the register of *significatio Stoica*. Since the state of *gaudium* remains, from a doctrinal point of view, the prerogative of the Stoic sage, Seneca does not hesitate to employ the term *gaudium* in its *significatio stoica* to refer to the unceasing joy that always accompanies virtue when his examination is centered around the Stoic sage and his discourse is an internal discourse addressing members of the Stoic

school of thought. In this case, he thus adheres strictly to the doctrinal antinomy *gaudium-voluptas.* In a number of other cases, by contrast, he finds it useful to temporarily suspend the dichotomy.

The third original article, "Philosophy from the texture of everyday life: The critical-analytic methods of Foucault and J. L. Austin", is written by Jasper Friedrich (University of Oxford, United Kingdom). In a conference given in 1978 in Tokyo (published under the title "The Analytic Philosophy of Politics" in *Foucault Studies,* No. 24, pp. 188-200, June 2018), Foucault drew a comparison between his own philosophical methodology and that of "Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy in so far as the latter "reflects on the everyday use of speech we make in the different types of discourse".

Following this line of thought, the article compares Foucault's approach to the speech act theory of Austin. It identifies the core of a uniting philosophical methodology that cuts across the analytic/continental divide in philosophy in general and constitutes a powerful alternative to the methods applied by analytic political philosophers.

The approach here, termed 'analytic critique', starts from a critical analysis of what happens in ordinary lived experience and theorizes 'bottom-up' in an admittedly politically engaged way. In this manner, this approach challenges the conceptual and political superiority of contemporary political philosophy in the liberal-Rawlsian tradition.

BOOK REVIEWS

The book review section of the present issue contains the following extended review essay:

- Foucault's New Materialism: An extended review essay of Thomas Lemke's *The Government of Things.* New York: NYU Press, 2021. Reviewed by Mark Olsson (University of Surrey, United Kingdom).

In addition, the book review section contains the following book review:

- Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro (eds.), *The Late Foucault: Ethical and Political Questions*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020. Reviewed by Matteo Stettler (Deakin University, Australia).

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Since 2020, *Foucault Studies* has updated and clarified guidelines for footnote references and bibliography. Most important to note in this respect is that the journal articles have all text references in running footnotes with most of the bibliographical information about the source, while the list of references ending each article provides all bibliographical information about the source as well as the DOI of the given piece (if there is one).

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ARTICLE

The Use and Misuse of Pleasure: Hadot *Contra* Foucault on the Stoic Dichotomy *Gaudium-Voluptas* in Seneca

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ABSTRACT. Chapter II of Foucault's *The Care of the Self,* 'The Cultivation of the Self,' is arguably one of the most controversial sections of the entire *History of Sexuality*. The diatribe over this chapter was initially mounted by Pierre Hadot's critical essay 'Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self.'' Therein, Hadot objects to Foucault's dissolution of the Stoic doctrinal antinomy between *voluptas* ('pleasure') and *gaudium* ('joy') and, thereby, to the relegation of the latter notion to the subordinate status of 'another form of pleasure', on the one side, and of Seneca himself to the problematic rank of a sort of Epicurean on the other. The present investigation aims to unveil this aspect of the Foucault-Hadot *querelle* as only a pseudo-controversy engendered by Seneca recurring to two different terminological registers throughout his writings: the so-called *verbum publicum* and the *significatio Stoica.*

Keywords: Pierre Hadot, Michel Foucault, Seneca, pleasure, joy, philosophy as a way of life.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter II of Foucault's *The Care of the Self,* 'The Cultivation of the Self,' is undoubtedly one of the most suggestive and controversial sections of the entire *History of Sexuality* multivolume series. *Suggestive*, first, for it is philosophically situated at the intersection of an "ever-increasing tension" in Foucault's late research intentions: as Gros notes, that of "writing a reorganized history of ancient sexuality in terms of the problematic of techniques of the self" and, on the other hand, "to study these techniques for themselves, in their historic-ethical dimensions."[1] *Controversial,* second, for it eventually came at the center of many

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[1] Frédéric Gros, "Course Context," in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (2005), 513-514. From Elden's remarkable reconstruction in *Foucault's Last Decade*, we apprehend that the second of these projects, originally envisioned by Foucault as "a book separate from the sex series" with the title *Le Souci de Soi,* never saw the light at the time of his premature passing. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth; The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 Vol. I*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1997), 255. Besides Chapter II and III of the eventually

discussions in contemporary literature. The diatribe was ignited early on by Foucault's coeval and conational philosopher and classicist Pierre Hadot and his critical essay 'Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self',' explicitly conceived, as its title suggests, as a direct rejoinder to this precise chapter of Foucault's *The Care of the Self*.[2] Amid various critiques, Hadot rejects Foucault's presentation of Hellenistic-Roman ethics (and, more critically, of Stoic ethics) as "an ethics of the pleasure one takes in oneself."[3] He objects to Foucault's dissolution of the Stoic antinomy between *voluptas* ('pleasure') and *gaudium* ('joy'), and, thereby, the relegation of the notion of *gaudium* to the subordinate status of "another form of pleasure", on the one side, and of Seneca himself to the problematic rank of an Epicurean of sorts on the other.[4] On this precise point of contention of the Hadot-Foucault *querelle*, contemporary scholarship fragmented into a variety of more or less diverse interpretative positions, depending on their respective reception of Hadot's contentions. Re-echoing Hadot's own concerns, Davidson has argued that "it is misleading for Foucault to speak of the joy described by Seneca as 'a form of pleasure,'" concluding that "Hadot's interpretation of these ancient texts is the historically accurate interpretation."[5] Montanari instead received Hadot's critique as fundamentally unwarranted as, he argues, Foucault did sufficiently manage to differentiate the notions of *voluptas* and *gaudium* by assigning them diverse modes of manifestation (exogenous *vs.* endogenous).[6]

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published *The Care of the Self,* traces of this material are to be found in Foucault's 1981-1982 Lectures at the Collège de France (*The Hermeneutics of the Subject),* the content of which, as Elden noted, "is much closer to what Foucault originally envisioned *Le Souci de Soi* would do than the actually published book of that title is." Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade,* 170.

[2] Note that elsewhere Hadot sets himself to "observe to what extent our [*sc.* his and Foucault's] interests and concerns converged by comparing the summaries of Foucault's 1981-82 course at the *Annuaire du Collège de France* and [his own] article 'Exercices spirituels.'" Pierre Hadot, "An Interrupted Dialogue with Michel Foucault: Convergences and Divergences," in *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as Practice*, ed. Matthew Sharpe and Federico Testa (2020), 228. As Gros noted, *The Hermeneutics* indeed "appears as a considerably expanded and developed version of one small chapter in *The Care of the Self* entitled 'The Culture of the Self'" (in Burchell's English translation), or, alternatively, 'The Cultivation of the Self' (in Hurley's). Gros, "Course Context," 508.

[3] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995), 207. A reconstruction of Hadot and Foucault's respective position on this issue has recently been advanced by Cassiana Lopes Stephan, "Pierre Hadot e Michel Foucault: sobre a felicidade estoica e a experiência da alegria," *Sapere Aude* 7:13 (2016). A classical contribution on the dialogue between Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot more generally remains Thomas Flynn, "Philosophy as a Way of Life: Foucault and Hadot," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31:5-6 (2005). On Hadot's and Foucault's different conceptualizations of the spiritual exercises of the ancients, see Elettra Stimilli, "Esercizi spirituali o tecniche di vita? Pierre Hadot e Michel Foucault a confronto," *Pensiero: rivista di filosofia* 46:1/2 (2008). More recently also Laura Cremonesi, "Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault on Spiritual Exercises: Transforming the Self, Transforming the Present," in *Foucault and the History of Our Present*, ed. Sophie Fuggle, Yari Lanci and Martina Tazzioli (2015).

[4] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 207.

[5] Arnold I. Davidson, "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (2005), 129 and 144, n23.

[6] Moreno Montanari, *Hadot e Foucault nello specchio dei Greci: La filosofia antica come esercizio di trasformazione* (2009), 25-27. Other aspects of the Hadot-Foucault *querelle* are discussed by the same author in "La Filosofia antica come esercizio spirituale e cura di sé nelle interpretazioni di Pierre Hadot e Michel Foucault," *Studi Urbinati, B - Scienze Umane e Sociali* 80 (2010).

However, the scholar who went the furthest in exploring this issue is undoubtedly Irrera, who devoted to it an entire article. [7] According to the latter, not only does Hadot himself often fail to distinguish *gaudium* from *voluptas* in his own historical-doctrinal reconstruction of the philosophical works of antiquity,[8] but, as the scholar is keen to qualify, in Hadot's own framework, the only way in which this distinction could possibly hold is by "*anchor[ing] the notion of practice to theories that are prior and foundational to it,*" such as his alleged "*theory of universality as normative exteriority.*"[9] This realization brings Irrera to draw far-reaching conclusions for what concerns Hadot and Foucault's different methodological approaches, that is, the historical-doctrinal and the genealogical method, respectively:

> It is clear that the taxonomic activity of the historian of philosophy, however supported by honest, meticulous and anyhow necessary philological work, can be performed only starting from the choice of determined paradigms – in this [*sc.* Hadot's] case, a theory of transcendence – a choice that sublimates into methodological praxis, and finally hides behind the alleged neutrality and non-judgmental character of philological analysis, or behind the more or less objective exposition of undisputable historical-doctrinal contents. The special Foucaultian method of inquiry [*sc.* the genealogical method] does without just these issues, and distinguishes itself from Hadot's, or any other historian of philosophy's, intentions of historical-doctrinal reconstruction.[10]

However correct Irrera might be in pointing out that Hadot himself often employs the notions of 'joy' and 'pleasure' somewhat interchangeably in his works, that Hadot's historical-doctrinal method – or, possibly even more radically, *any* historical-doctrinal method – of studying ancient philosophical texts should suffer from such severe theoretical biases strikes us as a radical and quite indefensible claim. As Hadot made clear on several occasions throughout his *oeuvre*, in fact, his method of inquiry – heavily influenced by the 'second' Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* as it was[11] – was originally devised precisely to

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[7] Orazio Irrera, "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self: Notes on 'A Dialogue Too Soon Interrupted' Between Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36:9 (2010); Cf. Federico Testa, "Towards a History of Philosophical Practices in Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot," *PLI: the Warwick Journal of Philosophy* (2016), 169, n2

[8] Following Irrera, on this point, see also Matthew Sharpe, "Towards a Phenomenology of Sagesse: Uncovering the Unique Philosophical Problematic of Pierre Hadot," *Angelaki* 23:2 (2018), 129.

[9] Irrera, "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 1008. "Given Hadot's own non-Heideggerian thinking of presence," Sharpe recently wondered "how Hadot might have responded to this critique." Matthew Sharpe, "Introduction: Situating Hadot Today," in *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as Practice*, ed. Matthew Sharpe and Federico Testa (2020), 8. Interestingly, Irrera's position was already sketched early on by Simonazzi, in the provisional conclusions of his study: "The activity of research should [...] deepen [...] the theme [...] of the necessity, in Seneca's stoicism itself, to 'conquer' [...] a universal point of view, only starting from which, perhaps Hadot would argue, it is possible to distinguish between the concept of *voluptas* and *gaudium*." Moreno Simonazzi, *La formazione del soggetto nell'antichità: La lettura di Michel Foucault e di Pierre Hadot* (2007), 194. Translation mine.

[10] "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 1008-9.

[11] On the influence that Wittgenstein's thought exercised on Hadot, see his introductory remarks in Pierre Hadot, *Wittgenstein et les limites du langage* (2004). On the theme, also Sandra Laugier, "Pierre Hadot as a

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repossess the philosophical works of antiquity from the hands of fundamentalist interpreters and to re-situate them in the "living *praxis*" from which they originally emanated.[12] The whole purpose of Hadot's methodological approach, to turn Irrera's claim on its head, is declaredly *to anchor the notion of theory to a series of practices that are prior and foundational to it*, those being the famous spiritual exercises which gave to his entire body of work perhaps its most recognizable *leitmotif.*[13] As Hadot explains in *The Present Alone is Our Happiness*, that of Wittgenstein's 'language games'

> is an idea that had guided all my works. When one is in the presence of a text, or an utterance, it is not sufficient to take this text or this utterance in the absolute, as though it had not been uttered by someone in particular, under particular circumstances, on a particular day, during a particular period and in a determinate context. This is a weakness of religious fundamentalists, and is in fact shared by many historians of philosophy or by philosophers who conduct themselves as fundamentalists. They approach a text as though it was the word of the gospel, as though God had pronounced it, and cannot be restituted in space and time. On the contrary, the historical and psychological perspective is very important in the history of philosophy, because it is always a question of re-placing the claims of philosophers into the social, historical, traditional, and psychological context in which they were written.[14]

As we shall contend *contra* Irrera, Hadot can reclaim a sharp distinction between the Stoic notions of 'joy' and 'pleasure' – or, equivalently, can negate to the Stoic notion of *gaudium* the status of 'another form of pleasure' – not so much because of an unescapable theoretical bias that would supposedly vitiate from the onset his historical-doctrinal method of analysis, as, quite contrarily, because of his failure to apply also in this case his historical-doctrinal methodology of analysis itself. In the present investigation, we thus follow closely Hadot's own "methodological imperative"[15] and attempt to re-situate Seneca's use of the terms *voluptas* and *gaudium* in the rhetorical context of the two terminological registers that the Stoic philosopher introduces in his *Epistula* 59:[16] the exoteric *verbum publicum* (literally,

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reader of Wittgenstein," *Paragraph* 34, no. 3 (2011). Wittgenstein's influence on Hadot did not go undetected by Arnold I. Davidson, "Introduction: Pierre Hadot and the Spiritual Phenomenon of Ancient Philosophy," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (1995), 18-19. More recently, also José Miguel Fernández, "Spiritual Exercises and Language Games: The Influence of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Language on Pierre Hadot's Approach to Ancient Philosophy as a Way of Life," *Littera Scripta. Revista Filosofía* 3 (2022).

[12] Pierre Hadot, *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot. Philosophy as Practice*, trans. Matthew Sharpe and Federico Testa (2020), 57; also 84.

[13] Hadot tells us exactly so also in the opening comments of *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (2004), 3. "Philosophical discourse," he writes there, "originates in a choice of life and an existential option – not vice versa."

[14] Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson* (2009), 134-135. On this methodology, see also Hadot's considerations in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 61. Also the 'Postscript' to ibid., 280.

[15] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 274.

[16] For Seneca's writings, the present investigation refers to the latest English translations of *The Complete Works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* by The University of Chicago Press. For the *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* (*Epistulae* hereafter), I refer to Margaret Graver and A.A Long, *Seneca, Letters on Ethics: to Lucilius* (2015). For the

'public word') and the esoteric *significatio Stoica* ('Stoic meaning'). By doing so, we will be able to reconcile, on the very same textual ground, Hadot's and Foucault's respective accounts of Seneca's notion of *gaudium* – as seemingly referring to the *significatio Stoica* of 'joy' and the *verbum publicum* of 'pleasure,' respectively –, and thereby unveil this front of the Hadot-Foucault *querelle* as a 'pseudo-problem' engendered by Seneca's recourse to different terminological registers.[17] As we shall try to demonstrate, depending on the specific rhetorical circumstances of each one of his utterances, Seneca refers to that joyful emotion ensuing from virtue either with the Stoic doctrinal meaning of 'joy' (*gaudium*) or with the vulgar meaning of 'pleasure' (*voluptas*), thus respectively erecting or collapsing at liberty the traditional Stoic distinction between *gaudium* and *voluptas*. This being its program, the present investigation is thus structured as follows: first, we introduce Foucault's analysis in the critical chapter II of *The Care of the Self* (Section I); second, I discuss in detail Hadot's criticism, as appeared in 'Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self'' (Section II); third, I will put to the test Foucault's and Hadot's respective interpretations by consulting Seneca's writings (Section III).

I.   FOUCAULT'S TAKE: THE HEDONISTIC STRUCTURE OF THE GRECO-ROMAN SUBJECT

Chapter II of the *Care of the Self* opens with Foucault's chronicle of a significant phenomenon that emerged in the transition from the Classical to the Imperial era: the unprecedented degree of intensity reached by the problematization of the *aphrodisia*. Far from reflecting the coercive intervention of institutional authorities or the promulgation of more restrictive moral codes – such as those eventually in effect in the successive Christian epoch –, let alone the manifestation of an ascending individualistic preoccupation, Foucault prompts us to comprehend the tenor of this renovated emphasis on sexual austerity in the Imperial era in terms of the strengthening of the structure of reflexivity proper to the Greco-Roman self-constituting ethical subject – or, in his terms, of "an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts."[18] Although retaining its *genus* in Greek culture, such a phenomenon, as Foucault chronicles, reached its apex of intensity and valorization – in other terms, enjoyed its "golden age" – precisely in the Hellenistic-Roman *ethos* of the "cultivation of the self."[19]

De vita beata (*De vita* hereafter) we refer to 'On the Happy Life,' as contained in the volume Elaine Fantham et al., *Seneca, Hardship and Happiness* (2014). For the Latin, our texts of reference are L. D. Reynolds, *L. Annaei Senecae Ad Lucilius Epistulae Morales*, II vols. (1965) and Pierre Grimal, *L. Annaei Senecae De vita beata. Sénèque, Sur le bonheur* (1969). For the *Epistulae*, references are given, as conventional, to the number of the letter and the paragraph. For the *De Vita,* similarly, references are given to the chapter and the paragraph.

[17] I use Wittgenstein's term 'pseudo-problem' only in *sensu lato* to signify, as Gill noted, a question to which we should not attempt to find an answer but that we should try to dissolve in the realm of language. Jerry H. Gill, "Wittgenstein and the Function of Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 2:2 (1971), 137.

[18] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality* (1990), 41.

[19] Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 45. On what Foucault calls "the period of the golden age of the culture of the self," see also *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-82*, 30ff.

Critically, in the last section of the chapter, Foucault contends that this art of existence – an art that, in the distinctively Hellenistic-Roman phenomenon of the 'cultivation of the self', developed from, and came to rest upon, the Greek injunction *heautou epimeleisthai* ('care for oneself') – was grounded on the principle of *epistrophe eis heauton* ('conversion to self').[20] In the wake of Hadot's pioneering work on conversion,[21] Foucault qualifies that such *conversio ad se,* in late antiquity, asked of Greco-Roman selves a radical transformation of the way in which they attended to specific activities and directed their attention so that they might continually take care of themselves.[22] This intense and continuous form of ethical reflexivity, although being inscribable within the same horizon of the Pagan "ethics of control," Foucault specifies, finds in the Imperial era its articulation in *modes* and *domains* other than that, respectively, of the Greek self-*agon* and of an ontology of forces: that is, in his own words, other than "the agonistic form of a victory over forces difficult to subdue and of a dominion over them."[23] Foucault thus identifies two modes assumed by such ethical reflexivity in late antiquity: what we might refer to as the politico-juridical and the hedonistic modes of ethical self-possession – only the latter of which constitutes relevant material for the present reflection. Drawing a parallel with the preceding "heautocratic structure of the subject" in effect in classical Greece,[24] Foucault notes that in the Hellenistic period

> the experience of self that forms itself in this possession is not simply that of a force overcome, or a rule exercised over a power that is on the point of rebelling; it is the experience of a pleasure that one takes in oneself. The individual who has finally succeeded in gaining access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure.[25]

Having identified in this hedonism the constitutive principle of the Greco-Roman subject, Foucault does not recast the traditional Stoic antinomy between *gaudium* (or *laetitia*) and *voluptas* in its historical-doctrinal significance – that is, the contraposition between the domains of *eupatheia* and *pathos* –, but alongside three axes, only two of which hitherto identified by scholars: that is, in terms of (1) the moral genetics of these two states of the soul (endogenous *vs.* exogenous), as Montanari already noted;[26] in terms of (2) the temporal

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[20] Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 64-65.

[21] In *The Hermeneutics,* Foucault acknowledges explicitly his debt to Hadot's 1953 article 'Epistrophè et metanoia dans l'histoire de la philosophie,' which he considers as "an absolutely fundamental and important analysis." Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-82*, 216. Hadot's text has recently been published with an English translation by Andrew Irvine as "Epistrophe and Metanoia in the History of Philosophy," *Philosophy Today* 65:1 (2021). Hadot has produced two other texts expressly devoted to the notion of conversion, only one of which has been translated into English to date. Pierre Hadot, "Conversion," in *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020). See also the shorter Pierre Hadot, "Conversio," in *Discours et mode de vie philosophique,* ed. Xavier Pavie (2014).

[22] Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 64-65.

[23] Ibid., 65.

[24] Ibid., 70.

[25] Ibid., 66. See also Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-82*, 214. There Foucault writes, in reference to one of the defying axis of the Greco-Roman model of the *conversio ad se:* "You experience a pleasure in yourself, an enjoyment or delight."

[26] Montanari, *Hadot e Foucault nello specchio dei Greci*, 25-27.

modes of their manifestation (stable *vs.* unstable), as Irrera pointed out;[27] and, as I shall add, also in terms of (3) their qualities (serene *vs.* violent). As Foucault writes, in a passage that is worth reporting at length: this "pleasure that one takes in oneself,

> for which Seneca usually employs the word *gaudium* or *laetitia*, […] is defined by [1] the fact of not being caused by anything that is independent of ourselves and therefore escapes our control. […] It is characterized as well by [2] the fact that it knows neither degree nor change, but is given as a 'woven fabric,' and once given no external event can rend it. […] [It] is a state that [3] is neither accompanied nor followed by any form of disturbance in the body or mind.[28]

According to Foucault's reconstruction, *gaudium* or, equivalently, *laetitia,* is thus a form of pleasure that is (1) endogenously generated, (2) temporally stable, and (3) qualitatively nonviolent. This state of the *animus,* Foucault is keen to observe, for Seneca, can be contrasted "point by point"[29] – that is, on the (1) endogenous-exogenous, (2) stable-unstable and (3) violent-nonviolent axes – with another sort of pleasure, which thus presents itself as (1) exogenously generated, (2) temporally unstable, and (3) qualitatively violent. In Seneca's writings, the term *voluptas,* Foucault writes, in fact

> denotes a pleasure [1] whose origin is to be placed outside us and in objects whose presence we cannot be sure of: a pleasure, therefore, [2] which is precarious in itself, undermined by the fear of loss, and [3] to which we are drawn by the force of a desire that may or may not find satisfaction.[30]

"In place of this kind of [3] violent, [2] uncertain, and [1] conditional pleasure," that is, *voluptas,* Foucault concludes, supporting his contention by referring to Seneca's *Epistula* 23, "access to self is capable of providing a form of pleasure that comes, [3] in serenity and [2] without fail, of [1] the experience of oneself,"[31] namely, *gaudium.* If Foucault seems to be aware of this threefold distinction traceable between *gaudium* and *voluptas,* we now have to ask, as Irrera himself did,[32] why he insists on considering them *just* two 'different forms of pleasure,' as Hadot lamented. Can there be, ultimately, any justification for the Foucauldian historical-doctrinal indifference to the Stoic dichotomous domains of *eupatheia* and *pathos*? As we shall now consider, for Hadot, surely there is not.

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[27] "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 997.

[28] Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 66. Additions mine. Note that the order of the phrases of this passage has been re-arranged to provide a more linear exposition of the threefold axis that, according to Foucault, characterizes the Stoic notion of *gaudium.*

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid. Additions mine.

[31] Ibid. Additions mine.

[32] "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 997.

II.   HADOT'S REBUTTAL: THE PURITY OF INTENTION OF THE STOIC MORAL CONSCIENCE

Hadot presented his critical 'Reflections on the Idea of 'The Cultivation of the Self'' on the occasion of the *Rencontre Internationale* given in Paris between the 8th and the 11th of January 1988 to commemorate the fourth anniversary of Foucault's death.[33] Having taken note of Foucault's references to his early works,[34] Hadot seized that opportunity to "offer a few remarks with a view to delineating the differences of interpretation […] which separate us, above and beyond our points of agreements," as he himself puts it.[35] As anticipated in the introductory section, Hadot rejects Foucault's construal of Greco-Roman ethics (and, more critically, Stoic ethics) as "an ethics of the pleasure one takes in oneself" – a position which, to his regard, presents "a great deal of inexactitude."[36] Challenging him on the same textual ground – Seneca's *Epistula* 23 –, Hadot finds Foucault "a little off-hand [*un rien désinvolte*]"[37] at the moment in which he allegedly conflates the notions of *voluptas* and *gaudium*, thereby consigning, on the one side, the notion of *gaudium* to the subordinate status of "another form of pleasure," and, on the other, Seneca himself to the inappropriate rank of a sort of Epicurean.[38] As Hadot points out in his last interviews, when asked to summarize the distance that separated him from Foucault:

> My first divergence concerns the notion of pleasure. For Foucault, the ethics of the Greco-Roman world is an ethics of pleasure that one takes in oneself: This could be true for the Epicureans, who Foucault ultimately speaks of rather little. But the Stoics would have rejected this idea of an ethics of pleasure. They were careful to distinguish pleasure and joy.[39]

Far from being a sterile philological cavil, for Hadot, the Stoics carefully delimited both conceptually and terminologically the sphere of *hedone* ('pleasure') from the domain of

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[33] Hadot's article first appeared in English as Pierre Hadot, "Reflections on the Notion of 'The Cultivation of the Self'," in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher* (1992). Three years later, it was eventually republished in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (1995) – with the relevant exclusion of the report of the discussion following Hadot's presentation.

[34] Foucault mentions Hadot both in *The Use of Pleasure*, and, more critically, in a fundamental note of *The Care of the Self*. In the former, he confesses to have "benefited greatly" from Hadot's works. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality* (1990), 8; also 271. In the second, Foucault refers the reader back to Hadot's early collection of essays *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* for "an interesting discussion of these themes" revolving around the cultivation of the self. Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 243.

[35] *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 206.

[36] Ibid., 207. That Hadot's critique of Foucault is in turn "a matter of factual inexactitude" was more recently Giorgio Agamben's claim in *The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV* (2016), 99. *Contra* the latter's intervention in the Hadot-Foucault *querelle*, see recently Matthew J Sharpe and Matteo J Stettler, "Pushing Against an Open Door: Agamben on Hadot and Foucault," *Classical Receptions Journal* 14:1 (2022).

[37] Hadot, Pierre. "Foucault dans le texte," *Philosophie Magazine* 36 (2018), 91. Translation mine. Excerpt from Pierre Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre* (2001), 214-215.

[38] *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 207. Similarly, see also Hadot, "The Figure of the Sage in Greek and Roman Antiquity," 199.

[39] Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson*, 136.

eupatheia ('good feeling')[40] precisely because they abstained from grounding the realm of moral life on the principle of pleasure. According to Hadot, the Stoics jealously endeavoured to preserve "the purity of intention of the moral conscience," thus inaugurating that trajectory of moral reflections which eventually culminated with Kant and modern deontological ethics.[41] From the point of view of Hadot's historical-doctrinal reconstruction, in the ultimate analysis, "it seems difficult to accept that the philosophical practice of the Stoics […] was nothing but […] a pleasure taken in oneself," as Foucault allegedly maintained[42]

Two main conclusions may be drawn from this preliminary analysis. On the one side, while differentiating the two notions alongside the three axes described above, Foucault does expand the semantic scope of the notion of pleasure to embrace both *voluptas* and *gaudium/laetitia,* as Hadot lamented – whether rightly or not is a matter to be ascertained in due time. On the other, however, Foucault does *not* seem to be committed to the view for which this latter 'form of pleasure' *qua gaudium* is to be understood as the ultimate end of the Stoic moral life, that is, its *summum bonum* ('the supreme good'), as it was for the Epicureans. Foucault settled this issue early on in the imputed chapter 'The Cultivation of the Self,' where he made clear that it is "[the] relation to self that constitutes the end of the conversion and the final goal of all the practices of the self,"[43] and not that 'form of pleasure' that is associated with the self's successful access to itself, namely *gaudium.* In this

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[40] *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 207. The somewhat confusing contraposition of *eupatheia* and *hedone* is Hadot's, even though, for a Stoic, it would make more sense contraposing the domains of *pathos* and *eupatheia* on the one side, and the spheres of *hedone* and *chara* on the other. *Chara* ('joy') is in fact only one of the three *eupatheiai* ('good feelings'), alongside *boulesis* ('wish') and *eulabeia* ('caution'). While *hedone* ('pleasure') is one of the four *patheiai* ('passions'), alongside *epithumia* ('desire'), *phobos* ('fear'), and *lupe* ('pain'). On this, see Julias Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (1992), 104 and 114.

[41] *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 207. Translation modified. I've rendered Hadot's French *conscience* with the English 'conscience,' rather than 'consciousness.' Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (2002), 325.

[42] *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 208.

[43] Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 65. That this is the case can be best appreciated by looking at one of Foucault's most interesting case studies in the Hellenistic-Roman practices of the self, that of the *hupomnemata*. "Such is the aim of the *hupomnemata*," Foucault writes in his essay 'Self Writing,' "to make one's recollection of the fragmentary *logos* […] a means of stablishing a relationship of oneself with oneself, a relationship as adequate and accomplished as possible." Michel Foucault, "Self Writing," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1997), 211. Similarly, see also Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," 272. It is worth noting that it is at this point that Hadot's critique of Foucault on the Stoic notion of *gaudium* gets entangled with his wider critique of Foucault's lack of consideration for the Stoic notion of cosmic consciousness. That these two Hadotian lines of argument are "interconnected" was noted by Irrera, "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 996. Following the latter, see also Stephan, "Pierre Hadot e Michel Foucault: sobre a felicidade estoica e a experiência da alegria," 234. Somewhat similarly, also according to Wimberly: "From Hadot's perspective, Foucault's aims would seem to be heading in the wrong direction, toward *voluptas* and away from the Universal." Cory Wimberly, "The Joy of Difference: Foucault and Hadot on the Aesthetic and the Universal in Philosophy," *Philosophy Today* 53:2 (2009), 199. Simonazzi proposed a similar reading of the debate when he wrote that "he [*sc.* Hadot] states that 'Foucault presents the ethics of the Greco-Roman world as an ethics of pleasure that one takes in oneself,' while, on the contrary, according to Hadot, the main purpose of this ethics is to go beyond the individual self." Simonazzi, *La formazione del soggetto nell'antichità: La lettura di Michel Foucault e di Pierre Hadot*, 121. While agreeing with Irrera et al. on this point, we think nonetheless that Hadot's criticism on Foucault's misuse of the notion of pleasure might find its separate resolution.

sense, for Foucault, the practices of ethical self-constitution of the Stoics were not solely concerned with that pleasure that one takes in oneself, as Hadot wrongly presumed, but they *also* procured 'a form of pleasure' – as seen above, a very specific one –, issuing as a by-product of a successful ethical reflexivation, that is, of the establishment of a stable and accomplished relationship of the self with itself.[44] As we shall see in the following, this reading is substantiable by solid textual references.

III. SENECA'S TERMINOLOGICAL REGISTERS: VERBUM PUBLICUM AND SIGNIFICATIO STOICA

Anyone even remotely acquainted with later antiquity, even a self-declared novice Hellenist or Latinist like Foucault himself,[45] would certainly concur with Hadot in claiming that the Stoic *summum bonum* – that in which, according to the philosophers of the Porch, *felicitas* ('happiness') resides – "does not consist in pleasure but in virtue itself, which is its own reward."[46] "True happiness [*vera felicitas*]," as Seneca asserts unmistakably in the *De Vita*, "is located in virtue."[47] Nonetheless, we must grant Foucault that Seneca was one of those Stoic philosophers who regularly confronted Epicurus in his writings and who availed himself abundantly – and, as we shall see, often not unproblematically – of the notion of *voluptas,* even on those occasions in which, from the point of view of the Stoic doctrine, one would have expected the recourse to the more traditional term *gaudium.*[48] A primary point of reference concerning these notions – a reference left unnoticed by both Foucault and Hadot – is provided by Seneca's *Epistula* 59.[49] There, after having employed the term *voluptas* to denote the 'great pleasure' (*magna voluptas*) that he derived from Lucilius' correspondence, as we shall see, Seneca disambiguates the term by explicitly

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[44] That, for the Stoics, *gaudium* accompanies virtuous actions without being itself the objective of said actions is what Hadot himself tells us elsewhere. Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (1998), 240. That *chara* is a by-product of virtue, a so-called *epigennema,* can be seen in *SVF* III 76.

[45] "I am neither a Hellenist nor a Latinist" was Foucault's disclaimer in *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*, 7.

[46] Pierre Hadot, "Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self'," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995), 207.

[47] Seneca, *De vita beata*, 16.1.

[48] As DeLacy noted, in discussing the role of poetry in Stoic literature: "[t]he term *hedone* is also used in a favourable sense, even in contexts where strict usage would have required *chara.*" Phillip DeLacy, "Stoic Views of Poetry," *The American Journal of Philology* 69:3 (1948), 250. Similarly, see also Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (2015), 71. Following the latter, see Jennifer A. McMahon, "Beauty as Harmony of the Soul: the Aesthetic of the Stoics, in *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference of Greek Studies 2009,* ed. Marietta Rosetto, Michael Tsianikas, George Couvalis and Maria Palaktsoglou (2012), 57. On Seneca's notion of *gaudium* and its relation to the Stoic tradition, see Margaret Graver, "Anatomies of Joy: Seneca and the Gaudium Tradition," in *Hope, Joy, and Affection in the Classical World*, ed. Ruth R. Caston and Robert A. Kaster (2016).

[49] The relevance of this passage is highlighted by Evenepoel, "The Stoic Seneca on *virtus, gaudium* and *voluptas*," 46-47. By the same author, see also "Seneca on *virtus, gaudium* and *voluptas*: Some Additional Observations," *Antiquité Classique* 85 (2016).

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distinguishing the two terminological registers by which he usually speaks of it: what he calls 'the common parlance' (*verbum publicum*) and the 'Stoic meaning' (*significatio Stoica*).[50]

A. VOLUPTAS: PLEASURE QUA FALSE JOY

Voluptas, taken in its common connotation, Seneca qualifies to Lucilius, is "the word we generally use to refer to a glad feeling of the mind [*animi hilarem adfectionem*]."[51] Conversely, in the Stoic doctrine – or, as Seneca himself writes, "if we make words adhere to our statutes [*nostrum album*]"–, the term *voluptas* comes to acquire its distinctive negative acceptation, denoting something that, ultimately, "is discreditable [*rem infamem esse*]"[52] – a "fault [*vitium*]."[53] Even a pleasure as innocent as that derived from a friend's correspondence – a surge conventionally deemed honourable by ordinary individuals – is enough of a reason, in the context of *Epistula* 59, for awakening Seneca's suspicion and, ultimately, for issuing a warning against a potential *falsum bonum* ('false good'):

> I was not wrong to say that I derived great pleasure [*magnam...voluptatem*] from your letter. For even though the untrained person may be rejoicing for an honorable reason, still I refer to his emotion [*adfectum*] as pleasure [*voluptatem*], because it is unruly and swift to revert to the opposite state, and because it is set in motion by belief in a false good and is uncontrolled and excessive.[54]

Significantly, at the end of *Epistula* 59, Seneca borrows a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* to define *voluptates* as *falsa gaudia* ('deceiving or false joys'). Addressing his contempt to *voluptas*-seeking individuals, Seneca writes:

> When people have worn themselves out with wine and lust; when their vices outlast the night; when the pleasures [*voluptates*] they have consumed beyond the narrow limits of the body begin to suppurate; then in their misery they speak aloud that familiar line of Virgil:

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[50] Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 59.1. Seneca's distinction of these two terminological registers should certainly be read on the background of his use of philosophical language. Regarding the latter, as Armisen-Marchetti concluded, "Seneca's effort oscillates, in a constant dialectic, between a necessary technicality and a desired simplicity. A necessary technicality: Seneca has an excellent knowledge of stoicism and he is careful to render its concepts with scrupulous precision. But also a deliberate simplicity: the philosopher does not want to deviate from common language […]. The simplicity of the discourse is a response to the requirements of ancient philosophical teaching and the direction of conscience." Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, "La langue philosophique de Sénèque: entre technicité et simplicité," *Antike und Abendland* 42:1 (1996), 84. Translation mine. While the term *significatio Stoica* does not seem to compare elsewhere in Seneca's writings (or in any other Stoic Latin text), as far as I could ascertain, Seneca uses the term *verbum publicum* in *De beneficiis,* VI, 34.3, in reference to the standard and commonplace greeting 'Good day.' More interestingly, Seneca distinguishes the *verbum proprium* and the *verbum quasi publicum* for the notion of 'friend' in *Epistulae,* 3, 1.

[51] Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 59.1.

[52] Ibid., 59.2.

[53] Ibid., 59.1. That in this passage the term *hedone* is given "some definite technical sense" was also noted by Richard P. Haynes, "The Theory of Pleasure of the Old Stoa," *The American Journal of Philology* 83:4 (1962), 417. However, there seems to be nothing to indicate that Seneca's distinction between the *verbum publicum* and the *significatio Stoica* belonged to the Stoa as a whole, however certainly possible that might be.

[54] *Epistulae morales*, 59.4.

> *For you know how we spent that night, our last, amid deceiving joys.*[55]

> Indulging themselves, they spend every night amid deceiving joys [*falsa gaudia*], as if it were indeed their last.[56]

It would thus seem that, when understood in its traditional Stoic acceptation, any form of *voluptas* – from the simplest (that derived from a friend's letter) to the wildest (spending nights of unconsidered self-indulgence) –, for Seneca, denotes an amenability to seek after a *falsum bonum*, and it is thus best characterized as a *falsum gaudium*. In such capacity, as Hadot correctly maintained, *voluptas* seems to be irremediability set against *gaudium*.[57]

B. GAUDIUM/LAETITIA: JOY QUA TRUE PLEASURE

According to Seneca, the term g*audium*, intended in its Stoic acceptation, is brought forth solely by acting in conformity to *virtus*, that is, to the *verum bonum* ('true good'):[58] "joy [*gaudium*] pertains only to the wise person, for it is the elevation of a mind toward goods that are real and its own."[59] Even though only the sage, the Stoic ideal of perfection,[60] would be able to experience this *status animi* in his own or in his Stoic companion's virtuous conduct,[61] as Seneca points out in *Epistula* 59, referring now to the common and vulgar acceptation of the term *gaudium*,

> in our ordinary speech we often say that we are overenjoyed [*magnum gaudium*] that one person was elected consul, or another was married or that his wife has given birth, events which, far from being causes for joy [*gaudia*], are frequently the beginnings of future sorrow. For it is an attribute of joy that it never ceases or turns into its opposite.[62]

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[55] *Aeneid,* 6.513-514.

[56] *Epistulae morales,* 59.17-18.

[57] For the opposition *voluptas-gaudium,* see *SVF* III 431-4, and 438. Cf. also Seneca, *De vita beata,* 3, 4.

[58] Cf. pleasure as *falsum bonum* ('false good') in Seneca *Epistulae morales,* 59.4. For *gaudium* as deriving from virtuous conduct, see also Cicero, *De finibus,* V, 69.

[59] *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 59.2.

[60] It was a rather conventional feature of Hellenistic-Roman ethical reflections to be framed around the words and deeds of the sage, who functioned as the very "transcendental ideal" for people to conform with. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 57. See especially Hadot, "The Figure of the Sage in Greek and Roman Antiquity," But also Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 220.

[61] Seneca, *De vita beata,* 4.4. Also according to Graver: "Unlike the ordinary flawed person who delights wrongly in empty things, the wise person who is the Stoic ideal […] would experience joy in his own character and good deeds or those of virtuous friends. […] To experience it [*sc.* joy], Lucilius must perfect his character since only a fully virtuous and wise person possesses the genuine goods that are the proper object of joy." Graver and Long, *Seneca, Letters on Ethics: to Lucilius,* 517. Seneca repeats several times in the *Epistulae* that joy is a state of the soul reserved to the sage. See *Epistula* 27, 3-4; 72, 4-5; and 124, 23-24.

[62] *Epistulae morales,* 59.2. Also Graver reminds us of what "distinguishes joy as a philosophical idea from joy in the common or pretheoretical sense of that word. While both Greek and Latin speakers could in general speak of joy or rejoicing (χαρά/χαίρειν, *gaudium/gaudere*) as what anyone might experience in response to perceived good fortune, Stoic philosophers restricted those terms to their normative inquiry into the inner experience of the optimal agent," that is the sage. Graver, "Anatomies of Joy: Seneca and the Gaudium

It is exactly this *gaudium,* as technically understood by the Stoics (that is to say, the *verum gaudium* originating in *virtus*), rather than the one commonly conceived by ordinary people (that is to say, the *falsum gaudium* deriving from the vain goods of fortune),[63] that Seneca is exhorting Lucilius to learn how to experience in the much-discussed *Epistula* 23, the interpretation of which Hadot and Foucault so profoundly disagreed over. "Don't rejoice in empty things [*Ne gaudeas vanis*]," Seneca reminds his pupil there; this is the *fundamentum* ('foundation') – or, better, as Seneca immediately qualifies, the *culmen* ('pinnacle') – of any good mind (*mens bona*).[64] At a first reading, it would thus seem that Hadot is quite justified in calling out Foucault on his interpretation of this *Epsitula*, for, as the former argued, there "Seneca explicitly opposes *voluptas* and *gaudium* – pleasure and joy – and one cannot, therefore, speak of 'another form of pleasure,' as does Foucault […] when talking about joy."[65] And yet, although *gaudium,* or *laetitia,*[66] does remain Seneca's doctrinal term for the joy ensuing from virtue, in the very context of *Epistula* 23, this *status animi* is successively counted among the ranks of other *voluptates* in a manner that seems to depose in favour of the Foucauldian interpretation. In fact, in discouraging Lucilius from chasing any of the goods of fortune, Seneca tells his pupil that he is not depriving him of *voluptates* ('pleasures'), for he still wishes that his heart may be filled with *laetitia* – a statement which would seem to implicate that, for the purposes of the present utterance, this joyful state associated with virtue might, after all, be regarded as 'another form of pleasure,' as Foucault claimed:

> Do this above all, dear Lucilius: learn how to experience joy [*disce gaudere*]. Do you now suppose that because I am removing from you the things of fortune and think you should steer clear of hopes, those sweetest of beguilements, I am taking away many pleasures [*multas voluptates*]? Not at all: what I want is that gladness [*laetitia*] should never be absent from you. I want it to be born in your own home – and that is what will happen if it comes to be inside of you. Other delights [*ceterae hilaritates*] do not fill the heart; they are trivial feelings that merely smooth the brow. Surely you don't think that every person who smiles is rejoicing [*gaudere*]! The mind must

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Tradition," 133. See also the scholar's comments on Seneca's *Epistula* 23 in Graver and Long, *Seneca, Letters on Ethics: to Lucilius*, 517.

[63] Note that the emotion which Seneca referred to with the *significatio Stoica* of the term *voluptas* (*Epistula* 59, 18-18) and the one referred to with the *verbum publicum* of the term *gaudium* (*Epistula* 59, 2) can be both characterized as a *falsum gaudium* because both are unstable emotions susceptible of eventually turning into their opposite, while for Seneca the *verum gaudium* is an uninterrupted and unchanging emotion. This seems to suggest that the emotion that ordinary people vulgarly call *gaudium* corresponds to what the Stoics doctrinally designate as *voluptas.* As we shall see, exactly the opposite seems to hold for the *significatio Stoica* of the term *gaudium,* to which Seneca sometimes refers with the non-doctrinal meaning of the term *voluptas.* See especially footnote n72 *infra.*

[64] *Epistulae,* 23, 1.

[65] *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 207.

[66] As both Foucault and Hadot recognized, Seneca seems to refer indistinctively to the joy provoked by conducting oneself in accordance with *virtus* as either *gaudium* or *laetitia.* See Seneca, *De vita beata* 4.4; 15.2; and 22.3. Note that in *Tusculanae* IV, 66, Cicero distinguishes *gaudium* from *laetitia,* the latter characterizing an exaggerated form of joy.

be energetic and confident; it must be upright, superior to every trial. Believe me, real joy [*verum gaudium*] is a serious matter .[67]

This is not the only occasion in the entire Senecanian *corpus* in which, somewhat confusingly, the Stoic philosopher opts to refer to an *eupatheia* (such as the *gaudium* or *laetitia* deriving from virtue) using the term that traditionally connotes its opposite state of the soul, that is a *pathos* (such as *voluptas*), thus suspending, at least terminologically, the doctrinal antinomy between them. As Bocchi most interestingly noted,[68] that seems to occur also in the *Naturales quaestiones*, 6, 2, 2, where Seneca elaborates as follows on an exhortation delivered to the Trojans by Aeneas in the Virgilian epic*:* "If you want to be afraid of nothing [*si vultis nihil timere*] regard everything as something to be afraid of [*cogitate omnia esse metuenda*]."[69] Interestingly, on this occasion, Seneca recurs to using, evidently in its untechnical acceptation, the term *metus* ('fear'), the *pathos* of a future evil, in order to refer to its rationally justified correspondent: namely, *cautio* ('caution')*,* the *eupatheia* of an apparent future evil. As Bocchi pointed out when commenting on this passage of the *Quaestiones naturales,* with an observation that we wish to extend here also to the *Epistulae* – two texts which, relevantly enough, were addressed to Lucilius –, Seneca most likely resorts to using *metus* and *voluptas* to designate their corresponding *eupatheiai* because he lacks the appropriate terms for what Graver calls the 'progressor emotions' of the *proficiens*,[70] as both *gaudium* and *cautio* are traditionally considered unachievable by the latter and to belong only to the Stoic sage. In the *Quaestiones naturales,* as Bocchi noted, "Seneca, unable to use *cautio* for ordinary cases, finds himself without a term that expresses the attitude of serene expectation of future events typical of those who are not completely immune to the passions: therefore, the philosopher's choice falls on a term [*sc. metus*] that is at this point used with implied correction."[71] A similar consideration, we would like to suggest, holds for the term *gaudium* in the *Epistulae:* given that Seneca could not possibly use it for ordinary cases such as Lucilius', he finds himself lacking the term to express precisely that rationally justified state of enjoyment of a present good (namely, virtuous conduct) experienced sporadically by an individual who is still working his or her way through the path of wisdom: thus, he resorts to using its corresponding *pathos,* namely *voluptas,* in a non-doctrinal sense, that is, in a *significatio non Stoica* or in its *verbum publicum.*[72]

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[67] *Epistulae,* 23, 3-4.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Seneca, *Quaestiones naturales,* V, 2, 2. Translation by Harry M Hine, *Seneca, Natural Questions* (2010).

[70] Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (2007), 191-121. Brennan similarly referred to these states of the *proficiens*' soul as 'veridical emotions.' Tad Brennan, "The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions," in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (1998). Graver explains the origin of these emotions elsewhere. See "Pre-emotions and Reader Emotions in Seneca: *De ira* and *Epistulae morales*," 293.

[71] Bocchi, "A proposito di Seneca critico: l'ambivalenza al servizio dell'allegoria," 228, n17. Translation mine. That *gaudium* "pertains only to the wise person" we have seen above at *Epistulae,* 59, 2. That also *cautio* belongs exclusively to the sage can be gathered, according to Bocchi, by reading *Epistulae* 85, 26, where such state of the soul is characterized as *vitare mala.* Ibid.

[72] Referring to the joy that he derived from reading Lucilius' correspondence with the non-doctrinal meaning of the term *voluptas* is, I think, exactly what we find Seneca doing at first in the opening of *Epistula* 59, 1, where that state of the soul is defined as an *adfectio hilaris animi* ('glad feeling of the mind'). Importantly, *hilaritas continua et laetitia* ('an unceasing cheerfulness and joy') is exactly the way in which Seneca refers in

Several other examples of the same lexical procedure can be detected in other Senecanian writings, especially in the *De vita beata*.[73] At the beginning of this work, we find Seneca expanding the Stoic standard definition of the happy life – that is, "the life in agreement with its own nature [*vita conveniens naturae suae*]"[74] – into six different definitions, for, as he explains, recurring to the simile of the army, on which we shall have to return,

> Our good [*bonum nostrum*] can also be defined in a different way – that is, the same proposition can be grasped with different words. Just as one and the same army is spread out more widely one moment and compacted more tightly the next, […] but no matter how it has been ordered it has the same strength and the same will to stand up for the same cause – so the definition of the highest good [*summi boni*] can sometimes be spread out and extended, and at other times be compressed and collected into itself.[75]

As Asmis has argued, one of Seneca's aims in laying down these six definitions – on the specific content of which we shall not linger here – was to provide a correction to that "entrenched perception" whereby the Stoic *virtus* was "a stern and cheerless ideal – hardly such as to make a person happy."[76] To do so, as the scholar claims, Seneca decides to place in almost all his definitions of the Stoic *vita beata* much emphasis on the joy ensuing from virtuous conduct, as against the triviality of bodily pleasures. In the first definition, thus Seneca tells us that "when pleasures and pains have been rejected, a huge joy [*ingens gaudium*] comes in to replace those things that are trivial and fragile and actually prompt self-disgust – a joy unshaken and unvarying."[77] In the second, he assures us that "the mind looking down on the things of fortune" does so "joyous in virtue [*virtute laetus*]."[78] Similarly, in the fifth definition, Seneca doubles down on the difference between joy and pleasure: virtue is always accompanied by "an unceasing cheerfulness [*hilaritas continua*] and a joy [*laetitia*] that is deep and comes from deep within"[79] – a state of the soul with which "the tiny, trivial and impermanent movements of that meager thing, the body" cannot certainly rival.[80] Interestingly, however, the contraposition between the stable joys attending to virtue and the fleeting pleasures deriving from the goods of fortune does not prevent Seneca from mixing things up terminologically in the fourth definition, where he refers to the former state of the soul (which is doctrinally referred to as *gaudium*) by using the doctrinal term traditionally

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a doctrinal manner to the joy ensuing from virtue in *De vita beata*, 4, 4. This seems to be the case, even though later on in the very same *Epistula*, Seneca evidently shifts terminological register, referring to the doctrinal meaning of the term *voluptas*. Cf. Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 59.4. On this complicated passage of *Epistula* 59, where Seneca evidently struggles to find the right vocabulary to correspond with Lucilius, see Graver, "Pre-emotions and Reader Emotions in Seneca: *De ira* and *Epistulae morales*," 294-295.

[73] That there exists "a non-technical and less connoted acceptation of the term [*voluptas*], as a generic synonym of *gaudium*" in Seneca's *De clementia*, I, 1, 1, was Malaspina's claim. Ermanno Malaspina, *L. Annaei Senecae De clementia libri duo: Prolegomeni, testo critico e commento* (2005), 233. Translation mine.

[74] Seneca, *De vita beata*, 4, 3.

[75] Ibid., 4, 1.

[76] Elizabeth Asmis, "Seneca's On the Happy Life and Stoic Individualism," *Apeiron* 23:4 (1990),2 232

[77] Ibid., 3, 4.

[78] Ibid., 4. 2.

[79] Ibid., 4. 4.

[80] Ibid.

reserved for the latter (*voluptas,* although with the qualifier *vera*), thus suspending termino-logically their dichotomous relationship: "One may also define it [*sc.* the Stoic *summum bonum*] in such a way as to say that that human being is happy [*beatum*] […] to whom true pleasure will be scorning pleasures [*cui vera voluptas erit voluptatum contemptio*]."[81]

At this point in the argumentation of the *De vita beata,* there intervenes a fictitious inter-locutor with patent Epicurean sympathies who advances his reserves on the Stoic definitions of the happy and virtuous life that Seneca has just laid out. While recasting the old-age con-flict with the Epicureans concerning the incompatibility of virtue and pleasure, Seneca ends up conceding to his interlocutor that *voluptates* may even be part of the Stoic conception of the happy life, provided that they have "the same status for us as auxiliaries and light-armed soldiers have in an army camp, where they must serve rather than give orders."[82] Interest-ingly, for our purposes, pressed by his fictitious interlocutor to address another Epicurean position, namely, "do not cultivate virtue for any other reason than that you hope for some pleasure from it," Seneca resorts once again to defying the joy attached to virtue with that term that in the Stoic doctrine traditionally designates its corresponding *pathos,* namely, *voluptas,* which is thus here evidently employed in its *significatio non Stoica:*

> First, just because virtue is going to provide some pleasure [*voluptatem*] does not mean that this is the reason why it is sought. It does not provide pleasure, you see, but provides it also. Nor does it toil for pleasure: rather, its toil will attain this as well, even though it is seeking something else.[83]

To this, Seneca suggestively adds the following rhetorical image of cultivation ('of the self,' one might be tempted to add), which seems to corroborate Foucault's take on the so-called hedonistic structure of the Greco-Roman subject, as above analyzed:

> Just as in a field that has been plowed for corn some flowers grow up in between, yet all that work was not undertaken for this little plant, however much it pleases the eyes (the sower had another outcome in mind, and this supervened) – so too, pleasure [*voluptas*] is not the reward or the motive of virtue but an accessory [*accessio*]; and it is not approved of because it gives pleasure, but, if approved of, it gives pleasure also.[84]

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[81] Ibid., 4. 2. As Asmis already noted, "In this gnomic statement (4, 2), Seneca exceptionally uses the term *voluptas* instead of *gaudium* to refer to the joy of a virtuous mind, in order to score a rhetorical point." Asmis, "Seneca's On the Happy Life and Stoic Individualism," 232, n46. To this reading, Dyson has objected in "Pleasure and the *Sapiens*: Seneca *De vita Beata* 11.1," *Classical Philology* 105:3 (2010), 315, n11. For a similar use of *voluptas*, see *Epistulae morales ad Lucilius,* 18, 10. See also *solida voluptas* in *Ad Helviam matrem de consolatione,* 5, 5. Cf. also *De beneficiis,* 7, 2, 3-4, where the Stoic and Epicurean *voluptates* are compared: "the pleasure that is worthy of a human being and worthy of a real man is not to fill up the body […]; it is freedom from disturbances." Translation by Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca, On Benefits* (2011). For a similar usage, see also *De beneficiis* 4, 13, 1-2.

[82] *De vita beata,* 8, 2. Cf. footnote n85 *infra.*

[83] Ibid., 9.1. Hadot mentions this passage in *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, 240. As Irrera rightly noted, here "Hadot talks indifferently about pleasure, rather than only about joy." Irrera, "Pleasure and Transcendence of the Self," 1004.

[84] *De vita beata,* 9.1.

As his present purpose is that of addressing exclusively the consequentialist conception of virtue held by the Epicureans and thus the relationship that should ideally intervene between virtue and its corresponding state of the soul (whether it be pleasure for the Epicureans or joy for the Stoics), rather than the very definition of the *summum bonum* (pleasure for the Epicureans, virtue for the Stoics), Seneca finds it fitting here to temporarily archive the Stoic doctrinal antinomy between *gaudium* and *voluptas* in order to put into better focus his point and make his case in favor of the Stoic deontological view of virtue: if the Epicureans sought virtue for the *status animi* that it produces, namely, *voluptas,* the Stoics, he tells us, pursue virtue for itself, quite independently from its *epigennema* ('by-product') or, as we are told here, its accessory (*accessio*), which Seneca decides on this occasion to designate with the non-doctrinal term *voluptas* (rather than *gaudium*).[85]

CONCLUSION

It is our contention that one way in which we might make sense of Seneca's terminological liberality in referring to the joy attached to virtue – the very problematic passage from his usage of *voluptas* in its *verbum publicum,* to which Foucault seems to refer, to that of *gaudium* in its *significatio Stoica,* as seemingly brandished by Hadot – lies in a passage of the *De vita* that significantly precedes the above quoted definition of the Stoic happy life, where this *eupatheia* is referred to as *vera voluptas.*[86] There, as we have seen, Seneca claims that the Stoic *summum bonum* – which is usually defined as "the life in agreement with its own nature [*vita conveniens naturae suae*]" – "can also be defined in a different way – that is, the same proposition can be grasped with different words."[87] We are inclined to argue that something similar might be said for the definition of that state of the soul that, according to the Stoic doctrine, always accompanies the possession of virtue, namely joy.[88]

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[85] Evenepoel is of the same impression when he lists *De vita beata,* 9, 1-2, as one of those occasion in which Seneca refers to the joy brought about by virtuous conduct as *voluptas.* Evenepoel, "The Stoic Seneca on *virtus, gaudium* and *voluptas,*" 47. Cf. Asmis, "Seneca's On the Happy Life and Stoic Individualism," 239: "In his flower image, Seneca is not describing joy, but the short-lived, intermittent pleasures that follow upon the attainment of natural ends. As in his comparison of pleasures to auxiliaries [*De vita beata,* 8, 2], he views pleasures as spontaneous, unsought 'accessions', or *epigennemata,* that come when we 'preserve' natural endowments." Yet, as the scholar knows well, also *chara* is for the Stoics an *epigennema.* Asmis must have evidently been confused by Seneca's use of the term *voluptas* in a non-doctrinal manner to refer to the joy deriving from virtue, even though she is well aware that Seneca "exceptionally" does so for rhetorical purposes. Ibid., 232, n46. In conclusion: what Seneca "subverts" here is thus not his "doctrine," as Asmis thinks, but only his doctrinal terminological register (that is, his *significatio Stoica*). Ibid., 239. On the relationship between the *epigennemata* of pleasure and joy, see Anthony A Long, "Aristotle's Legacy to Stoic Ethics," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 15 (1968), 80

[86] It must be noted that it is precisely this sort of "contradictions, and lack of rigor and coherence" of the philosophical works of Greco-Roman antiquity that originally prompted Hadot to interpret ancient philosophy as a set of spiritual exercises and, ultimately, as a 'way of living.' Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, 61. For this, I sense, Hadot's rigidity in the interpretation of Seneca's technical vocabulary, and, thereby, his associated critique of Foucault's flexibility, is even more lamentable.

[87] Ibid. 4, 1.

[88] The validity of this assumption rests on the fact that, in *De vita,* Seneca defines almost each one of the six definitions of the Stoic *summum bonum* in terms of the joy that accompanies it. As much as the Stoic good

In fact, such a definition also seems to be a fluid and dynamic one and to be graspable with different *verba*: very much like Seneca's metaphorical army, the definition of the joy deriving from virtue may itself assume diverse configurations – at times expanding its semantic coverage to be assimilated to the notion of *voluptas*, as reflected in the Foucauldian interpretation, at others, compressing it, so as to re-establish the doctrinal antinomy between *gaudium* and *voluptas* that is so central to Hadot's reading of Stoic ethics – every time depending on the circumstances of each specific utterance and the interlocutors involved therein.

As we have seen, in the *Epistulae,*[89] – a text which is significantly addressed to the *proficiens* Lucilius –, Seneca cannot help but designate in a non-doctrinal manner the so-called 'progressor emotion' of joy experienced by his pupil with its corresponding *pathos,* namely, *voluptas,* as the state of *gaudium* remains, from a doctrinal point of view, the prerogative of the Stoic sage. Whenever a point of contention with the Epicurean school is instead being debated, such as in *De vita,* we found Seneca similarly resorting to defying the joy attending to virtue with the vulgar acceptation of the term *voluptas.* In those cases in which what is at stake is the difference between the Stoic and Epicurean *summum bonum*, Seneca usually refers to the restraining of pleasures as being itself the source of a higher and more noble form of *voluptas:* namely, *vera voluptas.*[90] The same holds for those passages in which he is addressing the difference between the consequentialist and deontological conceptions of virtue held by the Epicureans and the Stoics, respectively. There Seneca finds it similarly useful to temporally suspend the doctrinal antinomy *gaudium-voluptas* and to refer in a non-technical way to the *accessio* of virtue as a form of *voluptas* in order to get his point across better to his hostile interlocutor.[91]

Conversely, when his discourse is centered around the figure of the Stoic sage, and it is not addressed to interlocutors extraneous to the School of the Porch, Seneca does not hesitate to employ the term *gaudium* in its *significatio Stoica* to refer to the unceasing joy that always accompanies virtue, thus fully adhering to the doctrinal antinomy *gaudium-voluptas.*[92] If the pieces of evidence collected so far are sound, and our reasoning on the latter is correct at least as much as we hope they both are, then the double semantic register with which Seneca quite liberally employs the notion of *gaudium* and *voluptas* throughout his writings has allowed us to reconcile on the same textual ground Hadot's and Foucault's respective accounts of the joyful state ensuing from virtue, the former being seemingly guided by the doctrinal acceptation of the term *gaudium,* the latter by the vulgar acceptation of the term *voluptas.* It is worth noting, in conclusion, that such results have

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(*i.e.,* virtue) can be defined pointing to a virtuous individual "to whom true pleasure [that is, joy] will be scorning pleasures," we are legitimated in assuming that Seneca's following considerations concerning the fluid and dynamic definition of the Stoic 'good' shall apply as well to the state accompanying it, that is, joy. *De vita beata,* 4, 2.

[89] Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium,* 23, 3-4.

[90] *De vita beata,* 4, 2. See *solida voluptas* in *Ad Helviam,* 5, 5. The contrast between Stoic and Epicurean pleasures in *De beneficiis* 4, 13, 1-2; 7, 2, 3-4.

[91] *De vita beata,* 9, 1.

[92] *Epistulae,* 59, 2.

been reached by attending closely to Hadot's own historical-doctrinal method of reading ancient texts (and not casting doubts on its presuppositions, as Irrera did) – a method which, however, the French scholar himself, like those fundamentalist philosophers and historians of philosophy that he so harshly reproached, has failed to stand by on this occasion.

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FOUCAULT STUDIES

ARTICLE

The Subject of Desire and the Hermeneutics of Thoughts: Foucault's Reading of Augustine and Cassian in *Confessions of the Flesh*

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ABSTRACT. Although Foucault presented *History of Sexuality Vol. 4: Confessions of the Flesh* as a crucial part in the study of the genealogy of the subject of desire, Foucault's analyses of early Christian doctrine and pastoral technologies do not support the claim that an analytic of the subject of desire was established in early Christianity. This can be shown through a reconstruction of his readings of Augustine and Cassian. Augustine's doctrinal views of the human condition and the association of *libido* and disobedience to law are not accompanied by the production of technologies for the hermeneutics of desire. Cassian's pastoral technologies of obedience and subjection to the will of the spiritual director are organized around the hermeneutics of thoughts, and they aim at establishing an inner detachment from misleading thoughts through examination of conscience. This reconstruction opens new trajectories for a genealogy of the subject of desire and for a genealogy of pastoral power and governmentality.

Keywords: Confessions of the Flesh, obedience, law, desire, subject, hermeneutics

INTRODUCTION

At the time of the publication of *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* in April and May 1984, Foucault had a "Please insert" slipped into the volumes. In this insert sheet it is stated that these volumes are part of a series of three books that together complete the series *History of Sexuality*. He writes that these three volumes "form a whole" as they all concern the "vast study of the genealogy of desiring man, from classical antiquity to the first centuries of Christianity". On the announced third volume, *Confessions of the Flesh*, he remarks that it will deal "with the experience of the flesh in the first centuries of Christianity, and with the role played in it by the hermeneutics, and purifying decipherment, of

desire".[1] In the introductory chapter in *The Use of Pleasure*, we find a similar statement on the three volumes as study of the genealogy of desiring man from classical antiquity to the first centuries of Christianity. Foucault adds that *The Confessions of the Flesh* "deals with the formation of the doctrine (*doctrine*) and ministry (*pastorale*) concerning the flesh".[2]

These statements give the impression that the eventually posthumously published *Confessions of the Flesh* (in 2018) is a coherent body of texts in which several issues (flesh, hermeneutics, desire) are analyzed in their mutual interactions and determinations. We know since its publication that this is not really the case. *Confessions of the Flesh* is reconstructed on the basis of manuscripts and typescripts, with four separate manuscripts added as appendices, and without an introductory chapter and proper conclusions. More importantly, the book offers neither a thorough integration of the various components of the text in one "genealogy of desiring man" nor an analysis of the experience of the flesh in which the doctrinal and pastoral aspects are integrated.

In the final pages of *Confessions of the Flesh*, Foucault concludes that in early Christianity a new "unity reconstituted itself" around "the analytic of the subject of concupiscence".[3] But does this conclusion follow from the main sources Foucault studied? Do the readings of the contemporaries John Cassian and Augustine justify the conclusion that at the heart of their pastoral models and doctrines one finds the subject of desire? Was the interplay between a doctrine of desire and pastoral truth-telling techniques of confession fully established in early Christianity? In some other texts, one comes across the same problem. In the article "Sexuality and Solitude" from 1980, Foucault tries to bring together Augustine's "libidinization of sex" and its "huge influence on Western technologies of the self" on the one hand, and a monastic literature concerned "with the stream of thoughts flowing into consciousness", the decipherment of these thoughts, and to obligation of permanent confession on the other hand. Yet, in the final section of this article, Foucault writes that these "different and eventually contradictory" developments only in the long run produced "a common effect", namely the linking together of sexuality, subjectivity and truth.[4] The question thus arises how and in what context the subject's desire became the object of truth-telling procedures.[5] It is exactly on this point that *Confessions of the Flesh* is an unfinished project leaving unanswered the question as to how and when a full-blown analytic of the subject of desire was developed and became operational. Was it in the era of John Cassian and Augustine? Or was it in fact much later, after the Council of Lateran in 1215,[6] or in the period of Reformation and Counter-Reformation,[7] or even in the modern

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[1] Frédéric Gros, "Foreword to *Confessions of the Flesh*,", in *Confessions of the Flesh* (2021), viii.

[2] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality 2* (1992), 12.

[3] Michel Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh. The History of Sexuality 4* (2021), 285.

[4] Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in *Religion and Culture*, ed. J.R. Carrette (1999), 187.

[5] Agustin Colombo has rightfully argued that *Confessions of the Flesh* as a reflection on "the principle of desiring man" is an unfinished project since Foucault does not convincingly show how Cassian's anthropology and pastoral ideas can be harmonized with Augustine's anthropology and doctrine. Agustin Colombo, "What is a Desiring Man?," *Foucault Studies* 29 (2021), 86-87.

[6] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge. The History of Sexuality 1* (1998), 58, 61.

[7] Ibid., 19, 116.

medical sciences and in psychoanalysis as "institutionalized practices for the confession of sexuality"?[8]

In this article, I want to further explore the question as to whether *Confessions of the Flesh* can be read as a study of the genealogy of desiring man in which the interplay of pastoral and doctrinal elements is examined and convincingly shown or whether this text is in fact much more a study of different and even contradictory pastoral and doctrinal components that nevertheless establish conditions for a variety of later developments, notably in the early modern in-depth Christianization processes and the subsequent developments in medical sciences, psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Does Foucault convincingly argue that in early Christianity an analytic of the subject of desire was established, i.e., a systematic interaction between the obligation to examine and articulate the truth about oneself, and the conceptualizations of the subject of desire as simultaneously the juridical subject? I will argue that in *Confessions of the Flesh* Foucault attempts to map the various and distinct theories and practices that originate in different contexts in early Christianity but fails to provide convincing arguments for a unity constituted around the analytic of the subject of desire. To be clear, I do not claim that Foucault's readings of the writings of Cassian and Augustine should be seen as misreadings. My main claim is that Foucault, within the overarching project of the genealogy of desiring man, on a conceptual level insufficiently differentiates between the hermeneutics of thoughts in Cassian's writings on the purification of the soul through the battle against the vices on the one hand, and the emergence of a hermeneutics of desire from Augustine's views of the libido as the fundamental principle that defines subjectivity on the other. In addition, I will argue that because of his focus on Cassian's role in the establishment of Christian pastoral power, Foucault tends to neglect the importance of monastic self-practices, notably of exercises of the will. In order to substantiate this, I will focus on Foucault's reading of Cassian and Augustine. Before turning attention to Foucault's reading of these authors in *Confessions of the Flesh*, I will start with a brief exploration of the kind of problems and questions that made Foucault turn attention to early Christian doctrines and pastoral practices.

FOUCAULT'S TURN TO THE STUDY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PASTORAL PRACTICES

Although Foucault in 1984 announced *Confessions of the Flesh* as the fourth volume in *History of Sexuality*, we know that its manuscript components were written somewhere between 1980 and 1982.[9] In fact, he had already started studying Church Fathers such as Tertullian and Cassian from 1977 onwards. In the course "Security, Territory, Population" held at the Collège de France in 1977-1978, we find the first presentation of his findings. They concern the emergence of Christianity as a religion that lays claim to the daily government of men. More precisely, in early Christianity, one can witness the rise of a new

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[8] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975* (2003), 170.

[9] Pre-publications in the form of short articles on Cassian and Augustine were published in 1981 and 1982 ("Sexuality and Solitude" and "The Battle for Chastity").

institutionalized art of conducting, directing, guiding and manipulating both individuals and collectives. Its key characteristics are the insistence on pure obedience, on the submission of one individual to another, on the renunciation of one's own singular will, and on the daily and permanent examination of conscience and spiritual direction aimed at the compulsory production of one's internal and hidden truth through confession (*aveu*).[10] This shows that Foucault, as Daniel Defert writes, already very soon after the publication of *The Will to Knowledge* was "attempting to shift his history of sexuality by several centuries".[11] From the first months of 1977 onwards, Foucault started to reconsider the original plan for the further volumes of *History of Sexuality*, of which the first one would be named *The Flesh and the Body* and would concern the study of Christian practices and doctrines of penance and confession in the age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. From archival work we know that in January 1977 he changed the title of *La chair et le corps* to *Les aveux de la chair*.[12] In order to understand the modern and contemporary forms of government of men, Foucault now turns attention to the pastoral techniques developed in early Christian monastic tradition.

In order to understand what Foucault tries to establish in *Confessions of the Flesh*, one can best start from *The Will to Knowledge*. This text is first of all a critique of the liberation ideologies from the 1960s that dominated the contemporary public and political discourses. According to these – mostly Freudo-Marxist inspired – ideologies, civilization and the power of existing political systems are based on the repression of sexuality and the subjugation of human drives and instincts. At the heart of these ideologies, one finds the conviction that the removal of sexual taboos would not only grant freedom of expression of sexual desires but also create new political and societal realities. The aim was to give people the freedom to articulate their "true" sexual desires and preferences, and by doing so give people the freedom to define their own sexual identity. According to Foucault, these ideologies assume that (political) power in principle is always repressive and stands in opposition to the free expression of truthful and authentic human sexual desires. But is this repression truly a universal given and a historical fact? Must we necessarily think of power in terms of repression through prohibiting laws (taboos) and of human beings as desiring beings? According to Foucault, the conviction of so many people who claim, with passionate resentment against their past, present and themselves, that their sexual desires are repressed[13] has a scientific counterpart not only in the already mentioned Freudo-Marxist cultural studies of, for example, Marcuse but also in the dominant

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[10] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (2007), 148-185. Here and in *Confessions of the Flesh* Cassian is virtually the only relevant source for Foucault's inquiries into spiritual direction and obedience.

[11] Gros, "Foreword to *Confessions of the Flesh*," ix.

[12] Foucault wrote text for *The Flesh and the Body* until 1978 – the manuscript remained unfinished. Chevallier, *Michel Foucault et le christianisme*, 149. Daniel Defert mentions that this manuscript was to present a "genealogy of concupiscence" through and in interaction with "the practice of confession" and "the direction of conscience" as developed from the Council of Trent onwards. Daniel Defert, "Chronologie",′" in Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1* (2001), 73. See also, Philippe Chevallier, "The Birth of Confessions of the Flesh," *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 11 (2022).

[13] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 8-9.

structuralist theories in ethnology (Lévy-Strauss) and psychoanalysis (Lacan) that are organized around concepts of law and desire.[14]

This leads Foucault to formulate his main thesis in *The Will to Knowledge*: instead of repression of sexual desire, one finds from the 16th century onwards a growing number of institutions and practices for the incitement of individuals to put into discourse their sexual desires, feelings, activities, etc., with the aim of establishing the truth of sexuality as the truth of the subject and its identity.[15] In the modern age, sexuality became the object of pastoral, medical, juridical and psychoanalytical discourses that aimed to order, subject and control sexuality by making it speak the truth about itself and about the subject. This thesis is further explored in *The Will to Knowledge* through the critical analysis of the modern *scientia sexualis* as practices of the obligation to tell the truth of sexuality. According to Foucault, this obligation does not first appear in the modern sexual sciences (psychiatry, psychoanalysis). It has its roots in a Western Christian tradition in which sexuality could become the object of knowledge, was supposed to reveal the truth of the subject, and came to lead a discursive existence. In short, one needs to study "the history of the confession of sexuality"[16] in order to understand both the contemporary popular liberation discourses and psychoanalytic practices of the truth-telling of sexuality.[17]

At the same time, Foucault questions the political and anthropological presupposition of the popular liberation narratives and the supporting scientific theories, that is to say, the assumptions that the dialectics of law and desire are situated beyond specific historical developments and contexts. Since, according to Foucault, all knowledge is historically conditioned, the question is raised whether power can be articulated without reference to a juridical law and a prohibiting authority, and whether sexuality can be articulated without reference to law and desire.[18] In addition, he raises the question as to when and in what context the theory of interrelatedness of law and desire first appeared.

What Foucault highlights in *The Will to Knowledge* are modern theories and practices that built on the essential interrelatedness of law and desire, and develop techniques for relieving the effects of the prohibiting laws by means of obligatory articulations of the incestuous, repressed desires. Psychoanalysis, for example, is a formation of knowledge that regards the subject to be organized around its hidden and prohibited sexual desires. At the same time, psychoanalysis is a technique founded in confession (*aveu*) with the aim of extracting the truth of the subject from its sexual desires.[19] We find here a theory of desire and law combined with a confessional technique – we find sexuality as an object of

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[14] It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail Foucault's critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis in *History of Sexuality*. Elsewhere I have elaborated this issue more extensively in Herman Westerink, *De lichamen en de lusten* (2020). See also, Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (1991), 270-272; Arnold Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality* (2001), 209-215; Amy Allen, "Foucault, Psychoanalysis and Critique," *Angelaki. Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 23:2 (2018).

[15] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 12, 69.

[16] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 170.

[17] One could add here that Foucault views psychoanalysis as both a theory and practice of "interiorisation of the law by the self". Michel Foucault, About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self, 163.

[18] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 90-91, 157.

[19] Compare Michel Foucault, "Interview 1984," in Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 2* (2001), 1484-1485.

knowledge and of power strategies.[20] The project of the history of sexuality can be seen as a study into the historical conditions of both such theories, such practices and the way these two became associated.

A RELIGION NOT OF LAW BUT OF OBEDIENCE

In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault argues that the modern procedures (in and outside the *scientia sexualis*) for speaking the truth of one's sexuality "grew out of that formidable development and institutionalization of confessional procedures which has been so characteristic of our civilization".[21] Initially, he announced that the second volume in *History of Sexuality*, *The Flesh and the Body*, was projected to be a study of this institutionalization of confessional procedures in the Catholic pastoral and the sacrament of penance after the Council of Trent. On his findings he concludes: "According to the new pastoral, sex must not be named imprudently, but its aspects, its correlations, and its effects must be pursued down to their slenderest ramifications, (…) everything had to be told."[22] Why? Because not the concrete transgressions in sexual activities but "the root of all evil", i.e., "the flesh" or "the stirrings of desire" needed to be examined and brought under control. Foucault writes the following on this issue: "An imperative was established: Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse. (…) The Christian pastoral prescribed as a fundamental duty the task of passing everything having to do with sex through the endless mill of speech."[23] The confessional practices – defined as obligations – were to be seen as instruments of power and knowledge to reach into the most hidden and secret forms of desire. And it is this examination of desire that is supposed not only to produce a discourse of truth about the subject but also to have a transformative effect on that subject.

This suggests an already established relation between confession and the meticulous examination of desire. However, things are more complicated than they seem. One important complicating issue concerns the problematics of the law. The question can be raised as to how desire became related to law in the early modern confession practices; how desire became organized through juridical procedures. Also, there is the question of the relation between law and obligation. Notably, this second question is extensively explored by Foucault in the period he starts reading early Christian authors.

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[20] From this we can understand that Foucault in 1976 understood his project of a history of sexuality in terms of "archaeology of psychoanalysis". Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 129-130.

[21] Michel Foucault, "Interview on the history of sexuality," in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. C. Gordon (1980), 191. See also Michel Foucault, "Interview on the confession of the flesh," in M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. C. Gordon (1980), 211: "One thus finds [in Christianity] this formidable mechanism emerging – the machinery of the confession, within which in fact psychoanalysis and Freud figure as episodes".

[22] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 19.

[23] Ibid., 21.

In his course *Abnormal* held at the Collège de France in 1974-1975, Foucault had already begun to explore the evolution of confession and penance. He argues that in the Middle Ages penance was established in terms of the German juridical model as a system of "tariffed" penance. The actual transgressions one had committed were to be confessed to a priest, who would respond with a fitting and obligatory penance and the subsequent remission of sins – it is a system hence of offense and penalty, of crime and reparation.[24] In this course, a question emerges that will be important for further developments. According to Foucault, the guiding principle in the early modern confession manuals and practices is no longer "the law and breaches of the law", hence no longer the medieval juridical model. Central now is the obligation to confess everything, that is, all lingering thoughts and impulses, bodily "ticklings", pleasures, delights and desires.[25] Does this shift from law to obligation point toward an epistemic shift? This calls for further reflection on the different systematics and functioning of the law and the obligation of confession.

Foucault elaborates this problematic in courses held between 1977 and 1981. In the course 'Security, Territory, Population', he argues that the Christian pastoral is organized around "the insistence on pure obedience". Notably in early monasticism, Christianity shows itself to be a religion of obedience and submission to God's will. This divine will is neither founded in a – reasonable – law nor expressing itself merely through a general juridical law that applies to all men equally. Christianity is "a religion of what God wills for each in particular".[26] This voluntaristic-theological principle is reflected in the actual Christian pastorate: the pastor is not a judge representing the law and demanding submission to the law but a spiritual director in "a relationship of submission of one individual to another individual".[27] This view of the Christian pastoral power is continued throughout the period Foucault was closely studying early Christian texts and working on *Confessions of the Flesh*. In his course on the government of the living (1979-1980), we find similar statements on Christianity being a religion that binds individuals "to the obligation to manifest in truth what they are", that is, to manifest in depth "the most imperceptible movements of the 'mysteries of the heart'" in the form and context of complex relations with another (the pastor, spiritual director), other persons and the whole church community.[28] According to Foucault, this is particularly established in early Christian monasticism.[29] The obligation to tell the truth about one's sexual desires is not first established in the context of Reformation and Counter-Reformation Christianization processes but is in fact older than the juridical systems that dominated throughout the Middle Ages.

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[24] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 186.

[25] Ibid., 190.

[26] We note here that there are changes and nuances in the conceptualization of Christianity between 1974 and 1984, moving from the focus on Christianity as organization of pastoral power (and resistance) towards Christianity as inaugurating technologies of the self, new moral experiences and regimes of truth that will define modern subjectivity. See, Niki Kasumi Clements, "Foucault's Christianities," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 89:1 (2021); Arianna Sforzini, "Brève généalogie des *Aveux de la chair*," in *Foucault, les Pères et le sexe: Autour des Aveux de la chair*, eds. Ph. Büttgen, Ph. Chevallier, A. Colombo & A. Sforzini (2021).

[27] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 174-175, 183.

[28] Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 103.

[29] Ibid., 261-275.

It remains as yet an open question, according to Foucault, as to when the principles and practices developed in early monasticism concerning the monastic subject of the spiritual truth-telling (*sujet de la véridiction spirituelle*) became connected to juridical practices and the legal/juridical subject (*sujet de droit*, *sujet juridique* – "subject of law") in the practice of confession (*aveu*). In other words, Foucault suggests a process of "juridification of the confession" that builds upon an earlier development, namely the obligation to examine and express the truth about oneself.[30] He points at two decisive developments that condition this process of juridification. The first one we have already seen. It is the alliance with the Germanic juridical/penal system and introduction of tariffed penance in the Middle Ages. He adds a second development: the influence of Augustinian thought on the Benedictine Rule that was to become the main monastic rule from the 6th Century onwards. In this rule, one finds something lacking from Cassian's writings and actually undermining a monastic practice aimed at purification of the heart (see below): the definition of a number of faults and the subsequent sanctions – this is a first form of juridification that can be seen as paradigmatic for the much later – early modern – explosion of codified and casuistic literature and practices.[31]

The question of the relation between obligation and law, and of the introduction of juridical models and practices, is a question that repeatedly pops up in *Confessions of the Flesh*. On the developments until the age of Cassian and Augustine, we can be brief. According to Foucault, juridical models do not play a significant role in the early Christian practices of penance, in *exomologesis*, i.e., the public confession (*confessio*n) of faith and adherence to the truth of faith, in the confession of sins before God and a priest, or in the practice of virginity. There is no process of or tendency towards juridification until the 5th century in these domains. In fact, this tendency towards juridification starts in a relatively marginal domain that initially has no special spiritual significance: in the reflections on the ethics of marriage, its legitimacy and acceptability.[32] Foundations were laid in the Roman state when marriage came to be considered as an important concern since it was the basic component of society through which the moral conduct of individuals could be tied to a system of laws. What is first developed in this context is continued and Christianized by authors such as Clement of Alexandria or John Chrysostom: marriages can be defined as a legal bond organized and sustained through a set of reciprocal duties, rights, obligations and debts.

But the question is: Were these developments sufficient condition for the "huge juridical edifice" that will be constructed in the Middle Ages "making spouses appear as legal subjects in complex relations of debts, demands, acceptances, and refusals"? Can we understand "the juridification of sexual practice" from this relatively marginal issue in early Christian thought? The answer is provided through Foucault's reading of Augustine. It is in Augustine's writings on marriage, such as *De bono conjugali* and *De nuptiis et*

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[30] Ibid., 150, 169.
[31] Ibid., 176. See also, Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 298 (Appendix 2).
[32] Ibid., 194.

concupiscentia, that he finds "the rudiments of a jurisprudence of sexual relations" and the introduction of marriage as the main practice of pastoral care and intervention.[33] More importantly and more fundamentally, Foucault identifies Augustine's theory of *libido* (theory of concupiscence – desire) as the condition for the possibility of a "general conception of desiring man" and "the subject of law as existing simultaneously and in a single form".[34] It is the married individual who is thought by Augustine as a single subject of desire and law, that is to say, as a subject who is – on an ontological level – a libidinal being and, at the same time, a subject who is accountable for the manifestations of *libido* in sexual activities.

With regards to John Cassian and his role in the establishment of Christian practices of spiritual direction, examination of conscience, obligations to tell the truth in confessions (*exagoreusis – aveu*), and pure obedience, Foucault argues that these practices "do not take place within an apparatus of jurisdiction". After all, these practices are not tied to the examination of acts one admits, laws one has transgressed or responsibilities one has towards others.[35] They were developed in a monastic context outside of urban communities, that is, in a context in which individuals had chosen to leave the world of social contracts organized in laws behind in order to devote their lives to obtaining purity of heart. In other words, the libidinization of sex and the juridification of sexual practices must be understood from a context in which there is a shift in Christianity's center of gravity, namely the transition from the focus on intense asceticism of limited groups towards the reinforcement of the religious meaning of everyday life within the larger society.[36]

AUGUSTINE: THE SUBJECT OF DESIRE AND LAW

Although *Confessions of the Flesh* was announced in 1984 as part of the study of the genealogy of desiring man, the most explicit exploration of this topic can only be found in the last chapter of the book on the "libidinization of sex".[37] It is in this section of the book that Foucault focuses all attention on Augustine's doctrine of *libido*. According to Foucault, this doctrine can be seen as an answer to the Pelagian doctrine of free will as represented by Julian of Eclanum,[38] in which desire and lust at work in sexual relations were seen as

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[33] Ibid., 253. We should not forget the simple fact that Augustine was not a monk but a bishop in the city of Hippo – he was the pastor of a Christian community consisting of mostly married people. On Foucault's reading of Augustine's writings on marriage, see, Elizabeth Clark, "L'Augustin de Foucault au risqué d'Augustin," in *Foucault, les Pères et le sexe: Autour des Aveux de la chair*, eds. Ph. Büttgen, Ph. Chevallier, A. Colombo & A. Sforzini (2021).

[34] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 255, 277.

[35] Ibid., 109-110.

[36] Ibid., 194.

[37] See also Machiel Karskens, "Het regime van de bekentenissen. Foucaults *Histoire de la sexualité 4*," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 81 (2019), 562.

[38] Foucault basically follows Peter Brown's view in that Augustine's writings on marriage and sexual desire are for the larger part to be situated in the context of his debates with Julian of Eclanum – debates that occupied him in the last two decades of his life. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (1969), 381-397; Foucault, *The Confessions of the Flesh*, 260.

created by God and as such belonging to the very nature of the human being.[39] Therefore, this desire in itself could not be at fault and need not be renounced. It was a quality and not a deficiency of nature. In this view, however, what was considered as problematic was the excess of uncontrolled desire. The boundaries between "enough" and "too much", and between "controlled" and "uncontrolled", were easily identified. Desire and lust within marital relations and in the service of procreation were justified and good; desire and lust for the sake of desire and lust, or desire for extramarital sexual relations (adultery), or "unnatural" sexual activities (activities not aimed at procreation), were excessive. To maintain good desire was then a matter of self-control. For Julian, this was possible through the use of reason and volition, through understanding the nature of sexual desire (*concupiscentia*) and being able to control it with an act of the will.[40]

According to Foucault, in order to avoid an ethics of sexual desire based on the human capacities of reason and free will for controlling desire, Augustine needed to relocate "evil", identifying it no longer with excess but viewing it as an inherent aspect of every sexual relation and activity. There was always something evil at work in sexuality, including the legitimate activities aimed at reproduction within lawful marriage. In order to avoid turning God into the creator of something inherently evil in human nature, it was necessary "to establish the metahistorical event that reshaped the sexual act in its original form so that from then on it would necessarily include this evil that is evident".[41] There must have been an "event" through which the sexual act as inherent to human nature became corrupted and reshaped that human nature.

According to Augustine, Adam and Eve were created as man and wife; as sexual beings with the lawful possibility of having sexual intercourse for the sake of procreation. Yet, these paradisiacal possible sexual relations and activities must have been free from everything corrupted. From reading Augustine's anti-Pelagian texts,[42] Foucault focuses on his view that the paradisiacal sexual relation can be defined as consisting of acts obediently placed under unfailing command of the will (*voluntas*) and, as such, existing without any *libido* (i.e., *concupiscentia carnis*).[43] The sexual activities are completely determined by

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[39] Julian of Eclanum and Augustine agree on one important point: Adam and Eve were created for each other as man and wife, and were meant to procreate. Their writings on marriage and sexual relations thus mark an important shift away from the model of virginity: although virginity is still seen as more perfect than marriage, both authors – bishops writing for a married audience – stress the fact that marriage can be thought of as something inherently good and can be seen as a significant spiritual practice. Ibid., 232. See also, Daniele Lorenzini, "The Emergence of Desire," *Critical Inquiry* 45 (2019), 461-465.

[40] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 258, 283. See also, Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (1988), 412-413; Mathijs Lamberigts, "A Critical Evaluation of Critiques of Augustine's View of Sexuality," in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, eds. R. Dodaro & G. Lawless (2000).

[41] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 259.

[42] Notably *Contra Julianum, Contra duas epistulas Pelagionorum, De civitate Dei* and *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*.

[43] The concept of *libido* was already used in Stoic writings (notably by Seneca) to denote sexual desire (*epithumia*). The concept of *concupiscentia* was introduced in Christianity and first becomes a central notion in the age of Augustine and Cassian, after the translation of the Bible in Latin (Vulgate). See, Lamberigts, "A Critical Evaluation of Critiques of Augustine's View of Sexuality"; Westerink, *De lichamen en de lusten*, 139-140.

the volitional subject, i.e., by the subject acting from an undivided and unambiguous will. In Augustine's view, this means that Adam was capable of controlling and maneuvering his sexual organ just like he controlled his hands, feet or mouth. He was like a craftsman using his body parts as functional, calculable and obedient instruments for regeneration without any passion or lust.[44]

According to Foucault, the cause of the Fall and of human sin should be located in the volitional subject and its freedom of choice. This implies the possibility of willing against God or of being disobedient to God's will. The Fall (the eating of the forbidden fruit) marks the moment when Adam and Eve consent voluntarily to their own will against God's will. The just and definitive punishment for this act of disobedience does not consist in a Manichean split between matter and mind (body and soul) but is placed in the volitional subject. A division appears within the will in the form of a principle that is turned against the will, contradicting what the will wills,[45] while escaping from control by the will: the *libido*. The punishment for the disobedience of God's will consists of libidinal disobedience within the will itself. Augustine calls this *inobedientia reciproca*: the will is itself dominated by an involuntary disobedient principle (*libido dominandi*). Foucault underscores this link between *libido* and involuntariness. What we find in Augustine is the step from the volitional subject, capable of struggle against desire, passions and lust (in for example the virgin's and monk's practices of sexual abstinence) towards the subject of involuntary and uncontrollable *libido* (sexual desire and lust) – a "counter-will" that resists the will from within.[46] Since the Fall, the human condition can be defined in terms of the perverting and transgressive presence and dominance of *libido*, e.g., *concupiscentia carnis*.

The locus of sin (and punishment) is the will dominated by desires of the flesh. Augustine does not deny that since the Fall the human condition is one of weakness and limitation (in death), but nothing makes man's corruption and imperfection more visible than the lack of control over the sexual organs. It is notably the spontaneous and unpredictable erection of the male genital that is the most clear sign of man's insurrection against God and hence of his sinfulness. *Libido*, Foucault writes, "is phallic from the origin".[47] Every sexual activity and relation is perverted by the lack of control over the sexual organs and by its autonomous movements. Erection, in short, is the sign par excellence of the erectile aspect of the will,[48] i.e., the will that is no longer capable of determining man's spiritual and bodily activities in accordance with what is righteous but instead drives man to transgress everything originally created as good. Sexuality reminds us every day that the

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[44] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 260-262.

[45] On Foucault's reading of Augustine on *libido*, see Colombo, "What is a Desiring Man?," 79-80; Laurent Lavaud, "L'insurrection du sexe," in *Foucault, les Pères et le sexe: Autour des Aveux de la chair*, eds. Ph. Büttgen, Ph. Chevallier, A. Colombo & A. Sforzini (2021).

[46] Lorenzini, "The Emergence of Desire," 464-465. Lorenzini has rightfully pointed at the analogies between Foucault's interpretation of Augustine and Hannah Arendt's analysis of will and counter-will in Augustine's writings. Comp. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Willing* (1978), 89-95.

[47] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 265.

[48] On the erectile character of *libido*, see Sverre Raffnsøe, "Review Essay: Michel Foucault's Confessions of the Flesh. The fourth volume of the History of Sexuality," *Foucault Studies* 25 (2018).

human will (*voluntas*) cannot simply master whatever it wants. The libidinization of sex in Augustine thus consists of two related ideas. First, the introduction of the libido as the principle and force corrupting and dominating the human will and as such defining the human condition. And second, the libido is the determining force in post-lapsarian sexual relations and activities.

According to Foucault, from this Augustine does not conclude that libido, with its autonomous movements, is only to be seen as an inevitable part of the human condition. It is also the principle of involuntary and disobedient movements, and because of this the subject should always in principle be held accountable for its libidinal investments. Of course, one cannot be held accountable for the *libido* as defining aspect of human nature. One can also not be held accountable for its autonomous movements. But one can be held accountable for the consent to libido through an act of the will. One can be held accountable for those acts of the will that consent to that what the *libido* wants.[49] The individual is guilty of sin when voluntarily consenting to the involuntary movements of libido, i.e., when consenting to the desires of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*).

It is the notion of consent (*consensus*) that makes it possible to establish the relation between the subject of desire and the legal subject. Through the notion of the will's consent to the movements of libido, the individual can be held responsible for concrete sinful, transgressive acts. Consent makes that which belongs to man's nature a fault. Consent is for that reason at the center of man's inner moral struggles: consenting or resisting to consent to the movements of *libido*, i.e., consenting or resisting to evil. Foucault discusses this notion of consent alongside the notion of use (*usus*). In the context of marriage, *libido* can be used in the service of procreation or as helping to prevent the spouse's fornication (in adultery, for example). In such cases, there is consent to *libido* (and hence to something inherently evil), without it being sinful since the *libido* is used for a legitimate cause.[50]

According to Foucault, one can understand the later process of juridification from Augustine's ideas on *libido*, consent and use. The libidinization of sexual relations and activities that can be witnessed in his anti-Pelagian writings is the condition for the possibility of later juridification processes in the Middle Ages and in early modernity. How exactly is this a condition? Through the notions of *consensus* and *usus* Augustine defines an ethics of sexual relationships and activities in terms of an inventorization of the legitimate and illegitimate ways in which the inevitable sinful *libido* is either used to the good (in marriage) or to evil, that is to say, for one's own lust and pleasure. "In Augustine, the evil is preexistent and fatally inscribed in the sexual encounter", but its manifestation in an actual sinful act is not a necessary one because of the role of consent and the possibility of legitimate usage.[51] The juridification and codification of legitimate and illegitimate sexual

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[49] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 278.

[50] On the topic of consent and use in Foucault's reading of Augustine, see Westerink, *De lichamen en de lusten*, 144-148; Colombo, "What is a Desiring Man?"; Bernard Harcourt, "Foucault's Keystone: Confessions of the Flesh: How the Fourth and Final Volume of The History of Sexuality Completes Foucault's Critique of Modern Western Societies," *Foucault Studies* 29 (2021).

[51] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 282.

activities becomes possible through separating the evil of libido (as inherent to human nature) from the actual sexual activities as either permitted or prohibited.

Although Foucault claims, as we have seen, that Augustine's doctrine of *libido* had a huge influence on Western technologies of the self, i.e., on self-examination, self-decipherment and on what he in the later texts names the "hermeneutics of desire",[52] he does not establish a direct relation to these techniques in *Confessions of the Flesh*.[53] Augustine is relevant for his doctrine of *libido* and its implications but not for developing pastoral techniques for examinations of the involvement of the will in sexual activities. Foucault's reading of Augustine thus raises the question as to whether his doctrine of *libido*, consent and use can be seen as a condition for a later *hermeneutics* of desire. According to Foucault, Augustine's doctrine is the condition for the modern subject coming to recognize and experience himself as a subject of desire. Also, through the notions of *consensus* and *usus*, Augustine establishes a relation between sexual desire and legitimate and illegitimate sexual activities. This will give rise to the production of rules and casuistry concerned with defining one's rights, duties and transgressions in sexual relations (marriage).[54] In other words, in Augustine we find a matrix for relating desire to permitting and prohibiting law. One's sexual activities are evaluated as either good or bad, legitimate or illegitimate, through and within a juridical framework. Yet, such evaluation does by no means necessarily imply the obligation to tell the truth about one's lingering thoughts and impulses, bodily sensations, and secret pleasures, delights and desires.[55] Augustine's doctrine does not necessarily pave the way for a hermeneutics of *libido* as an obligatory analysis of the hidden origins and movements of lust and desire or as a technique for dissociating *libido* from sexual activities.[56] Instead of a pastoral power organized through obedience and submission to the other's will, one finds in Augustine the conditions for a juridical organization of sexual relations and activities.

CASSIAN: PASTORAL ARTS AND TECHNOLOGIES

The obligation of the examination of thoughts

Foucault's interest in Cassian's writings is first and foremost linked to his explorations of the origins and development of the Christian pastoral power in early Christianity. More specifically, this concerns the institutionalization of new techniques for governing men,

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[52] Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," 186. Compare also, Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 5. We should note here that the concept of "hermeneutics of desire" or "hermeneutics of the self" does not appear in *Confessions of the Flesh*.

[53] See also Colombo, "What is a Desiring Man?," 83-84.

[54] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 283-284.

[55] From this we can begin to understand how Reformation authors, profoundly influenced by Augustine's late doctrinal writings, could set in motion a "dejuridification" process, which included a dismissal of hermeneutics of the self and confession of the involvement of the will in legitimate and illegitimate activities. Michel Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai. Fonction de l'aveu en justice. Cours de Louvain 1981* (2012), 185.

[56] This aspect of dissociation marks an important distinction with Cassian's view of the struggle for purity of heart. See below.

as evidenced notably in Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum*. As we have already seen, the striking feature of the Christian pastoral power, making it completely different from Greek and Roman practices, is "the insistence on pure obedience" in a relation of submission to a spiritual director. According to Foucault, such submission to another person stands in opposition to the idea of obedience or submission to a law.[57] According to Foucault, pure obedience means, first, absolute obedience to the will of the other, such as, for example, evidenced in the test of absurdity.[58] Second, it means obedience for the sake of obedience, that is to say, obedience in order to arrive at a state of obedience. This state of obedience can be further specified. It implies humility (*humilitas* – refraining from willing), subjection to the will and direction of the other (*subditio*), and the renunciation (mortification) of one's own singular will "so that there is no other will but not to have any will" and no resistance to the other's will (*patientia*).[59] Further, this state of pure obedience implies permanence of spiritual direction. This spiritual direction is not aimed at a simple teaching of the truth of doctrine or law but consists of absolutely permanent direction and examination of conscience, here not seen as an instrument of self-mastery but of submission to the other's examination and evaluation, and of "objectivization of the self".[60]

In order to make this direction and examination possible, it is eminent that the individual monk confesses his thoughts permanently (*exagoreusis*) "in order to disclose not only to the other, but also to oneself, what is happening in the mysteries of the heart and in its vague shadows. It's a matter of exposing as a truth something that was not yet known to anyone".[61] The aim of this disclosure of mysteries of the heart is, first, to gain insight (knowledge) in the degree of purity of one's thoughts by examining the origins of these thoughts. The decipherment of one's thoughts focuses on the question of whether these thoughts are mixed with illusionary and misleading representations incited by demons. This exegesis of the subject can be seen as self-disclosure in the sense that it produces self-knowledge through the examination of the quality of thoughts and the reconstruction of the pure/impure origins of thoughts.[62] Second, the examination aims at eradicating everything from the mind that disturbs the contemplation of God and the purity and peace of heart.[63] Confession is not only a hermeneutical practice but also a cathartic method of freeing oneself from disturbing impure thoughts through verbalization.

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[57] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 174-175; *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 137. See also Philippe Chevallier, *Michel Foucault et le christianisme* (2011), 70ff.

[58] In Cassian's writings, we find the famous example of a monk who was ordered to water for a year a dried stick planted in the middle of the desert. This example shows that obedience is not trained through reasonable practices but implies submission to the will of the other. John Cassian, *Institutions cénobitiques*, ed. J.-C. Guy, *Sources chrétiennes 109* (1965), 4.24; see also, Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 92.

[59] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 178; Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 124-150; Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 94.

[60] Michel Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity," in Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. J.R. Carrette (1999), 196.

[61] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 109-110.

[62] Compare Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 300-301.

[63] John Cassian's *Conférences* start from the notion of purity of heart as the immediate aim of the monk's efforts: it is only with a pure heart that one may enter God's Kingdom and gain eternal life. Cassian, *Conférences*, ed. E. Pichery, *Sources chrétiennes* 42, 54 and 64 (1955-1959), 1.5-7.

What, then, exactly needs to be disclosed, examined and confessed? According to Foucault, the *exagoreusis* in Cassian focuses not on past sinful acts but on the multitude and course of spontaneous thoughts (*cogitationes*).[64] More specifically, the focus is on the discernment of good thoughts on the one hand and bad thoughts that disturb contemplation on the other hand. Such disturbing thoughts consist of all kinds of illusionary temptations and misleading representations, urges, agitations, suggestions, images, desires and acts of the will that create disorder and disquiet in a soul in need of stability and tranquility.[65] In addition, there are thoughts that are produced by and benefit from disorder and the multiplicity of thoughts – thoughts that appear innocent, are not mistrusted, and can yet introduce impurities. In short, "the examination consists in a constant oversight of the constant and uncontrollable stream of all the competing thoughts that present themselves to the soul".[66]

The examination and confession do not concern desire but the stream of thoughts, of which desires are an integral part. Foucault recognizes this when, in his course in Louvain-la-Neuve (1981), he states that Christianity has invented a practice of veridiction around a "hermeneutics of thought", i.e., the deciphering, discerning and scrutinizing of the multitude, mobility and illusionary character of thoughts – and I would like to add: *not* a hermeneutics of desire. He further writes that this hermeneutics of thoughts was never fully assimilated into the later juridical models organizing desire.[67] Foucault, however, does not further systematically explore the reasons for this impossibility of full assimilation. What reasons could there be? A first reason we have already explored. According to Foucault, the pastoral model and techniques Cassian develops around obedience, submission and *exagoreusis* differ for a juridical model with its references to the law. The voluntaristic aspects (the will of the other, the divine will, the unique interactions between monk and spiritual director) of the monastic pastoral power are difficult to reconcile with the notion of general laws that apply to all.

But there might also be another (related) reason. We have said that Foucault is primarily interested in Cassian as founding father of the Christian pastoral power. In his discussion of Cassian's writings, the focus is therefore on obedience, submission and confession to the spiritual director, and renunciation of one's will. Clearly, this is what Foucault is preoccupied with in his study of the historical conditions for modern disciplinary regimes. However, in this context Foucault also regularly refers to an important principle present in Cassian's writings that seems difficult to reconcile with submission and renunciation: the examination of conscience as "the screening of the soul by itself" and the

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[64] Foucault mentions that Cassian follows his predecessor Evagrius Ponticus when arguing that, since monks have already renounced a sinful life, the demons attack monks in their thoughts (*logismoi*). Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 102; Foucault, *On the Government of the Living. Lectures at the Collège de France 1979-1980* (2012), 298-299.

[65] Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (1998), 42-47.

[66] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 103. See also, Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," 187.

[67] Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 150. See also, Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 109.

monk's exegesis of himself of and sorting in the flow of his thoughts.[68] Like the examination by the spiritual director, such self-analysis aims at discernment, that is, at making a split (*partage*) between true and illusionary thoughts. In order to create such *partage*, one has to examine and distinguish (*discretio*) the origins of the thoughts in order to establish their "quality". The obedient and well-directed monk does not so much consider the content of his thoughts but their "value" by seeking the author – a demon, God, oneself – of the idea.[69] In this context, Foucault refers to Cassian's concept of *arcana conscientiae* as describing the thinking subject's relation to his own thoughts, a relation that Cassian further describes in terms of an inner "arbitrator" of one's thought and a "judge monitoring the way we combat".[70] Adequate examination of conscience presupposes the formation of an inner critical instrument for the monitoring and discerning of thoughts and for boosting the subject to continuous battle against the vices. What we find here in Cassian is a theory of "the battle within", that is to say, a process of purification of the soul through a close combat[71] in which the formation of an inner arbitrator of one's thoughts – conscience – is a fundamental precondition.[72]

Although Foucault consistently highlights obedience and submission to the will of the other, Cassian's views on the formation and examination of conscience point at an important aspect of his thought: self-analysis as ascetic practice, that is, as "an exercise of self on self".[73] Here, we come across an aspect of Cassian's thought that points towards self-practices in which the authority and presence of a spiritual director is unnecessary. It is not only because the pastoral model of obedience cannot be reduced to a juridical model that Cassian's hermeneutics of thought was never fully assimilated into the later juridical models organizing desire. In addition, in Cassian we also find self-practices that at least potentially resist the model of obedience and the juridical model. Cassian's pastoral model, in which the intimate relation between the subject and the spiritual director is central, includes technologies of subjectivation (*subjectivation*), that is to say, of constituting individual subjectivity through "subjection (*assujettisement*) of the individual to himself".[74] The well-trained monk can – so to say – be a pastor to himself, subjecting himself to the inner authority of a well-trained conscience.

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[68] Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 141; Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 103-105; Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 300; Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 301. Kasumi Clements has argued that Foucault's reading is static in its focus on technologies of domination (obedience, submission). As a result, Foucault does not fully develop the aspect of technologies of the self and self-practices in Cassian's work. Niki Kasumi Clements, *Sites of the Ascetic Self. John Cassian and Christian Ethical Formation* (2020), 10-20.

[69] Cassian, *Conférences*, 2.21-24; Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 104.

[70] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 105; Cassian, *Institutions*, 6.9.

[71] Westerink, *De lichamen en de lusten*, 125-126.

[72] Cassian's view of conscience differs from Augustine's views in which conscience can be seen as the verdict of reason against the consent to sinful desires. Manfred Svensson, "Augustine on Moral Conscience," *The Heythrop Journal* 54:1 (2013).

[73] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 205.

[74] Michel Foucault, "Sexualité et pouvoir," in *Dits et Écrits 2* (2001), 566.

The renunciation of the will and the dissociation of thoughts

From what we have said on Cassian's affirmation of the examination of conscience as self-analysis, we could raise the question of how his notion of renunciation of the will has to be interpreted. What does Cassian mean when he writes that "taught by many examples, they say that a monk, and especially the younger ones, cannot bridle the desire (*voluptatem*) of his concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) unless he has first learned by obedience to mortify his wishes (*mortificare per oboedientiam suas voluntates*)"?[75] An answer to this question may be found in Cassian's *Collationes Patrum* in the context of a discussion of the daily combat between desires of the spirit and those the flesh. Cassian writes: "Between these two desires then the free will of the soul stands in an intermediate position somewhat worthy of blame, and neither delights in the excesses of sin, nor acquiesces in the sorrows of virtue. (…) And this free will would never lead us to attain true perfection, but would plunge us into a most miserable condition of lukewarmness".[76] This lukewarm free will is the first eminent obstacle for the daily life of the monk as a life in close combat. The weakness of this will and its tendency to slackness and carelessness fundamentally undermines the inner battle against disturbing thoughts and the continuous striving for purity of heart. In other words, according to Cassian, the monk should not renounce his own singular will because it is egoistically dominant or fundamentally perverted by an evil libidinal principle, but – to the contrary – because the will is weak. Its freedom implies that it can move in various directions but without offering steadfastness in spiritual matters.

Foucault seems to have recognized that the renunciation of the will concerns the will's weakness and lukewarmness when he writes that Christian direction aimed at renunciation of the will "rests on the paradox of a determination not to will".[77] Foucault does not further explore this "determination not to will", and yet, in my opinion, this is a crucial element in Cassian's views of the monk's daily practices. The monk needs to be trained in a powerful not-willing, i.e., the steadfast capacity to say no to demonic trickery and illusions. This is what the spiritual directors teach by example: in the battle against the vices, a weak free will is useless; one needs to acquire the determination not to will in order to maintain striving only for perfection and willing nothing else. The monk needs to renunciate the *weakness and mobility* of the will in order to be able – to put it in Foucault's terms – to dissociate (*dissocier*) and disconnect (*defaire*) the will from its involvement in and consent to the movements of thoughts.[78] In order to decipher and discern the course of thought, one first has to radically interrupt the mobility of free will.[79] Freedom and weakness of the will have to be replaced by determination in not-willing.

In Cassian's view, examination of conscience is possible and effective when the weakness of the will is mortified and the determined not-willing is set in place. How then does this

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[75] Cassian, *Institutions*, 4.8.

[76] Cassian, *Conférences*, 4.12 and also 3.12.

[77] Foucault, *The Confessions of the Flesh*, 95-96.

[78] Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity," 193; Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 184-186.

[79] Seen from this perspective, the absurdity test (see above) is more than only an exercise in obedience; it is also an exercise in determination of the will.

not-willing relate to desire? Can this determination not to will be seen as a condition for the mortification of a desire that perverts all thoughts? Is the hermeneutics of (and battle against) disturbing thoughts after all a hermeneutics of desire? Peter Brown and others have argued that Cassian agrees with Augustine in so far as he assumes that since the Fall sexual desires and the inner conflicts with these desires are "as it were implanted in our bodies" and thus came to belong to the very "substance of human nature".[80] But this does not mean that Cassian accepts Augustine's view of *libido* or *concupiscentia carnis* as inner dislocation of the will. Nor are Cassian's ideas organized around a notion of sin as disobedience to God's law. What characterizes the post-lapsarian human condition is not the dynamics of will and counter-will but the battle between spirit and flesh. This inner conflict manifests itself in ongoing conflicts between various thoughts: representations against representations, acts of the will against acts of the will, desires against desires. When Cassian writes about *concupiscenta carnis* he places the concept in opposition to *concupiscentia spiritualis* – and, analogously, he places *voluntas carnis* in opposition to *voluntas spiritualis*.[81] The renunciation of the will is not an attempt to mortify libidinal desires but serves the purposes of creating a capacity for the dissociation of and detachment from tempting thoughts.

And what about *libido*? Despite the fact that Cassian in his writings in the context of his discussions of the battle against the vice of fornication (*fornicatio*) mentions *libido* as one of its components,[82] Foucault realizes that Cassian does not develop a full-fledged doctrine of *libido*. This is likely one of the reasons that in the chapter on the "libidinization of sex" in *Confessions of the Flesh* there are only minor references to Cassian.[83] *Libido* is indeed not frequently mentioned in Cassian's writings and also not systematically elaborated. It is not synonymous with *concupiscentia carnis* but seems to denote a very specific aspect of man's sexual thoughts. It is described by Cassian as "developing in the dark corners of the soul" and as being "without physical passions".[84] And in the context of his discussion of the problem of nocturnal pollutions, he mentions that in order to triumph over this impurity, one has to mortify the "libidinal ticklings" (*libidinis titillatione*) that are hidden in the depth of man's interior.[85]

In the chapter "Virginity and Self-Knowledge" in *Confessions of The Flesh*, Foucault focuses attention on Cassian's views on sexuality as radically different from Augustine's views on the *libido*.[86] Writing for monks, Cassian presupposes sexual abstinence and is

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[80] Cassian, *Conférences*, 4.7; Brown, *The Body and Society*, 420-422. See also Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 65, 76-77; Colombo, "What is a Desiring Man?," 84-85.

[81] Cassian, *Conférences*, 4.11.

[82] Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity," 190; Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 181, 184.

[83] We note here that Foucault is not primarily interested in theological discussions between Pelagians (such as Julian of Eclanum), semi-Pelagians (such as Cassian) and anti-Pelagians (such as Augustine). The fact that Cassian and Augustine were actively involved in debates on free will, sin and grace, and critically responding to each other's positions, has not kept Foucault from treating them separately without making significant comparisons.

[84] Cassian, *Conférences*, 12.2.

[85] Ibid., 22.6.

[86] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 181-189. See also, Foucault, "The Battle for Chastity".

only concerned with bodily sensations and sexual thoughts that challenge a monk in his search for purity. That Cassian devotes special attention to the nocturnal pollutions (Conference 22) is understandable given the fact that these pollutions point toward a fundamental problem for the monk: How can one monitor and dissociate pleasurable libidinal ticklings and hidden desires from other thoughts (acts of the will, representations, phantasies, etc.) when one is asleep and cannot actively labor upon the movement of thoughts or prevent their physical effects? Foucault argues that the problem of pollutions during sleep does not have the same status as the problem of erection in Augustine. The pollutions are not the visible sign of a perverted will inscribed in human nature. If the monk does succeed in tracing its origins and is able to disconnect this physical phenomenon from the will and from dream images, the pollutions are merely the last "remainders" of imperfection – the last involuntary inner stirrings to remain after one has succeeded in detaching oneself from tempting thoughts and desires. As such they remind the monk to remain humble and patient. One could at this point raise the question in what sense these detached pollutions are a sexual problem. In Conference 22, Cassian argues that the pollutions are caused by an excess of moisture through overeating (the vice of gluttony), spring from a mind empty of spiritual pursuits (the vice of acedia), or originate from lack of humility making a monk feel guilty of imperfections that belong to human nature (the vices of vainglory and pride) and preventing him from joining in the (contemplation of the) Eucharist.[87] The nocturnal pollutions point towards the likely presence of a variety of hidden disturbing thoughts (excitations, urges, etc.). They indicate that there are limits to self-mastery, and they determine the field for technologies of the self – the continuous examination of the stream of thoughts in the never-ending search for perfect *puritas cordis*.[88]

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND REMARKS

What Foucault found in the writings of Cassian and Augustine were historical conditions for modern organizations of power and knowledge. Notably in psychoanalysis, he saw an interaction of a theory (knowledge) of the interrelatedness of the law and desire, and a truth-telling technique (power) for the decipherment of desire. However, from the analysis of Foucault's readings of Cassian and Augustine, one cannot conclude that Foucault provides convincing arguments for such unity and analytic. Augustine's doctrine of libido did not include a hermeneutics of desire and an obligation to confess, and the later juridical pastoral models conditioned by Augustine's views on legitimate-illegitimate consent to desire are fundamentally different from Cassian's pastoral model of obedience and submission to the will of the other. Cassian's pastoral technologies were not organized around the problem of libido as the univocal sinful force perverting the will but around

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[87] Cassian, *Conférences*, 22.2-8. Peter Brown has rightfully argued that whereas Augustine has placed sexuality in the center of the human condition, Cassian places sexual thoughts in a complex interaction with other dangerous vices that lurk in the soul. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 422.

[88] Elizabeth Clark, "Foucault, the Fathers and Sex," 47.

the decipherment of the quality of a multitude of thoughts, and they were aimed at the dissociation of and detachment from misleading thoughts. Cassian did not introduce juridical models for the confession of libidinal desire as the truth of the subject.

And yet, it is precisely because the monastic ascetic techniques and Augustinian doctrine are "different" and "contradictory" – as Foucault himself noticed – that his readings of Cassian and Augustine open up new perspectives within his genealogical project of the history of sexuality. Notably Cassian's views of exercises and practices, in which the subjection to the other's will and renunciation of the weakness of one's own will can be seen as instrumental for the formation of conscience, self-examination and self-practices of dissociation and purification, open new trajectories for an analytic of modern forms of subjectivity relative to forms of governmentality. For, although Foucault does not explore the significance of the formation and examination of conscience as a fundamental aspect of subjectivation in Cassian's writings, in my opinion this aspect can be seen as important for later developments. In the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, not only the practices of obedient subjection to spiritual directors powerfully resurface but also technologies for the subjection of the individual to his own conscience strongly come to the fore, notably in the Reformation as the "revolts of conduct" that oppose the sacramental power of the priest-pastor.[89] Although Foucault did not systematically explore the impact of the Reformation on the modern governmentality, we know that he saw the Reformation as a key factor in the transformation of the individualizing pastoral power (the subjection of the individual to the spiritual director and the examination of conscience) towards a totalizing political power in which the state produces institutions (schools, prisons, etc.) aimed at enclosing and disciplining individuals.[90] The way in which Reformers such as Luther and Calvin articulated conscience – relative to confession (*confession*) – could shed light on the genealogical connection between the Christian pastoral power and the modern forms and manifestations of governmentality. Notably in Calvin's theory of "double conscience", in which he makes a distinction between a "political conscience" that has the function of adjusting one's life to the societal norms and civil righteousness as organized by the political order, and a "spiritual conscience" that instructs an individual in matters of faith and truth, we can detect both a strong individualizing tendency as well as a tendency towards morally disciplined integration in the larger unities of church and society.[91] We may find here a condition for the disciplining of populations (through processes of Christianization and confessionalization) on the one hand, and for counter-conduct, revolt and resistance (through the primacy of spiritual conscience over political conscience), on the other. In my opinion, this problematic provides a fruitful trajectory for further

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[89] Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 85; Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 166.
[90] Foucault, "Le sujet et le pouvoir," 146ff.
[91] On this issue, see Herman Westerink, *The Heart of Man's Destiny. Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Early Reformation Thought* (2012), 110-116.

research into Foucault's published texts and the Foucault archives at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which include several documents on Luther's texts on confession.[92]

We have seen that Foucault's study of early Christian doctrine and pastoral practices had its origins in the questions and theses formulated in *The Will to Knowledge*.

If Foucault intended to trace back the contemporary analytic of the subject of desire to early Christian authors, we can conclude that his reading of Augustine and Cassian do not provide convincing arguments for such an analytic being established in early Christianity. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that readings of Cassian and Augustine are of no value for understanding contemporary theories and practices such as psychoanalysis. In his 1981 course in Louvain-la-Neuve, Foucault suggests that the influence of Cassian's hermeneutics of thoughts can be traced through history, resurfacing in Descartes exclusion of the *malin genie* as the producer of illusionary and misleading thoughts.[93] This exclusion functions as an introduction of a fundamental problem that haunts modern thought: one could be mistaken; there is the possibility that one produces illusions for oneself (*possibilité d'illusion de moi sur moi*).[94] According to Foucault, first Schopenhauer and then Freud will articulate this problem in terms of the inevitable presence and workings of unconscious and illusory thoughts. In this 1981 course, Foucault does not further explore this train of thought that points towards the possibility of a general reinterpretation of the history of Western thought relative to Christian spirituality.[95] Again, this opens new possibilities for further reflections on the way the early Christian monastic practices (hermeneutics of thoughts, examination of conscience) may have fundamentally influenced the character of Western philosophical exercises in thought activities that, according to Foucault, can be seen as "the living substance of philosophy".[96]

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[92] References to Luther can notably be found in Box 88 in the Foucault archives. These documents show that Foucault, through his study of the confession of sin and lust in Luther and his catholique contemporary Cajetan, encountered subjectivity in the form of a relation to the self and others, i.e., a form of subjectivity further characterized by dissociating forces, inner conflictual experiences and subjection to various techniques of self-decipherment and truth-telling. On this issue see, Arianna Sforzini, "L'autre modernité du sujet. Foucault et la confession de la chair: les pratiques de subjectivation à l'âge des Réformes," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 235:3 (2018).

[93] Foucault had already explored this aspect of Descartes's *Meditation*s in his 1972 essay "My Body, This Paper, This Fire". In that text he underscores that fact that meditations imply "ascetic" exercises through which the subject "detaches" himself from "impure" and "disordered movements" of thought. (Interestingly, this choice of words later returns in his analyses of Cassian's writings.) Michel Foucault, "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu," in *Dits et Écrits 1* (2001), 1125. See also Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (2007), 175-194.

[94] Foucault, *Mal faire, dire vrai*, 167-168.

[95] Ibid., 169. The relation between philosophy and spirituality is explored in the course "The Hermeneutics of the Subject" but without extensive elaborations of the monastic hermeneutics of thought, the problem of illusionary versus true thoughts, and its significance for Western philosophy.

[96] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 9.

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ARTICLE

Philosophy From the texture of Everyday Life: The Critical-Analytic Methods of Foucault and J. L. Austin

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ABSTRACT. In a 1978 lecture in Tokyo, Foucault drew a comparison between his own philosophical methodology and that of 'Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy', claiming the label 'analytic philosophy of politics' for his own approach. This may seem like a somewhat surprising comparison given the gulf between contemporary analytic and continental philosophy, but I argue that it is a very productive one which indeed might help us reconsider this gulf. I proceed through a comparison between Foucault and the speech act theory of J. L. Austin, one of the analytic philosophers Foucault had in mind in his Tokyo lecture. By focusing on the methodological commonalities between Foucault and Austin, this article identifies the core of a philosophical methodology that cuts across the analytic/continental divide in philosophy in general while constituting a powerful alternative to the methods applied by analytic *political* philosophers specifically. This approach, which I term 'analytic critique', is one that starts from a critical analysis of what happens in ordinary lived experience and theorises 'bottom-up' in an avowedly politically engaged way – thereby challenging the conceptual and political aloofness of contemporary political philosophy in the liberal-Rawlsian tradition. Foucault's appropriation of the label 'analytic philosophy', it is argued, ought to function as a call to more imaginative methodological-theoretical engagement across the traditional division between continental and analytic approaches.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, J. L. Austin, philosophical methodology, analytic philosophy, genealogy, ordinary language philosophy

INTRODUCTION

The ideas which I would like to discuss here represent neither a theory nor a methodology.

Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 1983

It is a mystery to me that what a philosopher says about his methods is so commonly taken at face value.

Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 2002

Philosophers in the analytic tradition are largely seen to be hostile to the work of Michel Foucault.[1] Analytic *political* philosophy in particular, with its often 'abstract, politically unengaged, and ahistoric character',[2] seems diametrically opposed to Foucault's politically engaged genealogies of particular practices. It may surprise, then, that Foucault in a 1978 lecture in Tokyo claims the label '*philosophie analytique de la politique*' for his own approach.[3] The word 'analytic' in a general sense has frequently been attached to the French philosopher – Dreyfus and Rabinow term his methodology 'interpretive analytics'[4] – but the Tokyo lecture draws a specific analogy to the 'Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy of language'.[5] The suggestion that Foucault's philosophy could be read as analytic *in this sense* is intriguing – not least coming from the author himself. Nevertheless, the central claims of this lecture, translated into English only as recently as 2018, have not yet been subjected to any sustained analysis. While there have been some scattered analyses of the similarities between analytic philosophers of language and Foucault's own philosophy of language,[6] there has, to my knowledge, been no serious treatment of intriguing suggestion that he took analytic philosophy of language as a model for his *political* philosophy, i.e.,

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[1] Carlos G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (2018), 5-8. For an extreme example of such hostility, see Nicholas Shackel, "The Vacuity of Postmodernist Methodology," *Metaphilosophy* 36:3 (2005).

[2] Jonathan Wolff, "Analytic Political Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Michael Beaney (2013), 817.

[3] I will be referring to Giovanni Mascaretti's English translation throughout this article. Michel Foucault, "The Analytic Philosophy of Politics," *Foucault Studies* 24 (2018), 188-200; Giovanni Mascaretti, "Introduction: The Analytic Philosophy of Politics," *Foucault Studies* 24 (2018), 185-187. The lecture was first published in Japanese in *Asahi Jaanaru*, June 2, 1978, 28–35 and later in French in volume 3 of *Dits et Écrits*. Michel Foucault, "La Philosophie Analytique de La Politique," in *Dits et Écrits III, 1976-1979*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (1994), 534-551.

[4] Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (1983), 104–25.

[5] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.

[6] Arnold I. Davidson, "Structures and Strategies of Discourse: Remarks Towards a History of Foucault's Philosophy of Language," in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (1997); Daniele Lorenzini, "Performative, Passionate, and Parrhesiastic Utterance: On Cavell, Foucault, and Truth as an Ethical Force," *Critical Inquiry*, 41:2 (2015), 254–268; Tuomo Tiisala, "Power and Freedom in the Space of Reasons" (2016), 77-81. PhD diss.

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his genealogical investigations of power.[7] It is the task of this article to take a first look at this question: What does it mean to read – what do we get out of reading – Foucault's work as 'analytic philosophy of politics'?

I approach this question mainly through a comparison between Foucault and one of the analytic philosophers he no doubt had in mind when lecturing in Tokyo: J. L. Austin, the originator of speech act theory. Needless to say, Austin and Foucault are very different thinkers in many ways, yet I will focus almost exclusively on their similarities. As such, the task of this article is figuratively to colour in the middle part of a Venn diagram; this is a limited task, and I am by no means claiming that the picture I paint is an exhaustive characterization of either author. Yet, the aim is not merely a descriptive one of pointing out overlaps. Foucault's simile between his analysis of power and analytic philosophy is productive, I will claim, because it calls into question the primacy of the continental/analytic distinction and might thereby inspire more imaginative engagement across these two traditions. By focusing on the methodological commonalities between Foucault and Austin, I believe we can identify the core of a philosophical approach that cuts across the analytic/continental divide in philosophy in general while constituting a powerful alternative to the methods applied by analytic *political* philosophers specifically. This approach, which I will term 'analytic critique', is one that starts from a critical analysis of what happens in ordinary lived experience and theorises 'bottom-up' in an avowedly politically engaged way – thereby challenging the conceptual and political aloofness of contemporary political philosophy in the Rawlsian tradition.

After briefly clarifying what I mean, and what I take Foucault to mean, by 'analytic', I begin by considering some of the similarities Foucault highlights in the Tokyo lecture: the rejection of aprioristic theorising in favour of fine-grained analysis of 'the texture of everyday life'. Following that, in section 3, I go a bit further than Foucault did himself in exploring deeper similarities – but also differences – in how he and Austin approach the relationship between structure and agency. This discussion reveals a common methodological core between the two philosophical approaches, which I term 'analytic critique', and in section 4 I argue it constitutes an attractive alternative to the methods currently popular among some political philosophers in the analytic tradition. In the conclusion, I further hint at some possible applications of this methodology to theories of deliberative democracy and to critique of capitalism.

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[7] Mark Kelly briefly discusses 'The Analytic Philosophy of Politics' in the introduction to his book *For Foucault Against Normative Political Theory*, where he interprets Foucault's claim to apply 'analytic' methods as a claim to 'thoroughgoing methodological non-normativity'. My analysis differs from Kelly's in that I trace more substantial similarities between Foucault and analytic philosophy of language than merely a claim to non-normativity. While I do not discuss the issue of normativity in this article, I am sceptical of Kelly's very restrictive definition of normativity – as I show below, the 'non-normative' methods of Anglo-American analytic philosophers have also been applied, especially by feminist philosophers, in ways that merit the label 'normative'. Mark G. E. Kelly, *For Foucault: Against Normative Political Theory* (2018), 3-5.

ON 'ANALYTIC'

Analytic political philosophy is today more or less synonymous with a Rawls-inspired approach which mainly uses the methods of moral philosophy to elucidate the normative principles applicable to the realm of political justice.[8] This is certainly not what Foucault had in mind when talking about an 'analytic philosophy of politics' (I will return later to the contrasts between Foucault's version of an 'analytic' method and Rawls'). If Foucault was aware of this Rawlsian style of political philosophy – *A Theory of Justice* was published 7 years before the Tokyo lecture – he did not seem to associate it with the label 'analytic political philosophy'. Indeed, I will argue that one of the interesting things about Foucault's lecture is that it reminds us that the tradition of analytic philosophy is much broader than contemporary analytic *political* philosophy, and that the current fixation within the latter with the methods of moral philosophy conceals some interesting resources in the broader analytic tradition which might be useful to political theory. In fact, I will be arguing towards the end of this article that Foucault's analytic approach provides a powerful alternative to the current mainstream of liberal analytic political philosophy.

Analytic philosophy is notoriously hard to define, and I shall not attempt to do so here. Glock, in a book-length attempt at answering the question 'What is analytic philosophy?', ends up defining it partly as a tradition, partly through family resemblance.[9] Foucault did not, in the Tokyo lecture, claim that he had all along been applying some definable 'analytic' method; rather, he was pointing precisely to such a family resemblance between his work and certain analytic philosophers of language.

Which analytic philosophers were on Foucault's mind? He refers to 'Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy' in the abstract, but the specification that these philosophers concern themselves with 'critical analysis of thought on the basis of the way one says things' makes it clear that he means the school of so-called ordinary language philosophers associated with Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin.[10] As mentioned, it is the last of these three that will be my focus here. Yet, one might think that Foucault's references to the notion of games in analytic philosophy[11] actually suggests Wittgenstein as an important point of reference. It is likely too that he was thinking of John Searle, the arch-analytic philosopher and student of Austin's whom Foucault had met on his first visit to UC Berkeley in 1975 and later corresponded with frequently. The choice of Austin as the comparand in this article is somewhat arbitrary (though Foucault was clearly familiar with Austin's work having referred to it as early as 1969 in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*). I choose Austin simply because I find the comparison fruitful—Searle's propensity for

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[8] See Katrina Forrester, *In the Shadow of Justice: Postwar Liberalism and the Remaking of Political Philosophy* (2019).
[9] Hans-Johann Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy* (2008).
[10] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.
[11] Ibid., 193.

systematic theory-building and attachment to certain notions of truth and intentionality, for instance, would render the family resemblance between Foucault and the analytics much harder to detect.

Foucault does not repeat, let alone elaborate on, the idea of an analytic philosophy of politics anywhere else in his plentiful writings and published interviews. We can find a few scattered remarks in various writings and interviews about his appreciation of the 'analytic' methods of 'Wittgenstein, Austin, Strawson, [and] Searle', but these are usually in the context of Foucault's philosophy of language and analysis of discourse—for example, at a 1973 roundtable discussion in Rio de Janeiro where he refers to 'a species of analysis of discourse as strategy a bit like it is done by the Anglo-Saxons'.[12] Other authors have also elaborated on the relationship between Anglo-American analytic philosophy and Foucault's philosophy of language, discourse, and rhetoric.[13] To my knowledge, there is as of yet no sustained analysis of what it could mean to treat Foucault's analysis of power as an analytic philosophy of politics.

Suggestively, Foucault frequently availed himself of terms like 'analysis', 'analytic tools', etc., and it is common to see his approach referred to as an 'analytics of power'.[14] Kelly points out that the term 'analysis' would have had psychoanalytic connotations at the time Foucault wrote,[15] but clearly he was aware of the Anglo-American 'analytic' philosophy, and as early as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault matter-of-factly applies it to speech act theory, referring to Austin as the 'English analyst'.[16] It is tempting, therefore, to read the Tokyo lecture back into Foucault's previous work as if this was what he meant with 'analytic' all along—not least because the Tokyo lecture is, in the translator's words, 'one of Foucault's clearest accounts of his own approach to the analysis of power'.[17] I believe that this would be a mistake, however. We have reasons to be cautious about attributing too much authority to these brief remarks, not only because Foucault never revisited the analogy in his subsequent work but also because the Tokyo lecture seems to have been prepared on rather short notice after his visits to Japanese prisons convinced him to scrap an originally planned interview on the penal system.[18]

It is important, therefore, to emphasise that I am not trying to give a novel account of Foucault's general methodology on the basis of his remarks in Tokyo. I approach that lecture as no more than a pithy, perhaps rather spontaneous, set of remarks on some

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[12] Michel Foucault, *A Verdade e as Formas Jurídicas* (2002), 139. Translation mine. See also Davidson, "Structures and Strategies of Discourse,".

[13] "Structures and Strategies of Discourse,"; Lorenzini, "Performative, Passionate, and Parrhesiastic Utterance,"; Tiisala, "Power and Freedom in the Space of Reasons," 77-81.

[14] E.g.: Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 104ff.

[15] Mark G. E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* (2009), 34–35.

[16] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), 82.

[17] Mascaretti, "Introduction," 185.

[18] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 188.

affinities Foucault detected between his thought and that of the analytic philosophers of language. Nor am I concerned with a full analysis of the Tokyo lecture—I am focussing specifically on the part of the lecture where Foucault explicitly discusses what an 'analytic philosophy of politics' means to him. Inspired by these remarks, I undertake a broader comparison between the work of Foucault and Austin, going beyond the content of the Tokyo lecture. My aim is, in one way, very modest: I am merely pointing to some similarities between Foucault and the philosophy of Austin *et al.*, which might make us see both approaches in a changed light. On the other hand, my aim is more ambitious: I am not limited to clarifying Foucault's own claims about his methodology but rather let the analogy live its own life to see whatever we might get out of imagining a Foucauldian analytic philosophy of politics.

FOUCAULT AND AUSTIN: A COMPARISON

The first, and perhaps the most striking, similarity between Foucault and Austin is the way they both reacted against abstract and dichotomous models which constituted the theoretical orthodoxies in their respective fields at the time. It is well known, of course, that much of the former's work was concerned with countering the simplistic images of power as something possessed by the sovereign (or the dominant class), of power as merely a repressive force, and the concomitant preoccupation with dichotomous questions of power's being 'good or bad, legitimate or illegitimate'.[19] Analogously, Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* is something of an underplayed diatribe against the sole concern of philosophers of language with the representative-descriptive functions of language leading to an all-encompassing preoccupation with truth or falsity, or the 'true-false fetish', which Austin decries.[20] We may say that both proceed from an initial decapitation: if Foucault wants to 'cut off the King's head' in the study of power,[21] Austin decapitates truth itself in linguistic analysis.

It is in finding an alternative to these 'massive qualifications-disqualifications' of legitimate/illegitimate or true/false that Foucault draws the main parallel between his approach and analytic philosophers. In the work of the latter, these abstractions are challenged through reflection 'on the everyday use of speech', 'a critical analysis of thought on the basis of the way one says things'.[22] Austin's magnum opus starts by reflecting on highly mundane uses of language, such as 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' or 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow'[23]—are these sentences in any sense 'true' or 'false'? In

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[19] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.

[20] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), 150.

[21] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1978), 89.

[22] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.

[23] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 5.

the same manner, Foucault suggests a political philosophy that starts from reflection on 'the texture of everyday life', having 'as its task the analysis of what ordinarily happens in power relations, a philosophy that would seek to show what these relations of power are about, what their forms, stakes, and objectives are'.[24] Instead of starting from the 'grand games' of power of the state or the ruling class, the Foucauldian approach is to investigate what he calls the 'limited, lowly games of power' around madness, illness, prisons etc.[25] – elsewhere he speaks of an '*ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms'.[26] As Toril Moi puts it speaking of ordinary language philosophy, Foucault as well as Austin help 'us to think seriously about the particular case, about the ordinary, the common, and the low'. [27]

The 'analytic' approach which Foucault and Austin have in common is one that eschews aprioristic theorising in favour of detailed, and in some sense modest, analysis with a strong empirical bent. Empirical content figures differently in the two philosophers' work, however. There is quite a stark difference, in fact, between Foucault's use of detailed historical analysis and Austin's reliance on imaginary vignettes. That the latter nevertheless is empirically oriented is revealed in how his made-up examples differ from the thought experiments common among moral and political philosophers. Whereas, say, moral philosophers' reflection on the trolley problem is meant to yield transcendental moral principles, Austin uses hypothetical examples only to understand empirical and contingent reality. Take an example: under what circumstances, he asks, does uttering 'I do' constitute an act of marrying? Certainly not if 'said when you are in the prohibited degrees of relationship, or before a ship's captain not at sea'.[28] These are not universal facts about language but empirical facts about the particular conventions of one's society; the general insight – *that* speech acts are partly constituted by social conventions – is yielded only via reflection on social reality.

Despite the attention to detailed description, neither of the two authors under consideration limit their approach to 'thick description', and there are striking similarities in their modes of theorising beyond the particular in a bottom-up manner. 'Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought – a constant checking'.[29] For Foucault, theoretical abstractions are necessary but always provisional. Thus, it is inappropriate to begin from,

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[24] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 193, 192.

[25] Ibid., 193.

[26] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (1980), 99.

[27] Toril Moi, "Thinking Through Examples: What Ordinary Language Philosophy Can Do for Feminist Theory," *New Literary History* 46:2 (2015), 193.

[28] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 34.

[29] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, 2nd ed. (1983), 209.

say, a global theory of class domination and then *deduce* from it an explanation for the confinement of the mad – Foucault claims that this would be 'too facile' and that one could have always, and as easily, justified a contrary deduction.[30] Yet, this does not imply the abandonment of abstract concepts like 'class'; it merely means analysis cannot be *based* on already-objectified concepts but must proceed through the provisional application of an 'analytic grid' which is constantly checked against how well it accounts for reality. Dreyfus and Rabinow speak of 'Foucault's pragmatic concern that concepts be used as tools to aid in analysis, not as ends in themselves'.[31] A very similar analytic method is discernible in Austin's work. Once we reject the prior objectification of language as truth-conditional and feel 'the firm ground of prejudice slide away beneath our feet',[32] the way to theorise is indeed through 'ongoing conceptualization' and 'constant checking'. Like Foucault, Austin recognises the need for positing abstract concepts while continually emphasising their provisional nature. He proposes any number of theoretical concepts and schematizations throughout his lectures on speech acts but is continually at pains to stress that he does 'not wish to claim any sort of finality for this scheme'; 'Everything said […] is provisional, and subject to revision'.[33]

If there is a common meaning of the adjective 'analytic' that applies equally to the authors of *How to Do Things with Words* and *Discipline and Punish*, it is the rejection of *a priori* theoretical objectification in favour of fine-grained analysis of particular examples to which the conceptual framework is constantly adjusted. This captures, I believe, what Foucault had in mind when he claimed to share a method of 'critical analysis' with Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophers: 'critical' not in the sense that the latter offer a *critique* of language but critical in the sense of constant *critical reflection* on the adequacy of the conceptual framework.

GAMES, RULES, AND STRATEGIES

The previous section constitutes a sketch, if not of a coherent methodology, then at least of a methodological *style* which Austin and Foucault share. This section will dig somewhat deeper into the methodological foundations of these two thinkers' work to reveal further affinities – going beyond the similarities Foucault himself highlighted and perhaps even what he was aware of. In doing so, I will also pinpoint what makes Foucault's approach transcend what I dubbed 'critical analysis' above to become 'analytic critique'.[34]

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[30] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76* (2004), 31.

[31] Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 120.

[32] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 13.

[33] Ibid., 14, 4.

[34] Note that in reconstructing Foucault's analysis of power here, I am drawing on work published both before and after the Tokyo lecture—it should thus not be seen as an elaboration of what exactly he meant in the

While Austin never made this move – and was rather disinterested in social critique – his methodological framework is very amenable to it, and other analytic philosophers of language have picked up where he stopped short. It is instructive, for these purposes, to take up the notion of games which figures prominently in the Tokyo lecture. Alluding to the Wittgensteinian notion of language games, Foucault says: 'Relations of power too are played; they are games of power that we should study in terms of tactics and strategy, rule and accident, stakes and objective'.[35] The notion of games, as will be shown below, provides a useful metaphor for understanding the similar ways in which Foucault and Austin relate structural factors to the particular cases and actions they study.

While Austin did not use Wittgenstein's notion of language games, he was deeply indebted to the latter's idea that to understand language is to understand what can be *done* with language, and speech act theory is readily redescribed as the study of possible moves within language games. Austin coins the term 'illocutionary force' precisely to explain how 'mere' speech can have the force to change the social world – what Bourdieu terms 'social magic'[36]: under the right circumstances, saying 'I name this ship…' or 'I promise you…' means I have named a ship or made an obligation to keep a promise. Yet, this illocutionary force is not strictly speaking inherent in the linguistic utterance itself – this is obvious from the fact that it relies on the uptake of others to be effectual. In fact, describing an illocutionary act is always describing 'the *conventions* of illocutionary force *as bearing on* the special circumstances of the occasion of the issuing of the utterance'.[37] The study of speech acts, then, is not (merely) the study of a formal linguistic system as in structuralism. Nor is it the study of individual speaking subjects and their intentions or cognition as in Gricean and neo-Gricean pragmatics. Any given instantiation of speech can only be understood, in illocutionary terms, by understanding it as an instantiation, within a determinate context, of conventions, which can only be grasped by understanding their role within a way of life.[38] Austin is particularly interested in outlining the conditions for the successful performance of such speech acts (and how they can go wrong), i.e., with describing the 'rules' of the language game or, if you will, the conditions of possibility for the performance of illocutionary acts. That is, the nominalistic concept of illocutionary force captures how these rules come to fruition in a 'move' within the game.

1978 lecture but rather as a reconstruction of a certain approach to political philosophy which could be termed 'analytic' in the sense he suggested in Tokyo.

[35] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 193.

[36] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), 111.

[37] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 114, *emphasis* added. Thus, Bourdieu misses the mark when he accuses Austin of 'trying to understand the power of linguistic manifestations linguistically', neglecting that 'authority comes to language from outside'. Austin is quite clear that speech acts can only be understood with reference to what is 'outside' of language – that an order, for instance, requires that the one doing the ordering *already* has the authority to do so. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 109; Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 29.

[38] Ibid., 147.

Foucault's early 'archaeological' work, such as *The Order of Things*, is similarly concerned with conditions of possibility. His analyses of *epistemes*, the 'rules of formation' governing what counts as knowledge in a given era, can be seen, in this way, as analogous to Austin's study of the rules governing speech acts.[39] Yet, as he began explicitly thematising power in his work, his concern became less the rules of the game and more what he termed strategies. Now, it would be a mistake to understand 'strategy' here as conscious, strategic planning on behalf of any subject: power is intentional but non-subjective.[40] With the risk of oversimplifying, we may say that power has 'strategic' objectives,[41] but while the functioning of power supervenes on individual actions, the individual subject cannot control the strategic significance of their actions in the overall game: 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does'.[42] The prison guard knows what they do and why (they guard the prisoner because that is their job)—what they do not know is the significance of their actions in the 'production of delinquency'. Thus, the individual act can be understood, in terms of power, only by understanding its strategic significance in the overall game. Foucault's notion of power displays surprising similarity with Austin's illocutionary force in that both are nominalistic concepts capturing the way in which structural properties are brought to bear on individual acts. The metaphor of games, rules and strategies is useful here because it supplies a way of conceiving of structures as shaping and constraining actions without determining them (this approach also distinguishes Foucault from structuralism and functionalism, as well as subjectivist humanism, but such considerations are beyond the scope of discussion here).

Foucault, however, is not only interested in the conditions of possibility of strategic actions within the game of power but, crucially, with the *effects* of power, and this is what makes his approach critical in the sense of critique. Power, as he defines it in the 1982 essay 'The Subject and Power', is a mode of 'action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future'.[43] That is, every action, while constrained by its position within the structures of power, also itself reshapes or reinforces the structure of possible actions available to others. It is this focus on how power

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[39] Granted, there are enormous difference in scope, style, epistemology, etc., between Foucault's study of the rules governing knowledge and Austin's rather more modest elucidation of the conventions governing mundane speech acts. Nevertheless, a common methodological denominator can be identified in the orientation towards the rules of formation of thought and speech. Foucault briefly discusses the speech act approach in the light of his archaeological project in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 82–87.

[40] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, 94.

[41] For a fuller discussion of the complex question of intentionality in Foucault's theorization of power, see Kelly, *Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 47–50, 69–72. Power's intentionality, as Kelly points out, should be understood as an emergent property.

[42] Foucault cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* 187.

[43] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 220.

constrains the possibilities for action that allows Foucault to say that philosophy should 'analyse and *criticize* relations of power' but without 'global, definitive, absolute, unilateral pejorative or laudatory qualification'.[44] The detailed analytic critique of power is about *dis*closing the possible actions that power *fore*closes. As Koopman puts it in his analysis of Foucault's methodology as 'problematizing genealogy', the point is 'to critically show the way in which certain practices, beliefs, and conceptions have become problematic in the history of thought due to the contingent intersection of a complex set of enabling and disabling conditions'.[45] This is an essentially descriptive endeavour, but it is also a critical and normative project of what Frankfurt School theorists call 'disclosing critique', because through the disclosure of new ways of seeing social reality, 'our view of social reality is so changed by the radically new description that our value beliefs cannot remain unaffected either'.[46]

Austin does not make this move but remains on the level of synchronic analysis of structures of possible speech acts, neglecting the diachronic and strategic aspects of how language games change and how speech acts act upon other speech acts. It is not hard to see, though, that his framework lends itself also to such a perspective. Indeed, other analytic philosophers, prime among them analytic feminists, have extended speech act theory in precisely this way. Rae Langton's application of speech act theory to questions around pornography and rape is a prime example. In a much discussed paper, she argues that pornography, which she conceives of as speech, in its depiction of women, alters the possible speech acts available to women in a way that effectively silences them; by perpetuating images of women as always wanting sex, pornography alters accepted conventions such that their speech acts of refusal often do not gain uptake.[47] Applied in this way, we may attach the label 'analytic critique' to Austinian speech act theory too: the critical analysis of everyday speech is here precisely applied in order to disclose the way some speech acts operate to constrain others.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ANALYTIC CRITIQUE

From the initial comparison between Foucault and analytic philosophy of language, I have tried to give the rudiments of a methodology that captures the commonality between the two. This approach of analytic critique starts from a critical analysis of the texture of everyday life, of experiences of institutionalization, epistemic or communicative practices, etc., to theorise and criticise the conditions of possibility of these experiences and the

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[44] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 193, *emphasis added*.

[45] Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (2013), 95.

[46] Axel Honneth, "The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism," *Constellations* 7:1 (2000), 123.

[47] Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 22:4 (1993), 293-330.

therein identifiable strategies of power. While Austin never goes beyond 'critical analysis' to 'analytic critique', his approach lends itself naturally to this method, as shown in Langton's work. What remains is the question of how analytic critique might relate to contemporary political philosophy.

To highlight Foucault's family resemblance with analytic philosophers of language is not to deny or diminish the gap between the French philosopher and what usually passes as 'analytic *political* philosophy'. *Contra* Paul Patton,[48] I see a fundamental incommensurability between Foucault and contemporary normative political theory inspired by Rawls and Nozick, and I am not implying that reading the French philosopher as 'analytic' makes this difference any less jarring. Indeed, Foucault is clear that his 'analytic' approach arises from dissatisfaction with orthodox political theory, including the liberal contract tradition. He is highly sceptical of such grand 'philosophies of freedom' which, in outlining the legitimacy and limits of authority, have historically ended up 'authoriz[ing] excessive forms of power'.[49] If philosophy is still to play a role as a 'counter-power', it needs to drop the pretension to legislate about the limits of power and instead concern itself with the critical analysis of power relations. 'Legislative' political philosophy, which tells the governors how they may legitimately exercise power, is to be replaced with analysis-critique ('it is not up to us to tell you the sauce with which we want to be eaten'[50]). It is not hard to see that this approach is opposed to contemporary liberal political philosophy in the Rawlsian vein, which precisely outlines the conditions for legitimate coercion.

Here, it is worth briefly dwelling on what makes the critical-analytical approach I am proposing here different from the Rawlsian methodology of 'reflective equilibrium'. Rawls proposes reflective equilibrium as a method for arriving at the most acceptable theory of justice—given that our intuitive judgments about justice at different levels of generality often conflict, we ought to check our general beliefs about justice against our judgments in particular cases and against alternative conceptions of justice.[51] This involves going back-and-forth between general beliefs about justice and considered judgments about specific cases, which at first sight may remind us of the method I outlined above of 'constant checking'. In practice, however, the Rawlsian method stops far short of the Foucauldian-Austinian approach. It does not start from a critical analysis of how politics really works but from the assumption that politics ought to be governed by a normative theory of justice and that our best access to this theory is through our moral intuitions.

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[48] Paul Patton, "Government, Rights and Legitimacy: Foucault and Liberal Political Normativity," *European Journal of Political Theory* 15:2 (2016), 223-239; Paul Patton, "Foucault's 'critique' of Neoliberalism: Rawls and the Genealogy of Public Reason," *New Formations* 80-81 (2013), 39-51.
[49] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 191-192.
[50] Ibid., 193-194.
[51] John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (2001), 29-32.

Compare how Austin's work differs from the kind of philosophy of language that 'fetishises' the true/false-distinction. The methods of the latter, not unlike Rawlsian political philosophy, involve devising theories about language and then checking them against various examples, such as 'The King of France is bald'. If the theory yields an anomalous result for any given possible sentence, the theory might need to be revised. However, Austin's point is that starting from the assumption that any given sentence must fit into our theories of truth and meaning prevents us from understanding how language really works. This requires jettisoning the entire framework of previous theories of meaning and starting instead from a careful analysis of what we really *do* when we speak. Similarly, the analytic philosophy of politics that Foucault proposes wants to rid itself of the assumption that the task of political philosophy is to determine the extent of just coercion. Take the example of Foucault's analysis of prisons. Relying on intuitive judgments about which forms of punishment are just or excessive is precisely anathema to Foucault's method; his approach is to show through detailed analysis how power functions through carceral institutions (and through the discourses which make them appear 'rational', 'humane', and 'just').[52]

What is productive about the comparison between Foucault and analytic philosophers of language is how it shows that the chasm between Foucault and Rawls, Nozick *et al*. is not necessarily the chasm between 'continental' and 'analytic' philosophy. Indeed, what the foregoing discussion has shown is that Foucault shares much with certain analytic philosophers outside of *political* philosophy (in a narrow sense). Rae Langton's work has been mentioned as one example that could be labelled analytic critique, but there are many others, especially within analytic feminist philosophy, who take similar approaches. The work of these authors, though, is rarely considered 'political philosophy' but categorised as 'feminist philosophy', 'philosophy of language', or 'social epistemology'.

To strengthen the point, consider, as an illustration, Miranda Fricker's work on epistemic injustice as another approach within analytic philosophy that conforms to the notion of analytic critique.[53] Despite speaking in the register of justice/injustice, Fricker's analysis does not start from a global theory of justice but rather from the everyday experiences of those who find themselves marginalised in the production of knowledge. Her

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[52] One might of course argue that a proper application of reflective equilibrium involves also testing our judgments against genealogical critique of our own beliefs as well as meta-theoretical beliefs about how theorising ought to take place—and thus that reflective equilibrium could, in principle, lead us to adopt precisely the method I have outlined in this paper. Notwithstanding the fact that this is *not* how Rawls and Rawlsians have applied the method in practice, there is certainly some plausibility in this claim—however, Peter Singer is probably correct in claiming that 'making the model of "reflective equilibrium" as all-embracing as this may make it salvageable, but only at the cost of making it close to vacuous'. Peter Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions," *The Journal of Ethics* 9 (2005), 331–352.

[53] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007).

discussion of hermeneutical injustice is especially instructive: she begins from the experience of those who struggle to make sense of or communicate their own negative social experiences due to a lack of shared conceptual resources. Her main example is the experience of women who were victims of sexual harassment before feminist activists made 'sexual harassment' a widely known concept.[54] She then theorises the conditions of possibility for these experiences as a situation of hermeneutical injustice; 'the unequal relations of power prevented women from participating on equal terms with men in those practices by which collective social meanings are generated'.[55]

The argument is not that Fricker's methodology is *entirely* compatible with a Foucauldian approach. Indeed, Crary accuses Fricker of a certain 'methodological conservatism' because she 'operates in the logical realm determined by a neutral conception of reason'.[56] This is apparent in how Fricker conceives of hermeneutical marginalization as a way in which power *distorts* the formation of knowledge, which would otherwise have proceeded freely and neutrally; power therefore being *external* to knowledge in a way Foucault would clearly deny.[57] But these substantial differences aside, there is an identifiable common core between the work of Fricker (and other analytic feminists) and Foucault's analytic critique.[58]

My point, then, is not to entirely efface, or even 'transcend', the continental/analytic divide. Rather, I have shown that there are other *possible* ways of drawing the boundaries between different philosophical methods, and for those of us who are interested in challenging the abstract, ahistorical and politically aloof nature of much contemporary political theory, 'analytic' as well as 'continental' philosophers can provide attractive alternative methodological tools.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Foucault, when lecturing in Tokyo, claimed to find in analytic philosophy of language a 'certain model' for his own philosophical approach to power, one that seeks to 'analyse, clarify, and make visible, and thus intensify the struggles that develop around power'.[59] Above, I have tried to expand on what exactly Foucault has in common with Austin and other analytic philosophers, and what a critical-analytic approach to political philosophy,

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[54] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 149-151.

[55] Ibid., 152.

[56] Alice Crary, "The Methodological Is Political: What's the Matter with 'Analytic Feminism'?," *Radical Philosophy* 2:2 (2018), 52.

[57] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, 98.

[58] This also suggests that a more thorough engagement with Foucault's analytic of power could be one way in which the 'methodological conservatism' might be productively overcome. I say '*more* thorough' because Fricker actually does engage with Foucault on power in *Epistemic Injustice* but arguably only in a relatively superficial way. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 9-17.

[59] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.

that finds its model in Foucault as much as in Austin, has to offer. In the detailed analysis of 'the texture of everyday life' that both authors share, I would argue we find a powerful alternative to much contemporary political theory. Yet, I have not so far explicitly defended this methodology (beyond rehearsing some of Foucault's own misgivings about the dominant traditions of political thought). An extensive argument for this approach must be the topic of another article – nevertheless, and by way of a conclusion, I want to briefly suggest two lines of defence against the following two arguments: (1) many political philosophers might insist that the analysis of everyday life is perhaps the concern of social philosophy but certainly not political philosophy, which is properly concerned with the domain of the political in Rawls' restricted sense; (2) critical theorists, on the other hand, might worry that the concern with 'lowly games of power' is depoliticising, inasmuch as it distracts from an overarching critique of capitalism and class domination.

To answer the first concern, let me simply suggest one way in which an analytic-critical approach could be highly relevant to precisely the domains theorised by political philosophers. One prominent field within contemporary political philosophy is that of deliberative democratic theory, where, in the tradition of Habermas, deliberation is usually theorised as an idealised procedure. What an analysis in the style of Foucault, Austin, Langton and Fricker could contribute here is a critique of actually existing deliberation: How does power function through everyday practices of deliberation, through the various speech acts that constitute the practice and through the shared hermeneutical resources that constitute its condition of possibility?

To address the second concern, let us begin by noting that Foucault does not see philosophy as a free-standing activity but explicitly politically committed and allied to the resistances and struggles of social movements. In Foucault's eyes, contemporary social movements in the 1970s were struggling against specific practices of power within prisons, psychiatry, medicine etc., and 'relatively indifferent to the political regimes and economic systems'.[60] Today, however, it is hard to deny that, in Nancy Fraser's words, 'capitalism is back' in both academic criticism and social struggles.[61] Is the micro-analytic perspective not misguided, then? Not entirely, I would suggest. What fuels the current revival of *Kapitalismuskritik* is, in good part, the growing encroachment of neoliberal capitalism on ever-more areas of everyday life. And given this, one might say, it is a crucial task of politically engaged theory to analyse the content of ordinary life in order to show how power – and capital – works through it. Foucault's prescient work on neoliberal governmentality and the 'enterprise society'[62] provides very useful ways of linking micro-

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[60] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 195.

[61] Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism," *New Left Review* 86 (2014), 55.

[62] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-79* (2008).

and macro-critique.[63] In the Tokyo lecture itself, Foucault makes this move when he goes on to discuss the concept of 'pastoral power' underpinning 'capitalist and industrial societies as well as the modern forms of the state accompanying and supporting them'.[64] Thus, Foucault's analytic of how power operates in everyday life does not shy away from making connections to the macro-level problematics of state and government – it is just that we cannot simply *deduce* the concrete and 'lowly' mechanisms of power from a prior theory of capital. Understanding the ways in which disparate technologies of power become functional for the reproduction of capitalist societies requires detailed analysis. Regardless of Foucault's own views, we need not see this approach of critique of the ordinary as opposed to an overarching project of critique of political economy; it simply calls for a more nuanced analysis of the micro-macro interlinkage. '[W]hat one is trying to discover in Marx', Foucault once said, 'is neither the determinist ascription of causality nor the logic of a Hegelian type, but a logical analysis of reality'.[65]

These two very brief sketches, it is my hope, illustrate that the project of analytic critique is a promising methodology; one that could draw on both continental and analytic resources in providing a counterweight to political philosophy's tendency towards disengagement from social reality. The paragraphs here have also provided two possible research programmes where these methods might be fruitfully applied. More than anything, however, the productive power in Foucault's appropriation of the analytic label might lie in the potential to shake up the conceptual framework we usually employ to categorise different strands of political and social philosophy. Hopefully, then, this article may be a small contribution to more imaginative methodological-theoretical engagement across the traditional division between continental and analytic philosophy.

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[63] Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," *Rethinking Marxism* 14:3 (2002), 49-64.

[64] Foucault, "Analytic Philosophy of Politics," 192.

[65] Quoted in Davidson, "Structures and Strategies of Discourse," 10.

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REVIEW ESSAY

Foucault's New Materialism: An extended review essay of Thomas Lemke's *The Government of Things*

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ABSTRACT. This article constitutes an extended review essay of Thomas Lemke's book *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms* published by New York University Press in 2021. A shorter version of this article was published as a book review in *Social Forces* (http://doi.org/10.1093/soac037, 22nd April 2022). This longer extended version is being published here with the permission of Oxford University Press, who publish *Social Forces*. In performing this review, the article seeks to outline and assess Lemke's thesis to incorporate Foucault as a part of the new materialist approach to the social and physical sciences. As my own work has located Foucault as a materialist since the 1990s, I relate Lemke's endeavour to my own and conclude that my approach has distinct advantages that his lacks. At the same time, however, his account presents some novel and insightful dimensions which can profitably be added to mine, strengthening the case for Foucault's materialism overall.

Keywords: New materialism, Michel Foucault, Thomas Lemke, Mark Olssen, Graham Harman, Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, complexity theory.

INTRODUCTION

I first wrote on Foucault as a complexity materialist in the 1990s with the publication of the article, 'Michael Foucault's Historical Materialism: an account and assessment' in 1996, and later with my book *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education*, initially published by Bergin & Garvey, New York, in 1999, and as an updated version by Paradigm Publishers in 2006. These were followed by papers such as 'Foucault as Complexity Theorist: overcoming the problems of classical philosophical analysis' in 2008 and 'Exploring Complexity Through Literature: Reframing Foucault's research project with hindsight' in 2017. More recently, in my book *Constructing Foucault's Ethics: A Poststructuralist Moral Theory for the 21st Century*, published in hardback in June 2021, the introductory chapter recaps Foucault as a complexity materialist as necessary background for a consideration of ethics.

When I started advocating the thesis of Foucault as materialist, with a few exceptions, notably the book on Foucault by Gilles Deleuze,[1] the common interpretations of Foucault frequently represented him as some sort of 'discursive' idealist.

In as much as Thomas Lemke's new book *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms* supports my own view for a materialist reading of Foucault, it constitutes a welcome addition to the literature on the topic on several fronts. Firstly, it seeks to locate Foucault in relation to the existing literature on the new materialisms. Secondly, it assesses several of Foucault's major concepts in terms of how they both contribute to a materialist understanding of Foucault as well as resolve and surpass the difficulties and shortfalls that Lemke identifies in the existing approaches.

On the new materialisms, Lemke outlines and critiques three approaches: that of Graham Harman's 'Object Orientated Ontology' (OOO); that of Jane Bennett's 'Vital Materialism'; and finally of Karen Barad's proposal of 'agential realism'. All these approaches share a concern to take into account "the productivity and dynamism of matter."[2] As Lemke states:

> [t]hey propose to take a critical distance from the Cartesian-Newtonian understanding of ontology and to reconceptualise agency beyond the human subject. This 'ontological reorientation'[3] … promises to transcend the modernist dualism of nature and culture, affirming the inventiveness and indeterminacy of matter."[4]

In relation to epistemology, the new materialisms propose to base their analyses on the models of the natural sciences but also "to understand biology and nature as historical and contingent rather than governed by eternal and deterministic laws."[5] A third common feature "connects the rethinking of materiality to the matter of politics, seeking to develop a new form of analyzing power relations beyond the sphere of the human."[6]. Lemke goes on to note how these 'new materialists' seek to distinguish themselves from the 'old materialists' in relation to their emphases on such postulates as the "'dynamism of matter' … 'novelty', 'breakthroughs', and 'originality'."[7] Lemke documents his general 'unease' with the new approaches; firstly, the repetitive nature of the message and, secondly, the abandonment by some of the idea of critique which they see as somehow outdated. Here he mentions the work of Bruno Latour.[8]

Harman's approach stands as distinct from the others in many senses. OOO postulates discrete and bounded objects which are separate and isolated from human subjects. As

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[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (1988).

[2] Thomas Lemke, *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms* (2021), 4.

[3] Lemke cites this phrase from Coole, Diana and Samantha Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," (2010), 6-7.

[4] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 4.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 5-6.

[8] See Bruno Latour, "On Actor Network Theory: A Few Clarifications," *Soziale Welt* 47:4 (1966), 369-81.

such, OOO constitutes an "explicit essentialism."[9] In contrast, Bennett and Barad "are concerned with 'things' and 'phenomena' respectively"[10] in relation to their "processes of 'becoming' rather than states of 'being'."[11] As Lemke continues, "[t]hey focus on hybrid assemblages and relational entanglements in which the subject is 'already part of the substances, systems, and becomings of the world'."[12]

Lemke's more specific criticisms of each of these approaches are also insightful, and indeed his critique of these existing approaches is one of the strengths of his book. Putting aside for a moment each of these authors' criticisms of Foucault, and Lemke's defence of Foucault in turn, OOO is seen as inadequate in relation to its inability to offer any cogent theoretical justification as to how human and nonhuman objects are related, how objects are established and become meaningful, and for representing nonhuman objects in isolation – as variously weird, unpredictable, unknowable, etc. – thus translating, according to Lemke, into "an extreme form of subjectivism"[13] which is also an "essentialism"[14] and which is incapable of resolving the "theoretical tension between relationalism and foundationalism,"[15] thus resulting in "a serious lack of conceptual clarity."[16] Jane Bennett's perspective on the 'vibrancy of matter' is also seen as unsatisfactory. While Bennett puts forward her thesis on the vibrancy of matter to undermine traditional empiricist ontologies concerning matter and contributes toward the important theoretical innovation of a posthumanist ontological and political theory, she is criticised by Lemke for failing to account for "negative processes and destructive patterns that obstruct and hinder the progressive politics she envisions."[17] More specifically, and, I think, more to the point, Bennett is harangued for failing to theoretically articulate the precise ways in which matter is 'vibrant' or 'active.'[18] This especially relates to what Bennett refers to as 'thing-power', especially relating to 'nonhuman things', and to the 'force of things.'[19] It has always been unclear to me whether such a 'force' as Bennett identifies is postulated as internal to 'things' or as emerging from contingent relations in historically engendered configurations. In that Bennett conveys by the concept of 'vibrancy' a new form of dynamism which defies determinism and predictability, it is far from clear how such a label can describe

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[9] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 8.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Lemke, ibid., citing Stacy Alaimo, "Thinking as the Stuff of the World," *O – Zone: A Journal of Object – Orientated Studies* (2014), 14.

[13] Lemke, ibid., 14.

[14] Ibid., 8.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 14.

[17] Ibid., 15.

[18] See Lemke, Chap. 2.

[19] Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory* 32 (3) (2004), 347–72. Lemke lists many who have criticised Bennet on this or related issues, notably Ben Anderson, "Review of *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* by Jane Bennett" (2011), 395; Bruce Braun, "Review of Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things, by Jane Bennett," (2011); and Andrew Berry, *Material Politics: Disputes along the Pipeline*, (2013).

'forces' in the nonhuman world of 'things', i.e., as being integral to 'things', without causing justifiable pandemonium and incredulity in the natural sciences. As Lemke puts it, "Bennett goes beyond organic concepts of life and claims that 'everything is, in a sense, alive'."[20] For me, this comes uncomfortably close to traditional notions of 'vitalism' now applied to both the human and nonhuman world of animals, plants and 'things', without seemingly understanding the difficulties of such a thesis. While Bennett's work thus marks a major contribution in the development of new materialist scholarship by identifying several important tropes, Lemke is right to identify serious conceptual confusions within her approach, including more than a hint of residual essentialism that lies buried but active. Lemke continues to show how such ambiguities in turn affect her concept of agency as well as limit the efficacy of politics and ethics within her work.

Similarly, Barad's 'diffractive materialism' is deficient. Termed by Barad as 'agential realism', this strand of new materialism differs significantly from the other two approaches by rejecting the idea of isolated objects, conceptualising them instead in terms of entanglements between bodies of different kinds and conceiving vibrancy of matter solely in terms of a relational ontology. In line with the quantum revolution, things continue to operate deterministically as per the Newtonian world, but things also 'always' interact relationally in terms of entanglements, and it is in this second sense that vibrancy emerges to defy deterministic and predictable trajectories. Barad, in my view, thus marks a serious advance over the works of Harman and Bennett. Based on this clearcut formulation in which both the Newtonian and quantum have they respective place, Barad adheres to a commitment to the physicist Niels Bohr, supplementing it with elements of "poststructuralist theory and feminist technoscience studies."[21] Breaking with "the concept of matter as a passive substance that exists independently of epistemic practices [Barad puts forward] …the idea that 'matter plays an agentive role in its iterative materialization."[22] Centrally important here is Barad's contention that "the central lesson to be learned from Bohr is that *'we are part of the nature that we seek to understand'*."[23] Also important for Bohr is that 'uncertainty' is not simply epistemological, or methodological, as it was for Heisenberg, but ontologically exists in reality itself. Hence, in terms of the new world of 'relations', uncertainty becomes a guiding ontological principle, and determinism and predictability are correspondingly defeated. Such a perspective underpins Barad's view on 'representationalism', which in her view grounds a correspondence theory of truth; the idea of traditional scientific positivism which depicts mind-independent reality as having a "fixed and stable nature"[24] and presupposes a binary "opposition between words and things, nature and society, represented and representation."[25] In

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[20] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things,* (2010), 117; cited in Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 49.

[21] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 57.

[22] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), 177; cited in Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 57.

[23] Barad, ibid., 26, cited in Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 58 [emphasis in Barad's original])

[24] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 59.

[25] Ibid.

contrast to representationalism and positivism, Barad advances a 'proto-performative' conception, which she takes from Bohr,[26] and asserts that the "practices of knowing and being are not isolatable: they are mutually implicated."[27] As Lemke notes, "the critique of representationalism cannot be separated from the method of diffractive reading."[28] Diffraction amounts to an indirect form of 'relational' reading incorporating "deviance and difference" as opposed to 'representation', 'mediation', "mirroring and sameness."[29] The key point for Barad is that, in the world that we are a part of, we always provide an "active ongoing articulation of the world in its differential mattering."[30]

This is an important perspective, and Lemke is to be credited with a clear and relevant summary of Barad's perspective and shortcomings. While crediting Barad for her insightful analysis and utilisation of the concept of 'apparatus' as a part of her new 'ontoepistemological framework', Lemke then goes on to criticise Barad's exclusive dependence on Bohr, while at the same time admitting the relevance of many of her points for Foucault. Although Lemke grasps many of the pertinent criticisms of Barad's work here, in my view there is a need for greater precision or clarity on what is amiss with Barad's viewpoint. Lemke grasps the general problem that in seeking to assert relational ontology as all pervasive and accounting for all materialisations, including those pertaining to both human and nonhuman world, Barad inadvertently, perhaps, reinstates both a form of foundationalism simultaneously with a relational ontology which claims to deny it. Lemke terms this as a "residual foundationalism" in Barad's work; a "simultaneous focus on radical relationality and stress on a quasi-fundamental role of matter give Barad's critique of social constructivism and poststructuralism its particular strength."[31] Lemke notes various other writers who make similar criticisms of Barad.[32] Lemke relates this criticism to Barad's caricatured view of poststructuralism as solely concerned with the social and not with matter, as well as her reification of Niels Bohr as "the final analytic key."[33] For Barad, the quantum mechanics of Bohr is "the correct key of nature that applies to all scales."[34] Yet, as Lemke points out, not only were there arguments and inconsistencies between the quantum theorists but Bohr is reified out of context as applying everywhere, in all times and places, giving his work a "quasi-foundational role in agentic realism"[35] which "tends to marginalize or exclude other important contributors to quantum mechanics."[36] A related effect of this is that the 'agentic realist' view of 'intra-actions' and 'diffractive

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[26] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 31.

[27] Ibid., 185; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 60.

[28] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 60.

[29] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 71; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 60.

[30] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 381; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 61.

[31] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 75.

[32] See Dennis Bruining, "A Somatechnics of Moralism: New Materialism or Material Foundationalism," *Somatechnics* 3:1 (2013), 151.

[33] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 74.

[34] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 85; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 74.

[35] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 73.

[36] Ibid.

patterns' apply to all matter. For Barad, as Lemke notes, interactions are now conceptualized as "nonarbitrary, nondeterministic causal enactments ... *temporality and spatiality are produced and interactively reconfigured in the materialization of phenomena.*"[37] Barad uses the term "spacetimematter" to capture this idea, but this may be questioned to the extent that it is generally asserted without a detailed review of the possibilities of its denial, how traditional physicists might react, with counter-instances, as well as the oversimplified interpretation of the phenomenological view she attributes to Bohr ('that we are a part of the reality that we investigate') that she quite possibly misinterprets or oversimplifies.

Lemke suggests that to focus on Bohr alone is to neglect other important influences in the quantum movement. This is an important insight, and some of my own research could be used profitably to augment Lemke's point here. One person that I think is of central relevance is Erwin Schrödinger, who identified some aspects of Bohr's thesis that are not acceptable, and who also constitutes a possible counterweight to Barad's argument in the paragraph above. While Schrödinger accepts the theses of indeterminism, uncertainty and non-linear causality as constituting key strengths of the Copenhagen interpretation, he was opposed, as was Einstein, to Bohr's non-realism over objects, i.e., the view promulgated by Bohr that objects in the world do not actually exist until after or simultaneous with their observation or measurement; a view which both Schrödinger and Einstein regarded as idealist nonsense.[38] Such a view would also run counter to Foucault, who saw a world of non-discursive material objects behind or below the world of discourse as fundamental to his 'new' materialist approach.[39]

We might also add here various others who came afterwards whom I refer to as 'post-quantum'. This is why I see Ilya Prigogine as one significant thinker in my own writing.[40] Although he cannot be accepted in his entirety, Prigogine,[41] perhaps with the perspective

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[37] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 68, citing Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 179 (original emphasis).

[38] Schrödinger's cat paradox was aimed at demonstrating the incongruity of such a view. For an explanation of Schrödinger's and Einstein's objections to Bohr's view concerning objects, see Barry Parker, *Quantum Legacy: The Discovery that Changed Our Universe,* (2002), 138ff.

[39] This view is expressed by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), chap. 6 especially.

[40] See my previous writings: Mark Olssen, "Learning in a complex World," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Learning,* ed. Peter Jarvis (2012), 376–392; Mark Olssen, "Discourse, Complexity, Normativity: Tracing the elaboration of Foucault's materialist concept of discourse," (2015); Mark Olssen, "Ascertaining the Normative Implications of Complexity for Politics: Beyond Agent-Based Modeling," in *World Politics at the Edge of Chaos: Reflections on Complexity and Global Life,* ed. Emilian Kavalski (2015); Mark Olssen, "Exploring Complexity Through Literature: Reframing Foucault's Research Project with Hindsight," *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations* 16 (2017); Mark Olssen, "Complexity and Learning: Implications for teacher education," in *Companion to Research in Teacher Education,* ed. Michael A. Peters, Bronwen Cowie, Ian Menter (2017); Mark Olssen and Will Mace, "British Idealism, Complexity Theory and Society: The Political Usefulness of T. H. Green in a Revised Conception of Social Democracy," *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations* 20 (2021); Mark Olssen, "The Rehabilitation of the Concept of Public Good: Reappraising the Attacks from Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism from a Poststructuralist Perspective," *Review of Contemporary Philosophy* 20 (2021); and Mark Olssen, *Constructing Foucault's Ethics: A Poststructuralist Moral Theory for the 21st century* (2021).

[41] See Ilya Prigogine, *From Being to Becoming* (1980); Ilya Prigogine and Irene Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos* (1984); Ilya Prigogine and Gregoire Nicolis, *Exploring Complexity* (1989); Ilya Prigogine, *Time, Chaos and the Laws of Chaos* (1994); Ilya Prigogine, *The End of Certainty* (1997); and Ilya Prigogine, *Is Future Given* (2003).

of hindsight, generally makes more sensible and plausible judgments regarding the overall contributions of the quantum revolution; not by getting rid of linear causal trajectories and the relevance of mechanism in every particular context but by suggesting that what the quantum revolution did was introduce relationalism *in addition* and also *simultaneously*, i.e., acting variously at the same time. What was problematic about the traditional physics of the Newtonian world was its ontological individualism, the exclusivity by which it excluded relationalism, as well as its failure to see, to use Barad's terminology, that matter was 'entangled', that is, it interacted in unpredictable ways, thereby implicating a different ontoepistemology (of relationalism) characterised by nonlinear causal sequences, novelty, uncertainty, nonpredictability, and indeterminism. Prigogine was influenced by A. N. Whitehead's 'process-relational' philosophy, as well as by Martin Heidegger's 'historical ontology,' and is frequently represented as "the 'grandfather' of chaos theory."[42] The quantum revolution introduced a 'relational' or 'systems' 'turn' to science, supplementing mechanism, deterministic trajectories, and predictability with a more holistic, relational type of analysis sensitive to configurations, open systems, serendipity, chance, and the emergence of unique events. Adapted to conform with Foucault, mechanism can only be retained as an explanatory model if it can be freed from any association with essentialism, insofar as matter, even if it does conform to, and on occasions be best explained in terms of the mechanical model, can still be conceptualized as being constituted in history through a process of evolution in time which gives an historical 'fixity' to its boundaries and the way it acts under different conditions. What the quantum revolution did unleash, then, is to allow for the development of a new philosophy of science based upon the relational possibilities of open systems, novelty, indeterminism, and chance. Although Lemke does not appeal to Prigogine, he is nevertheless alert to the inadequacies of Barad's analysis in confining her theoretical insights to Bohr in her claims to represent all of matter as 'intra-active becoming.'[43]

The point of summarizing Barad, as well as Bennett and Harman, is to set the basis for his book and claim that Michel Foucault can appropriately resolve the problems of these existing 'new materialist' approaches, thereby providing for a materialist ontoepistemology that can take account of matter generally, that is, both *the human and the nonhuman world*. In this respect, Lemke also criticizes Barad's criticism that Foucault "restricts the productivity of power to the limited domain of the social."[44] As Lemke continues, "[t]he

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[42] American Institute of Physics, "Prigogine," aip.org. https://history.aip.org/phn/11807013.html (accessed February 20, 2022). A better case can be maintained for Henri Poincaré, whose resolution of the 'three-body problem' at the close of the nineteenth century established the philosophical basis for indeterminism and the absence of predictability. Along with Prigogine and Bohr, Poincaré would also need to be considered as important in establishing how Foucault's historical ontology can be comprehended as a form of dynamic materialism. For more on this, see Henri Poincaré, "Sur le problème des trois corps et les équations de la dynamique," (1890) as well as Henri Poincaré, "Le problème des trois corps," (1891). Also see my article, Mark Olssen, "The Rehabilitation of the Concept of Public Good," and my recent book, Mark Olssen, *Constructing Foucault's Ethics*.

[43] Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 28:3, (2003), 882.

[44] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity,' 810.

conceptual privilege Foucault attributes to the social precludes – according to this reading – engaging with matter in a substantive way, since he regards 'matter merely as an end product rather than as an active factor in further materializations'."[45] Other charges that Barad levels at Foucault concern a persistent anthropocentrism in that Foucault's analysis "focusses on the production of human bodies, to the exclusion of nonhuman bodies whose constitution he takes for granted."[46] A third charge concerns "Foucault's flawed account of the 'precise nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena'."[47] Lemke then proceeds to respond to such views and claims that an answer can be gained "in revisiting and revising" Foucault's conceptual proposal of 'a government of things.'[48] While acknowledging that his account "builds on elements in Foucault's writings that [Foucault] … himself never coherently discussed or further developed,"[49] he maintains that Foucault can be used to provide for a more coherent 'new materialist' approach.

Lemke then proceeds to analyse three concepts: *dispositif* (which he prefers to call 'dispositive'); *technology*, and *milieu*. The analysis of these three concepts enables a refutation to Barad's three criticisms of Foucault: *dispositive* answers Barad's charge that "the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena remains unsatisfactory,"[50] and Lemke claims to show that "Foucault's notion of the *dispositif* is informed by a material-discursive understanding of government as 'arranging things.'[51] In this sense, says Lemke, "Foucault's distinctive use of 'dispositive' is that it assembles discursive and non-discursive elements …."[52] Secondly, through the concept of *technology*, Lemke argues against Barad's claim that Foucault limits the productivity of power to the social. Thirdly, against Barad's claim concerning Foucault confining analysis to human bodies, Lemke shows that the concept of *milieu* renders Barad's argument invalid. Although he concedes that "Foucault never directly inquired into the nature of matter or investigated the specifics of human-nonhuman relations,"[53] through observing the lines of the "trails to be followed,"[54] Foucault "invited scholars to selectively take up, adapt, and transform his ideas and concepts in approaching issues and questions that Foucault himself did not address or that remained marginal to his historical and philosophical agenda."[55] Citing Brian

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[45] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 62; citing Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 810.

[46] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 10, citing Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* 169.

[47] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 10, citing Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* 200.

[48] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (2007), 97.

[49] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 11.

[50] Ibid., 11.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., citing Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), 4.

[55] Ibid.

Massumi, Lemke says that it is a case of "working from Foucault after Foucault"[56] "to revise and update his 'toolbox' for addressing contemporary problems."[57]

One could cite other passages from Foucault to support Lemke's response to Barad here. In one of my own articles,[58] I cite Foucault's comments on the apparatus as a multiple articulation between both discursive and non-discursive material forms. As Foucault observes: "the episteme is a specifically discursive apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogenous."[59] Foucault allows for a duality of articulation between discursive and non-discursive material forms. The point is noted by Deleuze, who says: "Foucault's general principle is that every form is a compound of relations between forces. Given these forces, our first question is with what forces from outside enter into a relation, and then what form is created as a result."[60] In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, Foucault observes how punishment cannot be derived solely from the force of the discourse, for torture, machines and dungeons are material and have meaning because of the discourse of punishment. What is important to note is that the social forms of discipline and punishment represent a synthetic and relatively autonomous compound of knowledge and technique and material objects or things. So, the developments of the prison, the clinic, and the mental asylum are the outcomes of a multiple articulation.[61] This view supports Lemke's assertion that Barad has seriously misfired in her views on Foucault.

Lemke's analysis of the three concepts constitutes an important contribution to Foucauldian studies. It is through his analysis of these concepts that Lemke seeks to rebuff Barad's claim that Foucault lacks a dynamic concept of the material that can explain both human and nonhuman bodies. Lemke notes how others also shared this view, and he cites Paul Rutherford, who claimed that Foucault's concept of biopower could not explain "*both* people and *things*,"[62] and Nigel Thrift, who expressed the view that Foucault's writings are "curiously devoid of thingness."[63] Acknowledging that "Foucault rarely pursued this line of research,"[64] the quotes I have included in the paragraph above reveal that he was nevertheless aware of the issue and clearly saw his research as interrogating the nexus between discourse and things, power and knowledge. While Lemke equivocates with the view that Foucault "tended to underestimate the relevance of the natural sciences for a

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[56] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 12, citing Brian Massumi, "National Enterprise Emergency: Steps Towards an Ecology of Powers," *Theory, Culture, Society* 26:6 (2009), 158.

[57] Ibid., 12.

[58] Olssen, "Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Neo-Liberalism,"

[59] Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980), 197.

[60] Deleuze, *Foucault*, 124.

[61] See my article, "Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Neo-Liberalism" (2003), 194.

[62] Paul Rutherford, "The Entry of Life into History", in *Discourses of the Environment*, ed. Eric Darier (1999), 44.

[63] Thrift, Nigel, "Overcome by Space: Reworking Foucault," in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, ed. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (2007), 56.

[64] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 79.

genealogy of power,"[65] he claims that "it is possible to discern conceptual tools in Foucault's work to address [Barads] … concerns."[66] To this extent, the first concept assessed is the *dispositive*, which for Lemke "successfully grasps the complexities of material-discursive entanglements."[67] The second concept of *technology* also "exceeds the domain of the social," while the third concept of *milieu* "schematically takes into account more-than-human practices."[68]

These three concepts form the lynchpin of Lemke's attempt to establish the case for Foucault as materialist. The concept of *milieu* defines a spatial constellation and "reconfigures existing temporalities."[69] Lemke draws mainly from Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France of 1977-78, published in English as *Security, Territory, Population*.[70] Indeed, this is the only significant place where Foucault discusses the concept of 'milieu' in a theoretically distinctive sense, as far as I am aware.[71] Although a great deal is made of Foucault's drawing on Canguilhem's use of the concept in biology, it is noteworthy that in the 'Introduction' to the English language edition of *The Normal and the Pathological*,[72] which Foucault contributed, it is the concept of 'environment,' not 'milieu,' that appears throughout. Indeed, the English word used in both 'Life: Experience and Science'[73] and the 'Introduction' to the English translation of Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*[74] is 'environment.'[75] The concept 'milieu' does not appear at all in either of the two English sources for Foucault's article listed above. Although Lemke makes the acknowledgment "translation modified" after citing a quotation from Foucault's introduction to Canguilhem's book, he replaces the original word "environment" with "milieu."[76] While Lemke would no doubt claim that this is necessary to restore Foucault's original intentions, one may also conjecture that he is exaggerating the significance of the concept of 'milieu' in Foucault's project overall.[77]

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[65] Ibid., 80.

[66] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 80.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 128, 131.

[70] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

[71] If the word 'milieu' does appear, as it does in *Society Must Be Defended*, in both the French original as well as the English translation, it is simply as equivalent to the word 'environment', which Foucault says constitutes "the milieu in which [human beings] live" (See *Society Must Be Defended*, 245.

[72] See Michel Foucault, "Introduction", in *The Normal and the Pathological*, ed. Georges Canguilhem (1991), 7-24.

[73] Michel Foucault, "Life: Experience and Science," in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954 – 1984, Vol. II.*, ed. James D. Faubion (1998), 475.

[74] Foucault, "Introduction", 7-24.

[75] Ibid., 19.

[76] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 127.

[77] Lemke quotes from "Life: Experience, Science," the slightly modified version of the introduction to Canguilhem's book published in Foucault's *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* (1998). The extract quoted by Lemke includes the passage: "Forming concepts is a way living and not a way of killing life […] it is to show, among those millions of living beings that inform their milieu and inform themselves on the basis of it…." The actual passage reads: "Forming concepts is a way of living and not a way of killing life […] it is to show,

Another instance of Lemke replacing the concept of 'environment' with the concept of 'milieu' occurs later in his book[78] when he quotes Foucault from *Society Must Be Defended*, again replacing the word 'environment', which appears in the English language translation of Foucault's text, with the word 'milieu' on two occasions.[79] While again Lemke would claim that he is restoring the use of 'milieu' as used in the French original editions by Foucault, it is noteworthy here that the translators of Foucault's texts have not seen the concepts of 'environment' and 'milieu' as theoretically distinct in the way Lemke is seeking to maintain but more in the sense of being interchangeable. And this in turn is based on the fact that Foucault never gave them any reasons or grounds to make such a distinction. My view here is that Lemke is seeking to convey the impression that Foucault was more concerned with the concept 'milieu' than in fact he was. Further, there would appear to be little evidence to suggest that Foucault had any continuous interest in the concept of milieu throughout his writing career.

Lemke's reasons for modifying the English language translations of Foucault's works in the passages referred to above is reinforced a few pages later when he seeks to establish the distinctiveness of the concept of 'milieu' in Foucault's writings. Here Lemke claims that *milieu* has a significance that words like 'environment', 'background' or 'surrounding' do not.[80] *Milieu*, he says, "is an interactive space, a relational network that constitutes the elements of which it consists as much as it is itself their endpoint or outcome."[81] It is at this point that one is forced to object that there is nothing intrinsic to a concept such as *milieu* that entails these meanings and which differentiates it from other concepts such as 'environment', 'surrounding', 'the social conditions of existence', 'background' or 'social context.' A Foucauldian surely cannot claim that words that appear like synonyms have fixed and unequivocal meanings. The complex metonymy that inflects all of Foucault's concepts is not integral to the words themselves but resides rather in the ontoepistemological choices that render Foucault's approach as distinctive in particular contexts. In this sense, the concept of *milieu* will certainly bear the qualities that Lemke discerns, yet so will other Foucauldian concepts not discussed in this book, such as 'environment', 'context', 'event', 'the outside', 'exteriority', 'problematization', 'history', 'genealogy', 'Herkunft' (descent), 'Entstehung' (emergence), 'discourse', 'episteme', 'archive', 'error', etcetera. In 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' Foucault utilizes the concepts of *Herkunft* to represent an 'outside' or 'exteriority' that 'inscribes' the body: "The body is the inscribed

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among those billions of living beings that inform their environment and inform themselves on the basis of it…" (1998, 475).

[78] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 169.

[79] See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), 245. The English translation which Lemke cites reads: "the problem of the environment to the extent that it is not a natural environment" (2003, 245). Lemke cites this passage and writes: "the problem of the milieu to the extent that it is not a natural milieu" (Foucault 2003, 245; translation modified) (Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 169).

[80] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 130.

[81] Ibid.

surface of events."[82] Foucault says that "[t]he body and everything that touches it: diet, climate, and soil – is the domain of *Herkunft.*"[83] *Entstehung* (or emergence) is also theorised in terms of a complex non-linear conception[84] to represent the "moment of arising"[85] and to "the emergence of a species (animal or human)."[86] Emergence is characterized by Foucault in terms of 'shifts in the meaning of words', substitutions', displacements', 'disguised conquests' and 'systematic reversals.'[87] History itself is opposed to the 'Platonic modalities' and should aim at 'dissolving identities' and critiquing existing 'knowledge' and 'truths'. By weighing and calculating Foucault's overall approach, his use of different concepts, and the common elements to his analyses, it is possible to *fathom*, if one can excuse the analogy, through fitting the pieces of the 'jig-saw' together, the precise form of complex materialism that Foucault subscribes to.

Lemke's account of the concept of *milieu*, as utilized by Foucault, notwithstanding his reification of the concept as of more importance to Foucault than in fact it was, is nonetheless insightful, for he proceeds to imbue it with the central characteristics of a complex ontoepistemological approach. Faithful to Foucault's complexity approach, Lemke applies a complex systems analysis to the concept representing it as being a 'relational network,' as exhibiting 'self-regulating capacities,' as defined by "an intersection between a multiplicity of living individuals."[88] The concept has its specificity for Foucault in the sense that, as Foucault defines it, "it is therefore the medium of an action and the element in which it circulates."[89] In this sense, the milieu defines "an intersection between a multiplicity of living individuals."[90] It is a mechanism for "governing the aleatory"[91] which constitutes an alternative to Newton's mechanical account in order to understand it as a "dynamic force."[92] Lemke represents it as shaping the individuals who inhabit it who in turn re-shape the milieu. In Foucault's hands, it provides non-mechanistic "algorithms of the living world"[93] which shift from a "metaphysics of life" to representing life in terms of 'information theory', that is, in terms of a 'program' or 'code' which breaks down and dispenses with traditional distinctions between the organic/inorganic, nature/nurture, discursive/material, and conventional/natural.[94] This analysis accurately portrays Foucault's complex materialism in relation to his use of a single concept. My point is that the

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[82] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (1977), 148.

[83] Foucualt, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 148.

[84] Ibid., 139. Here Foucault admonishes Paul Rée for representing the history of morality as characterized by Nietzsche in linear terms.

[85] Ibid, 148.

[86] Ibid, 149.

[87] Ibid, 151.

[88] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 130-131.

[89] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, (2007), 20-21; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 128.

[90] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 130-131.

[91] Ibid., 129.

[92] Ibid., 128.

[93] Ibid., 122.

[94] Ibid., 122-123.

concept of milieu is but one concept that maintains the orientating function of a complex logic, and that many others could contribute further to the laudable task of representing Foucault's form of new materialist thinking.

Lemke links these concepts to what he claims is Foucault's work from the mid-1970s by which he "provides the conceptual tools for a material-discursive understanding of government that goes beyond practices of guiding human subjects."[95] He links this to the notion of a 'government of things', which first emerged, says Lemke,[96] in Foucault's lectures at the Collêge de France of 1977-78. It is this conceptual proposal of a 'government of things' that can explain both the human and non-human worlds that make a relational account of agency and ontology possible, says Lemke.[97] Although Foucault "never actively pursued …a more-than-human analytics of government,"[98] the tools necessary are present within his work. This is especially so in that government concerns a relation between people and things. 'Things' cover both discursive and nondiscursive entities.[99] As Lemke points out, 'humans' and 'things' are not two separate spheres but are co-constituted in a context where everything – humans included – are governed as 'things.'[100] This notion of a 'government of things' links further to Foucault's discussion of 'economic government,'[101] and to the idea of the 'administration of things', which, says Lemke[102] is captured in the notion of *dispositif*.

In discussing the concept of *dispositif* [*dispositive*, for Lemke], Lemke seeks to differentiate it from the concepts of *archive, episteme, apparatus* and *assemblage*. *Dispositif* expresses the idea of a "relational and performative understanding of assembling and arranging complexes of humans and things", says Lemke.[103] Noting various definitions of the concept, such as: "'deployment', 'apparatus', 'device', 'system', 'organization', 'mechanism', and 'construct,'"[104] Lemke opts for referring to it in terms of the English word, 'dispositive' "as a better way of grasping the semantic richness and conceptual specificity of *dispositif*."[105] Noting that Foucault utilized the concept first in his lectures on *Psychiatric Power* in 1973-74, to describe disciplinary power, Lemke cites Foucault to outline its methodological functions as, firstly, pertaining to both discursive and extra-discursive objects; secondly, to the historical contingency and variability of its usages; and, thirdly, of its variable functions or purposes at different times and situations.[106] "*Ontologically*, the dispositive is a 'network' (*réseau*)", says Lemke.[107] "It is a composite of things that seems to

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[95] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 82.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid., 141.

[99] Ibid., 83.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 33-34.

[102] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 82.

[103] Ibid., 90.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 91. Here Lemke quotes Foucault from "The Confession of the Flesh," 194 -195.

[107] Ibid., 92, citing "The Confession of the Flesh," 196.

include virtually anything from discourses and institutions to bodies and buildings."[108] Citing Foucault, "the dispositive assembles the elements it consists of and is itself the result of this process of 'formation.'"[109] In this, says Lemke, "[t]he dispositive enacts a double movement,"[110] both mobilizing things and rendering them disposable.[111] Here it is *technological* in that it is characterized by its "onto-creative aspect."[112] Thus, dispositive expresses the idea of "a permanent recombination and rearticulation of heterogeneous elements within a relational network."[113] In differentiating the concept of 'dispositive' from that of 'apparatus', Lemke is also insightful, and such distinctions are important to keep in mind, especially when encountering Foucault's varied usages and descriptions in his different works. Despite the fact that Lemke himself notes how in his earlier texts Foucault's meanings of the term dispositive "is sometimes close to the technical meaning of mechanism or apparatus,"[114] we can also accept Lemke's argument that apparatus is a "more limited and circumscribed concept"[115] than dispositive, which refers more to "the static collection of instruments, machines, tools, parts, or other equipment of a given order of things."[116] Dispositive in this sense denotes more of an arrangement or network.[117]

Lemke also seeks to distinguish the concept of dispositive from that of *assemblage,* as used initially by Deleuze and Guattari. While Lemke accepts that the concept of assemblage places the accent on ontological composition and creativity and rejects anthropocentric accounts of agency, he also maintains that important dimensions of dispositive are not addressed by the concept of assemblage. The differences are difficult to discern, however. Assemblage, we are told, is concerned with 'ontological heterogeneity', whereby "a diversity of entities … [gives] rise to new collectives and unknown configurations of space and time."[118] He then concedes that there is 'a sense' in which "dispositives could be 'considered a type of assemblage, but one more prone to … re-territorialisation, striation, scaling and governing'."[119] I am not myself convinced that precise distinctions can be maintained here. While Lemke says that "[w]hile an assemblage indiscriminately includes non-humans as well as humans, the notion of the dispositive takes into account the differential boundaries between these heterogeneous elements."[120] He summarizes the point by citing Ben Anderson, who says that the dispositive, in contrast to the assemblage, "gives more

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[108] Ibid., 92.

[109] Foucault, *"The Confession of the Flesh,"* 195; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 92.

[110] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 92.

[111] Ibid., 92-93.

[112] The term belongs to Jeffrey Bussolini, "What is a Dispositive?" *Foucault Studies* 10 (2010), 100; cited Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 93.

[113] Ibid., 94.

[114] Ibid., 98-99.

[115] Ibid., 99.

[116] Ibid., 99-100.

[117] Ibid., 100.

[118] Ibid., 101.

[119] Ibid. Here Lemke cites Stephan Legg, "Assemblage/Apparatus: Using Deleuze and Foucault," *Area* 43:2 (2011), 131.

[120] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 101.

of a sense of the ongoing *integration* of a differential field of multiple elements."[121] This seems to me dubious considering that the nuances of meaning shifted for Foucault according to the specific topic of analysis. Foucault also showed disdain for being overly precise in analytic terms, rejecting the idea that words maintain fixed meanings in all contexts.[122] Lemke's attempt to set up a solid distinction here seems somewhat strained in this sense. A second difference is that assemblage "is mostly associated with emergence, innovation, and creation,"[123] whereas dispositive "places the emphasis on the movements of stabilization that tend to put heterogenous elements into order."[124] Accepting this distinction, it is not a big or major difference, and both concepts, depending on the context of writing, and the subject matter being discussed, are clearly useful.

Lemke's real interest in differentiating 'dispositive' from 'apparatus' and 'assemblage' is to articulate dispositive as having a 'strategic concern', thereby being able to address the problem of 'ontological politics' and paving the way for a more materialist approach to government.[125] To this end, Lemke characterizes 'dispositive' as having a "strategic objective"[126] in that "dispositives exist insofar as they address a specific demand or 'urgency'."[127] It is here, however, where I take issue with Lemke, for the purpose of associating dispositive with a strategic concern is, in turn, intricately linked to the conceptual proposal of a 'government of things' which Lemke contends can ground a Foucauldian materialist approach capable of explaining both human and nonhuman matter. One should note at the outset that no such analytics informed Foucault's writings on governmentality in the 1970s[128] or the secondary literature on governmentality published in the 1990s.[129] While I can accept the notion of 'strategies without strategists' in relation to the world of politics or society, I would rather speak of the 'dispositive' or 'assemblage' in less explicitly political terms and more in the sense of having 'productive' or 'positive' potentials; not just as concerns the human world but also in relation to the world of inert matter or 'things.' Matter on its own can be seen as forming specific configurations or entities through processes of emergence, the phenomenon of life itself being one of these. But to

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[121] Anderson, "Review of Vibrant Matter," 35.

[122] See for instance "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 139, where Foucault says that words do not have fixed meanings across time, and he attributes this observation to Paul Rée.

[123] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 101.

[124] Ibid., citing Laura Silva-Castañeda and Nathalie Trussart, 'Sustainability Standards and Certification: Looking through the Lens of Foucault's Dispositive,' *Global Networks* 16:4 (2016), 495.

[125] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 102.

[126] Ibid., 94.

[127] Ibid.

[128] This included Foucault's famous paper, "Governmentality," which was given initially as a lecture at the Collège de France in February 1978 and was published in September-December 1978 in the Italian journal, *Aut Aut,* 167-168, translated and edited by Pasquale Pasquino.

[129] See Graham Burchell, "Translator's Note," in *Michel Foucault, Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973 – 1974*, ed. Jacques Lagrange (2006) and Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government,* (1996). This point is noted by Lemke (*The Government of Things*, 141), which makes his interest, that of *creating* a materialist theory for Foucault, anchored by the conceptual proposal of a 'government of things'.

represent the nonhuman world in terms of a 'government of things' I find problematic in the sense that 'government' implies a form of agency that is not present in the nonhuman world of things or in evolutionary processes. This is to say, I fundamentally disagree that the concept of governmentality in Foucault can be used to conceptually anchor a new materialism which can explain both the human and nonhuman world of matter and its constitution. While in my own writings I have maintained that a Foucauldian approach that is materialistic is possible, it is best expressed and constructed as a form of complexity or dynamic materialism building on the quantum revolution from the start of the twentieth century and the later formulations and refinements of the post-quantum complexity scientists later in the century. Lemke is correct that to focus solely on Bohr is unjustified. By taking the whole range of quantum and post-quantum writing over the twentieth century, however, an approach which 'fits' Foucault can be 'assembled', and his own particular statements, concepts, and formulations can be used as 'tests' for its coherence. Consistent with the broad thrust of the quantum movement, Foucault articulates a relational ontoepistemology that focusses on open systems with novel unintended effects (*dispositifs*, *assemblages*). Once one accepts this, then all of Foucault's concepts and analyses can be seen to manifest complex, dynamic potentials. The insight can be applied to the world of physics and matter as well as government. I think it can be shown that Foucault's analyses from early works to his death in 1984 is compatible with a form of dynamic materialism of the sort that Lemke describes, utilizing insights from thinkers as diverse as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bohr, Poincarè, Prigogine, Deleuze, and others.

The difficulty with the concept of government, or of a 'government of things', manifests itself in the obvious sense that government for Foucault encapsulates an active, human-centred behaviour concerned to govern people's conduct through 'positive' means. For Foucault, in his famous article 'Governmentality,'[130] government refers to the activity meant to shape or guide or affect the conduct of people. As Foucault puts it, "[t]he art of government … is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce *economy* – that is to say the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth."[131] While he also saw it as pertaining to activity aimed by the self on oneself, it seems difficult to me to represent the entanglements of the nonhuman world (e.g., the development of crystals or plants) in terms of the conceptual proposal that Lemke tries to make. Although Foucault acknowledges that government concerns "a complex composed of men and things,"[132] it is first and foremost concerned with "how to be ruled, by whom, to what end, by what authority, etc."[133] By utilizing the concept of governmentality, Foucault is not being anthropocentric in this, for his interest here is to explain the actions and conduct of humans as concerns the issue of *rule* (of souls, of the self, of children, of populations, of the state) in the context of an uncertain and unpredictable environment. Government

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[130] Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller, 1991.

[131] Ibid., 92.

[132] Ibid., 93.

[133] Ibid., 88.

therefore cannot itself ground Foucault's materialistic approach, as Lemke tries to do, but can be explained in terms of it. What Lemke does, by seeing governmentality as accounting for both the human and the non-human, is inject an anthropocentrism into Foucault that Foucault himself managed to avoid. I find this move by Lemke puzzling indeed.

The seeds of a more all-encompassing ontoepistemological framework which can explain human and nonhuman, organic and non-organic processes, in their material development lies scattered but articulated in fragments within Foucault's oeuvre as a whole. By his social and historical constructivism, his rejection of essentialism, his genealogical conception of *descent* (*Herkunft*) and emergence (*Entstehung*) by which he postulates all phenomena as historical, as well as his writings on governmentality, and much else, the essential core of a 'new' post-quantum materialist approach can be elaborated in Foucault. Lemke has indeed detected it, and his interesting and insightful analyses of concepts such as 'dispositive', 'milieu', and 'technology', as well as his analyses in Foucault's writings of thinkers such as Canguilhem and Jacob, contribute to understanding Foucault as a complexity materialist who articulates a relational ontology. The problem for me, then, does not relate to the detailed analysis of concepts, where Lemke contributes, but rather one of neglecting other concepts which are possibly better contenders to explain Foucault's approach, such as *genealogy*, with its complex materialist approach to history. The problem of seeking to ground a conceptual proposal for a new materialist analysis in terms of the 'government of things' is that even for Foucault the nondiscursive world of matter does not possess 'purposes' and 'intentions' - not at least of the sort that the concept of 'government' suggests. Concepts such as 'emergence' or 'eventalization,' which although mentioned by Lemke, but not given serious consideration within his thesis, are to my mind more compatible with notions of 'dispositive' and 'assemblage' in that new configurations construct new realities. The concept of 'emergence' (*Entstehung*) is elaborated as part of Foucault's approach to history as genealogy in detail in his classic article, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'[134] and suggests a complex articulation consistent with Nietzsche's view of history. In that article, it is *history* that forms the 'outside' and 'inscribes' the body in a way parallel but different to the use of *milieu* in *Security, Territory, Population*. This would seem to suggest that Foucault changed his language and concepts depending on the time he was writing, as well as what he was writing about, a fact which suggests we remain nominalistic about his use of specific words, guard against reifying certain concepts, and seek to locate his complex ontology in the general approach he is taking. It is for these reasons that the concept of 'milieu' cannot really be differentiated from those of 'environment', 'context', 'surrounding' or others, for in Foucault's hands all concepts have a *dynamic* or *complex* potential. Using a range of concepts, Foucault's relational ontology suggests a materialism that can be used to account for both the human and nonhuman world, including the emergence of entities such as 'life' itself, as well as 'intelligence', 'cognition', 'the brain', 'societies', etc., which can be productively considered in relation to the concepts of 'dispositives' or 'assemlages', i.e., as historically constituted or evolved phenomena with historically (or cosmologically) positioned boundaries which give the

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[134] See Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," especially pages 139-144, 148-152, 159.

appearance of 'solidity,' 'fixity,' 'form,' and 'boundary'. All of this can be rendered quite compatible with Foucault as materialist.

Although 'government' cannot anchor or guide Foucault's materialist analysis, it can be accounted for in terms of it, and, indeed, governmentality conforms to and illuminates Foucault's distinctive materialist approach. In this sense, much of Lemke's summary and analysis of government policy and its take-up in scholarship is insightful. In Chapter 7, he turns his attention to Science and Technology Studies (STS), Actor Network Theory (ANT) as well as feminist and postcolonial technoscience as illustrating a relational materialism in the domain of governmental and policy studies. Here Lemke offers interesting insights concerning the possibility of extending a Foucauldian approach to the nonhuman world. He draws on the work of John Law and Annemarie Mol,[135] who discuss and resolve the 'chicken and egg' problem that many of the quantum theorists considered as to which came first: *material parts/elements* or their *relations*. Drawing on and summarising Law and Mol, Lemke argues that "'materials' … do not pre-exist their relations but are interactively (or intra-actively) constituted."[136] Lemke continues "that 'materials' acquire their properties and attributes by engaging with other materials."[137] He attributes the insights to Law,[138] Haraway,[139] and Latour[140] in terms of the concepts 'material semiotics' (Law) or 'a semiotics of things' (Latour). He then seeks to reconcile these views with his materialist Foucault comprising four dimensions: "the empirical investigation of ontologies, the analytic focus on practices, the normative proposition of a more-than-posthuman account, and the critical preference for an experimental approach to science and politics."[141] Instead of focussing upon "individual actors and their capacities," a Foucauldian materialism concerns itself with the "conditions of emergence and modes of doing."[142] At this level, while explaining how Foucault's ontology of becoming is homologous with a complexity materialism, Lemke is at his strongest. Foucault, he says, "proposes a distinctive 'choice of method' … to analytically grasp how dynamic ensembles of matter and meaning emerge" (p. 146). Of especial interest to me is the insight attributed to Mol (2013, p. 381) that practices embody norms internal to them.[143] In Chapter 8, Lemke shows how "the notion of environmentality captures a new dispositive of 'governing things'."[144] Lemke proceeds to demonstrate how the 'resilient biopolitics of neocybernetics,' as articulated

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[135] John Law, *Organizing Modernity*, (1994); John Law, "After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology," *The Sociological Review* 47:1, (1999); John Law and Annemarie Mol, "Notes on Materiality and Sociality," *The Sociological Review* 43 (1995); Annemarie Mol, "Mind Your Plate! The Ontonorms of Dutch Dieting," *Social Studies of Science* 43:3 (2013).

[136] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 141.

[137] Ibid., 142.

[138] John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (2004).

[139] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991).

[140] Latour, "On Actor Network Theory: A Few Clarifications".

[141] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 144.

[142] Ibid., 149.

[143] In Chapter 1 of my recent book, *Constructing Foucault's Ethics*, I maintain the same thesis using other sources.

[144] Lemke, *The Government of Things*, 169.

by Crawford Holling[145] and others, has come to dominate both scientific disciplines and policy arenas. To the extent that Lemke is arguing that a Foucauldian materialism *can explain* politics and policy, in addition to everything else, the final chapters reveal new and interesting analyses.

Finally, to recap, Lemke's study contributes to revealing Foucault as a materialist through the analysis of several important concepts in Foucault's lexicon. This he does with admirable skill despite the deficiencies noted above. That it is important not to *reify* certain concepts at the expense of others is important for it risks giving them a solidity within Foucault's oeuvre that they possibly do not deserve. As stated above, in my view Lemke 'over-eggs' the concept of 'milieu' and its importance in Foucault's oeuvre overall. But putting that aside, his analysis of the concepts *dispositive, technology* and *milieu* is insightful. My own view departs from Lemke in that I believe that understanding Foucault's approach as a form of complexity materialism, continuous in general terms with the quantum and post-quantum revolutions in complexity materialism, offers a more plausible approach to understanding how a Foucauldian approach can account for both the human and nonhuman worlds. It is with respect to the nonhuman and also inorganic worlds that worries me most in terms of a conceptual approach of a 'government of things.' Although Foucault's concern with government *can be explained* by his materialist approach, government *cannot easily constitute the axis or framework which itself orientates such an approach*, especially if such an approach is to be concerned with explaining both the human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic worlds.

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[145] See Crawford Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4:1, (1973).

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REVIEW

Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro (eds.), *The Late Foucault: Ethical and Political Questions.* **London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020. Pp. 304. ISBN: 978-1350134355 (hardback).**

This remarkable collection of essays, now available in paperback, brings together fifteen contributions by both well-established and also promising, early career scholars on the ethical and political questions at stake in Foucault's late works – a period of his *oeuvre* that keeps generating a rich commentary to this day.[1] Most of these contributions were originally presented on the occasion of the international conference 'Government of Self, Government of Others: Ethical and Political Questions in the Late Foucault' hosted by the Nova Institute of Philosophy (IFILNOVA) of Lisbon in 2017. By the titular *Late Foucault,* the editors of this volume intend to refer to that body of work that Foucault developed during his lecturing years at the Collège de France – from 1979 (*On the Government of the Living*) until 1984 (*The Courage of Truth*), the year of his premature passing –, with the notable (but certainly not reprehensible) exception of the *latest or last Foucault* of the posthumously and only recently translated fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality, Confessions of the Flesh* (2022), with which none of the contributors of this volume could significantly engage, given that the French edition by Gallimard appeared only in 2018. Even if that had not been the case, however, the lack of attention that this volume pays to this posthumous publication would certainly have squared well with its editors' approach to Foucault's exit lines, as it were. Far from being themselves 'in search of Foucault's final words' – like those scholars who "wanted Foucault's last word on Christian sexuality to solve a mystery," very much "like a retired detective finally revealing a notorious murderer's name"[2] –, Faustino and Ferraro would probably agree that there cannot be a *Final Foucault,*[3] nor should we evidently expect to find 'The Final "Final Foucault"'[4] in the *Confessions of the Flesh,* if by 'final' we understand anything like the 'definitive.' Their introduction to the collection ('Another Word on Foucault's Final Words'), which stands out

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[1] See, more recently, for instance, Paul Allen Miller, *Foucault's Seminars on Antiquity: Learning to Speak the Truth* (2022).

[2] Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Foucault's Last Words," *Boston Review,* 19 January, 2022.

[3] James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, *The Final Foucault* (1988).

[4] Joseph Tanke, "The Final 'Final Foucault'?," *Los Angeles Review of Books,* August 1, 2018.

as an important contribution in its own right, is explicative in this regard: "It is important to be aware that the only reasonable approach to Foucault's work is not to crystalize those last words," the two write, "but to let them remain infinitely *other* in the endless task of permeating and transforming present lives."[5] The declared aim of the volume becomes thus that of providing 'a cartography' of this last stage of Foucault's work and explore the contribution that its core concepts and ideas ('care of the self,' 'technologies of the self, 'truth-telling,' etc.) might provide either for a more coherent reconstruction of his intellectual trajectory or for approaching contemporarily significant ethical and political issues, which the several contributions of this collection taken together achieve brilliantly.

The overall architecture of the collection is solid, well-structured, and rigorously thought-through. The volume is organized into five thematic sections, each containing three contributions dedicated to either an ethical, a political, or an ethical-political question connected to Foucault's late works and lectures, thus implicitly calling into question that assumption of a purely 'ethical turn' in Foucault's late thought that has for so long baffled scholars trying to square his last works with the more clearly 'political' ones preceding them – this is arguably the most distinctive contribution of this collection as a whole to contemporary Foucault studies. The first section ('Philosophical Practices, Philosophy as Practice') is dedicated to exploring the influence that the writings of Pierre Hadot exercised on Foucault's late thought and re-evaluating their oftentimes divergent understandings of ancient spirituality. As flagged by the editors themselves, this section occupies a place of honor in the entire collection, given that the latter appeared as part of the series 'Re-inventing Philosophy as a Way of Life' edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson, Matthew Sharpe and Michael Ure for Bloomsbury. We shall thus pay special attention to it, starting from its second and third contributions in order of appearance. Differently from Ure's, both Sellars' and Testa's essays – 'Self or Cosmos: Foucault *versus* Hadot' and 'The Great Cycle of the World: Foucault and Hadot on the Cosmic Perspective and the Care of the Self' – advance important reserves with respect to Hadot's criticism of Foucault's interpretation of ancient philosophy. It is worth noting that both scholars do exactly so, at least in part, by relying on the recent (and rather contestable)[6] intervention in the Hadot-Foucault *querelle* by Giorgio Agamben in the conclusive volume of his *Homo Sacer* series, *The Use of Bodies* (2016). As Agamben himself puts it in an interview, summarizing his main line of argument:

> The idea that one should make his life a work of art is attributed mostly today to Foucault and to his idea of the care of the self. Pierre Hadot, the great historian of ancient philosophy, reproached Foucault that the care of the self of the ancient philosophers did not mean the construction of life as a work of art, but on the contrary a sort of dispossession of the self. What Hadot could not understand is that for Foucault, the two things coincide. You must remember Foucault's criticism of the

[5] Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro, 'Another Word on Foucault's Final Words,' in *The Late Foucault: Ethical and Political Questions,* ed. Marta Faustino and Gianfranco Ferraro (2020), 7.
[6] See on this Matthew J Sharpe and Matteo J Stettler, "Pushing against an Open Door: Agamben on Hadot and Foucault," *Classical Receptions Journal* 14:1 (2022).

notion of author, his radical dismissal of authorship. In this sense, a philosophical life, a good and beautiful life, is something else: when your life becomes a work of art, you are not the cause of it. I mean that at this point you feel your own life and yourself as something "thought," but the subject, the author, is no longer there. The construction of life coincides with what Foucault referred to as "*se déprendre de soi*." And this is also Nietzsche's idea of a work of art without the artist.[7]

It does not really take much to dismantle Agamben's take on this coincidence between the paradigm of an aesthetics of existence and a dynamic of self-dispossession that would putatively hold in the case of Foucault's reading of the ancients. Suffice it here to note the contrast that Foucault himself acknowledges between the two "models of the rapport subjectivation-writing" that are discernable, respectively, in his own philosophical practice and in the philosophical practices he himself studied in the ancient philosophers: that is, to use Lorenzini's terminology, the model of a "writing-experience" and that of a "writing-exercise," the former being essentially a practice of de-subjectivation, the latter one of subjectivation.[8] Importantly, the first model – the one that Foucault declaredly inherited from authors the likes of Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille – will find its first theoretical elaboration precisely in his 1969 essay 'What is an Author?,' to which Agamben appeals. According to this model, the activity of writing is a "limit experience [*experience limite*], which tears the subject away from itself" and ensures that the "[subject/writer] is no longer itself or that it is brought to his annihilation or dissolution."[9] Whence Foucault's later recurring motto, of which Agamben is fond: "to get free of oneself [*se dépendre de soi-même*]."[10] *A contrario*, the second model, as Foucault retraces it in the first two centuries A.D., conceives the writing of *hypomnémata*, for instance, as the "*long process which turns the taught, learned, repeated and assimilated logos into the spontaneous form of the* acting subject."[11] Significantly, in this 'writing-experience' whereby one "make[s] oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself," Foucault himself recognizes elsewhere "*the opposite of the attitude of conversion*"[12]: namely, that fundamental attitude the he found characteristic of the entire apparatus of the techniques of the self, including the art of self-writing (the 'writing-exercise' *par excellence*), in effect in the Imperial era and that had precisely in the constitution of the subject its overarching endgame.[13] To reduce the writing-subjectivation model that Foucault himself practiced ('writing-experience') to that which, according to Foucault, Hellenistic-Roman philosophers practiced almost two millennia

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[7] Ulrich Raulff, "An Interview with Giorgio Agamben," *German Law Journal* 5:5 (2004), 613.

[8] Daniele Lorenzini, "Michel Foucault: Scrittura Di Sé E Sperimentazione," *Le parole e le cose*, April 8 2016. Translation mine.

[9] Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, *Michel Foucault, Dits Et Écrits, 1954-1988*, vol. II (2017), 862. Translation mine.

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality* (1990), 8.

[11] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-82* (2005), 529. De-emphasis mine.

[12] Michel Foucault, "The Concern for Truth," in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interview and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (1990), 263. Emphasis mine.

[13] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality* (1990), 64.

earlier ('writing-exercise'), as Agamben does, helplessly trying to defend Foucault from Hadot's accusations, amounts to rendering either Foucault a Stoic (as far as Foucault's own understanding of Stoicism goes) – and he most surely was not one of those! – or (Foucault's) Seneca a Nietzsche, a Blanchot or a Bataille, which is possibly an even more absurd proposition. Importantly, for the purposes of the present review, the distinction between Foucault's own philosophical practice as a genealogist and the philosophical practices that he himself studied in the ancients is what stands out as the single most relevant contribution of the excellent opening essay of the collection by Michael Ure ('Foucault's Reinvention of Philosophy as a Way of Life: Genealogy as a Spiritual Exercise').

Strictly connected to those of the first section, the essays contained in the second ('Care of the Self, Care of Others') explore new interesting possibilities opened by Foucault's isolation of the Greek *epimeleia heautou* ('care of the self') as the cardinal principle of ancient spirituality, either by comparing it with the notion of 'technics' of Bernard Stiegler ('Foucault According to Stiegler: Technics of the Self' by Amélie Berger Soraruff) or by applying it to thematic domains that were undeservedly neglected or only superficially treated by Foucault himself, such as music ('Notes Towards a Critical History of "Musicalities": Philodemus on the Use of Musical Pleasures and the Care of the Self' by Élise Escalle) and time ('Foucault's Ultimate Technology' by Luca Lupo). The latter might well have deserved a more systematic engagement with Heidegger. After all, it is starting precisely from Heidegger that, by his own admission, Foucault set up the question of truth and its relationship with the subject in his late period, especially in the 1981-82 lecture course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject,*[14] with which all contributions of this section deal. The third section ('Ontology of the Present, Politics of Truth') attempts to reshape our understanding of Foucault's late trip to Greco-Roman antiquity in light of perhaps two of the most distinctive themes of his entire *oeuvre*: that of an 'ontology of the present' ('The Care of the Present: On Foucault's Ontological Machine' by Gianfranco Ferraro) and the triad truth-power-subject ('Agonistic Truth: The Issue of Power Between the Will to Knowledge and Government by Truth' by Antonio Moretti and 'From Jurisdiction to Veridiction: The Late Foucault's Shift to Subjectivity' by Laurence Barry'). The section titled 'Government of Self, Government of Others' moves to discussing the more properly political ramifications of Foucault's final thinking on the notions of power, government and governmentality ('Understanding Power Through Governmentality' by Karim Barakat), especially by bringing it in dialogue with other prominent, contemporary political theorists, such as Hannah Arendt ('On Authority: A Discussion Between Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt' by Edgar Straehle) and Ernesto Laclau ('Neoliberal Subjectivity at the Political Frontier' by Matko Krce-Ivančić). Following the trajectory of Foucault's thought in his lecture courses, the fifth and concluding section of the collection ('Truth-Telling, Truth-Living') deals with the Greek notion of *parrhesia* and the associated one of truthful living, as explored by Foucault in his last lecture course, *The Courage of Truth* (1983-84). In keeping with the general approach of the collection, the contributions of this sections either re-read these notions in perspective of other types of truth-telling unearthed by

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[14] *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-82*, 189.

Foucault in his earlier studies, such as the 'confession' or 'avowal' ('Rethinking Confession' by Andrea Teti), or evaluate their relevance for understanding and tackling contemporary ethical and political challenges, whether these be constituted by the recent developments of the psychotherapeutic sciences ('Truth-Telling as Therapeutic Practice: On the Tension Between Psychiatric Subjectivation and Parrhesiastic Self-Cultivation' by Marta Faustino) or the narratives of trauma survivors ('Foucault, the Politics of Ourselves, and the Subversive Truth-Telling of Trauma: Survivors as Parrhesiasts' by Kurt Borg). All in all, Faustino and Ferraro's attempt with this volume to present Foucault's last words not as *final* but as irreducibly *other* – words thus capable of penetrating into our present lives and the belief systems that sustain them to radically transform them both – proves a highly felicitous one. This is a welcome and important addition to the existing literature on the last season of Foucault's thought and a valuable point of reference for anyone interested either in building a coherent understanding of the arch of Foucault's long and productive intellectual career or in approaching the ethical and political challenges of our present.

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