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**Questions of the Subject in Nietzsche and Foucault:
A Reading of *Dawn***

Keith Ansell-Pearson

Perhaps no nineteenth-century thinker or writer has shaped contemporary discussions of selfhood more than Friedrich Nietzsche...many who declare themselves his disciples emphasize his pioneering and sharp criticism of traditional notions about the self, his powerful denials that the ego is or can be coherent or stable, and that human beings should be regarded as “subjects” in the senses presumed by science, morality, or citizenship. Nietzsche’s powerful rejection of such views has provided much ammunition and inspiration for later thinkers who have found reason to announce or welcome the death of the self, the author, or the subject (Seigel 2005: 537).

The path towards the self will always be something of an Odyssey (Foucault, 2005: 249).

We have to acknowledge that Foucault’s interest in Nietzsche took place under quite specific conditions and is far from being intellectually neutral. These conditions were those of French academic culture in the post Second World War period. As Foucault himself pointed out, those who sought recourse to Nietzsche at this time were looking for a way out of phenomenology (Foucault 1990: 24, 31). For a figure like Foucault the attempt to break free of phenomenology was motivated by the desire to develop an intellectual programme that was not governed – as was seen to be the case with phenomenology – by a philosophy of the subject. In interviews Foucault repeatedly maintained that he was profoundly suspicious of the attempt to ground philosophy on the basis of a sovereign, founding subject, “a universal form of subject to be found everywhere”. Foucault says he is not only sceptical of this position but also deeply hostile to it. His contrary belief is that the subject “is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through

practices of liberation, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment” (ibid. 50-1).

With respect to Nietzsche it was his great achievement for Foucault to show that there was a *history* of the subject. It is perhaps for this reason that in one interview Foucault declared, “I am simply Nietzschean” (ibid. 251).¹ This, of course, begs the question: just what is it to be Nietzschean? This is especially difficult to work through in the case of a figure like Nietzsche where, with respect to his experimental texts, there is little in the way of settled views or consensus on the meaning of the many topics we encounter in them, including the question of the subject. As Foucault himself admits, “I do not believe there is a single Nietzscheanism...or that ours is any truer than others” (ibid. 31). For his “post-modern” commentators, from Foucault to Vattimo, Nietzsche deconstructs and dissolves the subject. But then we are faced with some problems, and let me mention two: (a) how do we explain Nietzsche’s appeal, running throughout his writings, to our becoming those that we are (unique, singular, incomparable, *self-creating*, *self-legislating*)? (b) how do we account for the interest in the self and the subject shown by Foucault in what we now call his late writings?

As Beatrice Han has done much to point out, it’s unclear how the later stress in Foucault on a self-constituting ethical subjectivity is compatible with the genealogical analysis of techniques of subjection and historical constitution of the subject (see Han 2002: 11, 169, 184-5). However this issue is resolved it’s clear that Foucault came to regard the constitution of an ethics of the self as an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task (see Foucault 2005: 252). As one

¹ On this statement see Oksala 2005: 183. In an interview with Stephen Riggins, Foucault says that it was Nietzsche, and no-one else, who inspired him to undertake his own personal intellectual work. See Foucault 1997: 125.

commentator has noted, "Given our current political and ethical situation, an ethics of the self would represent one critical point of resistance" (McGushin 2005: 630). Conceptions of the subject and of subjectivity operate on two levels: first, on the discursive or theoretical level and which allows us to comprehend the function of power; and, second, on the practical level in terms of "a tactical intervention in the deployment of resistance to power" (ibid.).

Some commentators, such as Peter Dews, see Foucault's so-called return to the subject as an abrupt turn (Dews 1989), whilst others, notably Deleuze, see no such return at all in his work simply because questions of subjectification have little to do with a subject or persons and more to do with an individuated field of intensities (Deleuze 1995: 92-3, 98-9). Foucault himself said his concern was threefold: How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions? (Foucault 2007: 117) If we turn our attention to Nietzsche we encounter a similarly complicated picture. Nietzsche is well-known for his hermeneutics of suspicion towards free will and the primacy of consciousness. In his writings he does much to show that the ego or self is not master in its own house and to argue that we need to pay closer attention to the body, to the unconscious, and to our drives. And yet, we also find in Nietzsche repeated appeals to self-mastery (and self-overcoming) as the goal of an art of living.

Deleuze is especially helpful, I think, on these points. He acknowledges the new dimension in Foucault's work and asks after its name, "this relation to oneself that is neither knowledge nor power...the affect of self by self..." (Deleuze 1995: 106) Foucault's focus, then, is on techniques of the self and how to conceive of an aesthetics of existence (how we fashion ourselves as a work of art). It's widely thought that Foucault turns, and once again, to Nietzsche for inspiration on this

point (see Sluga 2003: 235), but what's surprising about the late work on ethics is the lack of references to Nietzsche and to the "witty and graceful texts" of the middle period that so appealed to him (see Foucault 1990: 33). We get only general references to Nietzsche's idea of creating the self as a work of art. However, it is true that for both Nietzsche and Foucault what is at stake is not our finding ourselves or realizing a true or authentic self.

Let me first explore Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche for the ends of anti-humanism, and then turn for the rest of the essay to this concern with ethical self-formation. Here I shall focus on Nietzsche's *Dawn*, a text of 1881 which I believe can be fruitfully read as a text of ethical resistance to the normalizing tendencies of biopolitical society. This is a possibility Foucault did not see in the text since at the time he was interested in it, around the early 1970s, his main concern was with the destruction of the subject (of knowledge) and not the theme of the care of self.

II

As an anti-humanist thinker *par excellence* Foucault did much in his work of the 1960s and 1970s to dethrone the primacy of the subject within philosophical and scientific discourse. Doing philosophy in the days of his training, the early 1950s, meant doing the history of philosophy where the dominant influences were Hegel and phenomenology. Here the history of philosophy was delimited by, on the one hand, Hegel's theory of systems, and, on the other hand, by a philosophy of the subject. Foucault writes: "I chose not to be a historian of philosophy like my professors and...I decided to look for something completely different from existentialism" (Foucault 2001: 247). He found this in Nietzscheanism (especially the work of Bataille and Blanchot), which represented for him two things:

- (i) an invitation to call into question the category of the subject, namely its foundational function and supremacy.
- (ii) Second, converting this operation into an experience that leads to its destruction and explosion.

Here we see Foucault's specific interest in the subject is in the nature of the limit-experience in which the subject is dissolved and even destroyed. In the mid 1970s the interest in the subject shifts as Foucault's focus is on a history of the micro-physics of power in terms of a genealogy of the modern soul in which, along with many other things, the primacy of the subject as a foundation of knowledge is abandoned and attention is focused on the constitution of individuals "as correlative elements of power and knowledge" (Foucault 1977a: 194). In a late text Foucault declared that the general theme of his research was not, as commonly supposed, power but the subject, in particular his concern is with how we are transformed into subjects *and* how we transform ourselves into subjects (Foucault 1982: 208).

Whatever we think of the status of Foucault's thinking on the subject, it is clear that the topic is at the centre of his concerns. What is difficult to work through and make cohere is the changing fate of the subject in his corpus.

It is clear that Nietzsche occupies a special place in Foucault's intellectual development. There are at least three main phases in his development: first, the interest in the limit-experience; second, the concern with genealogy and the destruction of the subject of knowledge; and third, the interest in the care of self. Let me now focus on the second development. In several of his writings Foucault appeals to Nietzsche to account for an anti-humanist break within the history of modern philosophy. This break centres on the very subject of knowledge. Above all, Foucault wants to show that the subject of knowledge itself has a history in which the relation of the subject to the object, or truth itself, has a history (Foucault 2001: 2).

The focus is how social practices engender new domains of knowledge which bring to light not only new objects, new concepts, and new techniques, but also new forms of subjectivity and subjects of knowledge. The key claim is that there is no *given* subject of knowledge. This means that the subject is not foundational with respect to questions of knowledge, including its production, promotion, and advancement. Although Foucault mentions psychoanalysis, and its discovery of the prodigious terrain of the unconscious, as a key theory and practice that has re-evaluated in a quite fundamental way the sacred priority conferred on the subject and established in the Western tradition since Descartes, it is to Nietzsche that Foucault appeals the most. In a key admission he writes:

...I would like to pick up again, in a different way, the methodological reflections I spoke of earlier. It would have been possible, and perhaps more honest, to cite only one name, that of Nietzsche, because what I say here won't mean anything if it isn't connected to Nietzsche's work, which seems to me to be the best, the most effective, the most pertinent of the models that one can draw upon (ibid.: 5).

For Foucault, Nietzsche's significance resides in the fact that he undertakes a historical analysis of the formation of the subject, involving an analysis of the birth of a certain type of knowledge (*savoir*) that does not grant the pre-existence of a subject of knowledge (*connaissance*). Rather, knowledge is invented, it is an *Erfindung*. And to say that it is invented is to say that it is without origin:

More precisely, it is to say, however paradoxical this may be, that knowledge is absolutely not inscribed in human nature. Knowledge doesn't constitute man's oldest instinct; and, conversely, in human behaviour, the human appetite, the human instinct, there is no such thing as the seed of knowledge (ibid.: 8).

But more than this we can also say that, in addition to not being bound up with human nature, it is also not intimately connected to the world to be known. This

means that there is no resemblance or prior affinity between knowledge and the things that need to be known, or, expressed in Kantian terms, we can say that the conditions of experience and the conditions of the object of experience are completely heterogeneous. For Foucault, and I quote:

This is the great break with the prior tradition of Western philosophy, for Kant himself has been the first to say explicitly that the conditions of experience and those of the object of experience were identical. Nietzsche thinks, on the contrary, that between knowledge and the world to be known there is as much difference as between knowledge and human nature. So one has a human nature, a world, and something called knowledge between the two, without any affinity, resemblance, or even natural tie between them (ibid.: 9).

Foucault cites from *Dawn* 45 and that heralds a “tragic ending for knowledge” (see Foucault 1977b: 164). Here Nietzsche notes that it is human sacrifice that has traditionally served as the means of producing exaltation; this sacrifice has both elevated and exalted the human being. What if mankind were to now *sacrifice itself*: to whom would it make the sacrifice? Nietzsche suggests that it would be the knowledge of truth since only here could the goal be said to be commensurate with the sacrifice, “because for this goal no sacrifice is too great”.² But this goal remains too distant and lofty; much closer to home is the task of working out the extent to which humanity can take steps towards the advancement of knowledge and ascertaining what kind of knowledge-drive could impel it to the point of extinction “with the light of an anticipatory wisdom in its eyes”. However, we may need the help of other species on other planets in order to pursue the practice of knowledge with enthusiasm:

² See also on this Nietzsche 2006, II. 7, in which Nietzsche notes that life has always known how to play tricks so as to justify itself, including its “evil”, and today, for us moderns and free spirits, this takes the form of “life as a riddle, life as a problem of knowledge”.

Perhaps one day, once an alliance for the purpose of knowledge has been established with inhabitants of other planets and one has communicated one's knowledge from star to star for a few millennia: perhaps then enthusiasm for knowledge will swell to such a high tide! (Nietzsche 2011: section 45)

Foucault places the passion of knowledge in the service of a philosophical project that aims at disabusing humanity of its consoling fictions and encouraging it to pursue new truths and a new kind of philosophical wisdom. Foucault writes of this passion in a number of places, perhaps most poignantly and incisively in the Introduction to the second volume of his *History of Sexuality* on the use of pleasure. Foucault speaks of what motivates his intellectual work and declares it to be curiosity – not the curiosity that assimilates what it is proper for one to know but the kind that enables one to get free of oneself. As Foucault asks:

After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeable and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? (Foucault 1985: 8)

The task is to break with accustomed habits of knowing and perceiving, so that one has the chance to become something different than what one's history has conditioned one to be, to think and perceive differently. For Foucault this gives us, in fact, a definition of philosophical activity today, which consists in the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself. Instead, of legitimating what is already known the task is to think differently, and this is an essential part of philosophical activity conceived as an *askēsis*.

In his celebrated essay on "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History", Foucault puts the passion of knowledge in the service of an anti-humanist intellectual agenda and project. Nietzsche's aim, contends Foucault, is not to capture the essence of things or their purest possibilities and protected identities since this is to assume "the

existence of immobile forms that precede the world of accident and succession” (Foucault 1977: 142). Continuing this anti-Platonic agenda, Foucault writes of a search for what is already there waiting to be uncovered, “the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature” and that requires “the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity” (ibid.). Replacing metaphysics with (genealogical) history, Nietzsche finds not timeless and eternal secrets behind things, but the secret that they have no essence or that if such an essence exists it was fabricated in a piecemeal manner from alien forms. The history of reason demonstrates that it was born from chance, so that what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin but rather disparity. In a radical moment Foucault further contends:

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (ibid.: 146).

The history of humanity is a series of interpretations; this history is not one that requires the slow exposure of a meaning hidden in the origin since if it was then only metaphysics could make sense of the development of humanity. Instead we need to conceive interpretation as “the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning” (ibid.: 151). When we conceive interpretation in this way it becomes possible to bend it to a new will and impose a different direction. This is to practice what Foucault calls “effective history” that does away with constants, including the constant of humanity and of being ourselves in our identity:

Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on 'rediscovery', and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves". History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself (ibid.: 154).

This "effective" history, which Nietzsche starts to practice in earnest in *Dawn*, deprives the self of any reassuring stability of life and nature. This is because, as Foucault has it, knowledge is not made so much for understanding as it is for "cutting" (*trancher*). The task is to make ourselves different to what history has, in fact, made us. We need to appreciate that the forces that operate in history do not conform to destiny or are subject to the control of regulative mechanisms: events are singular and even random.

Foucault illuminates this realm of chance as follows: the world that can be known is not one where events are reduced so as to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, and their ultimate value. Rather, what is to be encountered in "a profusion of entangled events", in which what appears as profound and meaningful is, in fact, something that begins its existence through a host of errors and phantasms: "We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference" (ibid.). For Foucault, then, history has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to (metaphysical) philosophy, such as recounting the necessary birth of truth and values. Rather, it needs to become a differential knowledge, one of energies and failings, of heights and degenerations of poisons and antidotes; in short, its "task is to become a curative science" (ibid.: 156).

As we have seen, Foucault takes extremely seriously Nietzsche's insight that the passion of knowledge may entail the perishing of humanity. In short, what is signalled here is the double death of God and of man – that is, of man as *the* very "subject" of knowledge:

Even in the greatly expanded form it assumes today, the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth; man is not given an exact and serene mastery of nature. On the contrary, it ceaselessly multiplies the risk, creates dangers in every area; it breaks down illusory defences; it dissolves the unity of the subject; it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction. Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject...(ibid.: 163)

What Foucault acutely recognises is that where once religion demanded the sacrifice of our bodies, knowledge now calls for Nietzsche for an experimentation on ourselves, and this requires we "sacrifice" the subject of knowledge.

Two key points emerge from Foucault's rather dense presentation of the claims of the enterprise of genealogy: (a) firstly, inquiry cannot lay claim to a truth that would be detached and timeless, but rather needs to see itself as a practical tool for the critique of values; (b) secondly, such a critique of values must destroy the idea of a fixed human identity, so that instead of positing solid identities we learn to engage in a radical experimentation with ourselves (see Sluga 2003: 228). As Nietzsche himself puts it in *Dawn* 453, *we are experiments* and the task is to *want* to be such.

III

This, then, is the critique of the subject we find in Foucault's writings up to the point of his late writing and so-called ethical turn. With this turn the focus of his attention

shifts quite dramatically from the production of the subject through regimes of power-knowledge to how the subject produces itself through a form of ethical life and involving technologies of the self. At the outset we can note that his concern is not with the self as “substance” but as “activity”. Foucault points out that “self” is a reflexive pronoun that has two meanings: “auto” means the same but also conveys the notion of identity. The latter meaning shifts the question from the essentialist question, what is the self?, to the different question, what is the plateau on which I shall find my identity? We can find the self in a dialectical movement: taking care of the body is not taking care of the self since the self is not clothing, tools, or possessions, so the concern is over the soul or psyche (*psukhē*) and to be conceived, as already pointed out, as activity and not substance. Later in the text Foucault will say: “Theoretically, the cultivation of the self is soul-oriented, but all the concerns of the body take on a considerable importance” (Foucault 1997: 234).

As Johanna Oksala has pointed out, Foucault must be presupposing a subject that enjoys some relative independence with regard to the constitutive power-knowledge network and as a way of positing a subject that is capable of critical self-reflection and ethical work on the self (Oksala 2005: 165; see also 191-2). Here we now have a subject, as Deleuze appreciates, capable of turning back on itself and of critically examining the processes of its own constitution and bringing about changes in them. This, of course, is what Foucault calls an ethics centred on the care of self. It is this new ethical subject, this care of self, that is, I believe, relevant to an appreciation of the moment of *Dawn*, perhaps the most neglected text in Nietzsche’s corpus but in my view one of his most fertile and relevant texts today. To date there has been little speculation on how the Foucault of the 1980s would read Nietzsche. As one commentator has it: “Certainly, Nietzsche’s work is highly suggestive of a rich array of practices of care of the self. But this is not the place to begin an

exploration of that type” (McGushin 2007: 277-8).³ Before turning to Nietzsche and this text let me outline some principal features of Foucault’s conception of the care of self.

For Foucault self-cultivation takes the form of an “art of existence” – a *technē tou biou* – and is guided by the principle that one must “take care of oneself” (Foucault 1986: 43). Foucault claims that care of self (*epimeleia heautou*) is a Socratic notion or one that Socrates “consecrates” (ibid. 44). 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. 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: 269).

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 Menoecus, 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: 21; see also 1986: 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: 47). For Foucault the care of self is not constituted as an

³ For notable work in this area see Urpeth 1998 and Milchman & Rosenberg 2007.

exercise in solitude but as a “true social practice” (ibid.: 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 (ibid.: 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).

As one commentator astutely notes, for Foucault care of self does not simply denote attentiveness to, or even anxiety, about oneself, but is rather “a deliberate practice or set of practices that one uses in order to care for one’s existence” (McGushin 2005: 634). Moreover:

The goal of care was to establish the right, true, or full relation of oneself to oneself. This relation could be defined in terms of self-mastery, tranquillity, harmony, distance, or joy to name just a few possibilities (ibid.).

It’s only by establishing and maintaining the right relation to oneself that we have the basis for forming full relations with others: “Care of the self was the preparatory work, the means, to the *telos* of living a noble existence” (ibid.: 637). In all the different schools and developments in antiquity, philosophy is not simply about knowledge but about living a certain kind of life and being a certain type of subject. Knowledge is pursued to the extent that aids this mode of life and taking care of self. 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. He elaborates:

We find it difficult to base rigorous morality and austere principles on the precept that we should give ourselves more care than anything else in the world. We are more inclined to see taking care of ourselves as an immorality, as a means of escape from all possible rules. We inherit the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation. To know oneself was paradoxically the way to self-renunciation (Foucault 1988: 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. 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 (Foucault 2005: 13). 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 can be fruitfully read as an ethical thinker in the way Foucault thinks we have forgotten ethics.

Foucault wishes, then, to promote an ethics centred on a care of the self, in which the self is not given to itself, and there is a need to fashion a self through practices of freedom. For Foucault ethics concerns itself with how the individual constitutes himself as a moral subject of their own actions, so we have moved from the subject as one constituted by power or power-knowledge to one that aims to constitute itself, and this is the work of freedom. In the Stoics, for example, the experience of the self is not a matter of discovering a truth or the truth hidden inside the self “but an attempt to determine what one can and cannot do with one’s

available freedom" (Foucault 1997: 276). As an ethicist Foucault is concerned with ethics in its Greek sense of *ethos*:

The Greeks problematized their freedom, and the freedom of the individual, as an ethical problem. But ethical in the sense in which the Greeks understood it: *ethos* was a way of being and behaviour. It was a mode of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way visible to others. A person's *ethos* was evident in his clothing, appearance, gait, in the clam with which he responded to every event, and so on (ibid.: 286).

Furthermore:

What strikes me is that in Greek ethics people were concerned with their moral conduct, their ethics, their relations to themselves and to others much more than with religious problems. For instance, what happens to us after death? What are the gods? Do they intervene or not – these are very unimportant problems for them... The second thing is that ethics is not related to any social – or at least to any legal – institutional system. For instance, the laws against sexual misbehaviour were very few and not very compelling. The third thing is that what they were worried about, their theme, was to constitute a kind of ethics which was an aesthetics of existence (ibid.: 255).

Foucault wonders if our problem today might not be similar in that "we" no longer believe that ethics is founded on religion and we resist the invasion into our lives of legal control and prohibition. Recent liberation movements for Foucault suffer from the fact that they cannot isolate any principle on which to base an ethics or elaborate a new one: "They need an ethics", he says, "but they cannot find any other ethics than one founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on..." (ibid.: 256) The Greeks don't provide a solution to our problem simply because we cannot find a solution to our problems in another time; but what they do is call into question and relief our moral-Christian inheritance and shows us a different way of being ethical and practising freedom.

IV

Before turning to an analysis of Nietzsche on the self, let me say something about the text itself, *Dawn*, and then review the question of the subject in Nietzsche as we might pose it today. Disregarding general claims, we can ask: what does Nietzsche actually say about the self in the text? Might Nietzsche appeal to an ethics of the self in the text as a moment of resistance and, if so, what is he resisting?

Typically, and as witnessed in Roberto Esposito's work, Nietzsche's relevance for biopolitics centres on his late work, that is, *Beyond Good and Evil* and after (see Esposito 2008). However, in the neglected middle period texts we encounter a Nietzsche preoccupied with the care of self and in opposition to the fundamental disciplinary and biopolitical tendencies of modernity. What intrigues me about the book are the rarely examined references in the book to 'commercial society' and 'security'. There is a socio-political backdrop to the work and Nietzsche's attack on the presumptions of morality. I have come to think that Foucault's focus on biopolitics might enable one to get a grasp on the anxieties and concerns Nietzsche expresses in the book. For Foucault biopower is a power of regularization and normalization, and it is this power that Nietzsche appears to be responding to in *Dawn*. Foucault writes:

The normalizing society is a society in which the norm of discipline and the norm of regulation intersect along an orthogonal articulation. To say that power took possession of life in the nineteenth century, or to say that power at least takes life under its care...is to say that it has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population (Foucault 2003: 253).

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: 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?” (KSA 9, 11 [276])

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. 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...” (Nietzsche 2011: section 132) As Nietzsche sees it, then, the modern emphasis is on defining the moral in terms the sympathetic affects and compassion. 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*" (ibid.)

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: 88 note 45). 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" (2011: section 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" (ibid). 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 (section 194). In the future, care will need to be given to the most personal questions and create time for them (section 196). Small individual questions and experiments are

no longer to be viewed with contempt and impatience (section 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 giving vent to an altruistic in a subtle and delicate manner:

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 (section 174).

The perspective Nietzsche adopts here on commercial society is perhaps a little odd since we typically associate it with an ethic of selfishness and pride. However, this is mistaken. 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, 18). I think it is clear that in this section 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: 82). Unknown to ourselves we live within the effect of general opinions about “the human being”, which is a “bloodless abstraction” and “fiction” (Nietzsche 2011: section 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: and security is currently worshipped as the supreme divinity” (section 173).

In *Dawn* Nietzsche employs what we can call a care of self as a way of taking to task what he identifies as some worrying developments in modern society. We can describe both Nietzsche and Foucault as modern-day virtue ethicists who seek “to liberate the capacity of individual self-choice and personal self-formation from oppressive conformism...” (Ingram 2003: 240) Let me now explore questions of the subject in the text.

V

On the face of it, it’s not an easy task to claim that Nietzsche has an intimate concern with the fate of the subject in *Dawn*. Today notions of autonomy and sovereign individuality have been placed under suspicion in many quarters of philosophy and

in some quarters of Nietzsche-studies.⁴ Sometimes it is flatly stated that Nietzsche denies the self without further investigation or any deep appreciation of his oeuvre (Sorabji 2006: 17). In fact, a suspicion about the subject in Nietzsche dates back to an essay Gianni Vattimo published in Italian in 1979. Vattimo argued that Nietzsche's critique of morality is not conducted, "in the name of the free and responsible subject, for such a subject is likewise a product of neurosis, a thing formed in illness" (Vattimo 2006: 164).

As Arthur Danto has noted, the psychology in *Dawn* is dazzling and precocious. Nietzsche's psychology, he argues, is resolutely anti-Cartesian and has to be inasmuch as his critique of morality entails the view that we do not really know what we are, while Cartesianism is precisely the view that what we essentially are is something immediately present to consciousness, and nothing is true of us psychologically of which we are not directly and noninferentially aware (Danto 2005: 249). Here several aphorisms in book two of *Dawn* are especially significant. In aphorism 115 on the "so-called 'ego'" (*Ich*), Nietzsche draws attention to the prejudices of language, noting that they hinder a properly rich and subtle understanding of inner processes and drives. We seem to have words that exist only for the "superlative degrees" of these processes and drives: "Wrath, hate, love, compassion, craving, knowing, joy, pain – these are all names for *extreme* states." This would not be important were it not for the fact, Nietzsche thinks, that it is the milder middle degrees, as well as the lower ones, which elude us and yet "collaborate...in the formation of our character and destiny." In 116 on the "unknown world of the 'subject' (*Subject*)," Nietzsche startles us with his shocking assertion that from the most distant times of the past to the present day what has

⁴ For a sceptical treatment of the sovereign individual, which contests the claim that it represents Nietzsche's ideal, see Acampora 2006. See also Rukgaber 2012.

been so difficult for us to comprehend is our ignorance of ourselves: “The age old delusion that one knows, knows just exactly in every instance *how human action comes about*, lives on.” We superstitiously believe we know what we want, that we are free and can freely assume responsibility for ourselves and hold others responsible for their actions, and so on. He urges us to recognize that actions are never what they appear to be: “It took so much effort for us to learn that external things are not what they appear to us – now then! It is just the same with the inner world!” In this regard it is necessary to work against both metaphysical and moral “realism” (section 116). Finally, in aphorism 128 of the book Nietzsche challenges the Oedipal fantasy we might have of ourselves in which we exist as our own mother and father.

Nietzsche’s suggestion is that we are responsible neither for our dreams nor our waking life and that the idea of freedom of the will “has human pride and feeling of power for its mother and father” (section 128).

It is perhaps on the basis of a reading of aphorisms like these that Vattimo claims, to repeat, that Nietzsche’s critique of morality in *Dawn* is not conducted, “in the name of the free and responsible subject” since this subject is “a product of neurosis, a thing formed in illness” (2006: 164). He contends that because there is an inextricable connection between internal or internalized conscience, *including the “individual in revolt”*, and social morality, the appeal to freedom in Nietzsche cannot be made in the name of “the sovereignty of the individual” (ibid.: 162-3). He rightly notes that Nietzsche unmasks morality as a set of principles not intended for the utility or the good of the individual on whom they are imposed but for the preservation of society, even to the detriment of individuals; but he also infers that Nietzsche’s aim is not to defend the individual against the claims of the group. The reason, he argues, is not because, metaphysically speaking, it is necessary to prefer the claims of determinism over the belief in freedom, “but simply because there is no

subject of such actions. Not: the subject is not free, but simply: the subject is not” (ibid.: 161).

It is true that Nietzsche has done much in the text to deconstruct the fiction of some ontologically given or fixed unified self. However, this does not mean he has no concern with the “ego” or self. In aphorism 105, for example he paints a contrast between one’s “phantom ego” (*Phantom von ego*), which is formed in the heads of those around us and then communicated to us, and makes sure we live “in a fog of impersonal, half-personal opinions”, as well as arbitrary and fictitious evaluations, and one’s “self-established, genuine ego” (*ergründetes ego*), an ego that Nietzsche invites us to juxtapose to the “common, pallid fiction” of the “human being” (section 105). It would seem that for Nietzsche this “self-established ego” is a construction and work in progress, centred on the cultivation of the drives. As he puts it in a note from the end of 1880:

It is a myth to believe that we will find our authentic self (*eigentliches Selbst*) 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 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! (KSA 9, 7 [213])

Similarly, Foucault appeals to “creativity” over “authenticity”: “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (Foucault 1997: 262).

Whilst it is true that Nietzsche exposes the extent to which the I or ego is the subject of its drives and affects (it is not the master in its own house we might say, looking ahead to Freud), it is manifestly clear that he is *perturbed* by this fact, that is, troubled by the extent to which the self is little more than a contingency or mere

happenstance. In aphorism 119 he explores the drives and notes that no matter how much we struggle for self-knowledge nothing is more incomplete to us than the image of the totality of our drives. It is not only that we cannot call the cruder ones by name, but also more worryingly that their number and strength, their ebb and flow, and most of all the laws of their alimentation remain completely unknown to us:

This alimentation thus becomes the work of chance: our daily experiences toss willy-nilly to this drive or that drive some prey or other which it seizes greedily, but the whole coming and going of these events exists completely apart from any meaningful connection to the alimentary needs of the sum drives: so that the result will always be two-fold: the starving and stunting of some drives and the overstuffing of others (section 119).

Our experiences, then, are types of nourishment; the problem is that there is a deficit of knowledge on our part as to the character of our experiences. The result is that we live as contingent beings:

...as a consequence of this contingent alimentation of the parts, the whole, the fully-grown polyp turns out to be a creature no less contingent (*Zufälliges*) than its maturation (ibid.).

The ethical task in Nietzsche, it would seem, is not to allow oneself to be this mere happenstance. We need to experience dissatisfaction with ourselves and assume the risk of experimenting in life, freely taking the journey through our wastelands, quagmires, and icy glaciers. The ones who don't take the risk of life will, "never make the journey around the world (that you yourselves are!), but will remain trapped within yourselves like a knot on the log you were born to, a mere happenstance" (section 343). This is not to deny that the self or subject is not something contingent for Nietzsche: his whole point in *Dawn* is to show the contingencies of our moral formation and deformation and to disclose to the self that

it is something other than what it takes itself to be (fixed and stable) and that it may become something more fluid and dynamic, in short, that it may cultivate a becoming of what it is.

To suppose, as Vattimo does, that the “subject” is by definition something neurotic is to fail to make a distinction between autonomy and heteronomy, a distinction that can be drawn in Nietzschean and not just Kantian terms (see Sachs 2008), and to rule out *tout court* the possibility of an ethic of self-cultivation. For Nietzsche the focus is to be on the cultivation of the drives, and an initial step on the path to self-enlightenment and self-liberation is to know that here we do enjoy a certain liberty:

One can handle one’s drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of one’s anger, pity, musing, vanity as fruitfully and advantageously as beautiful fruit on espaliers; one can do so with a gardener’s good or bad taste and, as it were, in the French or English or Dutch or Chinese style; one can also let nature have her sway and only tend to a little decoration and cleaning-up here and there; finally, one can, without giving them any thought whatsoever, let the plants, in keeping with the natural advantages and disadvantages of their habitat, grow up and fight it out among themselves – indeed, one can take pleasure in such wildness and want to enjoy just this pleasure, even if one has difficulties with it. We are free to do all this: but how many actually know that they are free to do this? Don’t most people *believe in themselves* as completed, *fully-grown facts*? Haven’t great philosophers, with their doctrine of the immutability of character, pressed their seal of approval on this prejudice? (section 560)

The focus, then, is on the drives in which the self is not conceived metaphysically for there is no self independent of the structuring and organisation of the drives. For Nietzsche what we call the “self” just is a site or agent of structuring, ordering, and organising. In a note from autumn 1880 he insists that the intellect is the tool of our drives, “it is *never free*”. What it does is to sharpen itself in the struggle with various drives and thereby refines the activity of each individual drive. But he also insists

that: “The will to power (*der Wille nach Macht*), to the infallibility (*Unfehlbarkeit*) of our person, resides in our greatest justice and integrity (*Redlichkeit*): scepticism just applies to all authority, we do not want to be duped, not even by *our drives*! But what does not *want*? A drive, certainly!” (KSA 9, 6 [130]; see also D 109) So, although we cannot escape the drives in any absolute sense we can gain a distance from them so that we are not “duped” by them. And although we share drives with animals, our increase in integrity makes us less dependent on the stimulus of the drives (KSA 9, 6 [234]).

VI

As Ruth Abbey has pointed out, an ethics of care of self in Nietzsche centres on a concern for quotidian minutiae, attention to individualized goods, and an awareness of the close connection between psyche and physique (Abbey 2000: 102). For Nietzsche the small, daily practices of care of self are undervalued. In modern culture we can detect, Nietzsche writes, a “feigned disrespect for all the things which men in fact take most seriously, *for all the things closest to them*” (Nietzsche 2013 [WS]: section 5). As Abbey 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: 99). As Nietzsche notes, most people see the closest things badly and rarely pay heed to them, whilst “*almost all the physical and psychological frailties of the individual derive from this lack...being unknowledgeable in the smallest and everyday things* and failing to keep an eye on them - this it is that transforms the earth for so many into a ‘vale of tears’” (Nietzsche 2013 [WS]: 6). Our understanding of existence is diverted away from the smallest and closest things:

Priests and teachers, and the sublime lust for power of idealists of every description...hammer even into children that what matters is something quite different: the salvation of the soul, the service of the state, the advancement of science, or the accumulation of reputation and possessions, all as the means of doing service to mankind as a whole; while the requirements of the individual, his great and small needs within the twenty four hours of the day, are to be regarded as something contemptible or a matter of indifference. (ibid.)

Nietzsche goes on to name here 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 (see also 2011: 9).⁵ Nietzsche argues: "Our continual offences against the most elementary laws of the body and the spirit reduce us all...to a disgraceful dependence and bondage...on physicians, teachers and curers of soul who lie like a burden on the whole of society" (2013 [WS]: 5). All the physical and psychological 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 (ibid. section 6).

The Stoic Epictetus is especially admired by Nietzsche in *Dawn* on account of his dedication to his own ego and for resisting the glorification of thinking and living for others (2011: section 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

⁵ In *Dawn* section 9 Socrates is said to be one of those (rare) moralists who offer the individual a morality of self-control and temperance and as a means to their own advantage or a personal key to happiness. For further insight into the different depictions of Socrates we find in Nietzsche see Nehamas 1998: 128-156. See also Hadot 1995: 147-79.

is silent about this aspect of Stoic teaching.⁶ Nevertheless, it is true that the ethical outlook of Epictetus does invite people “to value their individual selves over everything else,” (Long 2002: 3)⁷ 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 (Nietzsche 2011: 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:

Let’s stick to the idea that benevolence and beneficence are what constitute a good person; only let’s add: “provided that he is first benevolently and beneficently disposed *towards himself!*” For *without this* – if he runs from himself, hates himself, causes injury to himself – he is certainly not a good person. Because he is rescuing himself from himself *in others*...to run from the ego (*ego*) and to hate it and to live in others, for others – has, heretofore, been called, just as unreflectedly as assuredly, “*unegotistical*” and consequently “*good*”! (2011: section 516)

⁶ Thomas Brobjer suggests that Nietzsche did not read the extended *Discourses* and was only familiar with Epictetus’s short ‘Manual’ or *Enchiridion*, and this might account for the somewhat one-sided portrait of him we get from Nietzsche’s appraisal. See Brobjer (2003: 430). For a full picture of Epictetus see Long (2002).

⁷ Long also notes that Epictetus devotes more thought to the care of the self than he does to what is incumbent on human beings as members of society (2002: 30).

Such passages clearly indicate, I think, that Nietzsche has what I am crediting him with in *Dawn*, namely, an intimate concern with the fate of the self and centred on a care of it.

Dawn is a text in which Nietzsche positions himself in important ways in relation to the history of philosophy. One of the most significant is his appeal throughout the text to various enlightenment traditions, including ancient and modern. Nietzsche seems keen to revitalize neglected and forgotten aspects or tendencies within the development of philosophy. If we focus our attention on questions of the ethical subject in Nietzsche, it is clear that he is breaking with modern conceptions and seeking to revive interest in an ancient care of self. There are key references to the likes of Epicurus and Epictetus in the text and these are figures that play a crucial role in Foucault's history of the care of self. Nietzsche was inspired by Epicurus's conception of friendship and the ideal of withdrawing from society and cultivating one's own garden. In a letter to Peter Gast of 1883 Nietzsche writes that Epicurus "is the best negative argument in favour of my challenge to all rare spirits to isolate themselves from the mass of their fellows" (KGB III, 1, 418). In a note from 1881 Nietzsche states that he considers the various moral schools of antiquity to be "experimental laboratories" containing a number of recipes for the art of living and holds that these experiments now belong to us as our legitimate property: "we shall not hesitate to adopt a Stoic recipe just because we have profited in the past from Epicurean recipes" (KSA 9, 15 [59]).

Taken as a whole the text *Dawn* perhaps represents Nietzsche's most avowedly Epicurean moment. A great deal of the thinking contained within the book is an attempt to revitalize for a modern age ancient philosophical concerns, notably a teaching for mortal souls who wish to be liberated from the fear and anguish of existence, as well as from God, the metaphysical need, and who are able

to affirm their mortal conditions of existence. Here one might adopt Hadot's insight into the therapeutic ambitions of ancient philosophy which was, he claims, "intended to cure mankind's anguish" (for example, anguish over our mortality) (Hadot 1995: 265-6). This is evident in the teaching of Epicurus which sought to demonstrate the mortality of the soul and whose aim was, in the words of a recent commentator, "to free humans from 'the fears of the mind'" (Wilson 2008: 7). Similarly, Nietzsche's teaching in *Dawn* is for mortal souls. In *Dawn* 501, which is entitled "Mortal Souls," Nietzsche writes that, "So far as the promotion of knowledge is concerned, humankind's most useful achievement is perhaps the abandonment of its belief in an immortal soul" (section 501).

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" (Foucault 1988: 24), but, according to Foucault, 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" (ibid. 31). How does *Dawn* fit into this schema as a nineteenth century work of resistance? The philosophical and ethical therapy Nietzsche is proposing in *Dawn* appears to be directed at those solitary free spirits who exist on the margin 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. It is certain that Nietzsche sought to found a philosophical school modelled on Epicurus's garden. As he wrote to Gast in 1879 (26 March), "Where are we going to renew the garden of Epicurus?" For some 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 writes, “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: 5)

VII

In this essay I have sought to clarify some important aspects of Foucault’s work on the subject and at the same time explore Nietzsche’s text of 1881, *Dawn*, as a site of ethical resistance to normalization and the biopolitical tendencies of modernity.

Dawn is a heavily neglected text in Nietzsche’s corpus, and here I have sketched one possible appropriation of it. The text has been admired in recent years for its ethical naturalism (see Clark and Leiter 1997) and even for its anticipation of phenomenology (see Safranski 2002). I am claiming it for a specific tradition within the history of philosophy and that I believe Nietzsche regarded as a neglected one in his own time, and one that he sought to employ for critical effect.

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. As such, he offers *Dawn* as a work of ethical resistance. Nietzsche’s ethical ambition in *Dawn*

is clear and it centres on the experiment of the human being and working against its closure. Let me end with a citation from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* of 1880:

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? (KSA 9, 6 [158])

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