THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

Original citation:
Ansell-Pearson, Keith. (2014) Care of self in Dawn : on Nietzsche's resistance to biopolitical modernity. In: Knoll, Manuel and Stocker, Barry, (eds.) Nietzsche as Political Philosopher. Nietzsche Today (3). Berlin : De Gruyter, pp. 169-287.
Permanent WRAP url:
http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/73141

Copyright and reuse:
The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work of researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.
Publisher's statement:
The chapter was first published in 2014 by De Gruyter.
http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/247716
A note on versions:
The version presented in WRAP is the published version or, version of record, and may be cited as it appears here.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: publications@warwick.ac.uk

warwickpublicationswrap
highlight your research

http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/

Keith Ansell-Pearson

Care of Self in *Dawn*: On Nietzsche's Resistance to Bio-political Modernity

The middle period writings (1878–82) are without doubt the most heavily neglected texts in Nietzsche's corpus, especially the two volumes of *Human, all too Human* and *Dawn*. How should they be read? The question is a difficult one to answer given the multifaceted and multi-layered character of the works in question. One can find different philosophical resources in them, including a naturalist agenda and anticipations of phenomenology. I think one especially productive way to read the texts I am referring to is as works of "resistance". In this essay I examine aspects of *Dawn*, from 1881, in the light of this theme of resistance. In these neglected texts we encounter a Nietzsche preoccupied with the care of self and in opposition to the fundamental disciplinary tendencies of bio-political modernity. What intrigues me about the text *Dawn*, for example, are the rarely examined references in the book to "commercial society" and "security". There is a socio-political backdrop to the work and to Nietzsche's attack on the presumptions of morality. This is not to say that Nietzsche is a political thinker in *Dawn*; it would be much more incisive to describe his project at this time as one of an ethics of resistance. "Our age", Nietzsche writes at one point in the text, "no matter how much it talks and talks about economy, is a squanderer: it squanders what is most precious, spirit" (D 179). Nietzsche succinctly articulates his concern in the following manner: "Political and economic affairs are not worthy of being the enforced concern of society's most gifted spirits: such a wasteful use of the spirit is at bottom worse than having none at all" (D 179). Today, he goes on to note, everyone feels obliged to know what is going on every day to the point of neglecting their own work or therapy and in order to feel part of things, and "the whole arrangement has become a great and ludicrous piece of insanity" (D 179). The therapy Nietzsche is proposing in *Dawn* is, then, directed at those solitary free spirits who exist on the margin or fringes of society and seek to cultivate or fashion new ways of thinking and feeling, attempting to do this by taking the time necessary to work through their experiences.

In *Dawn* Nietzsche employs a care of self as a way of taking to task what he identifies as some worrying developments in modern society. We can describe Nietzsche, like Foucault, as a modern-day virtue ethicist who seeks "to liberate the capacity of individual self-choice and personal self-formation from oppressive conformism…" (Ingram 2003, p. 240) This is the set of concerns I wish to explore in this essay.

I

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche informs his readers that his "campaign" against morality begins in earnest with *Dawn* and he adds that we should not smell gunpowder at work here but, provided we have the necessary subtlety in our nostrils, more pleasant odours. I think Nietzsche is here drawing the reader's attention to something important, namely, the fact that he wants to open up the possibility of plural ways of being, including plural ways of being moral or ethical. His act is not one of simple wanton destruction.

The "campaign" against morality centres largely on a critique of what Nietzsche sees as the modern tendency, the tendency of his own century, to identify morality with the sympathetic affects, especially *Mitleid*, so as to give us a definition of morality. Nietzsche has specific arguments against the value accorded to these affects, but he also wants to advocate the view that there are several ways of living morally or ethically and the morality he wants to defend is what we can call an ethics of self-cultivation. At one point in *Dawn* he writes: "You say that the morality of being compassionate is a higher morality [*Moral*] than that of Stoicism? Prove it! But remember that what is 'higher' and 'lower' in morality is not, in turn to be measured by a moral yardstick: for there is no absolute morality [*Moral*]. So take your rule from somewhere else – and now beware!" (D 139) With regards to the modern prejudice, which is one of the main foci of his polemic in the book, here there is the presumption that we know what actually constitutes morality: "It seems to do every single person good these days to hear that society is on the road to adapting the individual to fit the needs of the throng and that the individual's happiness as well as his sacrifice consist in feeling himself to be a useful member of the whole..." (D 132) As Nietzsche sees it, then, the modern emphasis is on defining the moral in terms the sympathetic affects and compassion (*Mitleid*). We can, he thinks, explain the modern in terms of a movement towards managing more cheaply, safely, and uniformly individuals in terms of "large bodies and their limbs". This, he says, is "the basic moral current of our age": "Everything that in some way supports both this drive to form bodies and limbs and its abetting drives is felt to be good" (D 132)

Nietzsche's main target in the book is what he sees as the fundamental tendency of modern "commercial society" and its attempt at a "collectivity-building project that aims at disciplining bodies and selves and integrating them into a uniform whole" (Ure 2006, p. 88). Here "morality" denotes the means of adapting the individual to the needs of the whole, making him a useful member of society. This requires that every individual is made to feel, as its primary emotion, a connectedness or bondedness with the whole, with

society, in which anything truly individual is regarded as prodigal, costly, inimical, extravagant, and so on. Nietzsche's great worry is that a healthy concern with self-fashioning will be sacrificed and this, in large part, informs his critique of what he sees as the cult of the sympathetic affects within modernity. For Nietzsche it is necessary to contest the idea that there is a single moral-making morality since every code of ethics that affirms itself in an exclusive manner "destroys too much valuable energy and costs humanity much too dearly" (D 164). In the future, Nietzsche hopes, the inventive and fructifying person shall no longer be sacrificed and "numerous novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society" (D 164). When this takes place we will find that an enormous load of guilty conscience has been purged from the world. Humanity has suffered for too long from teachers of morality who wanted too much all at once and sought to lay down precepts for everyone (D 194). In the future, care will need to be given to the most personal questions and create time for them (D 196). Small individual questions and experiments are no longer to be viewed with contempt and impatience (D 547). In place of what he sees as the ruling ethic of sympathy, which he thinks can assume the form of a "tyrannical encroachment", Nietzsche invites individuals to engage in self-fashioning, cultivating a self that others can look at with pleasure and that still gives vent to the expression, albeit in a subtle and delicate manner, of an altruistic drive:

> Moral fashion of a commercial society — Behind the fundamental principle of the contemporary moral fashion: 'moral actions are generated by sympathy [*Sympathie*] for others', I see the work of a collective drive toward timidity masquerading behind an intellectual front: this drive desires... that life be rid of all the dangers it once held and that each and every person should help toward this end with all one's might: therefore only actions aimed at the common security and at society's sense of security may be accorded the rating 'good!' — How little pleasure people take in themselves these days, however, when such a tyranny of timidity dictates to them the uppermost moral law [*Sittengesetz*], when, without so much as a protest, they let themselves be commanded to ignore and look beyond themselves and yet have eagle-eyes for every distress and every suffering existing elsewhere! Are we not, with this prodigious intent to grate off all the rough and sharp edges from life, well on the way to turning humanity into sand? ... In the meantime, the question itself remains open as to whether one is more useful to another by immediately and constantly leaping to his side and helping him — which can, in any case, only transpire very superficially, provided the help doesn't turn into a tyrannical encroachment and transformation — or by fashioning out of oneself something the other will behold with pleasure, a lovely, peaceful, self-enclosed garden, for instance, with high walls to protect against the dangers and dust of the roadway, but with a hospitable gate as well (D 174).

Nietzsche appears to have been exposed to the term "commercial society" from his reading of Taine's history of English literature (Taine 1906, p. 191). As one

commentator notes, those who favoured commercial society, such as the French *philosophes*, including thinkers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu, held that by "establishing bonds among people and making life more comfortable, commerce softens and refines people's manners and promotes humaneness and civility" (Rasmussen 2008, p. 18). It is clear that in the aphorism I have just cited Nietzsche is expressing an anxiety that other nineteenth century social analysts, such as Tocqueville, have, namely, that market-driven atomization and de-individuation can readily lead to a form of communitarian tyranny (Ure 2006, p. 82). Unknown to ourselves we live within the effect of general opinions about "the human being", which is a "bloodless abstraction" and "fiction" (D 105). Even the modern glorification of work and talk of its blessings can be interpreted as a fear of everything individual. The subjection to hard industriousness from early until late serves as "the best policeman" since it keeps everyone in bounds and hinders the development of reason, desire, and the craving for independence. It uses vast amounts of nervous energy which could be given over to reflection, brooding, dreaming, loving and hating and working through our experiences: "...a society in which there is continuous hard work will have more security [*Sicherheit*]: and security is currently worshipped as the supreme divinity" (D 173). We are today creating a society of "universal security" but the price being paid of it is, Nietzsche thinks, much too high: "the maddest thing is that what is being effected is the very opposite of universal security" (D 179).

Perhaps Nietzsche's fundamental presupposition in the book is that ours is an age of great uncertainty in which there are emerging individuals who no longer consider themselves to be bound by existing mores and laws and are thus making the first attempts to organize and create for themselves a right. Hitherto such individuals have lived their lives under the jurisdiction of a guilty conscience, being decried as criminals, freethinkers, and immoralists (D 164). Although this development will make the coming century a precarious one (it may mean, Nietzsche notes, that a rifle hangs on each and every shoulder), it is one that Nietzsche thinks we should find fitting and good since it at least ensures the presence of an oppositional power that will admonish that there is any such thing as a single moral-making morality.

Nietzsche's statements on security seem to describe our present-day reality to an uncanny degree. In a recent "critique" of security Mark Neocleous has claimed that today our entire political language and culture is saturated by "security"; indeed, everywhere we look we see being articulated the so-called need for it (Neocleous 2008, p. 3). Moreover, a prevailing assumption is that such security is a good thing, something fundamentally necessary in spite of all interrogations of it. The common assumption is that only security today is

able to guarantee our freedom and the good society, and the main issue on the agenda is how to improve the power of the State so it can secure us better. But, then we need to ask some critical questions. As Neocleous bravely puts it, what if at the heart of the logic of security there lays not a vision of emancipation, but rather "a means of modelling the whole of human society around a particular vision of human order? What if security is little more than a semantic and semiotic black hole allowing authority to inscribe itself deeply into human experience?" (Neocleous 2008, p. 4)

The critique of security would see security not as a universal or transcendental value, but rather as an exercise in political technology that shapes and orders individuals, groups, classes, as well as capital. It would contest the "necessity" of security that appears obvious and natural, and that aims to close off all opposition, so remaining "unquestioned, unanalysed and undialectically presupposed, rather like the order which it is expected to secure" (Neocleous 2008, p. 7). Neocleous speaks of resisting the course of a world that continues to hold a gun to the heads of human beings. Although Nietzsche responds to the crisis of security as he saw it in his own time by appealing to the need for everyone to carry their own gun, his point is one largely made in jest. More seriously, he recognizes the fundamental bio-political tendencies of modernity and the way they will impact on individuals, leading ultimately to a political technology of control and discipline and expressed in the name of our welfare and "security".

The morality Nietzsche wants to subject to critique refers to certain ways and habits of thinking, including the morality that is part of our modern self-image of ourselves (as moral agents), and that lacks intellectual conscience and integrity. Morality as we moderns conceive it gives our attempts at self-mastery a bad conscience and infuses our behaviour with guilt. (a) It is supposed that morality must have a universally binding character in which there is a single morality valid for all in all circumstances and for all occasions. Morality expects a person to be dutiful, obedient, self-sacrificing in their core and at all times: this demands ascetic self-denial and is a form of refined cruelty. (b) Ethicists such as Kant and Schopenhauer suppose that it provides us with insight into the true, metaphysical character of the world and existence. For example, in Schopenhauer virtue is "practical mysticism" which is said to spring from the same knowledge that constitutes the essence of all mysticism. For Schopenhauer, therefore, metaphysics is virtue translated into action and proceeds from the immediate and intuitive knowledge of the identity of all beings. (c) It is supposed we have an adequate understanding of moral agency, e.g. that we have properly identified moral motives and located the sources of moral agency. The opposite for Nietzsche is, in fact, the case: we almost entire-

ly lack knowledge in moral matters. (d) It is supposed we can make a clear separation between good virtues and evil vices but for Nietzsche the two are reciprocally conditioning: all good things have arisen out of dark roots through sublimation and spiritualization and they continue to feed off such roots.

It is important we appreciate that Nietzsche is not in *Dawn* advocating the overcoming of all possible forms of morality. Where morality centres on "continually exercised self-mastery and self-overcoming in both large and the smallest of things," he champions it (WS 45). His concern is that "morality" in the forms it has assumed in the greater part of human history, right up to Kant's moral law, has opened up an abundance of sources of displeasure and to the point that one can say that with every "refinement in morality" (*Sittlichkeit*) human beings have grown "more and more dissatisfied with themselves, their neighbour, and their lot…" (D 106) The individual in search of happiness, and who wishes to become its own lawgiver, cannot be treated with prescriptions to the path to happiness simply because individual happiness springs from one's own unknown laws and external prescriptions only serve to obstruct and hinder it: "The so-called 'moral' precepts are, in truth, directed against individuals and are in no way aimed at promoting their happiness" (D 108). Indeed, Nietzsche himself does not intend to lay down precepts for everyone. As he writes, "One should seek out limited circles and seek and promote the morality appropriate to them" (D 194). Here there are links to be made between Nietzsche and Foucault regards an ethics of the care of self.

II

Before turning to an explicit examination of the idea of the care of self in Nietzsche, and to see how he mounts a resistance to disciplinary modernity, let me first outline some salient features of Foucault's account of this task and project.

For Foucault self-cultivation takes the form of an 'art of existence' – a *techne tou biou* – and is guided by the principle that one must 'take care of oneself' (Foucault 1986, p. 43). Foucault claims that care of self (*epimeleia heautou*, *cura sui*) is a Socratic notion or one that Socrates consecrates (Foucault 1986, p. 44; see also Foucault 2005, pp. 6f.). However, it only becomes a universal philosophical theme in the Hellenistic period, being promoted by the likes of Epicurus, the Cynics, and Stoics such as Seneca. According to Foucault, the Delphic injunction to know one's self was subordinated to self-care. He gives several examples from the literature to vindicate his core thesis, including Epicurus's letter to Menoeceus, a text in which it is stated that it is never too early or too late to occupy oneself with oneself: "Teachings about everyday life were

organized around taking care of oneself in order to help every member of the group with the mutual work of salvation" (Foucault 1988, p. 21; see also Foucault 1986, p. 46). For Foucault it is in Epictetus that we find the highest philosophical development of the theme of care of self. For Epictetus the human is destined to care for itself and is where the basic difference between the human and other creatures resides. Moreover, for Epictetus the care of self "is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence" (Foucault 1986, p. 47). For Foucault the care of self is not constituted as an exercise in solitude but as a "true social practice" (Foucault 1986, p. 51). He is keen to stress that the "conversion to self" entails the experience of a pleasure that one takes in oneself:

> This pleasure, for which Seneca usually employs the word *gaudium* or *laetitia*, is a state that is neither accompanied nor followed by any form of disturbance in the body or the mind. It is defined by the fact of not being caused by anything that is independent of ourselves and therefore escapes our control. It arises out of ourselves and within ourselves. (Foucault 1986, p. 66)

For Foucault the contrast to be made is with *voluptas* which denotes a pleasure whose origin resides outside us and in objects whose presence we cannot be sure of (a pleasure that is precarious in itself). What Foucault is delineating here resonates, I think, with the "joy of existing" Nietzsche seeks to restore in his middle period as a central concern of a post-metaphysical philosophy and after two centuries of training by morality and religion (see WS 86). However, this tradition has become obscure to us today and we can account for this obscurity in terms of several developments. Foucault notes that there has been a deep transformation in the moral principles of Western society. We find it difficult to base a morality of austere principles on the precept that we should give ourselves more care than anything else in the world. Rather, we are inclined to see taking care of ourselves as an immorality and as a means of escape from all possible rules. We have inherited the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation. Here, "to know oneself was paradoxically the way to self-renunciation" (Foucault 1988, p. 22). Such is our assimilation of this morality of self-denial, to the point where we identify it as the domain of morality in and for itself, that the kind of morality pursued by the ancients strikes us today as an exercise in moral dandyism (see Foucault 2005, p. 12). As Foucault notes, we have the paradox of a precept of care of self that signifies for us today either egoism or withdrawal, but which for centuries was a positive principle, serving as the matrix for dedicated moralities. Christianity and the modern world have based the codes of moral

strictness on a morality of non-egoism to the point where we forget that such codes originated in an environment marked by the obligation to take care of oneself.

We can note here: Nietzsche, at least in the popular imagination, is taken to be an immoralist in the crude sense identified by Foucault when, on the contrary, he needs to be read as an ethical thinker in the way Foucault thinks we have forgotten ethics. We have developed a bad conscience over an ethics centred on self-care and regard self-renunciation as the basis of morality. We are the inheritors of a secular tradition that sees in external law the basis for morality and this morality is one of asceticism or denial of the self. As Nietzsche astutely points out, if we examine what is often taken to be the summit of the moral in philosophy – the mastery of the affects – we find that there is pleasure to be taken in this mastery. I can impress myself by what I can deny, defer, resist, and so on. It is through this mastery that I grow and develop. And yet morality, as we moderns have come to understand it, would have to give this ethical self-mastery a bad conscience. If we take as our criterion of the moral to be self-sacrificing resolution and self-denial, we would have to say, if being honest, that such acts are not performed strictly for the sake of others; my own fulfilment and pride are at work and the other provides the self with an opportunity to relieve itself through self-denial.

Among the Greeks practices of self-cultivation took the form of a precept, "to take care of self". This precept was a principal rule for social and personal conduct and for the art of life. This is not what we ordinarily think when we think of the ancient Greeks: we imagine that they were ruled by the precept, "Know thyself" (*gnothi seauton*). Why have we moderns forgotten the original precept of take care of the self and why has it been obscured by the Delphic injunction? In modern philosophy from Descartes to Husserl knowledge of the self, or the thinking subject, takes an on an ever-increasing importance as the first key step in the theory of knowledge. Foucault thinks we moderns have thus inverted what was the hierarchy in the two main principles of antiquity: for the Greeks knowledge was subordinated to ethics (centred on self-care) whereas for us knowledge is what is primary. But even the Delphic principle was not an abstract one concerning life; rather, it was technical advice meaning something like, "do not suppose yourself to be a god" or "be aware of what you really ask when you come to consult the oracle".

Two key points are worth making here. First, Foucault insists that taking care of one's self does not simply mean being interested in oneself or having an attachment to or fascination with the self. Rather, "it describes a sort of work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, technique" (Foucault 1997, p. 269). Second, regarding the taking care aspect, Foucault stresses that the

Greek word – *epimeleisthai* – designates not simply a mental attitude, a certain form of attention, or a way of not forgetting something. He points out that its etymology refers to a series of words such as *meletan* and *melete*, and "meletan", for example, means to practice and train (often coupled with the verb *gumnazein*). So, the *meletai* are exercises, such as gymnastic and military ones. Thus, the Greek "taking care" refers to a form of vigilant, continuous, and applied activity more than it does to a mental attitude.

III

Foucault contends that in Greek ethics we find a focus on moral conduct, on relations to oneself and others, rather than a focus on religious problems such as what is our fate after death? What are the gods and do they intervene in life or not? For the Greeks, Foucault argues, these were not significant problems and not directly related to conduct. What they were concerned about was to constitute an ethics that was an "aesthetics of existence". Foucault thinks we may in a similar situation to the Greek today "since most of us no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion" (Foucault 1997, p. 255). For him the general Greek problem was not the *tekhne* of the self but that of life, "*tekhne tou biou*, or how to live. It's quite clear from Socrates to Seneca or Pliny, for instance, that they didn't worry about the afterlife, what happened after death, or whether God exists or not. That was not really a great problem for them; the problem was: Which *tekhne* do I have to use in order to live well as I ought to live?" (Foucault, 1997, p. 260) More and more he thinks over time this *tekhne tou biou* became one of the self, so whereas a Greek citizen of say the fifth century would have felt his *tekhne* of life was to take care of the city and his companions, by the time of Seneca the problem is to primarily take care of himself. This taking care of the self for its own sake is something that starts with the Epicureans.

This is remarkably similar to how Nietzsche presents the issue of ethical life in the free spirit period where he suggests we need to cultivate an attitude of indifference with respect to the first and last things. In *Dawn* he explicitly appeals to Epicurus and Epictetus as thinkers who present a model of ethics quite different to what we have inherited through Christianity and modern secularism.

Ruth Abbey is one commentator who has drawn attention to the centrality of an ethics of care of self in Nietzsche's middle period. This centres on a concern for quotidian minutiae, attention to individualized goods, and an aware-

ness of the close connection between psyche and physique (Abbey 2000, p. 102). For Nietzsche, as Abbey notes, the small, daily practices of care of self are undervalued (Abbey 2000, p. 99). In modern culture we can detect, Nietzsche writes, a "feigned contempt for all the things that humans really take to be most important, all the nearest things" (WS 5). As Abbey further notes, in devaluing the small, worldly matters Christian and post-Christian sensibility, "puts people at war with themselves and forbids a close study of which forms of care of the self would be most conducive to individual flourishing" (Abbey 2000, p. 99). As Nietzsche notes, most people see the closest things badly and rarely pay heed to them, whilst "to be ignorant in the smallest and most everyday things and not to have a keen eye – that is what makes the world into a 'pasture of troubles' for so many people" (WS 6). Nietzsche goes on to name Socrates as a key figure in the history of thought who defended himself against this "arrogant neglect" of the human for the benefit of the human race (D 9). Nietzsche argues: "...our continual offences against the simplest laws of the body and spirit bring all of us, young and old, into a shameful dependency and unfreedom...upon doctors, teachers and pastors, whose pressure now lies constantly upon all of society" (WS 5). All the physical and psychical frailties of the individual derive from a lack of knowledge about the smallest and most everyday things, such as what is beneficial to us and what is harmful to us in the institution of our mode of life, in the division of the day, eating, sleeping, and reflecting, and so on.

For Foucault the principle of the care of self allows for variation: in Plato's Alcibiades care of self "refers to an active political and erotic state", but in the Hellenistic and Roman periods the care of self has become a universal principle and politics is left to one side as so to take better care of the self (Foucault 1988, p. 24 and Foucault 1988, p. 31). How does *Dawn* fit into this schema as a nineteenth century work of resistance? It is worth here making a comment on the diagnosis that informs Nietzsche's social critique in *Dawn*. Nietzsche laments the development he sees taking place where old Europe is being infected by the distinctive vice of the new world, the work ethic, which spreads "a lack of spirituality" like a blanket (GS 329). Such is Nietzsche's concern that he thinks that people are becoming frugal with regard to joy, increasingly suspicious of it, and with work enlisting a good conscience on its side to the point where "the desire for joy calls itself a 'need to recuperate'" (GS 329). He wonders whether we shall soon reach a point "where people can no longer give in to the desire for a vita contemplativa...without self-contempt and a bad conscience" (GS 329; see also D 178). Nietzsche notes that the modern culture of a society is the "soul" of commerce, as the personal contest was for the Greeks and war and victory was for the Romans: "The man engaged in commerce

understands how to appraise everything without having made it, and to appraise it according to the needs of the consumer… 'who and how many will consume this?' is his question of questions" (D 175). This mode of appraisal then gets applied, Nietzsche notes anxiously, to everything, including the productions of the arts and sciences, of thinkers, scholars, artists, statesmen, etc, so becoming the character of an entire culture.

It is certain that Nietzsche sought to found a philosophical school modelled on Epicurus's garden. In a letter of 26 March 1879 he asks Peter Gast: "Where are we going to renew the garden of Epicurus?" (KSB 5, p. 399) For commentators such as Horst Hutter, Nietzsche's ultimate goal is the shaping of the future of European humanity and society, and on this conception of his philosophy the retreat into an Epicurean-inspired community of friends is merely a temporary expedient in which free spirits work on themselves so as to become philosophical legislators of a future culture. As Hutter has written, "such fraternities of free spirits would be necessary to traverse the period of nihilism until a future point in time, when direct political action would again become possible" (Hutter 2006, p. 5). One thinks in this regard of what Nietzsche notes in *The Wanderer and his Shadow* when he says that free spirits withdraw into concealment but not out of any kind of personal ill-humour, as though the present social and political situation was not good enough for them; rather, it is that through withdrawal they wish to economize and assemble forces of which culture will one day have great need: "We are accumulating capital and seeking to make it secure: but, as in times of great peril, to do that we have to bury it" (WS 229).

IV

Let me now turn to illuminating the reception of Epicurus and Epictetus we find in *Dawn* and in Nietzsche's middle period in general.

What appeals to Nietzsche about Epicurus is the teaching on mortality and the general attempt to liberate the mind from unjustified fears and anxieties. If, as Pierre Hadot has suggested, philosophical therapeutics is centred on a concern with the healing of our own lives so as to return us to the joy of existing (Hadot 1995, p. 87), then in the texts of his middle period Nietzsche can be seen to be an heir to this ancient tradition. Indeed, if there is one crucial component to Nietzsche's philosophical therapeutics in the texts of his middle period that he keeps returning to again and again it is the need for spiritual joyfulness and the task of cultivating in ourselves, after centuries of training by mo-

rality and religion, the joy in existing. In the final aphorism of *The Wanderer and his Shadow* Nietzsche writes, for example:

> Only to the ennobled human being may the freedom of spirit be given; to him alone does alleviation of life draw nigh and salve his wounds; he is the first who may say that he lives for the sake of joyfulness [*Freudigkeit*] and for the sake of no further goal... (WS 350)

In the middle period, then, Epicurus is an attractive figure for Nietzsche because of the attention given to the care of self, and also because he conceives philosophy not as a theoretical discourse but one that, first and foremost, is a kind of practical activity aimed at the attainment of eudemonia or the flourishing life (Young 2010, pp. 279ff.). Nietzsche wants free spirits to take pleasure in existence, involving taking pleasure in themselves and in friendship. Nietzsche is keen to encourage human beings to cultivate an attitude towards existence in which they accept their mortality and attain serenity about their dwelling on the earth, to conquer unjustified fears, and to reinstitute the role played by chance and chance events in the world and in human existence (see D 13, 33, 36; see also Hadot 1995, pp. 87, 223, 252).

At this time Nietzsche is committed to a philosophical therapeutics in which the chief aim is to temper emotional and mental excess. One might contend that there is an Epicurean inspiration informing Nietzsche's actual philosophical practice at this time. According to one commentator, Epicurean arguments "have a clear therapeutic intent: by removing false beliefs concerning the universe and the ways in which the gods might be involved in its workings, they eliminate a major source of mental trouble and lead us towards a correct and beneficial conception of these matters" (Tsouna 2009, pp. 257f.). In part, Nietzsche conceived the art of the maxim in therapeutic terms. The modern age has forgotten the art of reflection or observation, in which it is possible to gather maxims "from the thorniest and least gratifying stretches of our lives" so as to make ourselves feel better, to give ourselves a lift and a tonic. We can return to life revivified rather than depressed from our encounter with thorny problems, and with "presence of mind in difficult situations and amusement in tedious surroundings" (HH I: 38). There is a need, therefore, for modern spirits to learn how to derive pleasure from the art of the maxim, from its construction to its tasting. Nietzsche notes that it is virtually impossible to say whether the inquiry into the "human, all too human" will work more as a blessing than a curse to the welfare of humanity; at any rate, and for the time being, the issue is undecided. He further notes that because science, like nature, does not aim at final ends, any fruitfulness in the way of promoting the welfare of humanity will be the result of science's attaining something purposeful without having willed it. But where science is needed now, as part of

a general therapeutic practice of reflection and observation, is in tempering the human mind: "shouldn't we, the more spiritual human beings of an age that is visibly catching fire in more and more places, have to grasp all available means for quenching and cooling, so that we will remain at least as steady… and moderate as we are now…" (HH I: 38) The illnesses and neuroses we encounter in humanity require that "ice-packs" be placed on them (HH I: 38). Nietzsche speaks of the "over-excitation" of our "nervous and thinking powers" reaching a dangerous critical point in our present and notes that "the cultivated classes of Europe have in fact become thoroughly neurotic" (HH I: 244). This concern with a cooling down of the human mind continues in *Dawn* where Nietzsche's makes even more explicit his concern with the spread of fanaticism in moral and religious thinking (see D 50).

In the middle period, then, Epicurus is one of Nietzsche's chief inspirations in his effort to liberate himself from the metaphysical need, to find serenity within his own existence, and to aid humanity in its need to now cure its neuroses. Epicureanism, along with science in general, serves to make us "colder and more sceptical," helping to cool down "the fiery stream of belief in ultimate definitive truths," a stream that has grown so turbulent through Christianity (HH I: 244). The task, Nietzsche says, is to live in terms of "a constant spiritual joyfulness [*Freudigkeit*]" (HH I: 292) and to prize "the three good things": grandeur, repose or peace, and sunlight, in which these things answer to thoughts that elevate, thoughts that quieten, thoughts that enlighten, and, finally, "to thoughts that share in all three of these qualities, in which everything earthly comes to be transfigured: that is the realm where the great trinity of joy rules [*Freude*]" (WS 332).

I have mentioned Nietzsche's concern with religious and moral fanaticism in *Dawn*. Nietzsche's search for a non-fanatical (*nicht fanatisch*) mode of living leads him to the Stoic Epictetus. Although this ancient thinker was a slave, the exemplar he invokes is without class and is possible in every class. He serves as a counterweight to modern idealists who are greedy for expansion. Epictetus's ideal human being, lacking all fear of God and believing rigorously in reason, "is not a preacher of penitence" (D 546). He has a pride in himself that does not wish to trouble and encroach on others: "he admits a certain mild rapprochement and does not wish to spoil anyone's good mood – Yes, he can smile! There is a great deal of ancient humanity in this ideal!" (D 546) The Epictetean is self-sufficient, "defends himself against the outside world" and "lives in a state of highest valor" (D 546). Nietzsche offers this portrait of the Epictetean as a point of contrast to the Christian. The Christian lives in hope (and in the consolation of "unspeakable glories" to come) and allows himself to be given gifts, expecting the best of life not to come from himself and his

own resources but from divine love and grace. By contrast Epictetus "does not hope and does allow his best to be given him – he possesses it, he holds it valiantly in his hand, and he would take on the whole world if it tries to rob him of it" (D 546). This portrait of Epictetus contra the Christian provides us with a set of invaluable insights into how Nietzsche conceives the difference between fanatical and non-fanatical modes of living: one way of life is self-sufficient and finds its pride in this, renouncing hope and living in the present; the other devotes itself to living through and for others, its attention is focused on the future (as that which is to come), and it lacks the quiet and calm dignity of self-sufficiency that is the Epictetean ideal.

Epictetus is also admired by Nietzsche on account of his dedication to his own ego and for resisting the glorification of thinking and living for others (D 131). Of course, this is a partial and selective appropriation of Epictetus on Nietzsche's part. Although his chief concerns are with integrity and self-command, Epictetus is also known for his Stoic cosmopolitanism in which individuals have an obligation to care for their fellow human beings, and Nietzsche is silent about this aspect of Stoic teaching. Nevertheless, it is true that the ethical outlook of Epictetus does invite people "to value their individual selves over everything else," (Long 2002, p. 3) and for Nietzsche he serves as a useful contrast to Christian thinkers such as Pascal, who considered the ego to be something hateful:

> If, as Pascal and Christianity claim, our ego [*Ich*] is always hateful, how might we possibly ever allow or assume that someone else could love it — be it God or a human being! It would go against all decency to let oneself be loved knowing full well that one only deserves hate — not to mention other feelings of repulsion. — 'But this is precisely the kingdom of mercy'. — So is your love-thy-neighbour mercy? Your compassion mercy? Well, if these things are possible for you, go still one step further: love yourselves out of mercy — then you won't need your God any more at all, and the whole drama of original sin and redemption will play itself out to the end in you yourselves (D 79).

Nietzsche wishes to replace morality, including the morality of compassion, with a care of self. We go wrong when we fail to attend to the needs of the "ego" and flee from it. We can stick to the idea that benevolence and beneficence are what constitute a good person, but such a person must first be benevolently and beneficently disposed towards themselves. A "bad" person is one that runs from himself and hates himself, causing injury to himself. Such a person is rescuing himself from himself in others, and this running from the ego (*ego*) living in others, for others "has, heretofore, been called, just as unreflectedly as assuredly, "unegotistical" *and consequently* "good"! (D 516) Such passages clearly indicate, I think, that Nietzsche has what I am crediting him with in *Dawn*, namely, an intimate concern with the care of self.

V

In the interview entitled "On the Genealogy of Ethics" Foucault says:

> What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (Foucault 1997, p. 261)

Foucault is keen to say that what he's advocating here is not the Californian cult of the self and neither is the heroic freedom of Sartrean existentialism. Both have major flaws for him. He likes to give the example of the Stoics as an alternative: "the experience of the self is not a discovering of a truth hidden inside the self but an attempt to determine what one can and cannot do with one's available freedom" (Foucault 1997, p. 276). He tells us that he's suspicious of the notion of "liberation" since it suggests a self that is repressed and waiting to be liberated beneath the layers of social and historical determination. He makes clear his conception of freedom as ethos in his account of how the Greeks problematized the freedom of the individual as an ethical problem. Here the word "ethical" denotes a way of being and behaviour. Somebody's ethos is evident in their clothing, appearance, gait, and in the calm with which they respond to every event. Thus, a human being possessed of a splendid ethos, who could be admired and put forward as an example, was someone who practised freedom in a certain way. However, extensive work by the self on the self is required for this practice of freedom to take shape in an ethos that can be said to be beautiful, honourable, estimable, memorable, and exemplary.

For Foucault the elaboration of one's own life as a personal work of art was at the centre of moral experiences in antiquity (even if it conformed to certain collective canons or practices). In Christianity by contrast, with the religion of the text, the idea of the will of God, and the principle of obedience, morality increasingly took on the form of a code of rules. From antiquity to Christianity we pass from a morality that was primarily the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. Foucault holds that for a whole series of reasons the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing and this absence of morality is to be replaced with the search for an aesthetics of existence (Foucault 1990, p. 49).

With respect to this idea of an "aesthetics of existence", this is one area where Foucault's work has invited much criticism. He has been accused of retreating in his late work into an amoral aesthetics, privileging an elitist notion of self-centred stylization, and undermining possibilities of emancipatory politics. Johanna Oksala is a recent defender of Foucault: she argues that his

ethics-as-aesthetics needs to be understood first and foremost as a continuation of his permanent questioning of the limits of subjectivity and the possibilities of crossing them. Foucault's ethics thus represent an attempt to seek ways of living and thinking that are transgressive and, like a work of art, are not simply the product of normalizing power. For Oksala one way to contest normalizing power is by shaping one's self and one's lifestyle creatively and the exploration of possibilities for new forms of subjectivity, new fields of experiences, pleasures, modes of living and thinking. She thus argues that the quest for freedom which characterises Foucault's late work is a question of developing forms of subjectivity that are capable of functioning as resistance to normalizing power. This concern on his part can even enable us to understand better the importance of the ancient practices of the self for Foucault. As he stresses, we cannot find in Stoic ethics the attempt to normalize and there is no attempt to normalize the population. Rather, it was, says Foucault, a matter of personal choice, making the choice to live a beautiful life and to leave to others memories of a beautiful existence (Foucault 1997, p. 254). Oksala maintains, then, that Foucault's aesthetics of existence should not be understood as a narcissistic enterprise nor as aesthetic in a narrow visual sense of the word as in looking stylish. It is an aesthetics not because it calls on us to make ourselves beautiful, but because it calls on us to relate to ourselves and our lives in terms of a material, a bios, that can be formed and transformed (Oksala 2005, p. 169). It is Nietzsche who perhaps best revives this conception of ethics for us moderns:

> It is a myth to believe that we will find our true or authentic self once we have left out or forgotten this and that. That way we pick ourselves apart in an infinite regression: instead, the task is to make ourselves, to shape a form from all the elements! The task is always that of a sculptor! A productive human being! Not through knowledge but through practice and an exemplar do we become ourselves! Knowledge has, at best, the value of a means! (NL, KSA 9, 7[213])

VI

Neither Nietzsche nor Foucault advocates an ahistorical return to the ancients. In the case of *Dawn* Nietzsche highlights the teaching of Epictetus, for example, as a way of indicating that what we take to be morality today, where it is taken to be coextensive with the sympathetic affects, is not a paradigm of some universal and metahistorical truth. If we look at history we find that there have been different ways of being ethical, and this in itself is sufficient, Nietzsche thinks, to derail the idea that there is a single moral-making morality. Both

thinkers seek to work against the construction of moral necessities out of historical contingencies. A key difference from the ancients is that Nietzsche is developing a therapy for the sicknesses of the soul under specifically modern conditions of social control and discipline.

I think we find in *Dawn* and the resistance to modernity it mounts a clear rebuttal of what Roberto Esposito construes as the guiding idea of modern political thought, namely, the idea of preserving life through the abolition of conflict, difference, and heterogeneity:

> One could say that the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy will be found in his rebuttal of such a conception, which is to say in the extreme attempt to bring again to the surface that harsh and profound relation that holds together politics and life in the unending form of struggle. (Esposito 2008, p. 85)

Esposito goes so far as to claim that although Nietzsche did not formulate the term he nevertheless "anticipated the entire biopolitical course that Foucault then defined and developed...One can say that all the Foucauldian categories are present in a nutshell in Nietzsche's conceptual language" (Esposito 2008, p. 85). As Esposito rightly notes, Nietzsche challenges the idea that the human species is ever given once and for all; rather, it is susceptible, "in good and evil, to being moulded in forms for which we do not have exact knowledge, but which nevertheless constitute for us both an absolute risk and an inalienable challenge" (Esposito 2008, p. 83). He quotes Nietzsche from 1881 on the "selection" of the human: "why should we not realize in the human being what the Chinese are able to do with the tree, producing roses on the one side and on the other side pears?" (NL, KSA 9, 11[276]) Nietzsche's ambition in *Dawn* is clear, I think, from the following note, and it centres on the experiment of cultivating what we can call human pluralization and working against the closure of the human:

> My morality [*Moral*] would be to take the general character of man more and more away from him [...] to make him to a degree non-understandable to others (and with it an object of experiences, of astonishment, of instruction for them)... Should not each individual [*Individuum*] be an attempt to achieve a higher species than man through its most individual things? (NL, KSA 9, 6[158])

Bibliography

Abbey, Ruth (2000): *Nietzsche's Middle Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Esposito, Roberto (2008): *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Timothy Campbell (trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, Michel (1986): *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality 3*. Robert Hurley (trans.). Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Foucault, Michel (1988): "Technologies of the Self". In: Luther H. Martin et al (eds.): *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. London: Tavistock, pp. 16–50.
Foucault, Michel (1990): "An Aesthetics of Existence". In: Michel Foucault: *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Writings 1977–84*. Alan Sheridan et al. (trans.). London: Routledge.
Foucault, Michel (1997): *Ethics: The Essential Works 1*. Paul Rabinow (ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Foucault, Michel (2005): *The Hermeneutics of the Self: Lectures at the College de France 1981–82*. Graham Burchell (trans.). New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
Hadot, Pierre (1995): *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Michael Chase (trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Hutter, Horst (2006): *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
Ingram, David (2003): "Foucault and Habermas". In: Gary Gutting (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 240–284.
Long, A. A. (2002): *Epictetus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Neocleous, Mark (2008): *Critique of Security*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (1974): *The Gay Science*. Walter Kaufmann (trans.). New York: Random House.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (1995): *Human, all too Human: volume one*. Gary Handwerk (trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (2011): *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*. Brittain Smith (trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (2013): *Human, all too Human: volume two*. Gary Handwerk (trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Oksala, Johanna (2005): *Foucault on Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rasmussen, Dennis C. (2008): *The Problems and Promise of Commercial Society: Adam Smith's Response to Rousseau*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.
Taine, H. A. (1906): *History of English Literature*. Vol. IV. H. Van Laun (trans.). London: Chatto & Windus.
Tsouna, Voula (2009): "Epicurean Therapeutic Strategies". In: James Warren (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 249–66.
Ure, Michael (2006): "The Irony of Pity: Nietzsche contra Schopenhauer and Rousseau". In: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32, pp. 68–92.
Young, Julian (2010): *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.