# MORALITIES OF SELF-RENUNCIATION AND OBEDIENCE

## THE LATER FOUCAULT AND DISCIPLINARY POWER RELATIONS

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Michel Foucault's work is frequently subdivided in the secondary literature into three different time periods: the early "hermeneutic" work from the 1950s and 1960s, the middle "genealogical" writings of the 1970s, and the final "ethical" work of the 1980s. Most commentators accept that there is some legitimacy to these divisions but there is no consensus on what defines these three periods of Foucault's work. Today, most of the debate centers on the nature of the division between the middle genealogical work and the later ethical work. If we are to believe the story told by Charles Taylor, Eric Paras, and Nancy Fraser then Foucault's genealogies of the 1970s describe a dire political situation that we are helpless to resist:[1]

> Without a nonhumanist ethical paradigm, Foucault cannot make good his normative case against humanism. He cannot answer the question, Why should we oppose a fully panopticized, autonomous society?[2]

This criticism of Foucault's middle work feeds into the further claim that Foucault's shift to ethical work in the 1980s aimed to address previous faults. The argument runs that Foucault abandoned his pessimistic genealogical analyses of disciplinary power and made a positive turn towards robust notions of individual self-transformation and change in his final ethical work. This Foucaultian ethical "turn" to the subject supposedly corrected the pessimism of his middle work by definitively breaking with it:

> According to the consensus established by the secondary literature, Foucault's early and middle work culminates in a kind of totalizing theoretical cage (of which "discipline" is the highest manifestation) that in turn constituted a kind of crisis or dead-end for Foucault's thinking by the mid-1970s. . . . Foucault's late work performs a 180-degree turn away from the (too-totalizing and demor-

alizing) "power" discourse of the early and mid-1970s and culminated in a renewed appreciation of the Enlightenment subject, the ethical arts of the self, and resistance to normalized totalization through individual action.[3]

What is especially notable about this thesis is that it cleaves Foucault's corpus in two, definitively separating the parts as having opposing interests and formulations. By picturing Foucault's work as oppositional, it becomes difficult to conceptualize ways to profitably share across the different periods.

Increasingly, commentators have begun to challenge this reading of Foucault, still acknowledging the change in Foucault's work but resisting the earlier narrative that had explained it as a total break. In work done by Jeffrey Nealon, Ladelle McWhorter, and Timothy O'Leary, they treat Foucault's work as undergoing a change of focus between the middle and later work but far from implying a rejection, they treat the work in many ways as complimentary or, as Nealon puts it, as an "intensification" of earlier themes.[4] Besides making a convincing argument for their points on a textual basis, this interpretation is attractive because it offers the ability to read across Foucault in ways that are not merely subordinate to the final ethical work. Although one would still need to be careful of the differences in vocabulary and method between Foucault's works, these thinkers open an avenue to promote the cross-pollination of Foucault's concepts, something that would be far less likely if his work was divided into segments that were opposed to one another 180-degrees.

Unfortunately, I do not have the room in this essay to chart my own complete topographical arguments relating Foucault's work across the 1970s and 1980s to put ideas in play across that topology as Nealon, McWhorter, and O'Leary do in their book length treatments. As a result, I plan to build from their work and start from the thesis

that the middle and later work are not antithetical to one another but do develop different themes and foci. I work through this topology in order to use Foucault's later work on ethics as the relation of the self to the self to develop an account of the ethical self-relation in the disciplinary subjects of his middle work.

In Foucault's later ethical work, he focused in large part on "the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject."[5] His studies examined what kind of relationship an individual had to assume to herself and what kind of work had to be done to become a subject. For instance, he explains that certain Greeks of antiquity had to take up a relationship of "self-mastery" in regards to themselves in order to conquer their passions and prepare themselves for political leadership.[6] In this later work he explores the different relations the self was expected to undertake to itself in Greece and Rome of antiquity, as well as in various periods of Christianity.

In Foucault's middle "genealogical" period, he had little to say about how disciplinary bodies had to relate to themselves and what work they had to do on themselves in order to be recognized as subjects. The lack of focus on the activity of the individual in this middle work is not just recognized by commentators but also by Foucault:

> I tried to mark out three types of problems: that of the truth, that of power, and that of individual conduct. . . . What hampered me in the preceding books was to have considered the first two experiences without taking into account the third.[7]

Although I reject Frasier's argument that Foucault's middle work excludes the possibility of a robust conception of the agency of the individual, I do accept that Foucault was not focused on developing such an account. This difference is important because Fraser, Paras, and Taylor would have us believe that an account of the agency of the individual is impossible in the middle work, while I would argue with Nealon and others that it is not antithetical, just not well elaborated.

My aim in this essay is to develop an account of individual conduct in disciplinary power by cultivating resources from Foucault's later work.

In the later Foucault, he traces the history of the work that a self is morally obligated to perform on itself from ancient Greece to Rome and onto Christianity. This genealogical account of ethical self-work shares a connection point with disciplinary power in that they overlap in Christianity. Foucault argues that the Christian monastery was "the first nucleus," "the point of departure" and the "matrix" of disciplinary power and it is through the monastery that Foucault's work on ethics edges his work on discipline.[8] The disciplines were formed out of the cradle of the Christian monastery and this essay aims to trace the transference of lineages of ethical self-relation between the Christian monastery and the disciplines.

In order to accomplish these goals, this essay will proceed in this manner: First, I will review the way that Foucault's work changes between the 1970s and the 1980s and establish linkages across which insights from the later work can be translated into the earlier work in order to reveal the ethical activity of disciplinary subjects. In the following section, I make the connection between his work on ethics and disciplinary power relations through the intermediary of the Christian monastery. In the final section, I show the value of an ethical examination of disciplinary power by shedding new light on two persistently, and perhaps famously, enigmatic areas of Foucault's work: his pronouncement from the *History of Sexuality Volume I* that a "counterattack" ought to be based on "bodies and pleasures" and his proclamation that we must respond to the contemporary situation "with an investigation which is that of an aesthetics of existence."[9] Clarifying these clouded elements of Foucault's thought will serve as an example of the insights that might be gained in using Foucault's later moral genealogies to reveal and develop new dimensions of his older work, especially disciplinary power.

## Topographical Translations

Although the primary aim of this essay is not to establish the theoretical grounds on which an encounter between the later and earlier work of Foucault might be staged, in part because it has

been done elsewhere, it is still nonetheless important to briefly consider the way in which a theoretical linkage will be established in this essay. The new insights that can be generated in Foucault's work on discipline by his later work on subjectivity will be shaped by the ways in which the works are bridged, and so some discussion is necessary, as it will form the theoretical matrix through which this essay will be staged.

Although I have sided with those that take Foucault's later work not to be a total rejection of his earlier work, that does not mean that all his work is informed by the same priorities. On the contrary, Foucault's later work prioritizes subjectivity and truth where the earlier work focused on power and knowledge. More specifically, in the later work Foucault aimed "to study the games of truth (*jeux de verité*) in the relationship of self with self and in the forming of oneself as a subject."[10] In this later work, Foucault analyzed how particular truths were mobilized in the formation of a subject such that one might be required to recognize oneself as a subject through these truths. For instance, ancient Greeks and Romans recognized themselves as individuals through their gender, class, age, wealth, marital status, etc. An important part of what it meant to be a subject, then as today, was to recognize that one has a certain truth to manifest in one's conduct. This focus on subjectivity and truth tends to prioritize the agency of the individual in that it highlights the action of the individual in constituting him- or herself as a subject through manifesting certain truths. Openings for individual resistance are easier to spot in the later Foucault because of his exposition of the activity of individuals in constituting themseves, activity that individuals might perform otherwise to subvert or resist the power relations they are enmeshed in.

The work through most of the 1970s, in the time between the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, tended to focus on power and knowledge. This work explored how the conduct of subjects and populations were informed by power relations and bound to certain forms of knowledge. This work focused less on the agency of the individual in the production of subjectivity and more on how that agency was created and regulated through different types of knowledge and power relations. Accordingly, "the consensus" seems to have concluded that this work offers no possibility of resistance because of the minimal focus on individual agency. However, this critique confuses the focus of a particular work with a pronouncement about the entire contemporary situation. Foucault's aim was not to focus on the activity of the individual in self-constitution but that should not be thought to imply that it does not exist or that it is impossible. Foucault is clear that power relations always imply the possibility of resistance, of subversion:

> The power relation and freedom's refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated. . . . At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an "agonism"—of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.[11]

For Foucault, power relations are not relationships of physical coercion or violence in which the individual or group has no choice but to comply. Relationships of power are exercised over the conduct of others where the "other" always has the choice to conduct herself otherwise. Thus, power is a constant provocation; for instance, a request by the teacher in grade school to sit down is often a provocation to stand up. Power relations are always exercised in a context of freedom (unlike relationships of violence or physical domination) and so leave room open for individuals to constitute themselves otherwise. Philosophy has its role in informing resistance because effective power relations, almost by definition, conceal their weaknesses and often require concerted study to locate them:

> I dream of the intellectual destroyer of evidence and universalities, the one who, in the inertias and constraints of the present, locates and marks the weak points, the openings, the lines of power, who incessantly displaces himself, doesn't know exactly where he is heading nor what he'll think to-

morrow because he is too attentive to the present; who contributes the raising of the question of knowing whether the revolution is worth it, and what kind.[12]

It is important to recognize that relations of power and knowledge always contain an agonistic struggle with freedom to see that Foucault's later work is not a refusal of the earlier work but a reorientation. Instead of situating the analysis at the level at which the subject is positioned in relations of power and knowledge as in the work of the 1970s, the work of the 1980s on subjectivity and truth takes up the analysis at the level of the individual and the work that is required for the individual to do in order to be recognized as a proper and legitimate subject. This later shift does not eliminate the question of power and knowledge or refuse its importance—it is still the case that the work of the self on the self occurs in the context of particular relations of power: "Foucault thinks of the *ethos* as personal, but not as private. An individual's *ethos* is publicly observable, and it is visibly permeated by social norms and political codes."[13] Foucault himself argues that his later work on ethics should not be seen as eliminating the question of power but of broadening it; he explains that he was working to "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" and this made it necessary to "expand the dimensions of a definition of power if one wanted to use this definition in studying the objectivizing of the subject."[14] Put otherwise, one could say that Foucault shifted from an analysis of the power relations exercised by others on the self (1970s) to an analysis of the power relations that could be constituted and mobilized by the self on itself (1980s). This does not imply a rejection but a shift in focus that can be used to differentially motivate and inform the multiple accounts given in Foucault's work by exposing them to different levels of analysis.

The project here is to explore the ways in which Foucault's work on the power one exercises over oneself can open up a new dimension in his account of disciplinary power, which generally lacks such a dimension and is focused on the power others exercise on the self. This look at the work of the individual in constituting herself

as a disciplinary subject will not eliminate or replace Foucault's account of disciplinary power and knowledge relations but it will "expand the dimensions" of it to include the power relations that connect the self to itself.

## The Ethical Lineage of Disciplinary Power Relations

> If we take monastic life as a model of disciplinary saturation, and monasticism was actually the point of departure and matrix of discipline, then what the monk does is entirely regulated, from morning to night and from night to morning, and the only thing undetermined is what is not said and is therefore forbidden.[15]

Foucault's work on the relations of the self to itself extends from ancient Greco-Roman morality to Christianity, bouncing back and forth between the different time periods in the work that extends from *Hermeneutics of the Subject* to his last interview entitled *The Return of Morality*. The above quote provides us with an organic connection between Foucault's ethical focus on the relationship of the self to the self and his work on disciplinary power relations as it gives us a site where Christianity, through monasticism, contacts disciplinary power relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Foucault argues in the above quote as well as throughout *Discipline and Punish* that disciplinary relations were birthed from monastic relations.[16] In the 1970s, he draws some insights about disciplinary power from its birth in the monastery but those discussions are largely limited to the operation of monastic techniques of government, for conducting the conduct of others, and do not seriously reflect on the relation of the self to the self.[17] In 1978, however, Foucault offers up the provocative idea that the disciplines gain from the monastery the assumption that "man is wicked, bad, and has evil thoughts and inclinations, etcetera. So, within the disciplinary space a complementary sphere of prescriptions and obligations is constituted that is all the more artificial and constraining as the nature of reality is tenacious and difficult to overcome."[18] Seemingly, Foucault offers us a first indication that some elements of the fallen

Christian subject were passed onto disciplinary relations from the monastery when they inherited a subject that is characterized by its evil and wicked nature.

In Foucault's later work he makes a much more detailed analysis of the Christian relation of the self to itself and its roots in Greco-Roman morality than in the earlier work where he was much more focused on the relation of the self with others. If we situate our analysis at this intersection of Christian coenobitical monasticism and the emergence of disciplinary power relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, then we might enrich and add new dimensions to our understanding of disciplinary power relations through his work on Christian subjectivity. More precisely, we can look to how Foucault characterizes the self-relation that is formative of Christian subjectivity in order to gain some insight into the disciplinary subject's self-relation that is also "wicked, bad and has evil thoughts."

Importantly, most of Foucault's analyses are not directed specifically at the monastery but at Christianity much more generally. In order to direct this account more specifically to the monastery and eventually to disciplinary power relations, I will use St. Benedict's *Rule* in order to contextualize Foucault's insights within the specific setting of the monastery. In other words, I plan to work to uncover how the principles that Foucault finds active in Christianity can also be seen to work in the monastery; I do this so that these insights appear in this essay in the form that is most directly related to the birth of the disciplines—in the monastic milieu. As a result, I will seek to give examples about how the general points Foucault makes about Christianity can be seen to be active in the monastery. I use St. Benedict's *Rule* to do this because it is the most influential *Rule* to guide monastic life in the West in the era that spawned the disciplines.[19]

As with many other areas of his work, Foucault had a unique view of Christianity that was shaped by his genealogies of Greco-Roman morality. Although I wish to spend the majority of this analysis looking more directly at the monastery and tying it to the disciplines, I believe that a relatively brief overview of Foucault's relevant work in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* on Greco-Roman morality will be helpful in fleshing out Foucault's views on Christianity.

From the start of the two volumes he devoted to Greco-Roman morality, Foucault lets the reader know that the Greeks and Romans of antiquity had a focus in their moral practice on the ethical relationship of the self with the self:

> Here the emphasis is on the forms of relations with the self, on the methods and techniques by which he works them out, on the exercises by which he makes himself an object to be known, and on the practices that enable him to transform his own mode of being.[20]

As opposed to some moralities that base their practice on an attempt to follow a code or a set of rules, Greco-Roman morality focused on the relation of the self to itself. Hence, what was of primary importance was not whether a particular act was forbidden or allowed by a code but on how one related to oneself in the carrying out of that act.[21]

This emphasis in Greco-Roman moral practice on the relation of the self with the self makes more sense if one understands it in practice, through its aim at self-mastery. For the Greeks, self-mastery was reflected in the moderation of one's actions, in the way that one revealed oneself not to be dominated by one's desires:

> *Sophrosyne* [moderation] was a state that could be approached through the exercise of self-mastery and through restraint in the practice of pleasures; it was characterized as a freedom.[22]

Moderation "was characterized as a freedom" because it reflected that the domination of the desires of food, drink, riches, sex, fear, etc. had been subdued to the force of the individual's reason; one was free of the slavery of one's desires and returned to oneself in one's reason. As a result, the central focus of Greco-Roman morality was not on whether one had performed a certain act that was forbidden or not (although there were certainly forbidden actions), the emphasis was on whether one had undertaken an action as a matter of rational choice that reflected moderation and self-mastery or whether one was motivated to it by enslavement to desire. It was fully

possible that the same action one day, done in the spirit of moderation and in complete self-control could be morally praiseworthy, while on the next day the action might be done out of a desire that the individual could not break free from and so would be blameworthy.

This self-mastery was a desirable goal for the Greeks in two senses. First, in a slave society, it was self-mastery that allowed one to be free from enslavement, not just to another person, but also to the defects of one's character:

> This individual freedom should not, however, be understood as the independence of a free will. Its polar opposite was not a natural determinism, nor was it the will of an all-powerful agency: it was an enslavement—the enslavement of the self by one-self.[23]

An individual who had mastered himself was no longer enslaved to his passions and whims but subject to his own reasonable control. Second, to have attained self-mastery also qualified one for political leadership because the self-mastered individual was free from the desires and passions that might otherwise lead him to abuse or misuse his power. Clifford summarizes this point in his *Political Genealogy After Foucault*,

> The virtue of moderation qualified an individual to exercise authority over others, which was a very important dimension of the individual's freedom. Those who did not govern, in fact, "received their principle of moderation" from those who did; thus, the "nonruler" had less freedom simply by virtue of his subordinate position.[24]

To be able to rule others, one had to first know how to rule oneself because, as a ruler, the leader's self-government would extend beyond himself to order the lives of others around him; thus, it was even more important for the ruler than for the private individual to learn moderation.

Although this morality undergoes many variations and important changes as it develops in Greece and is eventually adopted and transformed in Roman culture, it is the changes that Christianity brings to this morality that are of central concern to this essay. Christianity "disturbs the balance of the care of the self" by aim-ing to obtain salvation in a second 'true life' after death.[25] Benedict echoes Foucault's analysis and emphasizes that the purpose of monastic life is salvation:

> Monks should practice this zeal with ardent love.... Let them fear God and think of nothing before Christ, Who can lead us into eternal life.[26]

Removing the *telos* of moral action from this world into the next resulted in fundamental changes in the morality as it moved to reorient itself as means to salvation and not as a moral practice with its rewards centered in this life.

Salvation was fixed as the end of Christian morality in part because self-mastery and moderation became impossible goals. The Christian subject, unlike the Greco-Roman subject, starts with the presumption of its evil and fallen nature. The Christian subject is not wholly evil, just imperfect, and in that imperfection cannot be certain that its motives are correct, its actions are good, and that it is not being falsely deceived in the blindness of its imperfection by its own passions or by the devil. The Christian subject is always roiled by a variety of good and evil motives that mix in its heart causing it to have an imperfect adherence to the good (God). Foucault describes this conundrum in the hypothetical activity of a Christian trying to sort out the accuracy of their own representations of the current state of things:

> Does this idea I have in my mind come from God?—in which case it is necessarily pure. Does it come from Satan?—it which case it is impure. Or possibly even: does it come from myself, in which case, to what extent can we say it is pure or impure?[27]

The Christian subject, in its imperfection, cannot properly rule itself, which is born out by the fact that it cannot even properly sort out its representations of the world such that it knows it is proceeding with a pure or impure and deceitful notion. The relation of the self to itself in the form of self-mastery is no longer possible for the Christians and, instead, the self-relation comes to be marked by self-renunciation.

Self-renunciation entails the rejection of the efforts of the self to lead itself, to master itself. The Christian self has to turn away from its project of self-mastery because no part of the self is pure enough to lead the rest of the self to moral redemption without also introducing evil. This is why Foucault writes that Christianity turned from being a morality based on the relationship of the self to the self as in antiquity to a morality that more greatly focused on following a code of behavior—the self could not lead itself and so had to follow the leadership of God as given in a sacred text.[28]

Likewise, Benedict was sure that humanity was incapable of properly carrying out its own self-government without God: the Fall and the Crucifixion, among other Biblical tales, provided ample evidence of humanity's evil in their reflections on human failure. The solution to the problem of a fallen humanity in need of a way to govern itself virtuously was found, for him, in a monastic life that provided resources and impetus to pursue the code laid down by God:

> Listen, my son, and with your heart hear the principles of your Master. Readily accept and faithfully follow the advice of a loving father, so that through the labor of obedience you may return to Him from whom you have withdrawn because of laziness of obedience. My words are meant for you, whoever you are, who laying aside your own will, take up the all-powerful and righteous arms of obedience to fight under the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ.[29]

In order to achieve salvation, the monastery aimed to help the monks by establishing relations that encouraged and coerced the cenobites to lay aside their own fallen and corrupt attempts at self-government and turn themselves over to God in the most complete obedience and humility possible. Following the message of the Lord Jesus Christ could guide the brothers to a good form of conduct that would otherwise be out of their sinful and fallen grasp. Self-renunciation and acceptance of God's leadership was necessary for a successful moral practice: "The fundamental principle of Christian asceticism is that the renunciation of the self is the essential mo-

ment of what enables us to gain access to the other life, to the light, to truth and salvation."[30]

The Christian and monastic self sought to peel back its own prideful and evil attempts to lead itself like the skinning of an onion: "the essential function of [Christian ascesis] is to determine and order the necessary renunciations."[31] The self would examine itself only to renounce itself as evil and fallen in favor of a strict obedience to the only thing that is truly good, God and the sacred rules he gave humanity to live by in the Bible. Obedience was to be the end achieved by total renunciation of the self's own leadership and, in fact, the monastic subject found its highest form in the reduction of the individual to total obedience, a kind of forwarding point for God's wishes:

> We are forbidden to do our own will for "Leave your own will and desires," and "We beg the Lord in prayer that His will may be done in us." Thus we learn not to do our own will for Scripture warns us: "There are ways that seem right to men, but they lead, in the end, to the depths of hell." We must fear what was said of the careless, "They have been corrupted and made abominable in their desires."[32]

The monks attempted to rule themselves properly by following, in as complete a manner as possible, the directives given to them by the perfect God. The sinful and lacking part of the subject combated with the good and obedient part to determine whether governance would come from above and obedience would reign or whether direction would come from the willful, heavy, and sinful flesh. Ironically, the ideal form of self-government was realized when individuals governed themselves as little as possible and sought only to obey the commandments of God:

> They [monks] do not live as they please, nor as their desires and will dictate, but they live under the direction and judgment of an abbot in a monastery. Undoubtedly, they find their inspiration in the Lord's saying: "I come not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me."[33]

As the quote attests, the monastery deployed a set of power relations that coerced and trained the monks to docilely act out the vision of the good

demanded by God, even if, perhaps especially if, the rebellious individual did not desire it.

This moment, in which proper self-government was constituted as a form of self-renunciation that welcomed the domination of the subject by a more expert subject, was a tremendously important moment in the lineage that would give rise to contemporary disciplinary relations. It is at this moment that the subject turns away from itself as a source of acceptable self-government and looks in obedience and compliance to another in order to find the proper direction. The monastery dominates the becoming and constitution of individuals in God's name; it dominates individuals for their own good so that they may achieve their proper ends regardless of whether they desire or even fully understand those ends. In the name of God, the almighty, infallible, and loving Father of all, the monastery authorizes itself to impose a form of subjectivity on individuals that the individual had to prepare for through continual self-renunciation and accept with obedience. The ethical Expert (God), His discourse (the Bible and by extension the *Rule)*, and His emissaries (the abbot and his deans), gain a legitimate domination over the body and soul of the brothers in which it is necessary that the brothers renounce themselves and work in total obedience for his own good.

Although Foucault patiently documents the translation of technologies of hierarchy, space and temporal control between the monastery and the disciplines, he almost never explores the genealogy of this self-relation of renunciation and obedience as it moves into the disciplinary context. It will be our job in the next section to flesh out this insight in the context of disciplinary power relations.

### The Disciplinary Self-Relation

First, we must begin by marking a difference: the disciplines introduce the opposite disturbance into the self-relation that Christianity brought to the Greco-Roman care of the self in that the disciplines return the *telos* of moral practice to life from the afterlife. The goal of disciplinary practice shifts from salvation to a variety of 'worldly' ends, such as a well-trained effi-ciency; coordination with other subjects; docility; and standardization:

> Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility.[34]

The disciplines took their aims from the growing administration and coordination of the population to create the "perfect society" through training people in a military fashion, progressively moving them ever more towards an "automatic docility" that would allow them to work like the "meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine."

To achieve this dream of a perfect society, the disciplines did not return to the positive valuation of human nature that permitted the Greco-Roman culture to believe that people could master and govern themselves. The aim of self-renunciation remained along with obedience to an expert who possessed the truth about how the individual should conduct its own conduct. In the disciplines as in the monastery, subjects were not to determine the direction of their own formation as subjects by following their own inclinations, pleasures, and best ideas but by submitting to a series of experts who possessed the truth according to which subjectivization should occur:

> With this new economy of power, the carceral system, which is [discipline's] basic instrument, permitted the emergence of a new form of "law": a mixture of legality and nature, prescription and constitution, the norm. . . . The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the "social worker"-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements.[35]

As Foucault indicates in this quote, the 'truth' of disciplinary doctrines is not drawn from God, the

Bible, or the *Rule* as was the case in the monastery, but from the "judges" of the human sciences. These human scientists produced a scientific discourse that prescribed how bodies should conduct themselves. The psychologists, doctors, industrial engineers, evolutionary biologists, anthropologists, sociologists, educators, political scientists, and criminal justice experts were and are thought to be able to scientifically determine a normal range of acceptable behaviors from their scientific regard of the human body and psyche. Although the disciplines differ from the monastery in that their aims are earthly and that their authority extends from the sciences instead of from God, both aim at the renunciation of the individual's self-governance and see obedience to an expert discourse as a significant part of subjectivization.

The obedience of the disciplinary subject was not an accidental holdover from the monastery but was actively sought as one of the primary benefits of disciplinary power relations: "While jurists or philosophers were seeking in the pact a primal model for the construction or reconstruction of the social body, the soldiers and with them the technicians of discipline were elaborating procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies."[36] Knowledges were being constructed to make individuals fearful of their own self-governance and ready to renounce their own insufficient attempts at self-governance:

> And the mere fact that one claimed to be speaking about it from the rarefied and neutral viewpoint of a science is in itself significant. . . . Claiming to speak the truth, it stirred up people's fears; the least oscillations of sexuality, it ascribed an imagined dynasty of evils destined to be passed on for generations; it declared the furtive customs of the timid, and the most solitary of petty manias, dangerous for the whole society; strange pleasures, it warned, would eventually result in nothing short of death: that of individuals, generations, the species itself.[37]

Here we have many of the elements of the monastery translated into the disciplinary context: the assumption that the public would wickedly bring "civil disorder" if left to its own guidance; the demand that individuals renounce their own self-leadership for obedience and docility to an expert

authority; the establishment of a true form of self-constitution that can only come from binding oneself in a deep relationship of obedience to the higher authority of the discipline; and, finally, the goal of establishing a network of disciplinary institutions across society to teach self-renunciation, docility and obedience and establish, not God's Kingdom, but a perfectly coordinated apparatus that maintains all of the individual pieces of society in docility and clockwork order.

Looked at from the perspective of the relationship of the self to the self we can see further reason why disciplinary power relations are so pernicious. Disciplinary power relations exert such a dominant form of control, not just because they seek to impose their own normative standards of conduct through meticulous and rigorous training methods, but also because they teach the individual to distrust and renounce their own self-leadership. Disciplinary power relations offer a strong one-two punch of the imposition and effective training of the "true" forms of subjectivity and the introduction of self-renunciation that undermines the self's own resources to refuse their subordination. Disciplinary obedience is formed not just by the coercion imposed by others but also by the individual's own deep-seated practices of self-renunciation.

In contrast, Greco-Roman morality proceeded from norms to their stylization as part of a process of self-mastery and self-formation: "it was a means of developing—for the smallest minority of the population, made up of free, adult males—an aesthetics of existence, the purposeful art of a freedom perceived as a power game."[38] Although the ancients still had a number of requisite norms, they gave space to a few individuals to stylize the way that they came to embody these norms. This practice of self-formation reflected their confidence in the individual to seek out and embody the good and a distinct distaste for becoming enslaved to another person or doctrine for leadership.[39] In fact, when certain Romans began seeing moral teachers later in life, it seemed ridiculous to their peers because it was an embarrassment to submit oneself to another in obedience beyond one's youth: "This extreme

eagerness of adults to look after their souls, the zeal with which, like schoolboys grown old, they sought out philosophers so that they might be shown the way to happiness, irritated Lucian, and many others with him."[40]

In the disciplines, one also begins with norms but one seeks to apply those norms through a normalizing process in which one renounces self-mastery and seeks to apply that norm in the regular way demanded by the scientific discourses of the discipline. The disciplines seek to apply these norms in standardized ways to their obedient and docile charges, giving individuals little freedom to alter, transform or even to interject themselves in the process of their own formation as subjects except to reject their own urge to interject themselves. Where the Greeks and Romans responded to norms with stylization, the disciplines took to normalization with the end result that subjectivity was constituted as a kind of permanent obedience to the norm in the regular way required by the scientific code. Foucault refers to this state as domination: "one sometimes encounters what may be called situations or states of domination in which the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen."[41]

## Implications of the Disciplinary Self-Relation and Conclusion

Keeping in view the relation of the self to itself, two of Foucault's pronouncements on disciplinary relations gain new dimension and sense. New clarification on these two statements by Foucault is especially helpful because their meaning is uncustomarily opaque. First, I would like to look at this quote, focusing on the last sentence, and see how an attunement to the self-relation within disciplinary relations sheds new light on it:

> From Antiquity to Christianity one passes from a morality that was essentially a search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. And if I have taken an interest in Antiquity, it is because, for a whole series of reasons, the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing, has already disappeared. To this

absence of a morality, one responds, or must respond, with an investigation which is that of an aesthetics of existence.[42]

Without the ethical genealogy of the disciplines that has been assembled in this essay, it would be hard to make full sense of this claim. Why must one respond to the loss of morality as a code with a study of the aesthetics of existence? It becomes clearer if one sees that as part of Christianity and disciplinary power relations, the code had to serve as the basis for how one applied social norms because of the low estimation of individuals' capacity to lead themselves and develop their own moral practice. If morality as adherence to moral code begins to whither, then one needs another way to apply the norms that seemingly every society has.[43] If we follow Foucault, we will have to agree that the aesthetics of existence has been the other major form of applying norms in the West, at least since antiquity. As I argued earlier, the aesthetics of existence works to apply norms based on a process of stylization in which the individual takes up the socially requisite norms and alters them into a memorable form "in which one could recognize oneself, be recognized by others, and in which even posterity could find an example."[44] The aesthetics of existence provides an alternative relation of the self to itself based on freedom and self-mastery, instead of self-renunciation and obedience. Dumm suggests that Foucault turns to antiquity precisely to gather resources for establishing a form of self-relation not based in self-renunciation, "Foucault's turn to ancient Greece and Rome is inspired by the search for an ethos concerning the body that would not be associated with the renunciation of the bodily being itself that is to be found in the sort of asceticism he had traced to the emergence of normalizing discourse."[45]

However, we should note that Foucault did not say that we must adopt the aesthetics of existence but only investigate it. This is for several reasons: First, ancient morality and its quest for self-mastery is also deeply implicated in many of the dominating aspects of our society. We should notice that the practice of self-mastery in antiquity results in the self dominating itself, with the rational part of the self dominating the other parts: "This principle of 'internal regulation' involves a

domination over oneself."[46] This ethical self-relation is not far from Christianity or disciplinary relations; after all, what happens when the individual is not seen as able to lead itself towards the good? Where will the force of domination come from if the self is not able to provide it? Whether one stands on the position that the subject can and should master itself or that it needs to be mastered by another who possesses the truth, one is still legitimizing the domination of the self in legitimizing self-mastery. Once one accepts self-mastery as a principle, it becomes a debate about who is the best agent of domination, the self or others? But it is already a foregone conclusion that the self must be dominated. It is likely that a new form of self-relation that wants to avoid the domination of the subject will also have to challenge basic assumptions about the role of self-mastery in moral life; challenges that Greco-Roman morality may not be able to muster.

Second, and more simply, Greco-Roman morality was set in its own unique historical context and functioned as part of that social reality; any morality today will have to establish connections with the present—connections that will inevitably shape and alter the morality. Politically and historically, the aesthetics of existence as the ancients practiced it is an insufficient response to the present; however, as an object of investigation and inspiration for a new moral practice, it might contain the promise that Foucault hoped in an example of a society that related to norms on something other than normalization grounded in self-renunciation and obedience. Although it does not seem wise to attempt a return of Greco-Roman morality *in toto*, the aesthetics of existence can hold promise in its stylizing approach to norms.

Likewise, the analysis of the disciplinary self-relation is also able to draw out similar implications in another persistently vague and opaque area of Foucault's thought. Foucault insisted at the end of *The History of Sexuality Volume I* that, "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures."[47] What interests me here is Foucault's insistence on pleasure as a rallying point for the resistance to the normalization of sexuality.

A focus on pleasure makes sense if one notices how disciplinary self-relations use pain to teach one to renounce oneself and turn to the expert "other" to provide guidance. Disciplinary power relations employ pain to turn individuals away from themselves and towards the "other" in order to find out how to stop the other from applying the pain. Pain typically only ends once the self becomes focused on the other for leadership and submits in self-renunciation. Foucault writes, "At the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism"—a small mechanism of pain, self-renunciation and, if successful, obedience.[48] Pain for the disciplines is a means towards achieving the end of self-renunciation and obedience.

To follow one's pleasures can turn that look for government back towards the self. Unlike the disciplinary use of pain, which was created, refined and applied by the other as a means to an end, the use of pleasure does not have its end or goal outside of itself. The use of pleasure is not just a reversal of the use of pain—a trading of the stick for the carrot—as if instead of using negative means to induce self-renunciation one would turn to more positive and pleasurable tactics to insure the same goal. Pleasure is used quite differently than pain in that it is an end in itself; a turn to pleasure is a turn to pleasure itself. The self-relation would be based on growing an attunement to one's own pleasures that would allow one to diversify, intensify, and even to render them more complex and nuanced. To base a process of subjectivization on pleasure is to abandon self-renunciation as the central mode of self-relation and to base a process of subjectivization on the cultivation and knowledge of one's pleasures; to turn to pleasure is to listen to oneself and one's pleasures as a source of leadership. Pleasure focuses one on oneself as a guide rather than on the pain that serves as a bridge to obedience and submission. The cultivation of one's pleasures would be much more likely to lead to an art of stylization, an idiosyncratic practice of developing and maturing one's capacities for self-leadership, something much more like the ancient art of

existence than the contemporary disciplining of the subject.

What both of these examples together reveal is the way that a focus on the self-relation in disciplinary power facilitates the development of individual strategies of resistance. After all, as Foucault notes, power is always a provocation to freedom; a focus on the work a self must do in order to discipline itself is a provocation to perform that work in some other way, threatening the subject's good "self-discipline." Revealing the prevalence of a code morality is a provocation to render oneself a subject through some other means and the use of pain as a means to secure self-renunciation and obedience invites reflections on how pain, self-renunciation, and obedience can be subverted or surpassed. Bringing the operation of power into explicit relief opens it to critique: "power is tolerable on the condition that it mask a considerable portion of itself."[49] But, to return to those critics that I addressed at the outset of this essay, it should be acknowledged that the later Foucault is no panacea. Certainly, the later work can help to develop an account of the work one must perform in order to render oneself a subject and drive new ways to perform one's own self-relation differently, but it is unquestionably important to alter one's relationships with others to change the present as well. Foucault's focus on truth and subjectivity is neither a replacement for an account of power and knowledge relations nor is it likely to sidestep the resistance that could be generated by a collectivity of individuals seeking to alter their relationships with one another. Choosing the later work over the earlier threatens to leave one with just the sort of one-dimensional account that many protested in Foucault's lack of focus on the individual in his middle genealogical work. Foucault's later work is situated on a different level than his earlier work, but it is not a "higher" level that can serve as a replacement of earlier accounts. What I hoped to have accomplished in this essay is to show how an account of the relationship of the self to itself in disciplinary power relations can expand the earlier account, bringing out a new dimension of analysis without replacing the old. This relatively unused level of ethical analysis was used to "intensify" the view of disciplinary relations through uncovering elements of its operation and providing for more robust opportunities for individual resistance.

In sum, this essay developed a new account of the work the self must perform on itself in disciplinary relations through the cultivation of resources from Foucault's later work. By tracing the ethical self-relation from Greco-Roman antiquity to the Benedictine monastery, I was able to provide insight into the relationship of self-renunciation that underlies disciplinary docility and obedience. This self-renunciation undermines individuals' ability to lead themselves and makes them reliant on another who has mastery of the truth by which the subject must be constituted. Disciplinary relations were thus seen to be doubly efficacious in producing relations of domination: they attempt to eliminate the self-leadership of the individual which not only undermines the individual's potential to resist; it leaves them in need of the dominating training that disciplinary relations institute. This insight into the activity of the individual in the production of their own docility was then used to clarify and develop aspects of two perennially enigmatic but powerful areas of Foucault's work, his focus on "bodies and pleasures" and his turn to the "aesthetics of existence."

## ENDNOTES

1. Charles Taylor, "Foucault, Freedom, and Truth," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 154–84; Eric Paras, *Foucault 2: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (New York: Other Press, 2002); Nancy Fraser, "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" *Ethics* 96 (1985):164–84.

2. Fraser, "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" 180.

3. Jeffrey Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Power and Its Intensifications Since 1984* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 8–9.

4. Ibid., 46.

5. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in

*Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1964–1983* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 327.

6. Michel Foucault, "The Concern for Truth," trans. Phillis Aranov and Dan McGrawth, in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, ed. Sylvève Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 459.

7. Michel Foucault, "The Return to Morality," trans. Colin Gordon, in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, 466.

8. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 162; *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Grahm Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 46.

9. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 159; "The Concern for Truth," 451.

10. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 6.

11. "The Subject and Power," 342.

12. "Ethics and the Concern for the Self," in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, 225.

13. David Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Post-structuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 70.

14. "The Subject and Power," 326, 327.

15. *Security, Territory, Population*, 46.

16. *Discipline and Punish*, 162.

17. For a closer view of how Foucault relates the monastery to the disciplines, see ibid., 137, 140–43, 146, 149, 150, 154, 160–62, 172, 179, 238.

18. *Security, Territory, Population*, 47.

19. Daniel Marcel La Corte, "Introduction" to *Regular Life: Monastic Canonical, and Mendicant Rules*, ed. Daniel Marcel La Corte (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 5.

20. *History of Sexuality Volume II*, 30.

21. Iibd., 38.

22. Ibid., 78.

23. Ibid., 79.

24. Michael Clifford, *Political Genealogy After Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 68.

25. "The Concern for Truth," 439.

26. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Anthony Meisel and M. L. del Mastro (Garden City: Image Books, 1975), 105–06

27. Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–82*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 300.

28. Michel Foucault, "An Aesthetics of Existence," in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, 451.

29. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, 43.

30. *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 250.

31. Ibid. 485.

32. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, 57–58.

33. Ibid., 55.

34. *Discipline and Punish*, 169.

35. Ibid., 304.

36. Ibid., 169.

37. *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, 53–54.

38. *The History of Sexuality Volume II*, 253.

39. "An Aesthetics of Existence," 451.

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41. "The Concern for Truth," 434.

42. "An Aesthetics of Existence," 451.

43. Brent Pickett, *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

44. "An Aesthetics of Existence, 451.

45. Thomas Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 137–38.

46. Keith Robinson, *Michel Foucault and the Freedom of Thought* (Lewiston, ME: Edward Mellen, 2001), 218.

47. *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, 157. For a wider ranging reading of this phrase, see Ladelle McWhorter's excellent exegesis and development of this phrase in *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalizations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 176–92. For myself, I remain confined here to the specific insights this study can generate around this enigmatic phrase.

48. *Discipline and Punish*, 177.

49. *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, 86.

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