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Marli Huijer

The aesthetics of existence in the work of Michel Foucault[1]

Abstract   Foucault's analysis of an aesthetics of existence is presented as an instrument to practice ethical thought without the presupposition of an autonomous subject. The implications of Foucault's aesthetics of existence for ethical thought are traced to the work of Nietzsche. In Foucault's work, experiences of oneself are not a given, but are constituted in power relations and true-and-false games. In the interplay of truths and power relations, the individual constitutes a certain relationship to him- or herself. Foucault designated the relation to oneself and one's existence as the main area of ethical concern and the most important field where aesthetic values are to be applied. In his aesthetics of existence, he invited the individual to prob-lematize the relationship with the self and by using 'self-techniques' to transform it into a work of art. The relation to intimate others, shaped as friendship, is crucial to this ethical-aesthetic approach.

Key words   aesthetics of existence · ethics · Foucault · friendship · Nietzsche · subjectivity

Michel Foucault finished his writings with the motto 'Make life a work of art'. This motto should be understood as a form of ethics: ethics as an aesthetics of existence. In Foucault's perspective, ethics is conceived of neither as a coherent set of moral prescriptions nor as a study of moral behaviours. Instead, he viewed ethics as an ethical attitude aimed at transforming the relationship with oneself into a work of art.

An ethics as an aesthetics of existence is radically opposed to the combination of Kantian and liberal ethics, which is dominant in West-ern societies. In Kantian/liberal ethics, individuals are represented as

autonomous subjects (the universal man) who make decisions and moral judgements on the basis of rational considerations. In his early writings (especially in *Les mots et les choses*, 1966), Foucault criticized the view that the 'I', as an autonomous subject, precedes 'my' talking, moving, acting or thinking. In his later writings, this critique was often repeated. The individual is not a fixed reality, Foucault argued, but a historical, cultural and linguistic construction (or fiction), which comes about *in* the process of speaking, acting and thinking. The ethical questions Foucault asked are how individuals problematize what they are or do, how they problematize the world in which they live (Foucault, 1984a: 16), and what means individuals have for (trans)forming their relationships with themselves.

Foucault's historical studies on sexuality, in particular *L'usage des plaisirs* and *Le souci de soi* (1984a; 1984b), give examples of how individuals constitute themselves as aesthetic (moral) subjects. A major feature of this constitution is the linkage between the problematization of a part of oneself and the use of self-techniques (also called self-practices). These studies are primarily historical. Foucault did not study what aesthetics of existence might mean in contemporary life. In the articles and interviews which appeared around 1980, however, Foucault did give some suggestions along these lines.

In this article, the possibility of an ethics without a presupposed subject is examined. What did Foucault's announcement of 'the death of man' mean? What form of subjectivity did he presume in reflections on an aesthetics of existence? What did he mean by subjectivity surfacing in 'games of truth' and 'power relations'? What techniques can 'the human being' use to transform himself or herself into a work of art? In this connection, I discuss (1) diagnosing the present (problematization), (2) establishing one's relation to rules of personal conduct, (3) working on a transformation of oneself and (4) aiming at a stylization of oneself and one's existence.

In the endeavour to turn life into a work of art, relations to significant others in the form of friendships play an important role. By delving more deeply into the aesthetics of existence from the perspective of Nietzsche's philosophy, I will elaborate upon the meaning of this instrument or 'techniques of self' for ethical thinking.

Beyond man

Echoing Nietzsche's 'God is dead', in *Les mots et les choses* Foucault announced the death of man. The automatic assumption that man was an existing reality, that his existence played a decisive role in what the world, thought, truth, morality or one's own life were like was on very

shaky ground. There were two levels to Foucault's argumentation. He noted retrospectively that before the end of the 18th century, 'man' was an unknown figure; not until the late 18th and early 19th century did he appear on stage. Prospectively, Foucault felt that this figure was disappearing and the void of vanished man was 'nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space where it is ultimately possible to think again' (Foucault, 1966: 353).

The philosophical, 'perhaps paradoxical' request Foucault presented modern thinking with was 'to imagine for an instant what the world, thought and truth might be if man did not exist' (Foucault, 1966: 332–3). In his later work, Foucault presented various answers to this request.

In *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969), Foucault restricted the question to an analysis of the relation of a 'subject' to language. In 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' (1969), he described his efforts as follows: 'In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse' (Foucault, 1984[1969]: 118). Foucault's interest in language can be comprehended from the perspective of his admiring comments about Nietzsche who, as a philologist – 'and even in that field he was so wise' – opened the space in which language emerged in an 'enigmatic density' (Foucault, 1966: 316). Foucault primarily sought the answer to the question he claimed Nietzsche had posed about who or what the one is that speaks[2] in what was called a speaker's function or position: in the multiplicity of language, there are folds and interstices where 'someone' can speak. Speaking or writing does not begin with the person who speaks. On the contrary, the discourse coincidentally inserts the speaker. The speaker or writer does not precede his spoken or written words, he is merely a vehicle, a 'functional principle' by which it is stipulated in our culture what is and is not said, or what is or is not written down and distributed (Foucault, 1984[1969]: 119). In *L'archéologie du savoir*, 'the subject' is no more than a position an 'individual' can or has to occupy in the (linguistic) discursive formation. In the network of statements, 'the subject' is a fixed vacant place – be it changeable in time – that may be filled by different individuals (Foucault, 1969: 121–6).

How an individual winds up at a certain subject position is not self-evident. Language seems to use someone's mouth to have 'him' or 'her' make certain statements. In his inaugural speech (*L'ordre du discours*) in 1970 at the Collège de France, Foucault even expressed the desire to have his own 'I' become part of the anonymous murmur of the discourse:

> Rather than getting up to speak, I would have preferred to be enveloped in words, borne away beyond all possible beginnings. At the moment of speaking, I would like to have perceived a nameless voice, long preceding me,

> leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense, to beckon me. (Foucault, 1971a: 7)

The desire for anonymity, for the disappearance of the 'I', surfaced repeatedly in Foucault's later thinking and speaking and introduced an ambivalence in his thinking about the 'I'. The 'I' that could yearn to be absorbed in language presumed a transcendental yearning 'I' that preceded language. This ambivalence was eliminated in his genealogical studies, where yearning could be perceived as a force that operated straight through the 'I'.

From *L'ordre du discours* onwards, Foucault expanded his analysis with non-linguistic elements such as forces, power relations and social practices. The archaeological research analysing discursive formations by way of statements was supplemented and mixed with the genealogical research examining which forces and power relations played a decisive role in the emergence of discursive formations.[3] With his archaeological and genealogical analysis, Foucault boarded up the space of disappeared man by means of a complex ensemble of power and knowledge. In *Surveiller et punir* (1975), that led to a study on how individuals are disciplined and normalized by means of continuous and meticulous observations within fixed spans of space and time. 'Man' was subjected to a 'positive' or 'productive' force that was exerted by way of such techniques as surveillance, discipline, normalizing judgements and punitive measures. 'Man' (in so far as such a being could still exist) was perceived as a marionette, a subservient and silent body that was observed, disciplined and normalized down to the very last detail.

It would have been only logical to round off this 'political technology of the body' with the 'death of man' or the 'death of the body'. Because no matter how much insight Foucault's analysis might provide into the disciplining forces that are operative in Western societies, the individual with his docile body, as it came to the fore in *Surveiller et punir*, has just as negligible a right to exist as the 'man' from *Les mots et les choses*. But perhaps, as François Ewald proposed, we should conceive of Foucault's genealogical analysis as a genealogical critique, as a weapon against that power that divests it of all its masks and takes it to pieces (Ewald, 1975: 1235). Although Foucault presented the genealogy in *Surveiller et punir* as a factual study on changes in the penal system on the basis of a political technology of the body, he also referred to the critical effect of genealogy (Foucault, 1980b: 78–108). If genealogy is a critical analysis of power relations, then yet another mode of thinking about the 'I' is possible in the void of disappeared man in addition to a mode of thinking about 'the subject' in terms of subject positions in language and as an object of power and knowledge.[4]

This other thinking came to the fore in *L'usage des plaisirs* when Foucault gave a third answer to the question of what the 'I' is without a presupposed 'I'. He suggested the possibility that the experience of oneself is a relation to oneself that comes into being in links to truths and power relations. And he dedicated himself to an analysis of games of truth, 'true-and-false-games through which the being historically constitutes itself as experience, in other words as something that can and must be thought' (Foucault, 1984a: 12–13). For Foucault, this experience is not a case of being-subjected-to something or someone, nor is it a case of being-linked-to one's own identity, it is an experience that comes into being in an interplay of truths and power relations. In these games of truth and power relations, the human being constitutes a relationship to himself (experiences himself) through a certain link to 'truth'.

This last thought movement makes the declaration of the death of 'man' superfluous: 'man' can be perceived as one of the figures in a multifarious series of subjectivities. A bit more than a decade later, Foucault referred to his philosophical statement in *Les mots et les choses* that 'man' had all but perished as a mistake. Instead of stating that 'man' or 'the subject' was dead, what he wanted to say was 'that in the course of history, human beings have never ceased to construct themselves, in other words to perpetually alter the level of their subjectivity and constitute themselves in a manifold and infinite series of differing subjectivities that will never reach a final point and will never position us eye to eye with man' (Foucault, 1980a, *DE IV*: 75). The aesthetics of existence is a stylization of the relation to oneself, existing side by side with other formations. It is not a prescription or an ideal to be strived for by everyone. According to Foucault, 'The search for a form of morality acceptable for everyone – in the sense that everyone would have to submit to it – seems catastrophic to me' (Foucault, 1984j, *DE IV*: 706).

Power relations and subjectivity

What did Foucault mean by 'games of truth' and by 'power relations' through which the human being turns himself into someone who experiences himself? To start with power relations, the question of the relation to oneself in connection with power relations takes us to *La volonté de savoir* (1976) and 'The Subject and Power' (1982b). In these works, Foucault described power as a wide range of links among forces that are ever-present and come from all over: 'Omnipresence of power . . . because it is produced at every moment in time, at every point or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is all over, which does not mean that it contains everything, but that it comes from everywhere'

(Foucault, 1976: 122). Power is non-subjective, is not linked to a person or institution, cannot be personified in a figure like the monarch or the father, and has no hold *on* subjects.[5] Power is not a property or possession, but a plurality of intentions that perpetually clash and struggle, so that changes continually occur. They are actions that provoke reactions: changes, differentiations, reversals, reinforcements, subjugations or resistances. Power conceived as power relations does not have the negative connotation of domination or oppression that is to be combated in the name of humanity.

In the play of power relations, there are simultaneous and ubiquitous resistances that are focused on transforming the power relations (Foucault, 1976: 125–6). Resistances can weaken, sabotage or undermine power relations or have them change their direction. As 'opponent', resistance can be seen as a form of freedom: not a freedom the subject would possess in order to exert power or offer resistance, but a 'freeness' as opposed to power. Freedom in the form of resistance is a condition for exerting powers. Without resistance, power relations would have the connotation not of forces, but of domination. Since power relations come up against resistances, there is some manner of 'agonism': a heated struggle in which freedom and power provoke and incite each other (Foucault, 1982a: 222).

In the play of power relations and resistances, human beings constitute a relation to themselves. The subjectivity that comes into being in the interplay of power and resistance consists of a changeable collection of fragments among which the struggle between powers and resistances takes place. A panorama of possible experiences, modes of conduct and reactions opens up. The 'I' is not a unity but a wide range of experiences, intentions, desires, powers, movements, souls and the like. A multitude that can not be designated in any other way in Western language usage than by the word 'I': 'The subject: a complex and fragile thing, which it is so difficult to speak about, but without which we cannot speak' (Foucault, 1981, *DE IV*: 205). This notion coincides with the concept of subject Foucault referred to much earlier in an interview on *Les mots et les choses*: 'In the ominous predicament menacing us today, perhaps we should acknowledge the birth of a world in which people know that the subject is not consolidated but fragmented; not sovereign but dependent; not the absolute source, but a function that can unceasingly change' (Foucault, 1969, *DE I*: 789).

Nietzsche's inspiration can be discerned in these words. In 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire' (1971b), Foucault alluded to Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* when he spoke of the disintegration of our identity: 'For this rather weak identity that we try to preserve behind a mask is in itself merely a parody: plurality resides in it, innumerable souls vie within it; the systems thwart and rule each

other. Once one has studied history, one feels "happy that one, unlike the metaphysicians, does not have 'one immortal soul', but many mortal ones'' (Foucault, 1971b, *DE II*: 154).[6] In Nietzsche's work, according to Foucault, history was not inscribed in 'the subject' or 'man', but in the body: 'In the body, they [events, desires, failings and errors: MH] join together and suddenly manifest themselves, but they similarly part ways in the body, come into conflict with each other, efface each other, and fight out their insurmountable struggle. . . . The body: . . . the locus where the I (that would have liked to delude itself with a substantial unity) shatters into pieces' (Foucault, 1971b, *DE II*: 143).

In interviews, Foucault confirmed that he felt inspired by Nietzsche in this connection: 'Discussing the subject meant trying something out that would truly destroy it, shatter it, blow it up or transform it into something radically different' (Foucault, 1980a, *DE IV*: 48). In contacts in an anonymous environment, he recognized the idea of a total de-subjectification that makes way for a new form of subjectivity. One's own past or one's own identity dissolves into anonymity. That makes de-subjectification feasible, shedding whatever subject form one might have at the moment (Foucault, 1982b: 13–23). This (temporary) form of de-subjectification makes it possible to transform the experience of oneself.

True-and-false-games and identities

Foucault's view that the subject is fragile does not exclude the possibility of experiencing oneself as a 'unity' at certain moments. In the recognition, acceptance or designation of a 'unity', experiences come into being that enable 'me' and other people to comprehend who 'I' am. Someone can say, for example, that he experiences himself as a father, a Christian, an artist, a Conservative and so forth. If the truths I express about myself are generally known to one and all, subjectivity can assume the form of an identity. Identity can then include a subject form that 'I' expresses for myself or others in the assumption that I and the others comprehend what it entails. If I tell a colleague of mine I am a homosexual, I assume that he or she will understand what I mean. Like other subject forms, identity does not necessarily have to be a fixed given. Someone can assume different and sometimes contradictory identities, and identities can change their contents. Or after some time, someone can no longer see himself in a certain identity.

In expressing truths about what I do or think ('speaking true'), 'I' constitutes a certain relation to myself. The form of subjectivity that comes into being depends on the games of truth that are operative in, through, and around 'me'. Every form of subjectivity is a historical

ontogenic process, in which the human being becomes equipped with truths. Foucault's studies on the formation of the insane or criminal subject provide various examples: a human being identifies with a certain subject form or identity when he confesses to being insane or criminal. In the process of equipping oneself with certain truths, experiences of oneself come into place. One should bear in mind in this connection that the 'unity' or form that is achieved is always a fiction, something one manufactures for oneself (Foucault, 1980b, *DE IV*: 45).

Instead of accepting a truth, identity or subject form, one can also refuse to do so. The refusal of existing subject forms can provide openings for trying out new subject forms that are still unknown. According to Foucault, 'We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries' (Foucault, 1982a: 216).

But why should one be so critical towards contemporary subject forms? This question is also posed more generally as regards Foucault's critical thinking (Visker, 1990; 1994). And rightly so, because an exhortation to refuse and critically to contemplate subject forms should in turn be able to be critically questioned. Ever since Kant, critical thinking has been a major task of philosophy. Philosophy implies a love of thinking, and should trigger a critical contemplation of whatever seems to be taken for granted. In Foucault's words: 'But what then is philosophy nowadays – I mean the philosophical activity – if not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? And if, rather than legitimating what one already knows, it is not an enterprise to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently' (Foucault, 1984a: 14–15)? Philosophy – as the critical questioning of who or what we are at present, can 'separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think' (Foucault, 1984f, *DE IV*: 574). Foucault referred in this connection to freedom. Opening up the possibility of being, thinking, acting and speaking differently is 'a new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom' (Foucault, 1984f, *DE IV*: 574). This freedom does not imply that we could be completely different; we can only change 'to the extent that we are free' (Foucault, 1984f, *DE IV*: 575).[7] This 'critical philosophy' is not focused on a revolution or an antithesis, but on transformations at the limits of the historically shaped context of our life. What is more, a critical approach to the present enables the human being to play an active role in and to react to the constantly changing play of truths and power relations. As Foucault put it, 'My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism' (Foucault, 1984c: 343).

Techniques of self

In order to construct a relation to oneself, an individual needs certain techniques of self, 'self-techniques' or 'self-practices', enabling him to shape his own experiences. Foucault distinguished between self-techniques and other techniques that constitute subject forms. The most obvious other techniques include production techniques, signification or communication techniques, and domination techniques. Production techniques permit one to produce, transform and manipulate things, signification or communication techniques permit one to use sign systems, and domination techniques permit one to define the conduct of individuals, to impose certain ends or objectives (Foucault and Sennett, 1981, *DE IV*: 170–1).

Foucault got this classification from Habermas, but stated that in addition to these three major types, there were also techniques 'which permit individuals to effectuate, by their own means, a number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power' (Foucault and Sennett, 1981, *DE IV*: 171). These self-techniques serve to constitute the relation to oneself.

Foucault derived the notion of turning oneself into a subject and actively styling one's existence from the self-practices or self-techniques he examined in *L'usage des plaisirs* and *Le souci de soi*. In the cautious statements he made in interviews on the importance of an aesthetics of existence to contemporary political and aesthetic thought and action, he referred to the self-practices he analysed in *L'usage des plaisirs*. He made very few references to the *culture* of self-care he wrote about in *Le souci de soi*. The reason for this might be that the culture of self-care demonstrates a shift towards Christian subject formation. In the first and second centuries BC, the emphasis on mastering the turbulence of sexual lust disappeared. The emphasis was placed instead on the weakness of the individual. Testing oneself, self-awareness and enjoyment without lust came to occupy an important place in the transformation into subject: 'One can already see how the question of evil begins to work upon the ancient theme of force, how the question of the law begins to modify the theme of the art and the techniques and how the question of truth and the principle of self-knowledge evolve within the ascetic practices' (Foucault, 1984b: 85). Foucault's interest, however, focused primarily on an experience of subjectivity that did not emerge in obedience to the law or the conscience, but in an active styling of existence with the help of self-techniques.

Foucault analysed four aspects of the aesthetics of existence that he felt were characteristic of self-practices. The first aspect is the determination of the part of oneself that requires moral care. What is the *ethical*

substance that is problematized? The second aspect is the choice of how one should deal with the ethical substance. What is one's position relative to the precept one will follow (*mode of subjection*)? The third aspect consists of the work, the training, the trials and tribulations and the exercises one performs on oneself in an effort to transform oneself into a moral subject (*the ethical work on oneself*). The fourth aspect is the goal directedness. What subjectivity are we striving for when we behave morally (*teleology of the moral subject*)? (See Foucault, 1984a: Introduction, section 3 and Chapter 1.) It is not so much the aspects themselves that are specific to an ethics like the aesthetics of existence as how they are filled in. An aesthetics of existence differs in this respect from an ethics that is focused, for example, on chastity and purity. An ethics of that kind would tend to highlight (1) a problematization of internal evil, (2) a submission to moral prescriptions, (3) a struggle against temptation, and (4) a focus on purity. In an aesthetics of existence it is a matter of (1) determining the part of oneself that requires an ethical attitude, (2) establishing one's relation to the prescription of an aesthetics of existence, (3) a critical, active and 'experimental' attitude towards oneself, and (4) a striving to transform life into a work of art (Foucault, 1984c, *DE IV*: 383–411). In the following section, the various aspects of the instrument of an aesthetics of existence are addressed:

1   problematization
2   mode of subjection
3   working on oneself
4   focus on an aesthetics of existence.

1 Problematization

'Ethical problematizations' pertain to the question of which part of someone, of his or her life and actuality, requires ethical care. They are a component in the practice of an aesthetics of existence. According to Foucault, the Greeks problematized 'aphrodisia' in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Aphrodisia is a broad concept that covers not only the dynamic unity between sexual acts, desires and pleasures, but the naturalness and necessity of sexual activity as well. Foucault concentrated in particular on the problematization of the aphrodisia involving two men.[8]

Foucault wanted to analyse what we are in the present and what limits can be transgressed. In his essay on Kant's article 'Was ist Aufklärung?' he referred to the problematization of the actuality of existence. He favoured a philosophical ethos that included a recognition of our being historically determined to a large extent (in our case by the Enlightenment). Starting from this recognition, he wanted to analyse

how the limits we are experiencing today can be transgressed. The prob-
lematization of the present serves as a hinge between historical and criti-
cal reflection: a form of diagnostic thinking he borrowed from Kant
(Foucault, 1993[1983], *DE IV*: 688). Historical cum critical reflection
is the inquiry into what we are at present and which limits of actuality
can cautiously be crossed. It requires a critical attitude focused on
actively shaping existence. This 'modern' attitude to life or 'limit-
attitude' is 'a way to relate oneself to actuality; a conscious choice that
some people make; and a way of thinking and feeling, and a way of
acting and behaving that demonstrates a belonging to as well as a task.
Perhaps this is something like what the Greeks called an "ethos"'
(Foucault, 1984f, *DE IV*: 568).[9]

With his historical analysis of how we have been fit into the role of
reasonable and responsible subjects and with the striving to transgress
the limits of ourselves, Foucault thought along much the same lines as
Nietzsche.[10] In order to 'become who we are' and 'create ourselves',
there are given limits that have to be transgressed. One has to dare to
contravene one's own time. Before heading in one's own direction, there
is a struggle that has to be fought so that one can bear the loneliness this
route inevitably evokes (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 563 and 1988[1886]:
145–7).

Like Nietzsche, Foucault strove for a *targeted* transgressing of given
'reasonable' limits, for devising a new subjectivity whose form was still
unknown and uncertain.[11] It is precisely because of the targeted fash-
ioning that one might speak of an aesthetics of existence: it calls upon
the modern individual to adopt an active attitude of opposition and
resistance to uniformizing and disciplining tendencies and to develop
new subjectivities.

Problematization of friendship　　What part of ourselves or our existence
requires a critical, ethical attitude in the present? In an interview with
Dreyfus and Rabinow, Foucault referred to feelings as an ethical
substance that is relevant for moral conduct in our society: 'For instance,
you can say, in general, that in our society, the main field of morality,
the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality, is our feelings.
(You can have a girl in the street or anywhere, if you have very good
feelings toward your wife.)' (Foucault, 1984c, *DE IV*: 394).[12] Feelings
of affection, tenderness, friendship, loyalty, comradeship and solidarity
constitute a field of morality that is problematic for the individual as well
as for society, particularly if and when these feelings are not anticipated.
It is problematic for the individual, since the desire for friendship is a
restless longing, comparable to the restlessness of the love the dandy
Swann felt for the prostitute Odette (Foucault, 1982/3, *DE IV*: 330).[13]
This love societally is just as unexpected as the love between men that

Foucault accorded a central position. The restless yearning for unexpected emotional ties of this kind is viewed by society as a problem because affective relations, for example, between men – and not so much sexual acts – constitute a danger to the existing order.[14]

Foucault was not explicit about why he specified feelings of friendship as the modern-day part of ourselves or our existence that requires care. One possible explanation is that he felt the modern-day limits were marked by fixed and clearly demarcated identities. In his earlier analyses of how people react in Western culture to insanity, illness, crime and sexual perversions (in *Histoire de la folie*, *Naissance de la clinique*, *Surveiller et punir* and *La volonté de savoir*), he expressed the idea that the individual has to admit to a certain identity if he or she is to be disciplined into physical and mental health. The confessional culture can be counteracted by not viewing the 'I' (which confesses to being insane, homosexual and so forth) as identical to oneself, but as something fragile and fragmented that comes into being within and is part of the entirety of disciplining and other forces. In this field of forces, a significant other or a friend is an important factor in bringing about subject forms.

Foucault's problematization of feelings of friendship can also be viewed as a way to refute the depiction of contemporary life as being characterized by interpersonal contacts that are so numerous and complex they are only superficial and transitory. You are packed like sardines in the Tube; you touch everyone lengthily and intensively, and you get out at the next stop without knowing anything about anyone; you pick up a man or woman on the street or at a club, gratify your desires and forget all about him or her. In the depiction of this kind of contact, there is nothing that makes life worthwhile. Foucault refuted this depiction by problematizing the touches and collisions with others: isn't it precisely these confrontations and touches that present us with an opportunity to go beyond what we are in the present, to transform ourselves?

A restless yearning   When he referred to feelings of friendship as an ethical substance, Foucault may have been inspired by the problematization of the romantic relationship between a man and a boy he analysed in philosophical and medical literature from the fifth century to the beginning of the third century BC. As soon as the boy reaches adulthood, the relationship becomes problematic. It is no longer appropriate for him to serve as a sex object in the game of love. The transitory nature of the relationship between a man and a boy can be avoided by converting it from the bond of love into a relation of friendship, into 'philia': an eternal friendship described by Xenophon as 'two friends who look at each other, converse, confide in one another, rejoice together or feel a common

distress over successes and failures, and who guard over each other'
(Foucault, 1984a: 222). The depiction coincides with Foucault's descrip-
tion of contemporary friendships:

> As long as I can remember, the attraction to young boys meant I felt
> attracted to *relationships* with boys. . . . And not in the constrained form
> of a couple, but as a life option: how can men be together? How can they
> live together, share their time, their meal, their room, their leisure time, their
> sadness, their knowledge, their confidences? What does it mean to be simply
> among men, outside the institutionalized relations of the family, occu-
> pation, or compulsory comradeship? This is a desire, something that causes
> agitation. A fitful longing many people have. (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 164)

Foucault also recognized this restless longing in the strategic game of
courtly love between a man and a woman, a game that medieval trou-
badours used to sing the praises of, or in the modern-day game boys and
girls engage in when they go out on Saturday night (Foucault, 1984i, *DE
IV*: 743). The goal of this strategic game is love (or *fin amor*, as it was
called in medieval lyrics); not as the conquest of the beloved one, but as
the enjoyment (*joi*) of the idealized picture of love (Kristeva, 1983: Part
6). An ideal that Foucault, analogously to the Greeks, did not situate in
the love between men before but after they made love:

> . . . for a homosexual, the best moment of love is likely to be when the lover
> leaves in the taxi. It is when the act is over and the boy is gone that one
> begins to dream about the warmth of his body, the quality of his smile, the
> tone of his voice. It is the recollection rather than the anticipation of the act
> that assumes a primary importance in homosexual relations. (Foucault,
> 1982/3, *DE IV*: 330)

The idealized picture of love Foucault evoked in this interview does not
serve as a remedy for the ennui that ensues after the love-making ('omne
animal triste post coitum'). The theme in the pathos-ridden descriptions
would seem to be the extent to which you can submerge yourself in the
flush of friendship and love without losing control over your feelings and
without losing sight of the fact that the point is to turn life (with its tran-
sitory meetings) into something beautiful. The fact that even Foucault
was not always willing or able to remain in control of himself is clear
from the yearning expressed in some interviews for a pleasure so intense
it is overpowering: 'I would like and hope I'll die of an overdose [*Laugh-
ter*] of pleasure of any kind . . . the kind of pleasure I would consider as
the real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming that I
couldn't survive it. I would die' (Foucault, 1983, *DE IV*: 533). It might
have been the awareness of the seductiveness of this total loss of self that
was the essence of Foucault's problematization of feelings of friendship.
To him, ethics was not a solemn matter, something we use in an effort
to keep evil under control. Ethics was also a matter of pleasure, of taking

risks, of danger and the intensity of existence (Foucault, 1983, *DE IV*: 531).

To Nietzsche as well, feelings of friendship gave rise to the pursuit of a (temporary) balance between self-preservation and self-loss. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, he referred to the feeling of friendship as the highest feeling a person could reach as one grew older, even higher than the pride of the self-sufficient sage (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 425). He spoke of friendship as 'a kind of continuation of the love in which this possessive craving of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and lust for possesion – a *shared* higher thirst for an ideal above them' (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 387). This ideal is breakable because the coming together of friends is always a brief event. A meeting of this kind is comparable to two stars momentarily in one and the same orbit, or two ships moored side by side at a harbour: 'our paths may cross and we may celebrate a feast together. . . . But then the almighty force of our tasks drove us apart again into different seas and sunny zones, and perhaps we shall never see each other again' (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 523–4). It is an image very similar to Foucault's account of the lover who leaves in the taxi after the love-making. The 'star friendship' Nietzsche wanted to believe in stood for the conjunction of distance (the irreconcilable span between stars) and proximity (the fleeting moment when the stars share a common orbit). Since our life is too short and our power of vision too small, we can dream of the exalted possibilities friendship offers, but without taking full advantage of them (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 524).

In Foucault's work, as in Nietzsche's, problematizing feelings of friendship served as an important motivation for pursuing a stylization of life. Finding an equilibrium between self-loss and self-preservation has turned out to be a complicated game with idealization, memory, fantasy, transience, sadness, self-control, intimacy and distance all playing a role. In this animated entirety – with the subject constantly at stake – it seeks a way to create itself that transcends the automatism of everyday reality.

2 Mode of subjection

The second aspect of an aesthetics-of-existence practice is the decision to submit to certain rules, precepts, truths or convictions. How can one deal with the part of oneself that is problematized? To this end, Foucault studied the proper use (the *chresis*) of the aphrodisia in ancient Greece, the dynamics of lust, desire and acts: 'How does a man enjoy his pleasure "as one ought" ' (Foucault, 1984a: 63)? By deriving rules for personal conduct from general principles and truths, use can be made of the aphrodisia in a proper and appropriate manner. The subjectification

is brought about by actively, aesthetically and politically equipping oneself with certain truths and adhering to certain precepts.

> In this moral form, the ethical subject does not come into being by elevating the rules for his conduct to a general rule, but by way of an attitude and quest that individualize and transform his action and even can add a special lustre to the individual by way of the rational and well-considered structure it grants him. (Foucault, 1984a: 73)

This formulation is strongly reminiscent of Nietzsche's condemnation of anyone who thinks that 'in this case everybody would have to act like this'. According to Nietzsche, regulations about actions relate only to their coarse exterior; in the concrete situation, every action is unique and irretrievable (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 562–3). Instead of pursuing the firmness of a categorical imperative or of new moral laws, Nietzsche stimulated his 'friends' to give themselves laws and thus become who they are (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 563). He was not propagating a focus on the complete relativism of values or truths. He viewed a life without habits and constantly requiring improvisation as something intolerable. What he preferred were 'brief habits', a continuous alteration of needs, values, truths, thoughts, tastes, rules of conduct, states of health, daily schedules, ways of life and places of residence (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 536). Giving style to one's character is an art that compels a man – taking his needs, capacities, and the situation he is in into consideration – to equip himself in such a way with 'brief' truths and rules of conduct that he can 'attain satisfaction with himself'. In section 290 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Foucault's acknowledged source of inspiration in his pursuit of an aesthetics of existence (Foucault, 1984c, *DE IV*: 393), Nietzsche noted:

> To give style to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practised by all those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature, and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even the weaknesses delight the eye. (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 530)

Nietzsche did not share the Classical Greek point of departure which, according to Foucault, means the individual can derive precepts for himself from general principles. It is true that he almost unceasingly gave guidelines and truths for certain situations (which generally pertained to himself), but there are no general treatises in his work of the kind the Greeks wrote about how to deal with eating and drinking, illness, death and so forth. In his ideas about a modern-day aesthetics of existence, Foucault thought much along the lines of the openness this dearth of general guidelines implies. The creation of new possibilities, devising and playing new games so new rules could be drawn up, was more important than acting on the basis of general principles or programmes.

Foucault saw the sado-masochist game as an example of how rules could be experimented with in a creative fashion: SM is an eroticization of strategic relations. The roles are clear, but everyone knows that the person who starts off as master can end up as slave, and vice versa. Although the rules of the game are often fixed, whether or not explicitly so, they are not immutable (Foucault, 1984i, *DE IV*: 742–3):

> What interests the practitioners of S & M, is that the relationship is at the same moment regulated and open. . . . This mixture of rules and openness has the effect of intensifying sexual relations by introducing a perpetual novelty, a perpetual tension and a perpetual uncertainty which the simple consumation of the act lacks. (Foucault, 1982/3, *DE IV*: 331)

So like Nietzsche, Foucault never specified which rules should be adhered to in what situation. He viewed programmes or propositions as dangerous, since they in turn can become laws. What he was interested in was the 'game with empty space' (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 167). However, as was the case with Nietzsche's brief habits, every new game will eventually lose its sheen, which implies that people will have to keep inventing new habits or games.

This anti-universalist proposition evoked the indignant reaction that Foucault was denying and undermining the value of social and political agreements and conventions. Foucault was lapsing into nihilism and relativism, Walzer, Taylor, Habermas and Rorty chided in unison (Walzer, 1986: 51–68; Taylor, 1986: 69–102; Habermas, 1986: 103–8; Rorty, 1991: 193–8). All of them spoke highly of Foucault's analysis of the disciplining power structures in our society. If anyone, however, refused like Foucault to draw up new rules or codes, then in the words of Walzer, in political theory that was a sign of 'catastrophic weakness'.

Dreyfus and Rabinow rightly noted that this criticism stemmed from too limited an interpretation of Foucault's aesthetics of existence, namely as a 'Nietzschean' working on oneself. (Or in Rorty's interpretation of Foucault, as the 'Romantic intellectual's goal of self-overcoming and self-invention'; Rorty, 1991: 196.) According to them, the fact was overlooked that in Foucault's aesthetics of existence, this working on oneself was always linked to a critical attitude towards one's present situation (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986: 109–21). With their reaction, however, Dreyfus and Rabinow did not manage to refute the criticism. After all, the critical attitude Foucault spoke of could also be undermining. This did not necessarily mean all the social and political agreements were null and void, but it did mean they were consistently critically approached.

A more convincing refutation of the criticism about an ethic as aesthetics of existence tending towards nihilism and relativism can be found in Foucault's proposition that every morality contains forms of subjectification as well as codes of conduct. In many morality forms, the

emphasis is on developing codes, social agreements and rules of conduct. In an ethic as aesthetics of existence, the emphasis is on subjectification forms and self-practices: 'In that case, the system of codes and rules of conduct may be quite rudimentary' (Foucault, 1984a: 37). An ethic as aesthetics of existence is not a total negation or relativism of all values or truths. On the contrary, it contains a clear precept, namely that one is to transform life into a work of art. Foucault's input is borne by a normative speaking, in which the relation to oneself and to one's existence is designated as the main area of concern, as the most important field aesthetic values are to be applied to (Foucault, 1984d, *DE IV*: 624). This precept is not a universal commandment. It is an invitation to a certain form of subjectification that can exist side by side with invitations to other subject forms.

3 Working on oneself

The absence of fixed rules and a clear-cut programme for ethical and political conduct like the ones Foucault recommended in his last interviews can be useful, original and creative, as long as adequate thought is devoted to what happens and people remain aware of what is possible (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 167). An active, critical and 'experimental' attitude is required: 'at every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing, with what one is' (Foucault, 1984h, *DE IV*: 585). Foucault used the word 'ascesis' in this connection, analogous to the '*askèsis*' he studied in the Greek philosophical tradition, which was dominated by stoic thinking. *Askèsis* implied a perpetual willingness to engage in an exercise and struggle with oneself (Foucault, 1988, *DE IV*: 799; and 1984a: 85): a training of the self by the self. The lifelong exercising of this contentious relation is a form of stylization and appreciation of life and love relations (Foucault, 1984a: 89, 90 and 269). At the same time, *askèsis* implies an active freedom, a being free with respect to the passions by gaining command of oneself and thus over the aphrodisia. This freedom as being the master over oneself is related to being the master over others; it is precisely the people who exercise political power who are expected to be masters over themselves. Freedom 'in its full and positive form is a power that one exerts over oneself in the power one exerts over the others' (Foucault, 1984a: 93).

Foucault's defence of a contemporary ascetic attitude – by which he certainly did not mean any form of abstinence – also implied working on oneself and a form of freedom. Ascesis is 'the work one does on oneself to form or present a self that obviously is never achieved. . . . It is our task to promote a homosexual ascesis through which we can transform ourselves and invent – I am not saying: discover – a still improbable mode of living' (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 165). One example of how to work

on oneself is by critically reading books: 'Reading a book or talking about a book was an exercise one surrendered to as it were for oneself in order to benefit from it, in order to transform oneself' (Foucault, 1985: 76–7). Or by philosophizing: in the foreword to *L'usage des plaisirs*, Foucault presented his fashion of philosophizing as ascesis, as an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought, that gave him an opportunity to detach himself from his self, to change himself (Foucault, 1984a: 15; and 1984g, *DE IV*: 584).[15]

At the same time, ascesis is a form of freedom, a state of being free of rigid positions or propositions and a state of being free to enter into new relationships, thought experiments, or modes of living. In addition, freedom as Foucault saw it, as was noted above, can assume the far more radical form of a being free of one's own self, a non-identity or de-subjectification: a freedom that can be reached, for example, in anonymous sex contacts at gay saunas. Foucault also sought this transgression in the act of writing his books, an idea he derived from Nietzsche, Blanchot and Bataille:

> This attempt at de-subjectification, the idea of a limit-experience that detaches the subject from his own self, is the fundamental lesson I learned from these authors; a lesson that encouraged me to always view my books, no matter how tedious and scholarly they might have been, as experiences devised to detach me from myself, to keep me from remaining the same. (Foucault, 1980a, *DE IV*: 43)

In this freedom as transgression, as transcending the limits of what we are in the present, Foucault seems to have been influenced not only by the ancient Greeks, but by Nietzsche as well. To Nietzsche, the act of working on oneself in the form of a struggle with oneself was an important theme. The 'higher', the 'exceptional' human being he had in mind had to be able to laugh about his own life (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 370). This human being had to be able to suffer with his head held high, and be able to fight a continuous struggle against all the weaknesses that someone who was one of the herd, one of the everyday people, would give in to, if he was to achieve the self-stipulated higher ideal. Nietzsche's willingness to experiment – 'We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs' (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 551) – influenced Foucault. In his '*soi qu'on n'atteint jamais*', one might discern a similarity to Nietzsche's eternal pursuit of the never attainable *Übermensch*.[16] Yet there are no signs anywhere in Foucault's work of the Nietzschean dichotomy between lower and higher people (slaves and masters). On the contrary, in the example of SM Foucault made it clear that the master and slave roles were always interchangeable.

The meaning of relationships with significant others in the struggle one fights with oneself also manifests itself in Foucault's thinking in a

way that is clearly different from Nietzsche's. As Nietzsche saw it, the confrontation with the other could be a very short one. The goal was to gain command of and with oneself (and should thus, as in the case of Zarathustra, be attained in solitude or seclusion). Foucault, however, wanted 'being a master over oneself' to manifest itself in relations with friends or lovers. Foucault answered the question of who we are in the present via the question of how we might relate ourselves to the people whom society, institutions, our environment and we ourselves do not expect us to bear any relation to at all.

4 Focus on an aesthetics of existence

Like that of the Greeks, Foucault's aesthetics of existence was oriented towards the active formation of oneself and of life. He not only observed aesthetics-of-existence practices among the ancient Greeks, but also in the Renaissance and in 19th-century dandyism (with Baudelaire as the leading example, as was described by Benjamin) (Foucault, 1984a: 17; 1984f: 568–71). In contemporary times, he recognized the aesthetics of existence in gay life styles: 'Being gay does not imply any identification with the psychological features and the visible masks of the homosexual, but an aspiration to select and develop a life style' (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 165). In the development of new and creative modes of living by gay men, Foucault saw the convergence of an active freedom and the breaking open of fixed truths and identities. It is a political/aesthetic filling-in of oneself, in which without any premeditated plan, without any fixed truths or rules, one links oneself with other people and in this link or practice, tries to turn one's life into a work of art by being a master over oneself. Foucault was not able to give any further details about this kind of mode of living. It cannot be viewed as a final result, but will in all eternity remain a changing process. Foucault's refusal to give a more detailed description of the concept of stylization paralleled his stance that since the subject is not given in advance, we have to create ourselves as works of art (Foucault, 1984c, *DE IV*: 392).

As regards this filling-in, or more precisely the lack of it, of an aesthetics of existence, Foucault did not exhibit much similarity to the Greeks he studied in *L'usage des plaisirs*. The Greek attitude to life aspired to a way of living that was beautiful and valuable, first and foremost for the person himself, but could also acquire the glow of beauty afterwards in the eyes of others or in the memory of posterity. In the culture of ancient Greece, it was quite clear what a beautiful way of living was. Regardless of codes of conduct or chiding self-interrogations, a person had to be able to adhere to certain rules and regulations and exercise moderation in dealing with passions, demonstrating all the while that he is master over himself.

Foucault seemed to derive the void of the aesthetics of existence more from Nietzsche than from the Greeks. Nietzsche felt people should forge their lives into a unity by way of lengthy practice and daily work, and by finding a coherence in the myriad of coincidental factors in life (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 530). But what that unity was supposed to be like was not specified. In Nietzsche's view, the freedom to become what you are was linked to being able to change perspective as one saw fit, finding one's own truth, and stipulating one's own ideal, which could never belong to anyone else – let alone to everyone. It was not the contents of the style that were important, but the fact that one was satisfied with this style and with oneself, and that one loved oneself, regardless of general principles or the judgement of anyone else (Nietzsche, 1988[1882]: 531 and 560–3). To Nietzsche, the art of giving life style did not imply any artificial embellishment of life. It was an affirmation of life as it presents itself to us and which – despite or thanks to whatever ups and downs there might be – we give style to over and over again, in a different way each time.

The work of art thus created is not a final state but a fragile thing that in turn can give rise to dissatisfaction and resistance. The aesthetics of existence is a process of 'eternal recurrence': each subject form or way of living that is achieved can give rise to problematization and the recurrent use of the aesthetics-of-existence instrument. Nietzsche's idea that everything recurs in the same way can also apply in a certain sense to the aesthetics of existence. After all, the possibility cannot be excluded that in the continuous formation and transformation of the self, earlier subject forms might recur.

Conclusion

Foucault's pronouncement of the death of 'man' in *Les mots et les choses* did not lead to a negation of every subjectivity. On the contrary, at the end of his life, he referred to the issue of the subject and particularly of how human beings were formed or constructed as subject as the most important theme of his research: 'The goal of my work during the last twenty years . . . has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (Foucault, 1982a: 208). The statement suggests that the experience of oneself as a transcendental, universal and given subject can exist side by side with other subject forms. Foucault's conception of subjectivity as a shattered, fragmented, changeable experience of oneself cannot, however, be brought into concordance with this subject conception. The transcendental subject that acts on the grounds of or obeys moral codes makes way in the aesthetics of existence for a fragmented 'I' that constitutes

itself into subject with the help of self-techniques. From this angle, the aesthetics of existence is not only a matter of subjectification forms. It also implies a philosophical and an ethical commandment. The philosophical commandment is to conceive of subjectivity as a constantly changing compilation of fragments. The ethical commandment is to problematize the relationship with 'oneself', to work on it and to follow the precept of transforming 'oneself' into a work of art.

The aesthetics of existence is an instrument that can be used by whomever feels invited to do so to turn life into a work of art. The temporary and situation-linked character of the work of art is the reason why this cannot be elevated to a rule or law. Every work of art is to be conceived of as an occurrence, an event, a formation for that moment and that situation.

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Notes

1 This article is a revised version of the first chapter of my dissertation, published in Dutch as *De kunst gewoon te leven. Aids en de bestaansesthetiek van Foucault* [The Daily Art of Living. AIDS and Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence] (Boom, 1996). Part of this article appeared previously in *Alg Ned Tijdsch Wijsbeg* 87(2) (1995): 69–83. The English translation is by Sheila Gogol. I am grateful to Hans Achterhuis, Niels Helsloot and Evert van Leeuwen for their comments on previous versions of this article.

2 Foucault addressed this question in Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, I, section 5, where Nietzsche argued that the 'nobles' distinguish themselves from the plebs by calling themselves *Agathos* and the others *Deilos*. Nietzsche's way of distinguishing the person 'who speaks' is far less neutral than Foucault's question 'Who speaks?'

3 In *L'ordre du discours* (1971a: 71), Foucault described genealogy as the study of the formation of discourses. In an interview with M. Fontana and A. Pasquino, he gave a more detailed description: 'a historical research which describes the emergence of forms of knowledge, discourses, fields of objects and so on, without reference to a subject which would be transcendent to the field of events or which runs with his empty identity through history' (Foucault, 1977, *DE III*: 147).

4 Unlike W. Schmid, I view Foucault's various ways of examining the subject as studies existing side by side. Schmid described a stepped development in Foucault's work; as the first step Foucault pronounced the death of the '*Majuskel-Subjekt*' (the cogito subject and the transcendental subject), as the second step he studied the practical manifestations of the subject as

object of various institutions (the '*Minuskel-Subjekt*'), and lastly he moved from the focus on certain subjects to the 'discovery of the ethical subject'. Such an ontogenic history of Foucault's thought does not do justice to the value of Foucault's separate studies. Schmid addressed his tendency to turn everything into one whole, to the extent that he felt that after the 'death' of the subject the '*Majuskel-Subjekt*' becomes a component of the 'ethical subject' (Schmid, 1992[1991]: 113).

5 Foucault did not succeed in keeping his language consistent. In 'The Subject and Power' he talked about someone who exerts power and someone over whom power is exercised. This was in contrast to his statement that a power relation is not a mode of action upon others, but on the actions of others (Foucault, 1982a: 222).

6 Foucault referred to Nietzsche's (1988[1878]) *Menschliches, Allzumen-schliches*, II (Vermischte Meinungen und Spruche), section 17, *KSA*, Vol. 2, p. 386.

7 Foucault, 1984f, *DE IV*, p. 575: 'en tant qu'être libres'. In the original interview in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 47, it says: 'as free beings'.

8 See, for a more general description of Foucault's attitude towards the Greeks, Joly (1986).

9 In this text, 'modern' is conceived of not as a historical period but as an attitude, a way of relating oneself to the present.

10 Ansell-Pearson stated that Foucault was the first to take the political-theoretical interest of Nietzsche's modernism critics seriously. Foucault elaborated Nietzsche's notion of power as a multitude of practical power relations and addressed Nietzsche's critics on the 'modern metaphysicians' and the privileged rational, 'free', but a-historical subject in it. Ansell-Pearson (1991: 267–83). See also Mahon (1992).

11 In this respect, Foucault distinguished himself from Bataille, who emphasized the *experience* of trangression (and thereby affirmed the unlimited and impossible). While Bataille was chiefly concerned with putting oneself at stake and, almost literally, losing oneself, Foucault was concerned instead with *becoming* oneself (Foucault, 1963b, *DE I*: 233–50).

12 In the transcript of the interview Foucault said: 'You can fuck a girl . . .' Transcript available at the Centre Michel Foucault, Paris, number D 250(3)*r.

13 Foucault remarked that although Proust wrote in *Un amour de Swann* about a relationship between a man and a woman, this should be interpreted as a fantasy about something else.

14 'That individuals are falling in love with each other, that is the problem. The institutions are brought down; affective forces traverse them, affirm and disturb them simultaneously' (Foucault, 1984e, *DE IV*: 164). See also Foucault, 1984i, *DE IV*: 735–46; Foucault, 1982b: 17.

15 'I also reminded myself that it would probably not be worth the trouble of making books if they failed to teach the author something he hadn't known before, if they didn't lead to unforeseen places, and if they didn't disperse one toward a strange and new relation with himself. The pain and pleasure of the book is to be an experience.'

16 In the view of Deleuze, the power play in which the Foucauldian subject

constitutes itself is characterized by the unlimited finite (*le fini-illimité*). This is what Nietzsche traced as the eternal recurrence. In Deleuze's view, the *Übermensch* is the formal composition of powers in the human being with the 'external powers' which exist in the unlimited number of possible combinations of existing powers (Deleuze, 1986: 140).

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