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Introduction

In a sense, we have entered a new phase of Foucault's reception. His lectures at the *Collège de France* have been published in their entirety. These lectures were given as part of his duties as the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought, a position he held from 1970 until his death in 1974. Intended to be public presentations of his work in progress, and so they give us some idea of the concerns that animated Foucault's thought throughout this period. In places, they seem to fill in various caesurae left in the books. What more does Foucault have to say about the concept of "bio-power," presented in frighteningly apocalyptic terms in *The History of Sexuality* and then dropped? How can the idea of "truth-telling," of *parrhesia*, illuminate our conceptions of Foucault's ethics? Did Foucault – the theorist of power – really *do* ethics?

Before the publication of the lectures, it had become something of a commonplace, if not outright orthodoxy, in Foucault scholarship to divide his work into three periods. First, there is the "archaeological phase," exemplified in *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. This "first" phase is set off from the second phase by an extended silence in publishing by Foucault, which is explained with reference to Foucault's realization of the "methodological failure" of archaeology.[1] This is followed by a second, "genealogical" phase, in which Foucault's concerns are taken to shift from the autonomy of discourse and the production of knowledge to the effects and mechanisms of power. The monographs comprising this genealogical period are *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. This genealogical period, similarly, is followed by a relative silence; Foucault publishes no major monographs between 1976 and 1984. Then Foucault is taken to have had a "final" period, generally taken to

begin in the early 1980s and last until his death in 1984, during which he publishes the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*: *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. This final period is usually taken to signal an "ethical turn" in Foucault's thought, though I will be concerned in this essay with challenging that characterization.

This periodization has been quite important. A good many interpretations of Foucault hinge on it. For one fascinating and fruitful example, in Timothy Rayner's *Foucault's Heidegger*, the "turn" or break between the genealogical and "ethical" works is simply taken as a datum to be explained (in this case, by appealing to Foucault's latent Heideggereanism).[2] Beyond the explosion of discussions of "Foucault's ethics," even some who explicitly distance themselves from it still make use of it. Jeffrey Nealon, despite the "caveat that 'this periodization is only indicative and is discussed and criticized'" in his text, adopts it from Beatrice Han wholesale.[3] Nealon's ultimate claim, in fact, is that if Foucault eventually turned to ethics, so much the worse for Foucault.

Indeed, perhaps even because of its generally unquestioned acceptance, explaining the apparent "rupture" between his "middle" and "late" period seems to be an urgent task in Foucault studies. Whereas there seems to be a more or less accepted explanation of the shift from archaeology to genealogy – the "methodological failure" of the former – there does not seem to be any established account of just what "moved" Foucault from his middle to late period.[4] And the stakes, it appears, are high. Not only Foucault's "archaeological" work, such as *The Order of Things* with its manifest hope that "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea,"[5] but his work of the mid-1970s on power, seem to construe the human subject as nothing more than a precipitate of strategies and mechanisms of power. Hence we subjects don't seem to be capable of the sort of autonomy we normally desire in our practical and political lives. In particular, both Foucault's followers and his critics often seem to worry that any subject produced by power in this way would be incapable of formulating - let alone practicing - an ethics that would allow for the substantive critique of, and practical resistance to, the objectionable forms and exercises of power in which we find ourselves trapped. Wouldn't a turn to ethics, requiring - or so it is often alleged - an at least partially autonomous subject, fly in the face of all his previous work?

Most critically, the tacit acceptance of the thesis of an "ethical turn" in Foucault's work has been put to use by many of his readers to suggest that not only is there a turn to ethics but a turn to a *liberal* or even *neoliberal* ethos on Foucault's part.[6] The basic idea behind this interpretation seems to be as follows. Foucault's last lectures at the *Collège de France*, before he turned to Antiquity were primarily concerned with the development of various forms of neoliberalism (primarily German ordo-liberalism and American Chicago-style economics).[7] These lectures are not immediately or obviously critical, in

the way his earlier work on psychiatry or prisons were. In fact, the importance given to individual liberty in neoliberal schemas of government seemed to mirror the renewed importance of the individual some readers have found in Foucault's late work. After all, neoliberalism aimed at combating the excesses of the welfare state, and the postwar social contract more generally, that Foucault's genealogies of power in modern society had so forcefully undermined.[8] So, the reasoning went, perhaps Foucault was in fact *endorsing* neoliberalism, or at the very least *exploring* its emancipatory potential, before finding a more satisfactory model in the Greek "aesthetics of the self."[9] This reading found some support when Gary Becker, one of the economists Foucault discusses at some length in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, was unable to find anything but faithful description of his work in that text.[10] The idea of a liberal turn in Foucault's thought has even been used to explain other controversial aspects of his intellectual itinerary, such as his support for the Iranian Revolution.[11] This has, in turn, led some of Foucault's readers on the Left to question the importance or relevance of Foucault's thought for contemporary problems.[12] So, we see, however far we think we have moved beyond the orthodox view of Foucault's positions, it is still powerfully shapes even the reception of the lectures that, *prima facie*, present a more continuous body of work.

What I hope to do, however, is to undermine the periodiziation that makes the "liberal" or "neoliberal Foucault" possible: in particular, the positing of a "turn" in Foucault's thought from genealogy to ethics. In the first part of this essay, I explain how this periodization has emerged out of Foucault's own reflections on his work, which have subsequently been interpreted as responses to his earlier critics. I then show that characterizing Foucault's late works as a "turn to ethics" is premature and unwarranted in light of the vast array of textual evidence to the contrary. Rather, we shall see that there is a constant concern with how truth-telling and its norms shape us as subjects, for better or worse. Foucault's discussions of neoliberalism fit into this pattern as well. The upshot is this: if there is no "ethical turn," then there is likely no liberal or neoliberal turn, either. Instead of either worrying about the positions to which some sort of Foucauldian ethics might commit us or praising them for overcoming the constraints of conventional morality, we might do better to try to understand how Foucault thought – as he clearly did – that our commitment to truth-telling, or "veridiction," impacts our comportment more broadly.

The Three Axes of Historical Ontology and Foucault's "Ethics"

In 1984, at the very end of his life, Foucault in several venues gives us a brief overview of his work as comprising a singular project. In "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault poses the questions – in their most general forms – that have guided him through his career: "How are we constituted as subjects

of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions?"[13] So, we have an account from Foucault in which he explains his project as, all along, a unified one taking place along thre "axes" of investigation, axes that clearly seem to respectively correspond to Foucault's archaeologies of the 1960s, his genealogical works of the early and mid-70s, and whatever it is that he's doing from roughly 1979 onward.

Famously, one of the names given to this project is "historical ontology," or the "historical ontology of ourselves." As the name suggests, the historical ontology of ourselves is, ultimately, about figuring out who we are now. This is ontological, insofar as Foucault thinks that we are constituted in our very being as subjects, of knowledge, power, and our own action. Characterized thusly, and without a detailed exegesis of how such "constitution" actually occurs, Foucault's project seems anodyne, and even traditional. It echoes the Delphic imperative to know oneself, only with the proviso that to know oneself requires us to know who we have become, and how. While Foucault might share this aim with Socrates, he also more explicitly links his works to some of Kant's "occasional" writings. According to Foucault, the new line of inquiry Kant opens up in his answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" is, in essence, "What just happened?"

For Foucault, when Kant asks "What is Enlightenment?" he is asking "What is this thing that has just happened to us?" But in asking this, Kant is not merely reporting on current events, not narrating a story in which we simply happen to be embroiled as characters. The (allegedly) Kantian innovation, which explicitly orients Foucault's work, is in taking some historical event to be of ontological import; as new ways of subjecting ourselves to knowledge, power, and action become available to and - sometimes - obligatory for us, we are altered as subjects. It is in making the question of what has just happened to us an essential dimension of the question of who one is that Foucault historicizes his ontology, or, for that matter, ontologizes his history.

If "historical ontology" is the guiding thread in Foucault's inquiries, it involves, in general, figuring out who we are by investigating how we have become – that is, been constituted as – the subjects we are. And we are constituted thus in three ways: namely, as subjects (and objects) of our own knowledge, as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations, and as (moral or ethical) subjects of our own action. This is the picture that Foucault gives us in "What is Enlightenment?" And many of Foucault's commentators have taken Foucault's investigation of the first axis to comprise his "archaeological" work, or perhaps even an "archaeological method." Similarly, the second axis is supposed to be somehow related to "genealogy," to *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Conveniently, these distinctions seem to correspond fairly neatly to a chronological periodization of Foucault's work; an "archaeological phase" in

the 1960s, a "genealogical" phase in the 1970s, which then might be followed by some third phase in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, these periods being identifiable by gaps between major monographs. But it's not exactly clear how these different characterizations fit together, or what the objects of Foucault's descriptions are. One might be tempted to ask, if there are these three distinctions to be made in Foucault's work, and the first two might be subsumed under the terms "archaeology" and "genealogy," respectively, then how would we characterize the third axis?

The most prominent way of doing so has been as a "turn" to "ethics." In other words, Foucault's analytic distinction between the three axes of investigation is superimposed on a developmental reading of his work, such that the shift in apparent subject-matter from investigating technologies of power to those of subject formation is also read as a chronological division. This is already a loaded interpretive choice, and it has had nontrivial consequences. While the unity of "historical ontology" has often been overlooked, the division of Foucault's work along the three axes of archaeology, genealogy, and ethics has been a very influential way of describing his project, tacitly shaping his reception. Paul Rabinow has used it to organize the three volumes of Foucault's "essential works" in English. It has been adopted by Arnold Davidson, the general editor of the English translations of Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France*, for example, in "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics."[14]

As stated, the primary evidence for this alleged turn is generally taken to be the *prima facie* dramatic shift in historical focus; instead of focusing on the period between the renaissance and the twentieth century – the whole period of which was the focus of *The Order of Things*, the main data for both *The History of Madness* and *Discipline and Punish* being taken from this period, and the 19ᵗʰ century being the historical focus of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* – Foucault looks back to Antiquity and, strikingly, to the more or less explicitly "ethical" dimensions of subject-formation expressed in prominent Greek and Latin philosophy. Thus many have arrived at archaeology, genealogy, and ethics as Foucault's three "methods" or "projects," while, in general, ignoring the unity of historical ontology. Consequently, a good number of Foucault's commentators think that, in his final years, Foucault was "giving us" an ethics, namely, an "aesthetics of existence" or "ethics of the care of the self," that either takes as imperative that subjects "work on themselves," transforming themselves into "beautiful" human beings, or at least emphasizes our capacity to do so.

Some of Foucault's followers are fully on board with this purported ethical project.[15] But others are less satisfied with the ethics of the care of the self. Arnold Davidson, for example, thinks that Foucault is not merely doing ethics, but radically transforming how we ought to do ethics; he thinks this transformation a salutary one. Davidson thinks that Foucault shows us that we should think about the history of (philosophical) ethics as a type of

asceticism, that is, as a matter of techniques of the self aimed at transforming us into different sorts of ethical subjects. He calls this Foucault's "conceptualization" of ancient ethics, one that also makes possible a contemporary form "ethics as ascetics," to which he gives his qualified endorsement.[16] Nevertheless, Davidson admits that Foucault's investigations of modes and practices of ethical self-formation in Antiquity are perhaps too "aestheticized," too akin to a Baudelairean dandysme. In raising this concern, Davidson is being sensitive to Pierre Hadot's criticism of Foucault, namely, the charge that Foucault ignores the ways in which ancient schools of philosophy thought of ethical self-formation as a way of making oneself answerable to the structure of the world, its rational structure, and not as a freewheeling process of self-creation guided by amoral and individualistic aesthetic criteria like "beauty." The world has a rational moral structure, for the ancients, that makes a claim on all rational agents, so that, for example, Stoic asceticism is a matter of bringing oneself into a truly universal community, with objective or at least intersubjectively valid criteria for (moral) action. Davidson's response is to concede that Foucault's "interpretation" of the Greeks is untoward, but that conceptualizing ethics as, primarily or perhaps even exclusively, a matter of ascetics or self-fashioning is the correct way to proceed.

Let us consider Hadot's objection in more detail. It is, on the one hand, an historiographical complaint; Foucault is not getting the ancients right. In presenting a picture of Stoic "technologies of the self," for example, as focused on attaining pleasure or joy in oneself through various ascetic disciplines without an acknowledgement of the dimension of the universality of the Reason to which the Stoics aspire, Foucault does them a disservice. On the other hand, Hadot acknowledges that his historiographical complaint is in the service of an ethical complaint. That is to say, he is expressing a worry about the moral consequences of an excessive attention to the "aesthetic" dimension of ancient practices of ethical self-formation. Hadot claims that he is himself looking to the ancients for "alternatives" to our contemporary way of being in the world. As he puts it:

> All these observations which I have just made are not to be situated only in the framework of an historical analysis of ancient philosophy; they are aimed also at the definition of the ethical model which modern man might discover in Antiquity.[17]

And, he thinks, Foucault is doing the same thing. The trouble for Hadot and Davidson is that Foucault's turn to the Greeks for a model of ethical subjectivity that might be relevant today doesn't end up being ethical enough. The project is too self-involved, too self-interested; the "care of the self" that rejects the Whole of which that Self is but a part can only be an egoism.

Though I focus on a relatively minor quibble between Davidson and Hadot, the basic positions here are representative. There are many who think that Foucault's turn to an "aesthetics of existence" is deeply unsatisfactory as an ethics, who nevertheless are by and large sympathetic to the conceptualization of an "art of living" or technologies of self-formation as the primary matter of a philosophical ethics. If not egoism, the emphasis on Greek "aesthetic" self-fashioning may seem off-putting to many for other reasons: it is the privileged mode of existence of (a) slave-owning (b) white European males, focused on (c) male pleasure at the expense of female agency; or, perhaps, it is simply off-topic, as the 18ᵗʰ century concept of "aesthetics" that we have inherited has its own sort of autonomy from ethics or morality, and hence an "aesthetics of existence" could only be amoral; or, as some have noted, and especially in light of Foucault's 1979 lectures on neoliberalism, it seems that the mode of individualistic self-formation Foucault appears to endorse in the Greeks is too close to the sort of libertarian individualism demanded and produced by our (neo-)liberal present, and inimical to the sorts of moral solidarity required for concerted collective/social action. What's lacking, for these commentators, is a satisfactory set of principles or rules or virtues by which our "art of living" - for thematizing which Foucault rightly deserves credit - might be adequate to the contemporary moral landscape; one's life ought to be thought of as a work of art, but not one that only seeks to embody aesthetic values. One's life ought to be a work of moral art.

A similar worry arises for those for whom the very conceptualization of ethics as ascetics is problematic, who think that any turn to "ascetics" or "self-fashioning" will inevitably fail to be properly moral or ethical. Perhaps most hysterically in this vein is Richard Wolin, but even sympathetic critics might think that Foucault proffers only an anemic, inadequate ethics.[18] The worry, I take it, is that if Foucault is putting forward an ethics of the "care of the self," or "aesthetics of existence," it will inevitably be inadequate because recommending such an ethos, such a self-directed project, is just orthogonal to what first-order ethics normative ethics is. What ethics, in this sense, is supposed to do is to help us figure out what's right and what's wrong, which in turn enables us to figure out what to do. Foucault's ethics doesn't suffice for providing this sort of normative guidance when confronted with pressing contemporary problems. For example, Dianna Taylor has recently discussed her experiences of being confronted by many among the community of feminist scholars for whom Foucault is a disappointment because in some sense his work "is not normative" in this respect.[19] It doesn't help us see what we ought to do when, for example, we confront pressing issues of social justice, to be told that we ought to live our lives as works of art. If Foucault is giving us an ethics, one of the most important means of evaluating it would be to see what guidance would be offered to us in salient, morally-charged situations, and it's not clear that they would fare well.

A similar, but distinct, problem troubles those critics and commentators who think that Foucault's ethics are somehow inadequate or problematic for his own project. The idea is that Foucault's ethics just does not answer to the problems that Dreyfus and Rabinow, for example, gently point out, such that, after pointing out to us the possibility that we are living in a "carceral" society, and one in which we subject to something called "bio-politics" (this being linked to both the Nazi camps and the Soviet purges), Foucault calling us to "live our lives as works of art" is at best not really a solution to those problems but just the exchange of one "dangerous" way of living for another. Rainer Rochlitz is less reserved when he states, not without some justification, that "[t]here is something laughable about Foucault's proposing a new way of living if we continue to bear in mind the threats of genocide he had brandished some years earlier. If some social minority decided to set about making its life a work of art, this would hardly be a matter of concern for a power apparatus of this nature."[20] In short, Foucault's "ethics" is simply not up to the task of freeing us from the snares of power within which he himself had so effectively convinced us that we are trapped. At best, he simply changes the subject.

Finally, there are those who simply think that Foucault contradicts himself. The exact nature of the contradiction varies from critic to critic. As an example, James Porter might fall in this category. Like Hadot, he is a classicist and aims to raise a historiographical complaint. Again like Hadot, however, the historical criticism is motivated by moral concerns, claiming that "Foucault's genealogy of the modern self has more than a historical dimension: it also has a moral dimension."[21] The problem, as Porter sees it, is that Foucault tries to do too much with the concept of asceticism, or self-formation, simultaneously wanting to explain contemporary political dilemmas and deadlocks as arising out of attitudes, stances, and rationalities that emerge from Christian asceticism (perhaps in the same spirit as Weber), while at the same time tracing these forms of asceticism to laudable pre-Christian and Greek and Roman practices of "self-fashioning." Porter worries that there might be some sort of inconsistency or incoherence here, in that ancient practices of asceticism are supposed to lie both at the root of our contemporary, oppressive social situation and to bespeak the possibility of greater freedom than we currently enjoy.

Porter's complaint mirrors those by Critical Theorists regarding Foucault's genealogical works.[22] In broad terms, the complaint is that the targets of Foucault's critiques are precisely the sorts of things - norms, practices, and institutions - in which one would hope to find resources for resisting the indignities and injustices of contemporary society, somehow implicating them in our own oppression, such that appeal to them could only be self-defeating. The Critical Theorists here are particularly concerned that among Foucault's targets are rationality itself, or humanism, or the most valuable elements of the liberal tradition. Nancy Fraser puts it most forcefully:

[Consider] the disciplinary or carceral society described in *Discipline and Punish*. If one asks what exactly is wrong with that society, Kantian notions leap immediately to mind. One cannot help but appeal to such concepts as the violation of dignity and autonomy involved in the treating of persons solely as means to be causally manipulated. But again, these Kantian notions are clearly related to the liberal norms of legitimacy and illegitimacy defined in terms of limits and rights…Given that there is no other normative framework apparent in Foucault's writings, it is not unreasonable to assume that the liberal framework has not been fully suspended. But if this is so, Foucault is caught in an outright contradiction, for he, even more than Marx, tends to treat that framework as simply an instrument of domination.[23]

Porter and Fraser both draw out attention to the fact that the very things at which Foucault seems to gesture as possible sources of normative guidance - ancient asceticism or liberal frameworks - are swallowed up as part of the problem with respect we need to be guided.

Whether or not they think that Foucault's "turn" to ethics are insufficient in general, or for his own project, or just inconsistent with his prior work, almost all of these commentators agree that there is a shift of some sort, not just between the periods on which Foucault focused his investigations, but also in the object and aim of his investigations. Not only do they agree that the aims and objects of Foucault's investigations change radically sometime between 1977 and 1982 but, further, that he moves from a clinical, genealogical investigation of insidious "power-relations" permeating society to providing for us at least the rudimentary outlines of an ethics inspired by Greek and Roman practices of self-mastery. This outline has been embraced (e.g. O'Leary), subjected to sympathetic revision (Hadot, Davidson), denounced (Wolin, Rochlitz and others), and accused of some sort of incoherence (Porter, Fraser). This might seem a trivial point; obviously, everyone who has a stance on Foucault's ethics thinks that Foucault is providing an ethics. But it does not follow from the fact that there is a change in emphasis in Foucault's writing that he has simply started to do "ethics." As I shall now try to show, there is plenty of evidence suggesting that whatever Foucault was doing from the late 1970s onward, he was not doing ethics.

Against the Illusion of an Ethical Turn

As mentioned, Foucault's characterization of his project as an "historical ontology," with three different "axes," suggests a more-or-less chronological division between Foucault's explicit projects of "archaeology"

and "genealogy" and a third axis.[24] He was, in the 1960s, by his own admission doing something called "archaeology," which seemed to be followed, in the 1970s, by something called "genealogy." Between these two there is a lengthy gap between books, and an apparent change in focus from the structures of discourse to concrete practices of domination, to "power/knowledge." And his late work in the 1980s is both fairly forthrightly concerned with ethics, even if ancient ethics, and separated from his explicit work on power/knowledge by a break between monographs very similar to that between his "archaeological" and "genealogical" periods. So, the line of reasoning might go, he must be doing ethics, as it follows after genealogy just as genealogy followed after archaeology.

Unfortunately, this is unsatisfactory for a panoply of reasons, and I apologize for what will no doubt seem like an avalanche of textual evidence against the alleged "ethical turn." Granted, not all of these writings would have been available to Foucault's critics in the 1970s and 1980s. But the theme of Foucault's ethics has persisted long since then and seems so sturdily constructed as to require making this point with a hammer.

First of all, if the reasoning above is in fact that of his commentators, it suffers from some formal deficiencies. It would be inappropriate, on this view, to label his late work an "ethics," for the same reason we do not take his early work to be offering a "knowledge" or his middle work to be a "power." It is not even obvious, for that matter, that Foucault is giving a theory of knowledge or a theory of power. Though Foucault in some sense takes knowledge and power as the objects of his investigations, he is certainly not putting forward theories of what knowledge and power should be. Similarly, we might want to say that Foucault is putting forward a meta-ethics, that is, he is talking about ethics, and telling us something significant about what it is to be an ethical agent, and indeed he is, but that is different from putting forward a first-order, normative ethics proper. There is no *a priori* requirement of meta-ethical philosophy that first-order normative principles follow from its analyses, whether of the content of moral utterances or the source of normativity or the nature of moral agency or whatever.

Beyond this perhaps niggling objection, we might object further that, indeed, Foucault never characterizes his work as comprising the axes of archaeology, genealogy, and ethics. And, in fact, in one of the earliest versions of what would eventually become the essay "What is Enlightenment?" – from which the three-axis characterization of his work is often drawn – Foucault explicitly does otherwise. In the interview that has been published as "What is Critique?" given in 1978, Foucault gives us one of his first attempts at linking his thought to the sorts of historical and philosophical concerns that Kant raises in his famous essay. And, in this text, he also discusses the three axes of his investigations: these comprise archaeology, genealogy, and something called "strategics," which involve – precisely – the manners in

which relations of power can be intensified, solidified or reversed and transformed.[25]

Of course, one might respond as follows. "It's all well and good that Foucault prospectively – in 1978 – takes the emerging third axis of his investigation to be focused on strategies and tactics, deployments and reversals of power-relations; it nevertheless turned out that what he was interested in, that what came to be the third axis of his investigations, was precisely an ethics, that is, a new way of answering the question "How ought one (or I) live?" And he came to this by returning to the Greeks, who at least give us some way of understanding how to live that contrasts with the clearly insufficient ways that now command currency. How else are we to explain his focus precisely on Greek and Roman ethics, and precisely on the priority of (aesthetic) dimension of self-shaping in them?"[26]

There are two things to be said here. First, it's not at all clear that Foucault's attitude changed. In "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault's final word on Kant, much of the material from "What is Critique?" remains. But even more strikingly it reproduces exactly much of the material comprising the first two lectures of the series at the *Collège de France* under the title "The Government of Self and Others", delivered in 1983. What we find there is yet another description of his work along three axes. Predictably, the first two axes deal with knowledge and power. And, it is true, we do not find Foucault claiming that "strategics" constitutes the third axis of his investigations. But it is also true that we do not find Foucault claiming anything about ethics; rather, his stated "third axis" is concerned with "pragmatics," the "pragmatics of self." Foucault is interested in "the different forms by which the individual is led to constitute him or herself as subject."[27] Now, even if our ethical practices - or those of the Greeks and Romans - are one set of those practices, of which one can study the pragmatics, nothing about the "pragmatics of the subject" immediately implies that Foucault is doing ethics. It seems that if there were ever a time for Foucault to own up to doing ethics, or even to suggest obliquely that he was doing so, it was this. And yet he demurred.

This is perhaps because it is not even clear that Foucault's turn to the ancients is primarily focused around "ethics" or an aesthetic mode of self-cultivation, fashioning or formation. Foucault certainly did have positive things to say about fashioning one's life as a work of art, but – at least with respect to his published writings – they are usually in the form of occasional remarks, sometimes linked to a Kantian philosophical ethos that he had been exploring on and off for over half a decade, or linked to the more concrete and pressing issues of gay liberation, or simply as a theoretical response to the "fact that the self is not given."[28] But this hardly amounts to anything like a focus on such issues, let alone an ethics built on them. After all, it is hardly the case that the aesthetics of the self were the only things to which Foucault gave a positive assessment, even qua practices or discourses of resistance against power. He was not averse to providing, at any given juncture in his career,

elliptical remarks concerning "overcoming" or "resistance." As early as *The History of Madness*, Foucault seemed to think that there was something positive and meaningful in, for example, the Renaissance experience of madness, even if many therefore took him to task for appearing to attempt to liberate an "essence" of madness that would exist beneath any oppressive discursive formation. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault makes positive remarks about the powers of a modern "literature" that was gathering strength in the twilight of the modern episteme, and would sweep the figure of "Man" from the center of discourse. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault puts a positive spin on prison revolts and 19th century anarcho-socialist rejections of the prison system. In "Society Must Be Defended" Foucault explicitly praises the discourse of race war, of all things, for its critical, resistive potential, its function as a "counter-history" and – perhaps most striking – its evocation of a Biblical, prophetic voice and style of enunciation in contrast to the juridical or "politico-legendary" style of history linked to the Roman Empire. There is the notorious suggestion, in *La Volonté de Savoir*, that we elaborate a new economy of "bodies and pleasures" in opposition to the apparatus of sexuality and its "logic of desire." In the later 1970s, Foucault's apparent commendations multiplied and diversified: for example, his consistent appeal to human rights (on behalf of Vietnamese asylum-seekers, Polish Solidarnosc, and even a lawyer for the Baader-Meinhof Gang seeking asylum in France), and his enthusiastic support of radical Islamic self-government during the Iranian revolution. All of this before ancient practices of self-shaping had even made an appearance in his work.

Taking Foucault at his word, then, would mean actually taking him seriously when he says of Greek sexual ethics that they were "disgusting," and that "All of antiquity seems to [him] to have been a 'profound error.'"[29] It would mean taking seriously the claim that the interrogation of the ethical practices of antiquity is not a matter of doing ethics but of writing a "history of desiring man... situated at the point where an archaeology of problematizations and a genealogy of practices of the self intersect."[30] It would mean recognizing that when Foucault says that he is giving, in fact, a genealogy of ethics, he is no more giving us an ethics than Nietzsche is giving us a morality with his genealogy of morality.[31]

Nor should we be surprised, then, to find that a "Foucauldian" ethics has been subject to a battery of objections. It would be surprising, rather, if Foucault - despite his serious misgivings regarding Greek ethics, his professed lack of attention to any connection between ancient practices and contemporary problems, and his decided interest in investigating different historical modes of governmentality (of both self and others) - had somehow managed, as if by miraculous accident, to produce a compelling normative ethical theory. I hope that the evidence presented has been sufficient to convince one that, rather than thinking that Foucault is giving us an ethics and therefore leaving us with a host of problems, inconsistency or sympathy

for neoliberalism not least among them, we ought to employ *modus tollens* rather than *modus ponens*. The real question is why the latter seemed a compelling move in the first place.

On the Government of Truth

If one were still committed to excavating something like a Foucauldian ethics, it strikes me that one could not very well posit an ethical "turn" in Foucault's thinking, at least not simply on the basis of Foucault's scattered affirmations of the importance or desirability of developing one's life "as a work of art." If one were still so inclined, it seems that the task of the (radical) reconstruction of a Foucauldian ethics would involve assessing the consistency and coherence of all these affirmations, developing their thematic unity, and extracting some sort of guidance from them. Or, if that task appears too daunting, at the very least one would have to find some way of separating the "genuine" or perhaps "mature" affirmations, those which actually represent a "coherent first-order normative outlook," to use Nancy Fraser's locution, from his "immature" ones.[32]

But we can already hear – from both Foucault's critics and some of his partisans – the reply: "Precisely! The mature Foucault is the one who spent his last years discussing antiquity and endorsing the notion of giving a style to one's life as an ethical ideal. This is simply the last word, and so we who would assess this ideal are obligated to flesh out what such an ethics, with all its potential and deficiencies, would really amount to."

The problem with this response is that it raises a historical accident to the level of Foucauldian dogma. It is certainly true that in his final years Foucault was working on late antiquity, and it is also true that during this period Foucault was explicitly fascinated by the idea of extending the realm of the "aesthetic" into the very stuff of one's life or existence. He even linked this idea explicitly to the sort of ethos that he found in Kant, and with which he identified. And for a long time after his death, the extant writings gave the impression that these remarks were indeed Foucault's "last word," the mature hints of the ethics that had been lurking in his thought, perhaps only recently or perhaps all along.

But this impression ought no longer impress us. The fact of the matter is that we now have at our disposal the series of lecture courses that Foucault gave at the *Collège de France*, and in particular those from the late 1970s through to his death, which paint a very different picture of the trajectory of his thought over those years. We see that Foucault's explicit and continued inquiries into "biopower," beginning with his lectures "Society Must Be Defended" in 1975 and in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, and continuing in his lectures "Security, Territory, Population" and "The Birth of Biopolitics," of 1978 and 1979, respectively, led him to reformulate the object of his genealogies as "governmentality." Government, and in particular our

government by the truth, forms his constant concern. Indeed, we see from 1978 onward a concern with the development of a pastoral form of political power, incorporating religious modes of governance developed in the middle ages. We know that his first steps toward looking at the conditions of the possibility of this form of religious governance in Late Antiquity are taken in the 1979/1980 lecture courses "The Government of the Living." As he puts it:

> This year's course drew support from the analyses done the preceding years [i.e. precisely in *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*] on the subject of "government," this notion being understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior... Inside this very general framework, we studied the problem of self-examination and confession... The question raised is this one, then: How is it that in Western Christian culture the government of men demands, on the part of those who are led, not only acts of obedience and submission but also "acts of truth," which have the peculiar requirement not just that the subject tell the truth but that he tell the truth about himself, his faults, his desires, the state of his soul, and so on? How was a type of government of men formed in which one is required not simply to obey but to reveal what one is by stating it?[33]

No mention of ethics, but rather an explicit continuation of Foucault's genealogy of governmentality. As his investigations reach further into the ancient Greek world, he explains further:

> [It was] a question of beginning an inquiry concerning the instituted models of self-knowledge and their history: How was the subject established, at different moments and in different institutional contexts, as a possible, desirable, or even indispensable object of knowledge? How were the experience that one may have of oneself and the knowledge that one forms of oneself organized according to certain schemes? How were these schemes defined, valorized, recommended, imposed? It is clear that neither the recourse to an original experience nor the study of the philosophical theories of the soul, the passions, or the body can serve as the main axis in such an investigation.

One could be forgiven for thinking that one was reading a preface to *Discipline and Punish*. But this is Foucault's reflection on the course immediately following *The Government of the Living*, entitled "Subjectivity and Truth." He continues:

> The guiding thread that seems the most useful for this inquiry is constituted by what one might call the

"techniques of the self," which is to say, the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge. In short, it is a matter of placing the imperative to "know oneself" - which to us appears so characteristic of our civilization - back in the much broader interrogation that serves as its explicit or implicit context: What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one "govern oneself" by performing actions in which one is oneself the objective of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts?[34]

The point here is that the "techniques of the self" are not some sort of ethical response to the problems of contemporary society, but a domain to be investigated precisely in order to determine how people were led to or prescribed certain ways of relating to themselves that made them objects of knowledge. Foucault repeats himself at Dartmouth College:

I conceived of a rather odd project: not the study of the evolution of sexual behavior but of the historical study of the link between the obligation to tell the truth and the prohibitions weighing on sexuality. I asked: How had the subject been compelled to decipher himself in regard to what was forbidden? It is a question that interrogates the relation between asceticism and truth. Max Weber posed the question: If one wants to behave rationally and regulate one's action according to true principles, what part of one's self should one renounce? What is the ascetic price of reason? To what kind of asceticism should one submit? I posed the opposite question: How have certain kinds of interdictions required the price of certain kinds of knowledge about oneself? What must one know about oneself in order to be willing to renounce anything?... Thus, I arrived at the hermeneutics of technologies of the self in pagan and early Christian practice.[35]

Note that, if Foucault really were looking for something like an "ethics" or a "normative foundation" for his work, or for resistance in the present, or something of that ilk, it would make the most sense to pose a variant of Weber's question: if I want to act in accordance with true (ethical) principles, what part of myself ought I renounce? How do we overcome or transform those parts of ourselves that are shaped or formed or constituted by "power"? But this is not Foucault's question. Rather, the question is something more

like: "Into which technologies and practices of truth-telling must one be initiated in order to be governed?"

Arnold Davidson may be correct in noting that understanding "sexuality" is not in fact the main aim of Foucault's late work, but seems clearly mistaken in thinking that the point of his interest in "the history of ancient sex... was part of his interest in ancient ethics."[36] Rather, ancient ethics articulates one set of techniques, among others, by which we have subjected ourselves, one mode of governing our relation to the truth in a long history of them. Consider the following remark, from *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*:

> I have tried to show you that the role and function of ascesis - in the sense that Greek and Roman philosophers gave to to the word *askēsis* - was to establish the strongest possible link between the subject and truth... The ascesis constitutes, therefore, and its role is to constitute, the subject as subject of veridiction [i.e. truth-telling].[37]

Earlier in the same course, Foucault makes the same point, while establishing the continuity of this interrogation of Plutarch and Aurelius with his earlier work:

> ... at the heart of the problem I want to pose this year - and what's more have wanted to pose for some time - ... is: How is the relationship between truth-telling (veridiction) and the practice of the subject established, fixed, and defined? Or, more generally, how are truth-telling and governing (governing oneself and others) linked and connected to each other? I have tried to look at this problem under a whole range of aspects and forms - whether with regard to madness, mental illness, prison, delinquency, etcetera - ... I would now like to pose this question of the relationship between truth-telling and the government of the subject in ancient thought before Christianity... in the form and within the framework of a of a constitution of a relationship of self to self...[38]

At each turn, the question of the relation to the self, the techniques of the self, the "aesthetics of existence" are referred to a larger investigation of how the subject is governed by its relations to the truth, and how in turn "the formation of a certain type of experience of the self became possible which is, it seems to me, typical of Western experience... but also of the experience the Western subject may have or create of others."[39]

One might here think that Foucault is engaged in revisionist history, that his concerns with veridiction and subjectivity must be late additions to his work. But this would be to ignore, for example, the detailed analysis of techniques for securing and extracting truth in early modern judicial

proceedings in his 1971 lectures in Brazil on "Truth and Juridical Form" (material discussed also at length in *Discipline and Punish*).[40] In fact, it might be that, rather than either power or subjectivity, it is "truth" or "truth-regimes" or "regimes of veridiction" that are in fact the original objects of Foucault's work from at least his inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France* in 1970, at the beginning of what could be called his "genealogical" period:

> I want to try to discover how this choice of truth, inside which we are caught but which we ceaselessly renew, was made - but also how it was repeated, renewed, and displaced. I will consider first the epoch of the Sophists at its beginning, with Socrates or, at least with Platonic philosophy, to see how efficacious discourse, ritual discourse, discourse loaded with powers and perils, gradually came to conform to a distinction between true and false discourse.[41]

We see here that not only did Foucault begin his genealogies in 1970 with an inquiry into the different ways in which we might bind ourselves to truth, compel ourselves to speak it, but that he did so precisely by turning to the Greeks, to a great extent the subject of his first course. In fact, the same themes that appear in 1970 - such as that of the sumbolon, or the "half-truth" as a way of relating to truth in Greek tragedy, and especially in Oedipus, where truth is linked explicitly to power - return to the center of Foucault's concern in 1983.[42] The Greeks, for Foucault, do not appear first as the exemplars of a free art of living safe from the vicissitudes of disciplinary power, but as an early and decisive episode in the history of ways we have subjected ourselves, in this case by making ourselves accountable to the truth.

Indeed, the later return to the ancient world as a whole, despite the significance placed on it by commentators as Foucault's "final" work, does not even appear to be intended as more than a quick one; in "The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II" (note that both of his final lecture courses contain a reference not to ethics but to government), Foucault says:

> The lectures I would like to give will no doubt be somewhat disjointed because they deal with things that I would like to have done with, as it were, in order to return, after this several years long Greco-Roman "trip," to some contemporary problems which I will deal with either in the second part of the course, or possibly in the form of a working seminar.[43]

This remark seems designed to ward off misunderstandings, as he repeats a sentiment he had expressed days earlier in an interview, when asked about the contemporary ethical significance of his work:

> I must admit that I have not gone very far in that direction and I would rather come back to some contemporary problems, in order to try and see what we can do with all that in the actual political problematic… I don't like answering questions which I have not examined. I would, however, like to take up once again [in the contemporary world] those questions I have raised through the culture of Antiquity.[44]

Foucault never had the chance to move beyond the ancient world, but we have good reason to think that he would have. The final course was incredibly truncated on account of his rapidly deteriorating health, and he would be dead within months. Nevertheless, it's clear that it is truth-telling in all of its historicity, the different "games of truth" and "regimes of veridiction" and the manners in which these games and regimes are governed and have played a role in making us who we are here and now, is the focus of Foucault's research. The task - too large to begin here - of explicating in detail the structure of veridiction and governmentality, and their theoretical and practical significance, but their centrality to Foucault's thought is beyond dispute.

Now, one could try to make a case that the practice of ancient *parrhesia* or truth-telling, which interested Foucault in his very final courses at the *Collège de France*, is an ethically exemplary technology of self, an aesthetic of existence or manner of caring for the self in which we can find at the least the germ of a normative ethic of resistance for contemporary life. One could argue that at the very end of his life, Foucault had found, through his continued investigations into the political stakes of "veridiction," the basis for a new ethics. But this would require an independent conviction that giving us an ethics is what Foucault is primarily up to. It would mean rejecting out of hand Foucault's claim he is not looking for solutions to our present moral problems in other solutions to other problems, and that indeed he was not looking such solutions to begin with.[45] It would require explaining why Foucault's alleged foray into "ethics" seems rather to consist in extended discussions of truth-telling and governmentality, and why he had hoped to be done with his little "trip" and to return to investigations of the "contemporary problematic." One would have to explain why Foucault describes his work in 1982 not as ethics but as a "series of studies of 'the arts of oneself,' that is, the aesthetics of existence and the government of oneself and others," in effect assimilating discussion of the practices of the self to a series of studies on governmentality, begun (at the latest) in 1977.[46] One would have to explain why *parrhesia* is not rather just one mode of truth-telling, in all of its relations to power and government, among all the others that Foucault explored. In other words, it would be up to the partisan of Foucauldian ethics to explain how *parrhesia*, the ethics of truth-telling, the care of the self, or "aesthetics of existence," the emergence of all these techniques by which an individual may establish a

relation with herself, are not, on the contrary, nuances in the history of our government by truth.

We have already seen the genuine continuity of the problematic of truth, and of government by the truth, through his lectures. And he confirms this in his published monographs, for example, in the "Introduction" to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where Foucault tries to explain to his readers the glaring shift in historical material from the Victorians to the Greeks, he states that "[a]fter first studying the games of truth in their interplay with one another... and then their interaction with power relations, as exemplified by punitive practices - I felt obliged to study the games of truth in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject, taking as my domain of reference and field of investigation what might be called 'the history of desiring man.'"[47] Again, we see the importance of the "games of truth," of the rules and strategies that govern our relations to the truth, but no mention of ethics. When in 1984, interviewers try to insinuate that there had indeed been a "break" between this work and prior investigations, all Foucault will admit is that he had been brought to take account of the ways in which subject act on themselves in the process of subject-formation in a more explicit way than he had before. It is striking, I think, that Foucault – even at this very late stage – resists characterizing his work in ethical terms. This is not what one would expect of an author allegedly "turning" to "ethics." It is, however, rather unsurprising if one recalls Foucault's actually stated interests in investigating, variously, strategies of government and pragmatics of subject-formation, all of these reversible, alternately threatening and oppressive and empowering and free.

Towards a Genealogy of Neoliberal Veridiction

By way of closing remarks, I want to suggest a different approach to situating Foucault's discussion of neoliberalism in his larger genealogy of the government of truth. It should be difficult to ignore the fact that, even in his explicit engagements with bio-politics and governmentality in the 20th century, veridiction was at the center of his concerns:

> It is not so much the history of the true or the history of the false *as the history of veridiction* which has a political significance. That is what I wanted to say regarding the question of the market or, let's say, *of the connecting up of a regime of truth to governmental practice.*[48]

Foucault was particularly interested in how *the market* became a site of veridiction, and how *truth* – as produced in the market, spoken in and about the market – supersedes the application of *justice*:

> In simple and barbaric terms, let's say that from being a site of *jurisdiction*, which it remained up to the start of the eighteenth century, the market … is becoming what I will

call a site of *veridiction*. The market must tell the truth; it must tell the truth in relation to governmental practice.[49]

And there can be no doubt about these specific transformations for Foucault:

> Speaking in general terms, let's say that in this history of a jurisdictional and then veridictional market we have one of those innumerable intersections between jurisdiction and veridiction that is undoubtedly a fundamental phenomenon in the history of the modern West.[50]

Whatever Foucault means by justice and truth, whatever he thinks of the imbrications of the normative and descriptive, it seems clear that we need to consider his investigations of neoliberal governmentality in terms of the form of veridiction to which it responds, and their conditions. Neoliberalism, whatever else it is and has been, is a way in which we are governed by the truth, in a long history of such government.

There are multiple directions from which one might begin to approach this genealogy. One could begin by considering how the characterization of individuals as agents of market-exchange in neoliberal thought places a specific conception of *desire* at the heart of politics. If, as seen above, the market comes be a "site of veridiction," we might ask just what it is that comes to have its truth *manifested* in such a site. The answer, I take it, is desire – even if only in the de-libidinized form of *interest* or *preferences*. In making the avenues of free satisfaction of interest central to both self and politics, neoliberal governmentality can be seen as a reversal of traditional "repressive" moralities, in the name of a libidinal politics. There is some recent work in this direction.[51] If one were to emphasize this productive and channelled unleashing of desire in liberal governmentality, one might view a transformative relationship to one's own desire at the heart of resistance to neoliberalism. One could read Foucault's claim that the "philosophy of the future, if it exists, must be born outside of Europe or equally in consequence of meetings and impacts of Europe and non-Europe" in this light.[52] Foucault makes this claim to a Zen practitioner, in the context of discussing his interest in Zen. Foucault notes the importantly different and new ways in which Zen practice allows one to be aware of new and different relations between mind and body; this seems to echo his famous allusions to a new and different "economy of bodies and pleasures" beyond the apparatus of sexuality. As a branch of Buddhism, of course, Zen practice emphasises detachment and – especially – an end to pernicious *craving*, or desires. This is far too crude, as it stands, but the basic idea is clear; if we are governed through our desire, then we must learn to desire differently.

Whatever one thinks about the general strategy of transforming – perhaps even transcending – desire, it cannot be the end of the story with respect to placing neoliberalism in a history of the government by the truth. Placing desire at the heart of a genealogy of neoliberalism would require an

account of how desire became central to our identity. In other words, it would require an account of how, when we speak the truth about ourselves, desire, the will, the *flesh* all come to hold centre stage. We have some sense of what this might look like; it is the story that Foucault tells from the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, which he construes as an "archaeology of psychoanalysis" and winding through Christian practices of confession and deep into classical Antiquity in the latter volumes. In its broad strokes, this narrative is familiar. We move from finding the truth of ourselves in, say, erotic *action*, the use of pleasures, to the disturbances within our psyche, to concupiscence and ultimately the "flesh," which become the fertile ground of contemporary sexuality. And no doubt this story important, but it would still miss the character of the neoliberal relation to *truth*.

I want to close by suggesting that a promising – and, to my knowledge, unexplored - avenue of research for exploring the neoliberal regime of truth might look to the sort of progression that truth-telling follows for Foucault in antiquity. Foucault's interest in *parrhesia* begins with the alleged "crisis of democratic *parrhesia*" in ancient Athens. Using the plays of Euripides as examples of the vicissitudes of democratic truth-telling in debates over military engagement, the right of citizens to free speech comes to be problematized (in ways that seem more contemporary than we might have thought). Should *everyone* be permitted to speak the truth? Should the right to *parrhesia* be restricted to those with certain qualities and virtues? It is in this context that Foucault places the classical Greek philosophy that will, eventually, give rise to the hermeneutics of the self; in the case of Socrates and Plato, the problematization of *parrhesia* leads to concern for the soul, in its essential desire for the Good and its quest for truth.

This will become, for Foucault, a central question: who can tell the truth in the exercise of power? How does one come to learn to exercise power – over oneself and over others – and *whose help is required*? He traces the relation of Plato's philosophical advice to Dion of Syracuse in *The Government of Self and Others*, to Plutarch's outline of the parrhesiast as he who will be frank in his opinions with one in *The Courage of Truth*. The theme of the *partner or advisor* resurfaces again and again, as the one who will speak the truth to power. Indeed, it is with the theme of advising the Prince, or the Tyrant, with respect to the mastery of his desires that Foucault ends his 1980 lectures on *Subjectivity and Truth*:

> A fundamental problem is posed in this way: that of the prince's power over others and of the technology of himself, of the prince as subject, of the prince inasmuch as he governs others and has to govern himself. *It seems to me that the problem of governmentality…in all its dimensions appears quite clearly in this literature…*[53]

The basic point to be made here is that, for Foucault, the crucial questions concern who can tell the truth, what sort of person they must be, and what sorts of truths they must know in order to wield power, *along with* questions of who can teach them, who can train them, and from whom they must learn. In the ancient world, addressing these concerns broached the issues of spirituality, transformation, and the purification of the subject, of the possibility of accessing the truth, and the role of the "spiritual advisor" or philosopher in all this. In the modern world, the same issues remain. Foucault seems to admit as much at the end of his life:

> With the notion of *parrhesia*, originally rooted in political practice and the problematization of democracy, then later diverging towards the sphere of personal ethics and the formation of the moral subject, with this notion with political roots and its divergence into morality, we have… the possibility of posing the question of the subject and truth from the point of view of the practice of what could be called the government of oneself and others. And thus we come back to the theme of government which I studied some years ago. It seems to me that by examining the notion of *parrhesia* we can see how the analysis of modes of veridiction, the study of techniques of governmentality, and the identification of forms of practice of self interweave. Connecting together modes of veridiction, techniques of governmentality, and practices of the self is basically what I have always been trying to do.[54]

In this context, Foucault's first investigations into the history of biopolitics, which would grow into his discussion of neoliberalism can be read as centring around "a problem in political pedagogy: What must the prince know, where and from whom must he acquire his knowledge, and who is qualified to constitute the knowledge of the prince?"[55] Indeed, it is worth noting that his interrogation of German ordoliberalism – his first extended analysis of neoliberal government – explicitly foregrounds it as a response to a political crisis, a problematization of democracy in the reconstruction of post-World War II Germany. We can perhaps, then, view the history of neoliberalism as part of the history of struggles over our truths, those truths that need to be known to govern us, and who is qualified to tell them.

For example, Philip Mirowski and Edward Nik-Khah have recently argued that histories of neoliberalism that focus on the insufficiency of neoclassical models of economic rationality miss the point. Neoliberalism, as a *political* project, has been from the beginning embroiled in struggles for scientific credibility; this is revealed by the central place it gives to *information*, parroting the discourses of the post-war social sciences. The importantly novel upshots of this transformation of economic discourse is to (a) reify information, separating it entirely from actual *knowers* and *agents*, and (b)

rendering this information *opaque* to all but those who can design the proper markets to reveal it.[56] And, of course, when we participate in markets designed in accord with specific aims, we become subject to ever new norms for how best to comport ourselves within them, and ever new truths about our desires.

There is no question of unpacking Foucault's meticulous histories of German ordoliberalism or Chicago School economics here. But I want to suggest that we should at the very least place at the forefront of our interpretations of his thought the question of how *truth-telling*, the *will to know the truth*, along with the various ways that the truth that we can tell is *produced*, how observations are regimented, experimental apparatuses arranged, and so on. What sorts of truth are required to govern us, and how does this government integrate our *ethos?* How does one become *obliged* by the truth, and how does this obligation impact our comportment? It might not even be surprising to find that Foucault's "historical ontology" – the historico-philosophical investigation of how we are constituted as subjects, of knowledge, power, and ethics - is, behind its Kantian face, at its Nietzschean roots, an investigation of truth, of what it does to us, of what we might do with it, and of those domains in which we might have done with it.

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[1] See Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), and Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[2] In particular, see the first paragraph on page 86, referring to Foucault's "ethical turn" in the early 1980s as something to be explained.

[3] Jeffrey Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Powers and Its Intensifications Since 1984* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 2. Cf. Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, xiii.

[4] Note that I am not endorsing this explanation, just registering it.

[5] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 442.

[6] The most polemical essays offering this interpretation can be found *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, eds. Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016).

[7] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, 36-37, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[8] This line of reasoning, linking Foucault's alleged endorsement of neoliberalism to the criticism of Keynesian welfare state, especially in its French form, is put most forcefully by Michael C. Behrent. See his "Accidents Happen: Accidents Happen: François Ewald, the "Antirevolutionary" Foucault, and the Intellectual Politics of the French Welfare State," *Journal of Modern History* 82 (2010): 585-624, and "Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976-1979," *Modern Intellectual History* 36(3) (2009): 539-568.

[9] This is more or less explicit in Andrew Dilts, "From 'Entrepreneur of the Self' to 'Care of the Self': Neo-liberal Governmentality and Foucault's Ethics," *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011): 130-146.

[10] Gary Becker and Bernard Harcourt, American neoliberalism and Michel Foucault's 1979 Birth of Biopolitics lectures. Working Paper No. 614, Coase-Sandor Institute for Law and Economics, 2012.

[11] See Alain Beaulieu, "Toward a liberal Utopia: The connection between Foucault's reporting on the Iranian Revolution and the ethical turn," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36(7) (2010): 801-818.

[12] See, for example, Mitchell Dean, "Foucault Must Not Be Defended," *History and Theory* 54(3) (2015): 389-403. Dean's analysis is expanded and nuanced in Kaspar Villadsen and Mitchell Dean, *State Phobia and Civil Society: The Political Legacy of Michel Foucault*, though it is embedded in a somewhat idiosyncratic discussion of secularization theory.

[13] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Politics of Truth*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), p. 117

[14] David Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1986): 221-234.

[15] Most representative of this position, I think, are Eric Paras and Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Knowledge and Power* (New York: Other Press, 2006), and *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2002), respectively.

[16] Arnold Davidson, "Ethics as ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 115-140.

[17] Pierre Hadot, "Reflections on the notion of the 'cultivation of the self," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), 230.

[18] See Richard Wolin, "Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism," *Telos* 67 (1986): 71-86.

[19] Dianna Taylor, "Normativity and Normalization," *Foucault Studies* 7 (2009): 45-46.

[20] Rainer Rochlitz, "The Aesthetics of Existence: Post-conventional morality and the theory of power in Michel Foucault," in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, trans. Timothy J. Armstrong (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 257.

[21] James Porter, "Foucault's Ascetic Ancients," *Phoenix* 59 (2005): 123.

[22] I use "Critical Theory," capitalized, to refer to the broad tradition of thought deriving from the Frankfurt School, as opposed to those critical and theoretical ventures of thought such post-structuralism with which Critical Theory so frequently finds itself at odds.

[23] Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *Praxis International* 3: 284. Emphasis mine.

[24] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," 13.

[25] Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, 65. The malleability and reversibility of power-relations is to often ignored by readers for whom the burning insight of his mid-70s work seems to be a claim that subjects are not just produced but determined by power in some substantive (if nebulous) sense.

[26] Even those who acknowledge the presence of "strategics" as an important dimension of what Foucault thinks that he is doing in the late 1970s interpret it the light of what they take to be Foucault's "ethics": as a form of ethical "resistance" to inescapable power relations that is then superseded by Foucault's alleged turn to the "aesthetics of existence." Cf. Kevin Thompson, "Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-Formation," *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2003): 113-138.

[27] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5.

[28] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997): 262

[29] Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 233. Also *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 244.

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 13.

[31] Of course, this doesn't mean that Nietzsche and Foucault don't tell us much of interest about what it is to be an ethical agent or subject.

[32] Nancy Fraser, "Michel Foucault: A Young Conservative?" *Ethics* vol. 96, issue 1 (1985): 172.

[33] Foucault, "The Government of the Living," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 81. Emphasis mine.

[34] Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 87. Emphasis mine.

[35] Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 224.

[36] Davidson, "Ethics as ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought," 115.

[37] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Frédéric Gros (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 371.

[38] Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 229-230.

[39] Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 230.

[40] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995): 35-47. As Foucault says, "one may see judicial torture... as torture of the truth," and "from the judicial torture to the execution, the body has produced and reproduced the truth."

[41] Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1981), 70. While published separately, this is in fact the first lecture of Foucault's inaugural course at the *Collège de France*, published in English without this first lecture as *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France 1970-71*, ed. Daniel Defert, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[42] Foucault, "Oedipal Knowledge," in *Lectures on the Will to Know*. Also the lectures of 17 March, in the same volume, and *The Government of the Self and Others*, especially the "Course Context" and the lecture of 26 January, First Hour.

[43] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.

[44] Foucault, "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 124-125.

[45] Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 256.

[46] Foucault, "Self-Writing," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 207.

[47] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 6. Emphasis mine.

[48] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 36-37.

[49] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 32. Emphasis mine.

[50] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 34.

[51] For exciting work in this area, see Migeul de Beistegui, "Desire within and beyond Biopolitics" in *The Care of Life: Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Bioethics and*

Biopolitics, eds. de Beistegui et al (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 241-260 and *The Government of Desire: A Genealogy of the Liberal Subject* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2018). For a non-Foucauldian approach to the liberal politics of desire, see Ross Abbinnett, *Politics of Happiness: Connecting the Philosophical Ideas of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Derrida to the Political Ideologies of Happiness* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), especially Ch. 1.

[52] Michel Foucault, "Michel Foucault and Zen: A Stay in a Zen Temple (1978)," in Jeremy Carrette, ed. *Michel Foucault: Religion and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 110-114.

[53] Foucault, *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France 1980-1981,* ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 281

[54] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 8

[55] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*: *Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 127

[56] Philip Mirowski and Edward Nik-Khah, *The Knowledge We Have Lost in Information: The History of Information in Modern Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)