

LACAN'S ETHICS AND FOUCAULT'S "CARE OF THE SELF": TWO DIAGRAMS OF THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY (AND OF THE SUBJECT'S RELATION TO TRUTH)

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: DESIRE CONTRA ETHICS?

With the "discovery" of the unconscious, and the introduction of desire into questions of an individual's motivation, Freud in one fell swoop renders all previous accounts of ethics, and thus of the subject, partial.¹ Bluntly put, psychoanalysis demonstrated, explicitly for the first time, that there is something else that determines our behaviour up and beyond (or indeed, below) the "good," whether it be our own, someone else's, the good of society/humanity, or "the good" in a more general and abstract sense.² It is this revolution in ethical thought that is the subject of Jacques Lacan's seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, a revolution that is also a redefinition inasmuch as the latter is then not to do with the good at all, at least not in the above sense, and also not to do with what Lacan calls "the service of goods" (that includes the accumulation of wealth, commodities and so forth), but with that very desire—unpredictable, non-productive and unconscious—that will necessarily upset any such moral position. It is also this that marks psychoanalysis with tragedy insofar as such desire in operating contra this good (and especially the good of the individual) is also a being towards death.

The goal of Lacanian analysis—if it can be said to have one—is then less a "cure" or the production of a healthy productive individual (that is, the building up of the ego and the making of a "good" person) than the assumption of what might be called the subject of the unconscious that can only take place via the dismantlement of the various imaginary identifications that led to the former, including the various ethical ones (precisely about being a "good" person and so forth). This is not then an ethics of the individual at all, at least not of the conscious subject, rather, it is an ethics concerned with that impersonal desire that the former masks and which, for Lacan, constitutes the very truth of our being. It is, we might say, an ethics turned upside down.

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In what follows I want to excavate further this strange notion of ethics, and the concepts of desire and truth that it implies, via a commentary on the concluding session of Lacan's seminar.³ I am especially interested in how the deployment of these concepts themselves implies a particular kind of subject, or, we might say, a particular production of subjectivity.⁴ As a foil to this I will be comparing the latter with Michel Foucault's ideas about ethics as they are laid out in the introductory lectures of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (with some asides to Foucault's interviews on his late work and especially "On the Genealogy of Ethics"). If it is Lacan more than any other post-Freudian who sharpens and accelerates the challenge implied by psychoanalysis for ethics, then it is Foucault who takes up the further critical project of excavating an alternative tradition of ethics—the "Care of the Self" (the *epimeleia heautou*)—first practiced by the ancient Greeks, but which Foucault argues is directly relevant to our own ethical situation. I am specifically interested here in whether this particular ethical programme, which in some senses is pitched against Lacan's subject of desire, might itself be understood as a form of "the good" in Lacan's terms. Is Foucault's "Care of the Self" part of that ethical tradition that Lacan undermines, or does it in fact involve a different understanding of ethics that brings it closer to the psychoanalytic programme itself? Following this evaluation I will also be concerned with the specifically constructive nature of Foucault's "Care of the Self," and, explicitly in section two below, with Foucault's notion of spirituality—or simply the idea that access to truth must involve a prior preparation by the subject who is then, in turn, transformed by that very truth.⁵

There are major differences between my two archives, not least the one positioning desire as central, the other pleasure, but there are also, as I have just intimated, important resonances.⁶ Indeed, an immediate similarity is that both were intended specifically as oral discourses (being delivered as "seminars"). Both were open to all, and in both, I would argue, we see thought in action with the working out of the possibilities for a contemporary ethics (albeit this is often done via various historical analyses). A second resonance is that both attend to the relation one has with oneself contra any external power (Lacan) or control/dependence (Foucault). This important point will be explored throughout my article. For myself there are also resonances around the programmatic nature of both thinkers that lead from this orientation. These will be addressed—in the first section below—by the introduction of a third ethical thinker, Spinoza, whose own *Ethics* works, it seems to me, to bridge the ethical positions of Lacan and Foucault (and who therefore remains a presence throughout my article).⁷

A fourth and more secret resonance, which I attend to in section three (with some help from Gilles Deleuze and through diagrams), and which the previous two sections of commentary have been working towards, involves what might be called the ethical destination and the subject's relation to truth. Another way of putting this is that both Lacan and Foucault announce a finite subject that holds the infinite within albeit in two different articulations that will then involve two different kinds of relation—or non-relation. In short hand, and to think diagrammatically, these are the torus for Lacan and the fold for Foucault. Towards the end of this section I attempt a synthesis of these two: a composite diagram of the production of subjectivity that also draws in Henri Bergson's celebrated cone of memory as a further "connector" between my two protagonists.

In the fourth and final section of my essay, which operates as an afterword of sorts, I conclude my comparative study with an examination of the two different articulations of the subject's work that follow from these diagrams: the "path of the hero" in Lacan's *Ethics* and the idea of "life as a work of art" that Foucault develops in his late interviews. Here I am explicitly interested in something that is implicit throughout my article, namely the turn both thinkers make away from the typical Cartesian subject towards what we might call a subject yet to come, and it is towards this future subject (again with some help from Deleuze) that my concluding remarks are directed.

One further introductory remark. In general what follows intends a reading of Lacan that attends to the seminar as a pragmatic text for the production of subjectivity rather than to any structural interpretation that, for example, attends to Lacan's interest in the signifier or focuses exclusively on language in the construction of the subject (although I will return to this briefly at the very end of my article). As far as this goes I am interested

in Lacan's *Ethics* as a kind of technology of the self to use Foucault's term. As far as Foucault goes the logic is reversed in that I will not be dwelling on the specifics of his historical analyses, or on the particularities of the technologies of the self that he excavates, except in passing, but focussing rather on the notion of the "Care of the Self" itself as a kind of structural event—an event in thought that produces a relation to oneself and a concomitant freedom for and of the subject.⁸

1. SPINOZA BETWEEN LACAN AND FOUCAULT

Lacan begins the final session of his 1959-60 seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* with the comment that any ethics whatsoever presumes a judgement on an action that in itself contains a judgement of sorts, which is to say a meaning. Freud's insight, or hypothesis, that "human action has a hidden meaning that one can have access to," means, as far as Lacan is concerned, that psychoanalysis too has an ethics, or a "moral dimension," and that "in what goes on at the level of lived experience there is a deeper meaning that guides that experience." (Lacan, 312)⁹ As Lacan suggests this is less a discovery as such than the "minimal position" of psychoanalysis, albeit it is also the founding theory of any notion of what Lacan calls "inner progress." (Lacan, 312)

There is, however, a crucial difference between the latter and psychoanalysis and this comes down to the question of the good. For typical/traditional ethics (following this notion of "inner progress") there is, at bottom, the assumption that once meaning has been worked out there will be "goodness." "Goodness" is, as it were, the origin and *telos* of traditional ethics (in the seminar Lacan demonstrates that this tradition has its roots in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, a work that then operates as a cornerstone for all subsequent ethical definitions). In order to counteract this prevailing ethical assumption Lacan reminds us of the thought experiment of the "Last Judgement" that he introduced earlier in the seminar. Put simply, this is to project forward and imagine oneself at the end of one's life, or, in a parallel manner, to bring death forward as an event in life. The Last Judgement is then the operation of a standard by which to reconsider ethics in relation to "action and the desire that inhabits it." (Lacan, 313)¹⁰ From the perspective of the Last Judgement the question becomes: have you lived the life you wanted to lead beyond any injunction to the good, or, in more concrete terms, in terms of the acquisition of goods themselves (that is, wealth, commodities, status, and so forth)? As Lacan remarks: "The ethics of psychoanalysis has nothing to do with speculation about prescriptions for, or the regulations of, what I have called the service of goods." (Lacan, 312)

In contrast to this traditional and typical ethical position, which judges an action against the good (however this is thought), the ethical judgement for psychoanalysis, arising from a recognition of the nature of desire that lies at the heart of experience, is simply: "Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?" (Lacan, 314) This question might be opposed, as Lacan remarks again, to the "service of goods that is the position of traditional ethics" and that invariably involves "[t]he cleaning up of desire, modesty, temperateness, that is to say, the middle path we see articulated so remarkably in Aristotle ..." (Lacan, 314) The latter is, for Lacan, the "morality of the master, created for the virtues of the master and linked to the order of powers." (Lacan, 315) Such an ethics is then one that is tied to a transcendent schema and thus one that *subjects*.

It might be remarked straightaway that Foucault's "Care of the Self" would seem to fall precisely into this latter category of ethics that Lacan's own *Ethics* seeks to undo. Certainly, the "Care of the Self" involves an ethical trajectory of sorts—towards the good—and in the outlining of a mode of life that is beneficial for the subject there seems to be implied an ethical judgement that arises from an external rule against which such a judgement is made. There seems, on the face of it, as if some kind of transcendent operator is in place.

However, this would be to misconstrue how ethics, or simply the notion of a good life, is deployed within the archive that Foucault excavates. Indeed, for Foucault's ancient Greeks the ethical rule is specifically one that is chosen freely by the subject and then applied to the self by the self. The "Care of the Self" must then be understood as a distinctly individual matter, a personal choice (and thus a personal judgement) made by the subject himself rather than as a judgement made on an action from an outside agent or as the result of a

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external law. As such the ethical judgements of the "Care of the Self" might be seen as precisely a turning away from transcendent principles and, as such, might be understood rather as a kind of pragmatics that brings the "Care of the Self" closer to psychoanalysis itself.

In fact, Foucault gives us a succinct definition of this "Care of the Self" at the very beginning of his seminar on *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that clearly show its distance from Aristotle (at least as Lacan reads him), and also, at least in the first two points, its resonances with psychoanalysis. First then, the "Care of the Self" is "a certain way of considering things and having relations with other people;" it is an "attitude towards the self, others, and the world." (Foucault, 11)¹¹ Second, it is a "form of attention, of looking;" "a certain way of attending to what we think and what takes place in our thought." (Foucault, 11) And third, perhaps most important, it also names a series of actions—or practices—that are "exercised by the self on the self" and "by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself." (Foucault, 11) The "Care of the Self" is then less an ethics based on a transcendent law or authority than an intention, a mode of attention, and a particular practice, or set of practices.

We can note in passing that it is perhaps the nature of these practices of the "Care of the Self" that mark a distance from psychoanalysis. Such practices, which involve "techniques of meditation, of memorisation of the past, of examination of conscience, of checking representations which appear in the mind, and so on," do not just involve "talking" or indeed any other signifying regime (although they might mobilise these). (Foucault, 11) Indeed, to borrow the terminology of Felix Guattari, one of Lacan's analysts and perhaps his most trenchant critic, such technologies will tend to operate on an asignifying register.¹² I will be returning to this important point towards the end of my essay.

Nevertheless, as I suggested above, there is a sense in which the "Care of the Self" does seem to operate from a knowledge or presumption of what is good for the subject in the sense that it cannot but imply a judgement about actions, thoughts and so forth. This can be illustrated with just one of the technologies Foucault writes about, that of "checking representations which appear in the mind." (Foucault, 11) This has a striking similarity to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with its emphasis on the production of a healthy functioning subject (the building up of the ego), with all the criticisms that Lacan makes of this. There is then something to be worked out further here, namely the question of whether Foucault's subject can be identified with the ego in Lacan's terms (that is, the conscious subject) and thus whether these two thinkers are indeed ethically opposed.

In order to think this through, it is useful to take a detour via that figure that stands between Foucault's ancient archive and Lacan's more contemporary articulations: Spinoza. Indeed, I would argue that the latter calls forth the ethical revolution that Lacan and Foucault (in his turn to the ancients), both, in their own manner, continue. This is a revolution that involves a critique of any transcendent notion of the good, written by, as Deleuze and Guattari once called him, the "Christ of philosophers."¹³

On the face of it however Spinoza, like Foucault's ancient Greeks, seems to be precisely an ethical thinker in the sense Lacan portrays the ethical canon "before" psychoanalysis. Certainly the "middle path" of modesty, temperance, and so forth is exactly that advocated by Spinoza.¹⁴ As with Foucault then there seems to be an ethical dictate within Spinoza insofar as there are certainly injunctions to the subject to live a "good life." Simply put, there are judgements as to what is good and what bad for the subject. As such Spinoza, like Foucault, appears to follow the typical notion of ethics understood as a dictate to follow the "service of goods." There is also a sense in which Spinoza, like Foucault (at least in some of the technologies of the self he examines), suggests a turning away from the "worldly winds," the habits of pleasure seeking and so forth, towards a life determined by reason and discipline. This, on the face of it, is also a turn from desire; certainly it is a call to mastery, which, for Lacan, is always a discourse of power.

There are however also striking resonances between Spinoza's *Ethics* and Lacan's. On the one hand, for Spinoza, ethics involves an understanding of causation and then an acting accordingly, that is to say, ethically in one's best

interest. Such best interest is not necessarily what one might automatically assume, at least from the position of the subject as constituted. In Spinozist terms, we might say from the perspective of the subject of the First Kind of knowledge (the situation we find ourselves in the world as it were, or, we might say, the subject who is *subject to the world*). Indeed, a thorough understanding of causation will necessarily involve going beyond the interests of the subject *as is*—and this will necessarily also involve going against the desires of such a subject insofar as the latter are determined by what Freud-Lacan would call the pleasure principle (this is a form of desire that Lacan’s own ethics of desire runs counter too). Spinoza’s *Ethics* might be understood then as a kind of framework for self-analysis in terms of producing a knowledge not immediately apparent to the subject as is.¹⁵

As far as the outlining of a “good life” goes, we can also say that Spinoza’s *Ethics* is more a set of operating procedures, or a pragmatics, than a system of moral precepts. Indeed, although Spinoza does outline a lifestyle that is optimum for realising more and more knowledge (of causation), for becoming more of what one is, it follows from his *Ethics* that it is experimentation rather than such dictates that constitute the real ethical mode of behaviour insofar as we cannot know in advance whether a given encounter will be productive and generative for us (and, as such, we also cannot legislate ethically for others). The only thing we can be sure of is that we *do not know*—from the perspective of our ego, as Lacan might say—what we are, and thus, ultimately, what is “good” for us, at least in advance of any given encounter.

This amounts to a further, more profound resonance around what might be called the ethical destination. For Spinoza, as for Lacan, the relentless pursuit of causation will necessarily go beyond the mere “knowledge” of this causation. Indeed, the avowed goal of analysis, “to become a cause of oneself,” is the same as the goal of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, namely to “arrive” at a state of being when one is no longer subject to the world (and to those within it), but authors oneself. Through a kind of work on the self one must take responsibility, paradoxically, for that which came before oneself and indeed caused one to come into being (it is in this sense that both Spinoza and Lacan announce a strange temporality of the subject: its always retroactive formation).

Foucault’s “Care of the Self” is also about working on oneself in this sense in order to access a certain kind of understanding—or truth—that otherwise is masked. This work necessarily involves a taking responsibility for oneself. Indeed, as we shall see, it is this—what might be called a principle of *self-mastery*—that constitutes the importance of the ancient Greeks for Foucault, insofar as they demonstrate a method of self-governance that, for Foucault, might operate against neo-liberal governmentality and a politics of a self beholden to the transcendent operator that is Capital.

We might say then that Foucault’s “Care of the Self” *does* involve an ethical trajectory and judgement, but, ultimately, as with Spinoza, it is one not legislated for by anything outside that subject, and it is also one that is *not* for the good of the subject as is, but rather is in preparation for a subject that is yet to arrive. In fact, Lacan’s own ethics, as laid out in the seminar, also involves a trajectory of this kind inasmuch as it is structured as a journey of sorts in which different ethical dictates, or masters, are “overcome” in the production—or assumption—of the self as cause of itself. It is a journey from the outside edge of the torus—where our habitual life is led as it were—to the very centre, the place of desire, what Lacan, following Freud, calls *das Ding*. I will be returning to this topology below.

We can now return to the question of whether Foucault’s subject is opposed to Lacan’s—and make the provisional claim that, in fact, they have much in common. For both, as for Spinoza, there is a similar turn away from any transcendent ethical point *and* from the privileging of the subject as they are already constituted in the world. In each of these thinkers this is a turn away from the conscious subject—the ego—to something stranger, something that interrupts this economy of the subject as is, of business as usual.¹⁶ In Alain Badiou’s terms, and to pre-empt some of what follows, we might say that it is a turn from the subject of knowledge to a subject of truth.¹⁷ It is now time to look a little more closely at what Foucault says about this truth and in particular about the subject’s accessing of it.

2. SPIRITUALITY AND THE ACCESSING OF TRUTH

At the very beginning of his 1981-2 seminar at the *Collège de France*, published as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault announces his interest in attending to what he sees as an important historical and philosophical shift that occurs around the understanding of the self and our attitude towards it. This shift, which results ultimately in the Cartesian subject, involves the supplanting of an older idea of the “Care of the Self” with the more familiar ethical precept to “Know Thyself.” In fact, this particular historical study is, for Foucault, part of a more general inquiry, that again we might say has recently been reanimated by the writings of Badiou, and which is summarised by Foucault thus: “[i]n what historical form do the relations between the ‘subject’ and ‘truth’ ... take shape in the west?” (Foucault, 2)

Foucault posits a number of hypotheses for this change in ethics and especially for the concomitant denigration of the “Care of the Self” that occurs thereafter. Firstly, that this older ethical injunction to care for one’s self sounds—to modern ears—like either an individualist and self-centred “moral dandyism” or “like a somewhat melancholy and sad expression of the withdrawal of the individual ...” (Foucault, 13) Foucault points out that originally the injunction to care for one’s self did not have these negative connotations (of egoism and withdrawal), but in fact purely positive ones. A further paradox is that the austere disciplines and practices called for by this “Care of the Self” do not in fact disappear, but are taken up again albeit in the milieu of Christian asceticism with its doctrine of the renunciation of the self and in the shift to the more confessional “Know Thyself.” As Foucault has it in the interview “On the Genealogy of Ethics”: “... between paganism and Christianity, the opposition is not between tolerance and austerity but between a form of austerity linked to an aesthetics of existence and other forms of austerity linked to the necessity of renouncing the self and deciphering its truth.”¹⁸

The main reason for the shift, however, is more philosophical and has to do with the subject and truth, and indeed with how truth itself is understood. In fact, Foucault identifies a specific “Cartesian moment” in which the practices of the “Care of the Self” are replaced with practices of *knowledge*, with the latter understood as that which is apparent to the senses and to the subject as is. This is the positioning of self-evidence as origin of truth. It is, we might say, to install knowledge in the place of wisdom. In passing, we might note that this is the beginning of what Quentin Meillassoux calls the “correlation”: with the Cartesian moment the subject becomes the origin of knowledge of the world, but a world he or she is ultimately barred from in the very deployment of that knowledge (or mediation).¹⁹

Foucault contrasts this modern (and somewhat reductive) account of knowledge with a notion of “spirituality,” which “posits that the truth is never given to the subject by right.” (Foucault, 15). Foucault continues:

Spirituality postulates that the subject as such does not have right of access to truth. It postulates that truth is not given to the subject by a simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*), which would be founded and justified simply by the fact that he is the subject and because he possesses this or that structure of subjectivity. It postulates that for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself. The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subjects being into play [...] It follows from this point of view that there can be no truth without a conversion or a transformation of the subject. (Foucault, 15)²⁰

Truth, in this older tradition, is only reached on the condition of a prior preparation and of a price paid by the subject, that is, by an asceticism of some kind. Not only this but such truth, once accessed, has a reciprocal feedback impact on the subject, a “rebound” effect as Foucault calls it: “The truth enlightens the subject: the truth gives beatitude to the subject.” (Foucault, 16). Truth, we might say, is a transformative technology that takes the subject out of him or herself.

Indeed, this experience of truth, although prepared for by the subject, is not of the same order as the preparation. It is not, we might say, “of” the subject at all. We might note here the similarities with the movement from the Second to Third kind of Knowledge in Spinoza (as well as in the description of “beatitude” common to both accounts).²¹ The Second kind of Knowledge—the work of reason and the formation of “common notions”—prepares a platform as it were for the Third, intuitive kind of Knowledge (which we might also call a more immediate knowledge of truth). However, I would argue that a leap of sorts is required by the subject that wishes to traverse the first two kinds of Knowledge and access the Third. Another way of thinking this is that something beyond, or “outside” the subject as is must play its part. It is as if, at the last moment, and after any preparation made by the subject, the object must itself act and reach out to that subject. We might say that there must be a moment of grace, but also a subject who is prepared and open to such grace (or simply open to an “outside” understood as that which is beyond the subject as constituted).

With the Cartesian moment, which in fact is less a single moment than an historical development, there is then a privileging of knowledge—understood in the Cartesian sense—over this other form of Knowledge. As Foucault remarks, such knowledge, in the Cartesian sense, does “not concern the subject in his being” or indeed “the structure of the subject as such,” but only “the individual in his concrete existence.” (Foucault, 18) This has profound implications for the ethical subject. As Foucault remarks in interview:

Thus I can be immoral and know the truth. I believe this is an idea that, more or less explicitly, was rejected by all previous culture. Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth. With Descartes, direct evidence is enough. After Descartes we have a nonascetic subject of knowledge. (Foucault, “Genealogy,” 279)

Once again, the similarities with Badiou are remarkable: the production of subjectivity—when it is not merely the production of a subject of knowledge—operates contra knowledge (or, at least, such knowledge can only be a preparation for such a subject). In Badiou’s terms, this subject has nothing to do with the encyclopaedia (that is, the set of knowledges about the world as is), but is concerned with a truth that is always at odds with the latter and indeed calls the very subject into being (via an “event”).

The redefinition of truth as knowledge (in the Cartesian sense) immediately achieves a number of things. Positively, it sets up the conditions for science and for the Enlightenment more generally (the infinite progression of theorems and proofs). It also sets up the human sciences and the will—and confidence—to “explain” life via knowledge. Negatively however it reduces the subject to a subject of science, a subject limited to what already is, to what is already known. As such it also produces a concomitant suspicion towards any knowledge not based on scientific principles (for example those that imply a mutable subject position such as meditation and other introspective technologies).²²

Importantly however, Foucault suggests that nineteenth century philosophy still has elements of the aforementioned spirituality (Foucault mentions the German tradition: Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger) in which “a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity, to a transformation in the subject’s being.” (Foucault, 28) There are also other kinds of knowledge in which the state of the subject is directly implicated in any access to truth (albeit this spiritual dimension has tended to be obscured, or played down, shifted to questions of social organisation and the like). It is at this point in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that Foucault mentions, alongside Marxism, psychoanalysis and Lacan. (Foucault, 27) To quote Foucault, once more at length:

The interest and force of Lacan’s analyses seems to me to be due precisely to this: It seems to me that Lacan has been the only one since Freud who has sought to refocus the question of psychoanalysis on precisely this question of the relations between the subject and truth ... Lacan tried to pose what historically is the specifically spiritual question: that of the price the subject must pay for saying the truth, and of the effect on the subject that he has said, that he can and has said the truth about

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himself. By restoring this question I think Lacan actually reintroduced into psychoanalysis the oldest tradition, the oldest questioning, and the oldest disquiet of the *epimeleia heautou*, which was the general form of spirituality. (Foucault, 30)

This is then to understand psychoanalysis, in Foucault's terms, as a form of *parhēsia*, or truthful speech. It is, again, to think analysis as a specific technology of the self, albeit one in which a non-intrusive change is brought about as the result of the subject overhearing him or herself speaking. However, Foucault follows this insight with the immediate qualification, and reservation, about whether psychoanalysis can in fact formulate this spiritual question given that, for Foucault, the former involves the deployment of knowledge about the subject which is precisely what the *epimeleia heautou* does not do. Indeed, knowledge—however this is thought—is not enough for Foucault. The “Care of the Self” has to be a practice that results in a transformation.

But, given my account above, we might ask whether Lacan's ethics can be reduced to a knowledge in the sense Foucault gives the term? Certainly the former is positioned *against* ethical knowledge in terms of dictates from without (from any masters), but also in terms of the turn it makes from the Cartesian subject and from the knowledge implied by the latter.²³ Indeed, if any kind of knowledge is implied by psychoanalysis it is a knowledge that has more in common with Spinoza's Second and Third Kinds of Knowledge—that is, a knowledge of causation and ultimately of truth. Indeed, Lacan's subject is, like Foucault's, not a subject of knowledge understood in the Cartesian sense at all but something that undermines the latter; and especially, in Lacan's case, the certainty with which the Cartesian gesture proceeds to found its particular subject. Again, we might call this distinctly other state of being simply a subject of truth.

Perhaps the question to ask here is then about the relation between Foucault and Lacan's notions of truth. Certainly, for Foucault, truth is something “outside” the subject as constituted. It is something non-human if by human we understand something specifically Cartesian. Truth is the state of being once one's finite self, in terms of worldly desires and so forth, has been mastered allowing one, as it were, to then experience the infinite. In fact, we might say then that such truth, as an experience of the infinite, “saves” the subject from their finitude or simply their mortality. Again, the resonances with Spinoza are worth remarking on; for the latter ethics is likewise a work against the passions (or passive affects), a becoming active that ultimately produces a state of dwelling within eternity (but *not* an immortality). This is the accessing by a finite being of the infinite out of which they have been constituted.

For Lacan's *Ethics*, on the other hand, truth is *das Ding* or simply the Real. And the Real is everything that is left out in the constitution of the subject of knowledge, or, in Lacanian terms, the subject of the symbolic (desire then is not “of” this Real as such, but is the state of the subject alienated from the latter and thus always desiring it). For Lacan the analytic interest is how this alienation in the symbolic has taken place, or in his own turn of phrase (in the *Ethics*) how a subject has “eaten the book.” In *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* it is implied that a subject can, ultimately, arrive at this Real, the void of *das Ding* at the heart of experience, but it is equally implied that this truth would be the subject's undoing. *Das Ding* is the place of greatest desire but also greatest fear, hence the pleasure principle that throws up diversions at every step of the way, diversions that include the “service of goods.”

Indeed, psychoanalysis, by inventing an unconscious—the place of *das Ding*—that is fundamentally other to the subject as is might be seen, despite its avowed intention, to be setting up a bar of sorts that in fact stymies the subject's transformation. The specifically Lacanian unconscious is marked further by the alienation of this Real within the symbolic (indeed the unconscious is the result of the subject's alienation “within” the latter). This might be compared with Spinoza for whom rather than a conscious/unconscious division there are just different degrees of knowledge of causation. In a Spinozist sense then the unconscious might be understood simply as the fact that there is more to what we are than what we think we are, or, to put it another way: we do not know what we are and we certainly do not know of what are bodies are capable. It might be said, again from a Spinozist perspective, that the majority of the processes of the body (and thus of the mind) *are* unconscious,

but they are not barred from knowledge; they are simply yet to be known. Again, put simply, for Spinoza there is a continuum between what is known and what is unknown and depending on the state of the subject, that is, their ethics, the line moves from the unknown to the known.

For Foucault too there is a sense that the subject can access the unknown through work on the self and specifically, as with Spinoza, through a life of temperance.²⁴ Indeed, such a life—lived against the pleasure principle we might say—allows for this increase in knowledge when the latter is understood as a movement towards truth. As with Spinoza, this is to foreground the importance of practice in terms of an ethical life over and above any notions of an abstract “good,” but also against any notions of confession, or of the deciphering/unveiling of an authentic self—or more truthful desire—“behind” the subject as manifested.

3. THE QUESTION OF POWER AND THE QUESTION OF TOPOLOGY (THE FOLD AND THE TORUS)

It might be argued then that Lacan’s definition of traditional ethics as a judgement made in the light of “the good” leaves out the crucial matter of practice that both Foucault and Spinoza foreground. For Spinoza especially such practice, or what we might call an ethical programme (for Spinoza, the life of temperance) allows for an increase in our body’s capacity to affect and to be affected and thus also for a concomitant increase in our understanding of causation. Ultimately, the aim of such an ethical code is less to be “good” (or indeed bad) in whosever’s eyes, than simply to increase our capacity to be. In Spinoza’s terms it is to express more and more of our essence, resulting, paradoxically, in becoming more of what we already are. This implies a processual attitude to subjectivity as a kind of practical work in progress.

I will be returning explicitly to this notion of the work of the subject in my final section below, but I want to address here the question of mastery that is necessarily implied by it. Indeed, if for Lacan traditional ethics is, by his definition, the ethics of the master then we might want to ask about the question of *self* mastery that is so crucial to the programmatic nature of Foucault’s “Care of the Self.” This is, in fact, to address the crucial issue of power in relation to ethical conduct.

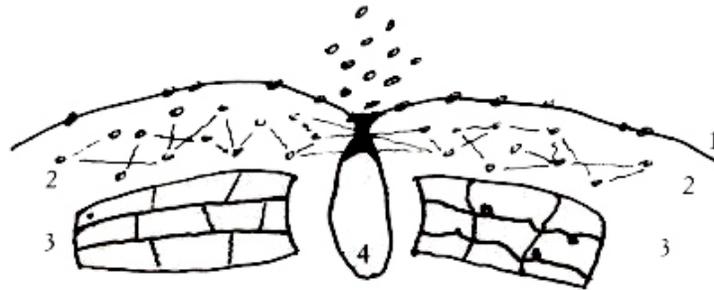
In fact, for Lacan, and in relation to the field of desire, the position of power is, in every case the same: to make desire wait. In Lacan’s words: “[t]he morality of power, of the service of goods, is as follows: ‘As far as desires are concerned, come back later. Make them wait.’” (Lacan, 315) Thinking this the other way round we might say that for Lacan desire acts *against* power. Indeed, for Lacan, this constitutes desire’s peculiar ethicality (and we might say also its radicality).

For Foucault on the other hand power must be addressed in and of itself. It must be made one’s own. Thus, “this work on the self with its attendant austerity is not imposed on the individual by means of civil law or religious obligation, but is a choice about existence made by the individual” (Foucault, “Genealogy,” 271). Again, the crucial point here is that such an ethics arises from a free decision made by the subject and a concomitant “mode of action” or *practice* of freedom that follows from this decision.

In Lacanian terms the question then becomes whether this self-power—power enacted on the self by the self—is also a form of the deferral of desire, or even of giving up of one’s desires, or whether it is something more productive and generative: a form of self mastery that allows one to resist power when the latter is understood as that which subjects. Certainly, as I have suggested above, the desires that the “Care of the Self” militates against are *not* the same as that desire which for Lacan is the metonymy of our being (in fact, the former are part of those distractions and diversions thrown up against the latter). The question still remains however as to what this self-power enables? Where does it take the subject?

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At this point it is worth a digression to Deleuze's powerful book on Foucault, and especially to the closing chapter where Deleuze discusses the relation of self to self and what it implies. Indeed, Deleuze provides a succinct commentary on Foucault's project of tracking how power and knowledge constitute subjectivity, but also about the possibility of subjectivation, or the self-fashioning of the subject by the subject via the folding in of outside forces. For Deleuze this fold of subjectivation in and of itself produces a kind of inner space of freedom within the subject. This is how Deleuze diagrams this fold, with its relationship to the strata (of power and knowledge), but also to the outside that has been folded within:



1. Line of the outside; 2. Strategic Zone; 3. Strata; 4. Fold (zone of subjectivation)
Fig1. Diagram from Deleuze, G. 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought', *Foucault*

With this technology of subjectivation, which is first invented by ancient Greeks (in Foucault's reading), it is, Deleuze remarks, "... as if the relations of the outside folded back to create a doubling, allow a relation to oneself to emerge, and constitute an inside which is hollowed out and develops its own unique dimension: 'enkrateia', the relation to oneself that is self-mastery ..."²⁵ This is "the inside as an operation of the outside."²⁶ As Deleuze suggests in interview it is an outside "that's further from us than any external world, and thereby closer than any internal world."²⁷

For Deleuze, following Foucault, it is this folding that constitutes the "novelty of the Greeks," insofar as "they bent the outside, through a series of practical exercises:"

... they folded force, even though it still remained a force. They made it relate back to itself. Far from ignoring interiority, individuality, or subjectivity they invented the subject, but only as a derivative or the product of a "subjectivation." They discovered the "aesthetic existence"—the doubling or relation with oneself, the facultative rule of the free man.²⁸

In the final chapter of the *Foucault* book Deleuze suggests two ways in which this outside might be negotiated by the subject: in a general un-folding, or being towards death, and in a continuous folding and refolding. For Deleuze, the Greeks chose the latter (whereas the Orient followed the former).²⁹ Deleuze suggests that the "proper" name of this continuous folding of the outside is memory, in fact a kind of "absolute memory" which doubles the present.³⁰ As Deleuze remarks: "Memory is the real name of the relation to oneself, or the affect on self by self."³¹

We might say then that the Greeks invented the monad, the folding of the whole world within the subject. We might note the connections with Leibniz here, at least as Deleuze reads him (indeed, Deleuze's books on Leibniz and on Foucault are both concerned with subjectivation as folding). But we also have here a compelling splicing of Henri Bergson's thesis in *Matter and Memory* to Foucault's "Care of the Self." The "inside-space" created by the free individual is that ontological ground—the "pure past"—that Bergson posits as the "background" to a reduced human experience. Deleuze is drawing out something profound within Foucault here, namely how the processes of subjectivation produce a space of the infinite within the finite, a folding-in of the universe (or,

in Bergson’s terms, the whole of the past). The fold might then be refigured as Bergson’s celebrated cone of memory (indeed, the cone *is* the fold figured in three dimensions), with A-B representing the Outside, P the world we find ourselves within, and point S the subject:

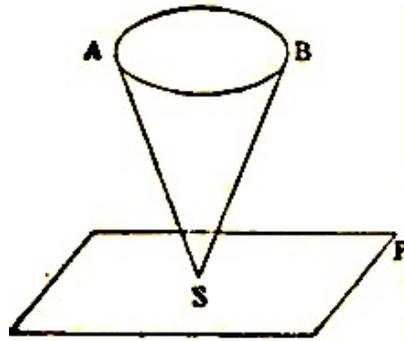
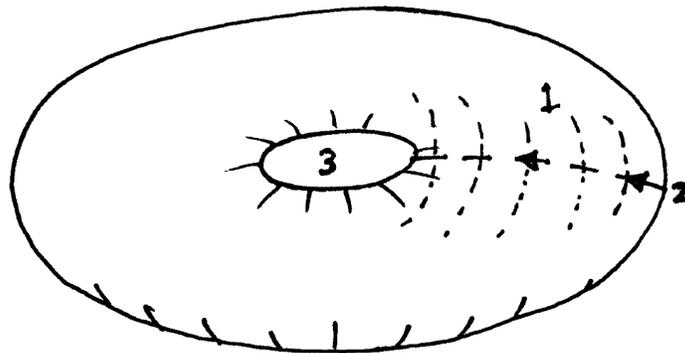


Fig. 2 Diagram from Bergson, H. ‘On the Survival of Images’, *Matter and Memory*

This fold-cone that “contains” the outside within might be compared with a similar void that, for Lacan, is located at the heart of experience: *das Ding*, or the Real. This is something at the very heart of the subject, but that is necessarily avoided if not effaced in the very production of that subject. As I have intimated above, but will make explicit here, the structure of this Lacanian ethical subject can then be diagrammed as the torus, with *das Ding* at its centre and the subject’s “path” figured as leading from outer to inner edge (via the overcoming of various ethical masters):



1. Ethical masters/boundaries; 2. The path of the Subject/Hero; 3. *Das Ding*
Fig. 3 Lacan’s *Ethics* diagrammed as Torus;

We might return here to the final pages of the *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* where Lacan writes of this void as having been first opened by Kant in his ridding of morality of any “interest,” thus making the question of ethics into a purely categorical imperative. For Lacan, on the other hand, psychoanalysis sees this void as “the place occupied by desire” and thus replaces the Kantian “Thou shalt” with a more Sadean “fantasm of *jouissance* elevated to the level of an imperative.” (Lacan, 316). (In Alistair Crowley’s terms we might phrase this *desiring* imperative as: “Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law”).

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So, Kant begins the revolution in ethics by abstracting the moral impulse, but he does not follow this audacious move through. In fact, he erects a transcendent space, a place in which the “unrealised harmony” of the moral dimension of experience might be realised. A transcendent enunciator is instated as it were, a divine presence, or, in Lacan’s phrase, a “Great Book.” (Lacan, 317) This is a book of accounts, where everything that happens, finally, is weighed up. “It is this that is signified by the horizon represented by [Kant’s] immortality of the soul.” (Lacan, 317) The promise of immortality, the religious wager *per se*, is then a way of deferring desire. In Lacan’s arresting turn of phrase: “As if we hadn’t been plagued enough by desire on earth, part of eternity is to be given over to keeping accounts.” (Lacan, 317) The promise of immortality, we might say, is a way of guaranteeing accounts and thus of guaranteeing power.

This is then the split articulated fully by Kant although not with its origin with him. It is a split—or a bar—between mortality and immortality; between the finite and the infinite. In fact, as Deleuze remarks in another context, the judgement of God actually produces this finite/infinite split, with the infinite then operating as a separate realm, one to which we do not have access *in this life* but that works precisely as a guarantee that the debts of this life will be repaid at a later date and in another place (as the religious saying goes: “your reward is in the next world...”).³² The pay-off of the “good life” is then not in and of itself that life itself, but the promise of a life always after the present one.

For Lacan, on the other hand, there is no other place in which accounts are being kept (for Lacan, following Nietzsche, God is most certainly dead). There is no law as it were, except, we might say, the law of desire. It is in this sense that, contrary to many accounts, Lacan might be thought of as a champion of immanence. In fact, this is an immanence that does not stop with man, but is of an apersonal desire, a *Thanatos* that decentres our anthropomorphic pretensions on to a further field of immanence of inorganic drives. The void is then not a sublime and other worldly place but is the very truth of our being and, as such, is located at the very centre of our experience, albeit masked by habits of the good, i.e. the subject as is.

What then of our access to this secret place of desire? As I have suggested it is not clear with Lacan whether one can truly assume this desire in its fullness. It must in fact always be signified and thus alienated. Indeed, although Lacan denies the transcendent space erected by Kant, there is a sense in which desire inevitably produces another place, beyond experience as it were—where desire is fully itself—and that, as such, our experience in the world as is characterised by a lack. Lack, in this sense, inevitably produces—or promises—another world, whilst Lacan’s subject, however far they proceed, is fated to dwell in this one.

With these two diagrams of the fold and the torus we have then two figurations of the finite subjects relation to truth, or to the infinite. For Lacan truth, as desire, is at the centre of our being (rather than being “beyond” as with Kant), but we are essentially barred from it inasmuch as our milieu of existence is the symbolic (our human habits—of the good—mask this truth).³³ For Foucault, following Deleuze’s reading, truth is folded within us and it is we who make this fold by choice. Such a fold brings the outside within. In fact, the fold suggests that the inside is nothing but a fold of the outside. Truth then is accessed, and we might also say, is actively produced, by the subject. We might also, as I suggested above, diagram this fold in three dimensions as a cone.³⁴

To conclude this section of my article on the topology of these two thinkers I want now to attempt something more experimental and splice the fold-cone to the torus. It seems to me that with this we begin to get a more complex picture of the subject’s relation to truth and also one that introduces duration, in its Bergsonian sense, into psychoanalysis:

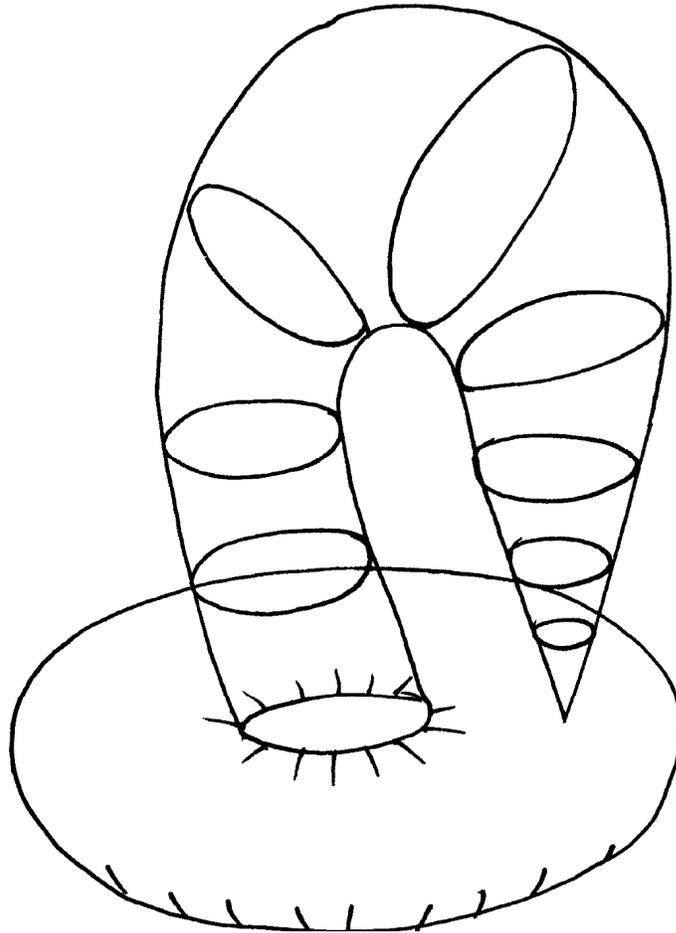


Fig. 4 Foucault/Bergson-Lacan (Fold/Cone-Torus) Composite Diagram

This composite diagram explicitly links the pure past/absolute memory, or simply the outside of Foucault-Deleuze-Bergson, with the Real or *das Ding* of Lacan.³⁵ It suggests that there is only a bar at the inner rim of the torus if one approaches from that direction—from edge to edge of the torus as it were. But there is *no* bar if one follows the cone, which is to say, concerns oneself with oneself rather than with a position always elsewhere, one that is always on the horizon, always deferred.

Indeed, the diagram suggests, in a nod to Badiou, that the accessing of truth might be less a journey from one side of the torus to the other, and more the result of an event of sorts *on* the torus—an event, which, we might say, arises also from a preparation made by the subject on that torus. Indeed, for Bergson the point of opening to the pure past (the apex of the inverted cone) involves just such a preparation, in this case simply the suspension of the motor-sensory apparatus—a hesitation or “stopping of the world.” Elsewhere Bergson suggests that this is also the operation of the mystic who turns away from the fixed rituals and habits of society (and religion), thus accessing “creative emotion.”³⁶ We might say that any accessing of this outside must indeed involve a turn away from the habits and concerns of the world, which is to say knowledge, towards something specifically other. What then is the specific nature of this turn and how does it produce a subject when this is thought of

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as *not* a subjected individual, but a free one? What is it that determines such a subject for Lacan and Foucault?

4. THE PRODUCTION OF THE SUBJECT: THE PATH OF THE HERO VS. LIFE AS A WORK OF ART

For Lacan guilt is the determining affect of typical subjectivity, the dominant emotional state of a subject that is subjected to a transcendent enunciator (insofar as such a subject leads a “good” life, legislated by a master of some kind, and in so doing does not follow their own desire). Guilt is the affective state in which desire has been put off until a later date. As Lacan remarks: “... on the far edge of guilt, insofar as it occupies the field of desire, there are the bonds of a permanent book-keeping, and this is so independently of any particular articulation that may be given of it.” (Lacan, 318) A life lived in this manner involves then the substitution of the “service of goods” for a desire that is consequently and endlessly deferred. In fact, this is, for Lacan, the situation of the modern world and of the subject therein:

Part of the world has resolutely turned in the direction of the service of goods, thereby rejecting everything that has to do with the relationship of man to desire—it is what is known as the postrevolutionary perspective. The only thing to be said is that people don't seem to have realized that, by formulating things in this way, one is simply perpetuating the eternal tradition of power, namely, “Let's keep on working, and as far as desire is concerned, come back later.” (Lacan, 318)

This is as much the case, Lacan argues, in a communist imagined future as one in which there is a “divine presence of an orthodox kind.” (Lacan, 318). In both, accounts are kept. In terms of the former, in place of “the inexhaustible dimension that necessitates the immortality of the soul for Kant, there is substituted the notion of objective guilt” with the concomitant “promise” that the “sphere of goods to which we must all devote ourselves may at some point embrace the whole universe.” (Lacan, 318)

For Lacan, on the other hand, and as we have seen, “the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire.” (Lacan, 319) Indeed, for Lacan, this is what a subject always feels guilty about in the last instance, even, in fact especially, when this giving ground has been for the very best motives, for the “good” of others (hence, according to Lacan, the deep resentment of Christians). This desire will however always at some point, and in some manner, return (hence, neurosis) being as it is the “unconscious theme” of our lives, the metonymy of our being. Desire will always demand that the debt be paid, putting us back on the track of what Lacan calls “something that is specifically our business.” (Lacan, 319)

For Lacan then “giving ground relative to one's desire” is always accompanied in the destiny of the subject by some betrayal ...” that is then tolerated by that subject. (Lacan, 321) Lacan continues, “[s]omething is played out in betrayal if one tolerates it, if driven by the idea of the good—and by that I mean the good of the one who has just committed the act of betrayal—one gives ground to the point of giving up one's own claims ...” (Lacan, 321) It is here that contempt—for the other, and for oneself—arises. Contempt is the accompanying affect to guilt; it is contempt that fixes us to what we already are, to the subject as is. Contempt keeps us going around the torus as it were, beholden to someone or something that is not, ultimately, our business, but is merely the “service of goods.”

Lacan however suggests another reaction by the subject to this betrayal: impunity. Indeed, for Lacan, this is “the definition of the hero: someone who may be betrayed with impunity.” (Lacan, 321). The hero is then someone who carries on following his or her desire despite everything (and, in tragedy, even the threat of their own death). For Lacan:

this is something that not everyone can achieve; it constitutes the difference between an ordinary man and a hero, and it is, therefore, more mysterious than one might think. For the ordinary man the betrayal that almost always occurs sends him back to the service of goods, but with the proviso that he will never again find that factor which restores a sense of direction to that service. (Lacan, 321)

It is not so much that the hero and the ordinary man are two separate figures, for, as Lacan remarks “[i]n each of us the path of the hero is traced.” (Lacan, 319) In Lacan’s terms it is then the hero, he or she who has been betrayed with impunity, that constitutes the subject of desire, or, we might say, the subject of immanence who has turned away from the transcendent enunciator who judges. This is someone who has not given ground to that which is specifically their business, and someone who has paid the price for this commitment. Indeed, for Lacan, “[t]here is no other good than that which may serve to pay the price for access to desire—given that desire is understood here, as we have defined it elsewhere, as the metonymy of our being.” (Lacan, 321) There is always a price to be paid for following one’s desire and it is this price that is the only one worth paying. It is the subject’s commitment to this truth of their own being—in the face of anything else—that, we might say, constitutes them *as* a subject.

In interview Foucault also refers to the subject as a “hero,” and to the latter “as his own work of art.”³⁷ Indeed, for Foucault, as for Lacan, the hero is involved in a specific concern with the self aside from any external—transcendent—legislation. We might say, again, that the hero can be defined as a subject dedicated to truth. As with Lacan, there is also a price to be paid for accessing—and speaking—this truth about oneself. This, as I mentioned above, is the price of asceticism.

However, for Foucault, there is also a constructive attitude to the self that is at stake besides this asceticism. Indeed, the ethical imperative, for Foucault, is less to treat one’s life as an enigma—a riddle of desire to be deciphered—than as a work of aesthetic production. Ultimately, and following the Greeks, it is “to give one’s life a certain form in which one could recognise oneself, be recognized by others, and which even posterity might take as an example.”³⁸ This fashioning of a self as an aesthetic practice is something that accompanies, and is implied by, the notion of ethics as the choice of certain rules of conduct inasmuch as both imply a certain style of living. As Deleuze remarks in his interview on Foucault’s work:

... it’s a matter of *optional rules* that make existence a work of art, rules at once ethical and aesthetic that constitute ways of existing or styles of life (including even suicide). It’s what Nietzsche discovered as the will to power operating artistically, inventing new “possibilities of life.”³⁹

For Foucault it is Sartre who develops the idea that the self is not given to us; however, unlike Sartre for whom there is then a turn to authenticity (which, we might argue, is continued with Lacan), Foucault suggests, following Nietzsche, that with the Greeks “[i]t was a question of making one’s life into an object for a sort of knowledge, for a *technē*—for an art.”⁴⁰ In the same interview Foucault talks further about “[t]he idea of the *bios* as a material for an aesthetic piece of art.”⁴¹ Again, one’s life becomes an object to be fashioned through an art of living. Foucault continues in the same vein some pages later:

We hardly have any remnant of the idea in our society that the principle work of art which one must take care of, the main area to which one must apply aesthetic values, is oneself, one’s life, one’s existence. We find this in the renaissance, but in a slightly academic form, and yet again in the nineteenth-century dandyism, but those were only episodes.⁴²

In a further interview Foucault links this aesthetics of existence more explicitly to modernity and to the Enlightenment, understood as an attitude of self-critique, that implied “a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving.”⁴³ This is a modernity that comes to parallel the Cartesian scientific worldview and which, to a certain extent, undermines it. For Foucault it is Baudelaire that exemplifies this attitude in his own celebration of the heroism of modern life, with its attendant attempt to capture something eternal within the contemporary moment, but also in a certain attitude that we might call a peculiarly modern “Care of the Self”:

[...] modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relation to the present; it is also a mode of relation that must be established with oneself. The deliberate attitude of modernity is tied to an indispensable asceticism. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration: what Baudelaire, in the

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vocabulary of his day, calls dandysme.⁴⁴

For Foucault there is then a modern “asceticism of the dandy” who remains unsatisfied with his subjectivity as is (we might say with his life on the torus (“in the flux of passing moments”)), and who thus “makes of his body, his behaviours, his feelings and passions, his very existence, a work of art.”⁴⁵ Indeed, contra Lacan, “[m]odern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets, his inner truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself.”⁴⁶ This self-invention arises from a decision made by the subject and a concomitant practice of living differently, against the norms of the world that such a subject is born into (insofar as these norms tend to be instigated by a transcendent enunciator, which in our own time, is Capital). It is this, what we might call (following Guattari) an ethicoaesthetic paradigm for the production of subjectivity, which determines a freedom of sorts for that subject. Following my discussion of Lacan and Foucault's topologies above, we might also call this the self-drawing of a new and different diagram of the finite/infinite relation, or simply of the relation a finite subject might cultivate to that which hitherto was “outside” themselves.

For Foucault psychoanalysis, ultimately, falls short of this ethicoaesthetics of existence insofar as it presumes a truth already given and ultimately determining of the subject (although, as I have attempted to demonstrate, it is also a truth, ultimately, that is barred from the subject). Indeed, the theory of desire, at once liberating for Lacan becomes a universalist and ahistorical limitation in Foucault's eyes. The resonances between Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari's own critique of psychoanalysis are perhaps worth concluding with here. In *A Thousand Plateaus* it is precisely the way in which Lacanian analysis operates as a tracing—of a predetermined truth—rather than as a map of a territory yet to come that defines it as a form of micro-fascism.⁴⁷ Its replacement, “Schizoanalysis,” with an emphasis on a machinic unconscious yet to be made, replaces this theatre, where parts and set pieces are already worked out, with a programme, following Spinoza, of experimental encounter and assemblage, or, as Deleuze and Guattari call it, a factory of the unconscious. Perhaps we can say then that schizoanalysis is a peculiarly contemporary “Care of the Self” that develops its own techniques and technologies, especially around the group and the institution, but that stays true to what we might call the Foucauldian ethicoaesthetic injunction to refuse transcendent enunciators, to be the source of one's own ethics and, ultimately, to treat one's life as a work of art.⁴⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE QUESTION OF PRACTICE AND THE SUBJECT-YET-TO-COME

Lacan's own concluding remarks in the *Ethics* are that psychoanalysis cannot be understood as one of the human sciences, or at least that such an attitude would amount to a “systematic and fundamental misunderstanding” insofar as the latter are a “branch of the service of goods.” (Lacan, 324) Indeed, Lacan's *Ethics* is in many senses one long critique of the “passion for knowledge” that has come, for Lacan, to occupy the place of desire in the modern world. Such knowledge, as I have tried to show, only concerns what Lacan calls the “service of goods,” or, we might say, the subject as is.

Indeed, Lacan's subject is fundamentally at odds with other more generally accepted notions of the subject inasmuch as it has to be assumed (this being the role of analysis—to “uncover” this “other” unconscious subject). It is certainly not the subject of any conscious agency or of the centred self. The latter might seem to define Foucault's subject that has a degree of assumed mastery over the passions, however, as I have tried to suggest, such a subject is merely the preparation or platform to allow for something else that is definitely *not* the subject as given to emerge. As with Lacan, so then for Foucault: the production of the subject—of truth—cannot be reduced to a science (or substance), or indeed be understood as the result of any kind of knowledge understood in a Cartesian sense. As Foucault says, the subject is not merely “constituted in a symbolic system,” but rather, “in real practices—historically analysable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them.”⁴⁹

In conclusion then it seems to me that this question of practice, ultimately, is the key difference between these two thinkers in their understanding of the ethical subject. Lacanian psychoanalysis, as psychoanalysis, involves a *speaking* “cure;” its realm of operation is the symbolic. It cannot but foreground language, and specifically the signifier, in the constitution of subjectivity. Indeed, it is the symbolic that causes alienation/produces the neurotic subject, but is also that which has the potential to “free” such a (always neurotic) subject (this being the shuffling of signifiers—the *bien-dire*—that allows the neurotic to signify their desire and thus be released from whatever impasse they find themselves within).

Speech, and indeed writing, certainly play a part in Foucault’s account of the subject. We have the *hypomnēmata*, notebooks, diaries, and so forth that are used as particular technologies of the self and there is also the importance of *parrhēsia*.⁵⁰ The latter especially—the telling of the truth about oneself—would seem to prefigure the analyst’s couch albeit it was a specifically public exercise. On the other hand technologies of the self, those codes and practices applied to the self by the self, were as often as not non-linguistic: friendship, or meditation for example. Indeed, in general, for Foucault, the “Care of the self” is a practice that is not merely verbal or linguistic, though it might employ these as partial methods. It is, as it were, a practice of freedom that can only be experienced in its active application by a subject.

We might return to the question of the master here. For Foucault a master—“one who knows best”—might well operate as an ethical guide, at least to begin with. A master might also, in a call for total obedience, aid in that self-examination crucial to the “Care of the Self.”⁵¹ For Lacan, on the other hand, the one who knows best is precisely the operator of power—a transcendent enunciator—that desire will always work against. Indeed, transference—where the analysand attributes a certain “knowingness” to the analyst—is only a first step in analysis (and a dangerous one); a first moment in the subject’s understanding and assumption of his or her own desires.

Might not however the same be said of Foucault? That a master is only the first step in a programme of self-mastery, and that the latter might itself be understood, in Lacanian terms, as the becoming a cause of oneself? To practice self-mastery is then to be involved in the production of a subjectivity that turns away from received values and from transcendent operators. Such a move—what we might call an affirmation of immanence—is then, ultimately either to refuse power in the name of desire (Lacan) or to assume it in the operation of a self-power (Foucault). In either case it is to change oneself and to change one’s relation to that which is outside oneself.

For Deleuze it is these new kinds of relations with the outside, these new kinds of folding, which ultimately constitute the core and importance of Foucault’s last writings.⁵² Indeed, for Deleuze, following Foucault, new kinds of folding will ultimately produce new forms of life that might well go beyond subjectivity understood in the specifically Greek sense. As Deleuze remarks:

... the production of new ways of existing can’t be equated with a subject, unless we divest the subject of any interiority and even any identity. Subjectification isn’t even anything to do with a “person”: it’s a specific or collective individuation relating to an event (a time of day, a river, a wind, a life ...). It’s a mode of intensity, not a personal subject. It’s a specific dimension without which we can’t go beyond knowledge or resist power.⁵³

For Deleuze’s Foucault the fold we call the human subject is a nineteenth century production for it is then “that human forces confront purely finitary forces—life, production, language—in such a way that the resulting composite is a form of Man.”⁵⁴ As such, and “just as this form wasn’t there previously, there’s no reason it should survive once human forces come into play with new forces: the new composite will be a new kind of form, neither God nor man.”⁵⁵

In the last pages of the *Foucault* book Deleuze extends this meditation on what he calls the superfold that might itself produce Nietzsche’s superman: “what is the superman? It is the formal compound of the forces within

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man and these new forces. It is the form that results from a new relation between forces. Man tends to free life labour and language *within himself*.⁵⁶ This is a subject that is no longer human in the sense in which Foucault drew and then erased him. It is a “something” that encapsulates the outside within, although this outside will have a different sense to that which it had for the nineteenth century subject. If this thing can still be called a man, then it is a man unrecognisable in terms of the Greeks, or in term of the *cogito*. It is a man who:

is even in charge of the animals (a code that can capture fragments of other codes, as in the new schemata of lateral or retrograde). It is a man in charge of the very rocks, or inorganic matter (the domain of silicon). It is a man in charge of the being in language (that formless “mute, unsignifying region where language can find its freedom” even from whatever it has to say).⁵⁷

In a final twist could not something similar be said of Lacan and of the injunction not to give ground on a desire that is fundamentally inhuman, alien to the subject as given? This is to identify an inorganic death drive at the very heart of life; a being towards death that supplants a consciousness when the latter remains a declaration of the “I think, therefore I am” with its all too human arrogance of knowledge and attendant morality based on a transcendent operator. Indeed, it seems to me that in both Foucault and Lacan there is a turning away from this kind of subject—what I have called the subject as is—towards something stranger, something, perhaps, more objective? This is the subject *as* object, but a peculiar privileged kind of object that contains folded within all other objects, the whole of Bergson’s pure past. It is the folding in of the outside as the constitution of a veritable inner universe. An instance of finitude that paradoxically holds the infinite within.

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NOTES

1. This discovery—or invention—of the psychoanalytic unconscious might be said to have had a parallel artistic “origin” with Surrealism and Dada, especially with its “technologies” of automatic writing and the like.
2. As John Rajchman notes in his own reading of Lacan’s *Ethics* this inversion of the ethical position is performed via an analysis of the three great ethical thinkers pre Freud: Aristotle, Kant and Bentham. Rajchman succinctly summarises Lacan’s portrayal of these three moral giants as, respectively, “a wise friend who knows the good in which one flourishes,” “a supersensible ego who presents to one the imperative of one’s obligations” and “an efficient mental hygienist who knows how to rehabilitate one’s unproductive or dysfunctional behaviour.” (John Rajchman, *Truth and Eros: Foucault, Lacan and the Question of Ethics*. London: Routledge, 1991, 70) Each of these thinkers makes a decisive move on the previous definition of ethical behaviour, defining the good in their own way, but in so defining it they keep to the basic schema (that there is a good to be worked towards as it were) that Lacan’s *Ethics*, following Freud, will undermine. To quote Rajchman: “[t]hus unlike the ethical ideals that would ‘centre us’ by making us wise, autonomous or productive, psychoanalysis places at the heart of experience something that ‘decentres us,’ submitting us to the singularity of our desire, the unpredictable fortune of our *amours*.” (Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 70).
3. I want to thank Jean Mathee for introducing Lacan’s *Ethics* to me—and to the MA Contemporary Art Theory students of 2007-8—in an inspiring workshop she gave on the latter at Goldsmiths College, London in that year. Some of my thinking in this paper was provoked by the rigorous and committed approach to the *Ethics* displayed in that seminar. I am also indebted to Jean more directly for the diagram of the torus on page 22.
4. Although I do not reference it in what follows, Bruce Fink’s compelling book, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, was invaluable in helping me think through the complexities of the Lacanian subject.
5. I began this enquiry, into the necessary prior preparation by the subject in any accessing of the infinite, in an essay explicitly on Spinoza, Bergson and Foucault. See Simon O’Sullivan, “The Production of the New and the Care of the Self” *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*. Eds Simon O’Sullivan and Stephen Zepke. London: Continuum, 2008, 91-103. That essay, and the present one, were motivated by a desire to think alternative models for the production of subjectivity beyond those “lifestyle options” proffered by neo-liberalism, which, despite its claims, increasingly produces an alienated, atomised and homogenised individual. Indeed, in a time of what Negri calls the “total subsumption of capital,” when time as well as space has been colonised, these alternative diagrams of the subject—and of the finite/infinite relation—become crucial and in and of themselves politically charged.
6. I have already mentioned John Rajchman whose book length study similarly—and masterfully—tracks the resonances and differences between Lacan and Foucault’s ethics, and which, as such, has informed parts of what follows (especially around the understanding of freedom as a practice). Indeed, Rajchman demonstrates a profound resonance around the meaning of ethics in general in both writers as that which is irreducible to whatever constituted ethics before—a suspicion as Rajchman has it, about any “received values.” (Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 145) “Thus, there is Lacan’s ‘realism’ of what must always be left out in our self-idealization, and Foucault’s ‘pragmatism’ concerning what is yet free in our historical determinations.” (Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 143-4) On the other hand, for Rajchman, Foucault was explicitly concerned with historicising the Freudian-Lacanian revolution in ethics and in demonstrating how the latter was less a universal aspect of humanity than an invention, one with a historical moment of production, and, as such, Rajchman figures Foucault’s ethical project as a grand genealogy of “desiring man.” (Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 88) For Rajchman’s Foucault then, “our own ethical predicament would be to rid ourselves of this long internalisation through which we came to think of ourselves as ‘subjects of desire,’” an internalisation, it has to be said, premised on a certain heterosexuality (Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 88). The new ethics, following Foucault, would be one that learnt from homosexuality and the new kinds of relationships being experimented therewith, and one that thus owed very little to Lacanian models that Foucault saw as dangerously ahistorical and universalist. This would also be to privilege questions of pleasure over desire. As Foucault himself remarks in interview:

I think there is no exemplary value in a period that is not out period ... it is not anything to go back to. But we do

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have an example of an ethical experience which implied a very strong connection between pleasure and desire. If we compare that to our experience now, where everybody—the philosopher or the psychoanalyst—explains that what is important is desire, and pleasure is nothing at all, we can wonder whether this disconnection wasn't a historical event, one that was not at all necessary, not linked to human nature, or to any anthropological necessity. (Michel Foucault 'On the Genealogy of Ethics' *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Penguin, 2000, 259)

7. Two other figures are also present explicitly and implicitly throughout the essay: Henri Bergson, whose thesis about the "pure past" in *Matter and Memory* enables a different kind of conceptualisation of Foucault's spirituality and about the accessing of an "outside"; and Alain Badiou, whose own theory of the subject, at least as put forward in *Being and Event*, involves a bringing together—at least of sorts—of Spinoza and Lacan, and, as such, has much in common with Foucault's own writings on the subject and truth.

8. For an extensive discussion of these various practices and technologies see, for example, the interview "Technologies of the Self" *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Penguin, 2000, 223-52.

9. This and all further parenthetical references to "Lacan" are taken from Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*. Trans. Dennis Potter. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, London: Routledge, 1992.

10. We might note here the resonances with Nietzsche's eternal return understood as a *test* of experience. The demon that "steals into your loneliest loneliness" poses the question of desire that is at the heart of Lacan's Last Judgement (and, indeed, his *Ethics* in general), namely: "Do you want this again and innumerable times again?" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. J. Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 194).

11. This and all further parenthetical references to "Foucault" are taken from Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-82*. Trans. Graham Burchell. Ed. Frederic Gros. New York: Picador, 2005.

12. Guattari addresses the crucial role of asignification in relation to the production of subjectivity throughout his writing. See, as indicative, the essay Felix Guattari, "On the Production of Subjectivity" *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis. Sydney: Power Publications, 1995, 1-32.

13. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*. Trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson, London: Verso, 1994, 60.

14. To quote Spinoza:

To make use of things and take delight in them as much as possible (not indeed to satiety, for that is not to take delight) is the part of a wise man. It is, I say, the part of a wise man to feed himself with moderate pleasant food and drink ...' (Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*. Trans. Andrew Boyle and G. H. R. Parkinson. London: Everyman, 1989, 173 (Book IV, Prop XLV, Corollary II, Note).

15. This connection is also evidenced biographically, and somewhat anecdotally, by the adolescent Lacan having "a diagram on the wall of his bedroom that depicted the structure of [Spinoza's] *Ethics* with the aid of coloured arrows." (Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: An Outline of a Life and a History of a System of Thought*. Trans. Barbara Bray. London: Polity Press 1997, 11).

16. A further connection here between Foucault and Spinoza is that such a turn from transcendent points, and the "work" of the subject that follows from this, takes as its medium the body insofar as the actions and practices of the latter, in their very materiality, are the site of ethics for both of these thinkers. We might also note here that for Lacan it is less the body than speech (as it makes manifest the unconscious) that is the ethical site insofar as Lacan's ethics is not about "well being," but, as Lacan remarks in *Television*, about "*bien-dire*" (speaking-well) (Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 41).

17. For Badiou's discussion of such a subject see Alain Badiou, "Theory of the Subject" *Being and Event*. Trans. Oliver Feltham. London: Continuum, 2005, 391-406. For my own detailed discussion of the latter, read against Deleuze, see Simon

O’Sullivan, “The Strange Temporality of the Subject: Badiou and Deleuze Between the Finite and the Infinite.” *Subjectivity* 27 (July, 2009, 155-71). In that article I make the argument that Badiou, almost despite himself, reinforces a kind of bar between the subject and truth (or, between the finite and infinite), whereas Deleuze (in *Difference and Repetition*) posits a continuum of sorts (a reciprocal relation) between the two.

18. Foucault, “Genealogy”, 274.

19. See Quentin Meilliasoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London: Continuum, 2008.

20. Foucault goes on to describe the movement of truth (as love (or *Eros*)) as either “an ascending movement of the subject himself, or else a movement by which the truth comes to him and enlightens him.” (Foucault, 15-16) The parallels with Badiou are remarkable. Unlike Badiou, however, Foucault writes of “another major form through which the subject can and must transform himself in order to have access to the truth.” (Foucault, 16) This is a form of work that is a “long labour of asceticism (*askēsis*).” (Foucault, 16). It is a preparation made by the subject—“a work of the self on the self”—that in itself enables the subject to have access to truth. (Foucault, 16)

21. In fact Foucault himself references Spinoza’s *Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding* in the second of the years opening lectures. To quote Foucault:

[...] in formulating the problem of access to the truth Spinoza linked the problem to a series of requirements concerning the subjects very being: In what aspects and how must I transform my being as subject? What conditions must I impose on my being as subject so as to have access to the truth, and to what extent will this access to the truth give me what I seek, that is to say the highest good, the sovereign good. This is a properly spiritual question [...] (Foucault, 27-8)

22. In a nod to Henri Bergson (and to pre-empt some discussion to come) we might map the difference between the infinite field of knowledge and the infinite nature of truth on to Bergson’s cone (see Fig. 2 above). In this case, P is the plane of knowledge that carries on in every direction *but remains on that plane*. A-B represents the realm of truth that likewise has an infinite character, *but that is not unidirectional*. The question of access to this truth is then the question of point S as the intersection of the two realms. It is the point at which the finite subject might access the infinite, understood, in Spinoza’s terms, as the eternal.

23. See also the essay on “The Mirror Phase” where Lacan introduces his thesis on the latter for the “light it sheds on the *I* function in the experience psychoanalysis provides us of it,” and, crucially, that “this experience sets us at odds with any philosophy directly stemming from the *cogito*.” (Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. Trans. Bruce Fink, with Heloise Fink and Russell Grigg, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002, 75). For Lacan the ego—or conscious subject—is in fact the result of a mis-recognition and an identification with ideal images. Later in the same essay Lacan is even more pointed in his critique of such philosophy, in this case existentialism, that maintains a sovereignty of consciousness: “[u]nfortunately, this philosophy grasps that negativity only with the limits of a self-sufficiency of consciousness, which, being one of its premises, ties the illusion of autonomy in which it puts its faith to the ego’s constitutive misrecognitions.” (Lacan, “Mirror Phase”, 80). As an addendum here it is worth noting Alain Badiou’s view that despite this critique of the *cogito* Lacan nevertheless remains within the Cartesian tradition insofar as the act of subversion implies a kind of fidelity to Descartes’ founding gesture of “centring” a subject. As Badiou remarks in the final meditation of *Being and Event*: “What localizes the subject is the point at which Freud can only be understood within the heritage of the Cartesian gesture, and at which he subverts, via dislocation, the latter’s pure coincidence with the self, its reflexive transparency.” (Alain Badiou, “Descartes/Lacan” *Being and Event*, 432). Badiou’s summing up of his own philosophical project involves the claim that he has moved beyond this “positioning” of the subject—even if it has been inverted—insofar as he locates the void “as generic hole in knowledge” not within the “being-in-situation” but as precisely radically separate to this (hence his particular theory of the extra-ontological event that alone calls a subject into being and that puts him more radically at odds with the Cartesian tradition) (Badiou, *Being and Event*, 432-4). It seems to me that Badiou somewhat overstates the case, perhaps to differentiate his

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own system of thought from one of his masters, nevertheless the idea of a “re-positioning of the ‘void’” does allow us to think further the differences and resonances between Foucault and Lacan. Indeed, on the face of it, Foucault would seem to have more in common with Badiou than Lacan insofar as the former's notion of spirituality involves accessing a radical outside to the subject—“truth”—that then transforms that subject. However, as I hope my article shows, this outside might itself be thought as an outside that is in fact folded in. Truth, or the void, relocated by Badiou contra Lacan as outside the subject (and the situation) is folded back into the deepest interiority of the subject by Foucault (especially in Deleuze's reading). The location of this void has implications for the practices of transformation that follow from it. Thus, with Lacan it is the “speaking cure,” or simply the subject overhearing themselves speaking; with Badiou it is fidelity to an event that comes from outside the subject that it has called into being; and with Foucault it is the processual deployment of technologies of the self that allow a kind of side stepping of the subject as constituted).

24. It is worth noting here that other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism also emphasise a life of the “middle way,” which is to say *not* one of extreme asceticism, but one that would allow a body the greatest capacity to affect and to be affected. This is to say, the production of a body capable of knowledge in Spinoza's sense. To return to—and extend—the passage quoted from Spinoza's *Ethics* in footnote 14 above, such “new and varied nourishment” of the body means that “the body as a whole may be equally apt for performing those things which can follow from its nature, and consequently so that the mind also may be equally apt for understanding many things at the same time.” (Spinoza, *Ethics*, 173).

25. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*. Trans. Sean Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 100.

26. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 97.

27. Gilles Deleuze, “Life as a Work of Art,” *Negotiations: 1972-1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 97.

28. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 100-1.

29. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 106.

30. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 107.

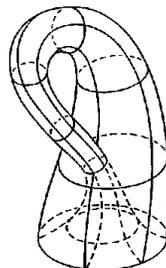
31. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 107.

32. See Gilles Deleuze, “To Have Done with Judgement,” *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. D. W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 126-35, and especially 129.

33. This might be illustrated by the Möbius strip (a twisted torus) that diagrams this irreducible, but always local, difference between subject and object, the finite and infinite. However far we travel along there is always another side:



34. A third Lacanian topology—or impossible object—would seem to follow this logic of folding: the Klein bottle, that diagrams the folding of the outside in (and is in fact produced by the cutting, twisting and rejoining of the Möbius strip):



My own composite diagram, although not itself a klein bottle, might be said to foreground certain operations, or logics, that inhere in the latter.

35. I have not elaborated any further on this particular “linkage” as I am keen to let the diagram do its job as it were. Indeed, I hope my diagram might operate as a kind of short-circuiting of the discursive, or, put differently (and following Lacan) as a topology that does not necessarily need to be explicated fully in order that it “works.”

36. See Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Trans. R. A. Audra, C. Brereton, with W. Horstall-Carter. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1935, especially pp. 209-65.

37. Foucault, “Genealogy,” 278.

38. Michel Foucault, “An Aesthetics of Existence” *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. Ed. L. Kritzman, London: Routledge, 1990, 49.

39. Deleuze, “Life as a Work of Art,” 98.

40. Foucault, “Genealogy,” 271.

41. Foucault, “Genealogy,” 260.

42. Foucault, “Genealogy,” 271.

43. Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume One)*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Ed. Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin, 2000, 309.

44. Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” 311.

45. Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” 312.

46. Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” 312.

47. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi, London: Athlone Press, 1988, 17-18.

48. I develop this idea in my article on Guattari’s *Chaosmosis*. See Simon O’Sullivan, “Guattari’s Aesthetic Paradigm: from the Folding of the Finite/Infinite Relation to Schizoanalytic Meatomodelling.” *Deleuze Studies* 4:2 (July, 2010, 256-86). In particular this article tracks through Guattari’s own articulation of the finite/infinite relation in relation to schizoanalysis, and attends to what I call the “folding-in” of transcendence that characterises Guattari’s new aesthetic paradigm.

49. Foucault, “Genealogy,” 277.

50. For a discussion of the *hupomnēmata* see the essay Michel Foucault, “Self Writing” *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume One)*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Ed. Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin, 2000, 209-14. *Parrhesia* is addressed at different moments in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*; see, for example, p. 366.

51. For an extended discussion of the master see Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” 246-7

52. Might it also be said that Lacan looked to these new ways of folding—especially of the Real—in his own late work? This would be the place to consider the seminars on the RSI and *Le Sinthome* understood as particular artistic technologies of the production of subjectivity. This is a project I leave to a later date.

53. Deleuze, “Life as a Work of Art,” 99.

54. Deleuze, “Life as a Work of Art,” 99-100.

55. Deleuze, “Life as a Work of Art,” 99.

56. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 132.

57. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 132.