Foucault and Autonomous Agency
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Introduction

In "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy," Mark Bevir examines "the role of Foucault's theory of power as an ethical critique" and explores the possibility of an ethic "built on a stance to the subject inspired by aspects of [Foucault's] work" (Bevir, 65). Central to Bevir's account is the claim that Foucault is committed to reject the idea of 'autonomy' in favor of the concept of 'agency' (66). The opposition between 'autonomy' and 'agency' is puzzling for intuitively it would appear that the two concepts are related when 'autonomy' is understood in the context of having the proper kind of relation with one's volitions: the beliefs and desires that move an individual to action are those with which the person identifies (Frankfurt 1988a). In this paper I aim to make good *that* intuition. To be fair, Bevir makes plain that in developing his account he 'uses' Foucault rather than offer an interpretation of him. Nonetheless, I contend that the opposition is extravagant, for Foucault does not need to reject the idea of 'autonomy' in order to motivate a critique of modernity in his late work. My paper proceeds as follows: After presenting Bevir's claim, I show why the idea of agency requires autonomy— autonomy as self-rule—by examining the role of self-reflection. I then argue that Foucault's emphasis on autonomy in his late work can be best understood in light of such a model of autonomy. By way of conclusion, I explore how such a concept of autonomy figures in Foucault's project of self-formation in his late work.

Bevir's account of Foucault and Autonomy

For Bevir, the opposition between autonomy and agency is based on Foucault's attempt to efface the idea of a self-constituting subject, since "no individual possibly could constitute himself as an autonomous agent free from all regimes of power" (ibid).[1] Bevir takes autonomous subjects "to be able, at least in principle, to have experiences, to reason, to adopt beliefs and to act, outside of all social contexts"; they can "found and rule themselves uninfluenced by others" (67). In Bevir's view, 'autonomy' then entails the notion that the subject is self-sufficient unto itself; the subject can create and maintain itself *ex nihilo*.

However, the subject cannot be autonomous because it is not possible for the subject to have "experiences or exercise his reason outside all social contexts." (68). Foucault makes a similar remark about the situatedness of practices. He writes,

> If I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group (Foucault 2003a, 34).

Bevir contends that for Foucault "the individual subject is not an autonomous subject, but rather a social construct" (67). In contrast, he tells us,

> [Agents] exist, only in specific social contexts, but these contexts never determine how they try to conduct themselves. … [These] regimes do not determine the experiences they can have, the ways they can exercise their reason, the beliefs they can adopt, or the actions they can attempt to perform. Agents are creative beings; it is just that their creativity occurs in a given social context that influences it (67).

Regimes of power, then, delineate the domain in which possible action can occur. Foucault endorses Bevir's conception of freedom in his analysis of power relations. He writes:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free'. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available (Foucault 2003b, 139).

Such an interpretation of relations of power is echoed by others. Ian Hacking, for example, points out, in an epistemological context, regimes of power have their own fields of positivity: They do not determine the content of propositions; rather they allow candidates for truth—propositions that can be considered true or false—to emerge (Hacking 1985, 149).[2]

Bevir claims that the rejection of autonomy need not entail the rejection of the idea of agency however. Since different people adopt different beliefs and take different actions, the social contexts themselves cannot explain such individuation if determinism were true. Bevir concludes that "there must be at least an undecided space in front of these structures where individuals decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to perform … We must allow, therefore, that the subject is an agent, even if not an autonomous agent" (67).

To summarize, Bevir's argument runs as follows: since the individual is a social construct, she cannot be an autonomous subject. Foucault is committed, therefore, to reject 'autonomy' because it presupposes that there is some kind of "genuine, pre-social human nature" (76). As opposed to the concept of the 'subject', Bevir proposes that Foucault affirms the idea of an 'agent.' Agents are concrete individuals in specific social contexts. Nonetheless, the contexts do not determine the individual's beliefs and experiences. Hence, Bevir contends Foucault takes the following position vis-à-vis the 'subject': he is *against* autonomy and *for* agency at the same time.

For Bevir, to be a social construct and to be an autonomous agent are mutually exclusive because, on the one hand, he construes the idea of 'autonomy' to be free of any social influences whatsoever; while on the other, the notion of 'agency' acknowledges that the values and practices by which we live are provided by society. However, Bevir's account

of 'autonomy' is problematic for the following reasons. First, his suggested opposition between autonomy and agency is puzzling; for it would seem that the concepts of agency and autonomy are connected. On one conception of autonomy—called 'personal autonomy' in the literature—it is thought that a person is acting autonomously if she is following her *own* projects, those with which she identifies. A person is said not to be acting autonomously if she were pushed and pulled this way or that by her desires, or beliefs which are not her own, such as individuals who suffer from various kinds of compulsions. If the person were ruled by her passions, say, her actions may not be hers if she did not want to be moved to act by those desires. According to personal autonomy, the concept of 'autonomy' marks off different kinds of agents, individuals who act. Bevir's idea of 'agency' without autonomy would seem odd because it would suggest that all agents are alike, from children to reflective adults. Second, the suggested rejection of autonomy flies in the face of Foucault's emphasis on the importance of autonomy in his late work, especially in the context of self-formation. For example, Foucault tells us that the project of a critical ontology of ourselves, a central theme in his late work, offers "the principle of a critique and a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy" (Foucault 2003c, 52).[3]

The objection against the opposition between 'autonomy' and 'agency' may be framed another way. Although Bevir insists that "we can say the subject always acts against a social background that influences him, and still insist that he can reason and act in creative, novel ways so as to modify this background" (68), we can still ask whether those actions are the agent's own? Are the beliefs that motivate the agent to act ones with which the agent identifies? Such questions concern whether or not the agency in question is worthy of the honor of the title of 'agency'. If it deserves such accolade, then one is tempted to say that Bevir's concept of 'agency' presupposes the idea of autonomous agency. He would then have to explain the difference between different kinds of actions. It would appear that issues concerning autonomy and agency cannot be easily evaded as Bevir suggests.

Bevir tells us that the rejection of the idea of 'autonomy' is needed for the critical examination of modernity, especially those aspects "such as enlightenment and liberalism that presuppose autonomy" (70). However, he need not take the extravagant step of rejecting autonomy to achieve that end. Bevir's discussion suggests a possible way out of the difficulties faced by the opposition between 'autonomy' and 'agency'. He observes that in modernity "the enlightenment views of knowledge and the liberal view of freedom are tied to one another in presupposing that individuals can stand outside of society" (68). Bevir's remark echoes Herbert Marcuse's observation.[4] Marcuse writes:

> In the philosophy of the bourgeois period, reason took the form of rational subjectivity. Man, the individual, was to examine and judge everything given by means of the power of his knowledge (Marcuse, 6).

However, there is a price to be paid in adopting such a conception of subjectivity. For on this view, the subject is "only rational insofar as it is entirely self-sufficient. All that is 'other' is alien and external … and as such primarily suspect … *Self-sufficiency* and

independence from all that is other is the sole guarantee of the subject's freedom" (Marcuse, 7 italics added). Here, the notion of self-sufficiency is pivotal. Rather than marking a distinction between 'autonomy' and 'agency', Bevir's discussion of those concepts points to two different conceptions of autonomy and the metaphysical grounds upon which those conceptions are developed: (a) autonomy as self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), and (b) autonomy as self-rule (or self-governance).[5] The question is which conception of autonomy is adequate to Foucault's project of a critical examination of modernity?

Self-sufficiency vs. Self-rule

The concept of autonomy as self-sufficiency can be traced back to Aristotle (*NE* 1097b, 1169b, 1177ab). Aristotle identifies happiness with the chief human good. As Sarah Broadie points out, the chief human good must fulfill two conditions: (a) it is "the most complete of human ends, being chosen for its own sake and never for anything else, and (b) self-sufficiency" (Broadie, 15). For Aristotle, self-sufficiency means that one is not in want of anything to lead a happy life, which is a life in accord with virtue.[6] However, Aristotle is quick to note that in order to lead such a life, one must have access to certain amount of external goods, including friends.[7] For Aristotle, then, self-sufficiency properly understood does not imply total independence from external factors.

Self-sufficiency plays a different role in Kant, one that is echoed in the passage from Marcuse: namely, autonomy is incompatible with external influences. For Kant, moral value is tied to the will alone; it is not influenced in any way by external considerations.[8] He writes in the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*:

> Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a *good will*. … A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition—that is, it is good in itself and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favor of any inclination (Kant, 279)

Inclinations render imperatives hypothetical or contingent, whereas categorical imperatives are to be free from all such influences.[9]

However, self-sufficiency can be seen to be a problematic model of autonomy. Not only is it impossible for an individual to have experiences outside of society as Bevir points out, but it would seem to run counter to our moral experiences. For instance, when parents act for the benefit of their children, say make sacrifices so that they may attend university, such actions would have no moral value on Kant's view because they are motivated by concern of their children's advantage. However, some would say that such actions are praiseworthy (May 139, Frankfurt 1999, 134).

We now turn to the alternative, autonomy as self-rule, which various authors have pointed out is based on the etymology of the word from *auto* and *nomos* (Frankfurt 1999,

131; May 139; Noggle 504). Self-rule suggests that one's actions are under one's control, in accord with one's will. This model of governing oneself requires that the beliefs, desires, and value commitments that guide one's life are one's own; these motives are self-authorized. Such authorization is typically thought to be made possible by identification with such psychological features through an appropriate process of self-reflection (Santiago, 77-78). As opposed to the idea of autonomy as self-sufficiency, autonomy as self-rule does not exclude external circumstances; rather it places the emphases on the ability of the individual to assess those influences in deciding which course of action to pursue (May 139ff).

The contemporary literature on autonomy as self-rule owes much to Harry Frankfurt's work on a hierarchical model of free will (Frankfurt 1988a). Intuitively, there is a connection between free will and autonomous action: if the action taken reflects the agent's will—that is, the action is motivated by desires or beliefs with which the person identifies—then we would consider the agent's action to be autonomous (Santiago, 86). The question is can Foucault's discussion of autonomy in his later work be read in light of the model of autonomy as self-rule?

Foucault and autonomy

I contend that Foucault's discussions of government, technologies of the self and practices of care of the self in his late work is best understood with the model of autonomy as self-rule, and not self-sufficiency. Foucault's late work marks a shift in emphasis from his earlier studies of disciplinary power. He tells us:

> Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self (Foucault 2003d, 147).

Foucault is well aware that the process of socialization is complex. He tells us, "governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself" (Foucault 1993, 203-204).[10] For Foucault, individuals are at liberty to mould themselves through various technologies of the self. These are techniques

> which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on (Foucault 2003d, 146).[11]

Such technologies, however, could also bind us to categories in which individuals are subjected to social control. As such, we have to "take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by

which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, [we have] to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. The contact point … is what we can call, I think, government" (Foucault 1993, 203).[12]

Foucault's analyses of government then involve two poles: how individuals direct their own actions as well as those of others, and as well as how states direct the actions of groups of individuals. The latter connects up with his examination of relations of power and disciplinary techniques with *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality, Volume 1* as exemplars of that work. The former is central to the critical project in Foucault's late work, for government is not merely imposing laws on individuals but also how individuals mould themselves into subjects.

In his 1980 Dartmouth lectures, Foucault remarks that the problem of the self for the past two centuries has been to find "positive foundations for technologies of the self" (Foucault 1993, 222), reflexive practices which allow individuals to become subjects. However, such practices are linked with disciplinary power which "categories the individual, imposes a truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him" (Foucault 2003b, 130). For Foucault, the problem of self today is not to seek "either a positive self or the positive foundation of the self;" rather, the problem we face today is "a politics of ourselves" (Foucault 1993, 222), in which new forms of subjectivity are to be promoted (Foucault 2003b, 134). The task is to develop those relations to ourselves whereby the subject actively constitutes herself as an ethical agent (Foucault 2003a, 34; Foucault 2003e, 111).

Foucault's interest in the relations to ourselves—what he calls 'ethics' (Foucault 2003e, 111)—led him to examine various modes of care of the self in ancient Greece and Rome. He outlines three different modalities of care of the self: the Platonic, the Hellenistic, and the Christian. He notes the importance of self-knowledge in the different modes (Foucault 2005). Under the Platonic model, one must tend to oneself first, specifically one must know what one is ontologically first, in order that one can properly care for others.[13] What one is ontologically is the soul in the Platonic model. He adds that self-knowledge under the Platonic model is "an ontological and not a psychological form of contemplation … [It is] independent of what one could call an exercise of the self upon the self" (Foucault 2003e, 121-122). However, under the Hellenistic model, Foucault tells us the recognition of oneself as a soul is no longer paramount. Rather the objects of attention are "the representations that appear in thought, the opinions and judgments which accompany representations, and the passions which act on the body and soul" (Foucault 2005, 457). Under the Hellenistic model, contemplating the soul is replaced by spiritual exercises, which employs reason to "observe, check … and evaluate what is taking place in the flow of representations and the flow of passions" (ibid.). The Hellenistic model of psychological contemplation has one significant advantage over the other models: its goal of self-formation requires neither the transcendence into the realm of Forms in the Platonic model nor the sacrifice of the self in the Christian model.[14]

Foucault tells us that the goal of care of the self in the Imperial period is to constitute oneself as a "morally valid" subject (Foucault 2005, 129). In order to accomplish that, one must strive to constitute "the self as the object capable of orientating the will" through various spiritual exercises (Foucault 2005, 131). Elsewhere, Foucault adds that the goal is to constitute "a self which could at the same time and without discontinuity be subject of knowledge and subject of will" (Foucault 1993, 209). As an ethical agent, one must have the right sort of connection with one's volitions; one must have the right kind of will which provides a coherent structure guiding one's life. At the other pole, a state Stoics calls *stultitia*, the individual, the *stultus*, is not "settled on anything and not satisfied by anything" (Foucault 2005, 130). The *stultus* does not reflect on his desires and does not "direct his attention and will to a precise and well-determined end" (Foucault 2005, 131). He lets life pass by "constantly changing his viewpoint;" his life lacks cohesion (Foucault 2005, 131). The *stultus* is an individual "who does not want the self" (Foucault 2005, 133).

In the present context of our discussion on autonomy, the feature of the relation to ourselves on which I want to focus is the central role that self-examination—the probing of beliefs and values—plays in self-formation. The importance of self-reflection to autonomy is implicit in Bevir's idea of 'agency.' As he points out, individuals can adopt beliefs, in general exercise their reason. The importance of self-reflection also intersects with an account of personal autonomy stemming from Frankfurt's analysis of freedom of the will. Frankfurt considers the capacity to deliberate on one's own desires, what he calls second-order volitions, an essential feature of personhood.[15] Persons lacking second-order volitions are wantons. A wanton, Frankfurt remarks, "does not care about his will. His desires move him to do certain things, without its being true of him either that he wants to be moved by those desires or that he prefers to be moved by other desires" (Frankfurt 1988a, 17). As with the *stultus*, there is a non-connection between the will and the wanton. Such an individual is not free to form her own projects. For Frankfurt the formation of a person's will is most centrally connected with coming to care about something; and it is coming to care about something that gives a cohesive structure to one's life (Frankfurt 1998b, 91). He writes:

> The moments in the life of a person who cares about something [are not linked] by formal relations of sequentiality. The person necessarily binds them together, and … in richer ways. This both entails and is entailed by his continuing concern with what he does with himself and with what goes on in his life (Frankfurt 1988b, 83-84).

I am aware that the comparison here is between Frankfurt's account of the will and Foucault's account of the will in Stoic philosophy, which is unlikely to be Foucault's own position. Nonetheless, Foucault would not object to the inclusion of a volitional element to his account of 'ethics'; indeed, his account of ethical agency would seem to require a volitional element. Foucault tells us what is of interest in ancient ethics is that a strong structure to one's life is provided by developing a relation with ourselves, without any relation to disciplinary structures (Foucault 2003e, 108). Furthermore, individuals chose to develop such relations with themselves (Foucault 2003e, 117). In order to

establish such a structure to one's life, individuals undertake "self-forming activities"—what Foucault calls ascetic practices—in order to constitute themselves as ethical agents (Foucault 2003e, 112). Presumably individuals undertake these practices reflexively because they identify with the beliefs and values underpinning their choice of how to live. The structure to their lives reflects a link between volition and action.[16] Foucault's account of ethics would then require ethical agents to have an appropriate relation with their will.

In addition, the comparison with Frankfurt, in particular the emphasis on the identification with one's desires, values, and normative commitments through self-examination, underscores the importance of self-reflection in Foucault's late work in general, and his discussion of autonomy in particular.[17] He remarks:

> [Critique] consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking that accepted practices are based. … Criticism consists in … showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted (Foucault 2000, 456).[18]

Foucault adds that his project is "oriented toward the 'contemporary limits of the necessary,' that is toward what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects" (Foucault 2003c, 52). He is challenging the assumption carried over from the Enlightenment that there is a link between growth in our capabilities and our autonomy.[19] In his view, the growth of our capabilities takes place in a disciplinary matrix, through scientific and administrative institutions. What is at stake for Foucault is, "how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations" (Foucault 2003c, 55).[20] In the context of our discussion of autonomy as self-rule, Foucault's claim that the task of self-constitution depends on examining "what is not or is no longer indispensable" for our autonomy is best understood in light of the model of autonomy as self-rule with its emphasis on self-reflection.

If the above discussion of Foucault's view of autonomy is right, then it would be a mistake to attribute the idea of self-sufficiency to Foucault's view of autonomy. The account of autonomy as self-rule has the virtue of not having to interpret Foucault as adopting the extravagant and counter-intuitive position of rejecting autonomy. It also allows us to understand the central role of challenging beliefs, desires, values and practices and the emphasis on autonomy in Foucault's late work.

Beyond Frankfurt: A Politics of Ourselves

Nonetheless, a strictly hierarchical account of self-rule like Frankfurt's will not be adequate for Foucault's task because the values and beliefs which guide identification may themselves be autonomy-inhibiting. What is required is an additional genealogical investigation of those values and beliefs. Take for example cases in which individuals are socialized under conditions in which they internalise conceptions of themselves which

exclude a fuller description of their own worth (Benson 1991, 396-397; Benson 1999). Although Foucault's account of autonomy is not identical with Frankfurt's hierarchical account, it should be noted that the added genealogical component is compatible with the kind of self-reflection required in the hierarchical model since the genealogical component is built upon it.[21] The identification with beliefs, desires, values and practices to move individuals to action would still be required in Foucault's idea of "a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy" (Foucault 2003c, 52).

There is also a danger to giving such emphasis to self-reflection in the account of autonomy as self-rule. The model developed from Frankfurt's analysis is focused on the individual's psychology, giving it an individualist flavor. To be sure, Foucault sometimes writes as if this is the aim of autonomous agency: to treat *one's* life as a work of art (Foucault 2003e, 109). His discussion of Baudelaire and dandyism could be interpreted in that light (Foucault 2003c, 49-50). However, the promotion of new subjectivities need not be either an individualistic or narcissistic endeavor. First, even though it is the case that individuals must undertake such projects themselves, Foucault insists that such practices of the self involve complex relations with others. He remarks that

> It is sometimes the case that around the care of the self, there developed an entire activity … in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together. Here we touch upon one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice (Foucault 1986, 51).

He remarks that "the interplay of care of the self and the help of the other blends into preexisting relations, giving them a new coloration and greater warmth. The care of the self—or the attention one devotes to care that others take of themselves—appear then as an intensification of social relations" (Foucault 1986, 53). Such spiritual guidance, he notes "could not take place without an intense affective relationship of friendship between … the guide and the person being guided. And this guidance requires a certain ethics of speech [Parrhesia] … Parrhesia is opening of the heart, the need for the two partners to conceal nothing from each other and to speak to each other frankly" (Foucault 2005, 137). Such practices of the self are social practices.

Second, Foucault's comment about parrhesia is suggestive because the individual must be in a position to account for her choices to others. The person's ability to do so is socially developed and maintained (Santiago, 88). Foucault's view, then, points to the social contexts in which individuals practice their autonomy. Put another way, if we want the concept of autonomy to indicate having control of one's life, to be empowered over the course of one's life (Santiago, 93), then non-psychological features must also be considered. For instance, individuals must be in a position to be exposed to other perspectives. They must be able to critically revise their own positions, and be able to experiment with the various versions. These requirements put constraints on the kind of social environment in which individuals practice their autonomy (Santiago, 99). Foucault recognizes the social constraints on the practice of autonomy. He remarks that:

Liberation is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of freedom. … But this liberation does not give rise to the happy human being imbued with [a human nature] to which the subject could achieve a complete and satisfying relationship. Liberation paves the way for new power relationships, which must be controlled by practices of freedom (Foucault 2003a, 27).

If this line of reasoning is cogent, Foucault's view of autonomy in his late work then links ethical and political practices. His emphasis on self-formation, then, is not a "vapid plea for aestheticism," as Hacking puts it (Hacking 1986, 239); but rather constitutes a politics of ourselves.[22]

Notes

¹ Bevir cites Foucault's remark that "the individual is an effect of power" (Foucault 1997a, 98) in support of his contention. However, Foucault does not say that the individual is an effect of power *simpliciter*. In the same passage which Bevir cites, he makes plain that individuals "are not only its inert … targets; they are always elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not is points of application" (ibid). (Cf. Allen 2000). Perhaps Bevir also had Foucault's remark that "one has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say , to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of a subject within a historical framework" (Foucault 1977b, 117). But Foucault makes plain what he means by 'getting rid of the subject:' the goal is arrive at an analysis showing how subjects are constituted.

² Linda Alcoff argues similarly in her discussion of the epistemological implications of Foucault's analysis of the relation between discourse and knowledge. She writes, "The rules of discourse formations do not mandate specific truth values for specific sentences, but open up a delimited space in which some sentences can be meaningfully expressed" (Alcoff 1996, 123).

³ See also Foucault 2003a; Foucault 2003b.

⁴ Foucault remarks similarly: "What I rejected was the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject—as is done, for example, in phenomenology or existentialism—and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a given form of knowledge is possible. What I wanted to try to show was how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another. … I had to reject *a priori* theories of the subject" (Foucault 2003a, 33).

⁵ May, 134.

⁶ As Thomas May puts it, self-sufficiency implies that one does not "look beyond himself to fulfill a perceived lack" (May, 135).

⁷ See Holowchak 2006, 103.

⁸ May, 136.

⁹ Kant's categorical imperative states that one should "act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 293). As May points out, the criterion of universalizability provides a test against the influences of inclinations (May, 136).

¹⁰ Foucault attributes such exercising of power over oneself *and* others to an earlier notion of government. Rather than the contemporary understanding of government as political institutions and the legitimation of those institutions, the earlier notion of government includes "how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to be become the best possible governor" and so on (Foucault 2003f, 229). He adds that to govern, in this sense, "is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault 2003b, 138). Foucault's work on the totality of governmental practices, which he calls governmentality, remains incomplete. Nonetheless, given the broad sense of government, he warns against interpreting the idea of government as replacing that of discipline, for disciplinary techniques are still implicated in governmental technologies (Foucault 2003f, 243).

¹¹ In an earlier discussion, Foucault omits the phrase "or with the help of others" (Foucault 1993, 203). Amy Allen cites the passage in the earlier work in her criticism of Foucault for not providing a relational account of the 'self' in practices of care of the self (Allen 2004).

¹² He tells us that "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive" (1977b, 119).

¹³ Tending to one's soul is then the soul's knowledge of itself, which will provide the wisdom necessary for proper care of others (Foucault 2005, 71; 174-175; 419). By recognizing the divine element within itself, the soul is able to attain the knowledge necessary for moral action. Foucault describes the pitfall of caring for others without first caring for oneself, without first knowing what one is. He tells us that in the *Symposium* Alcibiades admits that he still does not know what justice (*dikaisune*) is because he attended to the affairs of Athens instead of caring for himself first (Foucault 2005, 175).

¹⁴ Gros, 533.

¹⁵ With second-order volitions, the agent wants "a certain desire to be [one's] will" (Frankfurt 1988a, 16). In his analysis of the 'will', Frankfurt does not establish the conditions for the possibility of freedom of the will. He tells us that autonomy does not require "that the essential nature of the will be *a priori*" as it does for Kant (Frankfurt 1999, 135). Nor his hierarchical account does not seek an Archemedian point, as it has been criticized for generating an infinite regress (Cf. Watson 1975).

¹⁶ Elsewhere, Foucault describes the kind of self in which there is unity of knowledge and will as the "gnomic self" (Foucault 1993, 209-210).

¹⁷ Amy Allen similarly makes use of contemporary debates in personal autonomy in her interpretation of Foucault's critique of the liberal conception of 'autonomy' (Allen 2005). She notes the intersection between Foucault's account of autonomous agency and contemporary conceptions of autonomy in Anglo-American philosophy in that they both focus on critical reflection on one's desires, values, normative commitments, and so on. She cites Frankfurt as an exemplar of what she describes as the structural account of autonomy. Such an account focuses on the proper relationship between current higher

and lower-order desires. She further argues that "Foucault endorses a kind of structural account of autonomy and connects it with up with the historical constraint that emerges from his genealogical critique" (Allen 2005, 9).

[18] I would like to thank Jim Tully for pointing this passage out to me. Elsewhere Foucault describes the work of critique as follows: "[Critique] is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and questions power on its discourses of truth … [Critique] will be the act of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially ensure the desubjugation of the subject in what we would call … the politics of truth" (Foucault 2003g, 267).

[19] In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes: "The Enlightenment which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines" (Foucault 1979, 222). Cf Allen 2005.

[20] For elaboration on disconnecting capabilities from the intensification of power relations, see Menke 2003 and Heyes 2006.

[21] Allen notes that the genealogical component entails the hierarchical model.

[22] I would like to thank Brad Inwood, Loren King and James Tully for their generous comments.

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