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Foucault, truth telling and technologies of the self in schools[1]

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Abstract

The paper highlights how Foucauldian philosophical notions of care for the self are relevant to the moral education of young people yet care of the self is seldom an explicit goal of education, apart from sometimes appearing in such curricula as health or personal and social education. This paper considers Foucault's changing understandings about the self; truth-telling and technologies of the self; and his genealogy of confession.

Introduction

When disciplinary measures exclude students from school, the serious long-term impacts are often reduced educational and life chances and in turn social exclusion. Care of the self and even moral education remain largely unwritten in school policies and seldom form explicit goals of education. Rather they tend to be part of a general moral education that may be part of the hidden curriculum or located within a specific curriculum such as values, health, personal and social, religious philosophy, civics, and/or citizenship education. This paper highlights how Foucauldian philosophical notions of care for the self are relevant to the moral education of young people in secondary schools. The paper is divided into the following sections that pursue Foucault's changing understandings about the self: truth-telling and technologies of the self, and his genealogy of confession. It ends with a brief conclusion.

Imagine a top student is about to sit the crucial exams that will provide a scholarship that is vital for the student to attend university. A teacher sees the student in the middle of a group who all seem to be sharing a joint of cannabis. The consequences may be very different in different schools. In one there may be a policy of exclusion for drug use. In another, there may be an intervention policy to

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Network of Philosophers of Education Conference, and appears in the proceedings (Besley 2002). Another version appears as Besley (2005).

help students caught with drugs to change their behaviour. Such a school would likely have professionals such as school counsellors, educational psychologists, social workers and youth workers whose job might be to ascertain if this were a one-off experiment and to help if serious drug abuse were revealed, applying various 'psy' sciences (Rose 1989, 1998).

This situation highlights important professional and ethical issues for teachers. School policies are likely to influence which course of action the teacher and the student pursue, since the implications of truth telling and confessing are very different in each school. If the teacher knows that the consequences for being caught will mean exclusion for the student, should the teacher 'confess' this knowledge to the principal? Should the teacher turn a blind eye and say nothing, that is, lie by omission? Should the student confess? Apart from the pragmatic implications there are also implications for how both the student and the teacher each constitute their selves through their different practices of the self – care of the self, knowledge of self, confession and truth telling – that are likely to be involved in the process. Such practices will further shape the individual's understandings of their own self. How the psy sciences of the twentieth century have conceived of and positioned youth displays complex notions of self and the other and is 'intrinsically linked to the history of government' (not politics). Nikolas Rose argues that this 'is part of the history of the ways in which human beings have regulated others and have regulated themselves in the light of certain games of truth' and the 'regulatory role of psy is linked to questions of the organization and reorganization of political power that have been quite central to shaping our contemporary experience' (Rose 1998, p 11). Schools are institutions that clearly involve such regulation and governance of the experience of their students.

Foucault's notion of the self

Late in his life when discussing his work, Foucault (1988b) said that his project had been to historicise and analyse how in western culture the specific 'truth games' in the social sciences such as economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine and penology have developed knowledge and techniques to enable people to understand themselves. Foucault not only provides quite a shift from earlier discourses on the self, but also brings in notions of disciplinarity, governmentality, freedom and ethics as well as notions of corporeality, politics and power and its historico-social context. His own understandings about the self shifted over the years. Late in his life he notes that he may have concentrated 'too much on the technology of domination and power' (Foucault 1988b, p 19). Nevertheless, for Foucault both technologies of domination and technologies of the self produce effects that constitute the self. They define the individual and control their conduct, as they make the individual a significant element for the state through the exercise of a form of power – which Foucault termed 'governmentality' – to produce useful, docile, practical citizens (Foucault 1988c). Nietzsche inspired Foucault to analyse the modes by which human beings become subjects without privileging either power (as in Marxism) or desire (as in Freud). Foucault develops Nietzschean 'genealogy' and Heideggerian concepts into technologies of the self in a reconsideration of Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity (Foucault 1988b, Nietzsche 1956).

Foucault took up Heidegger's critiques of subjectivity and Cartesian-Kantian rationality in terms of power, knowledge and discourse. This stance against humanism is a rejection of phenomenology for Foucault saw the subject as being within a particular historic-cultural context or genealogical narrative. Foucault historicised questions of ontology, substituting genealogical investigations of the subject for the philosophical attempt to define the essence of human nature, aiming to reveal the contingent and historical conditions of existence. For Foucault, the self or subject 'is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself' (Foucault 1997a). Self means both '*auto*' or 'the same' so understanding the self implies understanding one's identity.

Foucault also harnessed Heideggerian notions of *techne* and technology. Heidegger questioned our relationship to the essence of modern technology, which treats everything, including people, 'as a resource that aims at efficiency – toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense' (Heidegger 1977, p 15). Unlike Heidegger though, who focused on understanding the 'essence' or coming into presence of being or *dasein*, Foucault historicised questions of ontology and in the process was therefore not concerned about notions of *aletheia* or an inner, hidden truth or essence of self (Heidegger 1977). Dreyfus points out that for both Foucault and Heidegger it is the practices of the modern world and modern technology that produce a different kind of subject – a subject who does not simply objectify and dominate the world through technology, but who is constituted by this technology (Dreyfus 2002).

Foucault set out a typology of four inter-related 'technologies': technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power (or domination) and technologies of the self. Each is a set of practical reason that is permeated by a form of domination that implies some type of training and changing or shaping of individuals. Instead of an instrumental understanding of technology, Foucault used 'technology' in the Heideggerian sense as a way of revealing truth and focused on technologies of power and technologies of the self.

Technologies of power 'determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject' (Foucault 1988b, p 18). Technologies of the self are the various 'operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being' that people make either by themselves or with the help of others in order to transform themselves to reach a 'state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault 1988b, p 18).

Foucault's earlier work emphasised the application of such technologies of domination through the political subjugation of 'docile bodies' in the grip of disciplinary powers and the way the self is produced by processes of objectification, classification and normalisation in the human sciences (Foucault 1977). Foucault himself defended the 'determinist' emphasis in *Discipline and punish*, admitting that not enough was said about agency, so he re-defined power to include agency as self-regulation thereby overcoming some of the problematic political implications in his earlier work (see Rabinow 1997; Foucault 1985, 1988a, 1990; McNay 1992). He emphasised that individuals are continually in the process of constituting themselves

as ethical subjects through both technologies of the self and ethical self-constitution, and a notion of power that is not simply based upon repression, coercion or domination. By this point Foucault saw individuals 'as self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society' (McNay 1992, p 4). Rather than needing the expertise of the priest or therapist to ethically constitute the self, individuals are able to do it for themselves (McNay 1992).

The history of sexuality, vol I (Foucault 1980a) presented a change from technologies of domination. A common assumption of western culture is that the body and its desires – its sexuality – reveal the truth about the self. Hence, if one tells the 'truth' about one's sexuality, this deepest truth about the self will become apparent and then one can live an authentic life that is in touch with one's true self. Foucault's work on sexuality is concerned with problematising how pleasure, desire and sexuality, the regimes of power-knowledge-pleasure as components of the art of living or 'an aesthetics of existence', have become discourses that shape our construction of ourselves through the revelation of 'truth' of our sexuality and of ourselves (Foucault 1985, p 12). Foucault (1988b) pointed out that, since a common cultural feature is the paradoxical combination of prohibitions against sexuality on the one hand and strong incitations to speak the truth on the other, his project became focused on a history of this link, asking how individuals had been made to understand themselves in terms of what was forbidden, namely the relationship between truth and asceticism.

In 'The ethics of the concern for self as a practice of freedom' (Foucault 1997a), an interview in 1984, the year of his death, Foucault explained the change in his thinking about the relations of subjectivity and truth. In his earlier thinking he had conceived of the relationship between the subject and 'games of truth' in terms of either coercive practices (psychiatry or prison) or theoretical-scientific discourses (the analysis of wealth, of language, of living beings, especially in *The order of things*). In his later writings he broke with this relationship to emphasise games of truth not as a coercive practice, but rather as *an ascetic practice of self-formation.* 'Ascetic' in this context means an 'exercise of self upon the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being' (Foucault 1997a, p 282). 'Work' completed by the self upon itself is an *ascetic* practice that is to be understood not in terms of more traditional left-wing *models of liberation,* but rather as (Kantian) *practices of freedom.* This is an essential distinction for Foucault because the notion of liberation suggests that there is a hidden self or inner nature or essence that has been 'concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression' (Foucault 1997a, p 282). The process of liberation, in this model, liberates the 'true' self from its bondage or repression. By contrast, Foucault historicised questions of ontology: there are no essences, only 'becomings', only a phenomenology or hermeneutics of the self – the forging of an identity through processes of self-formation. To him, liberation is not enough and the practices of freedom do not preclude liberation, but they enable individuals and society to define 'admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society' (Foucault 1997a, p 283). He rejected Sartre's idea that power is evil, stating instead that 'power is games of strategy' (Foucault 1997a, p 298) and

that the ways of avoiding the application of arbitrary, unnecessary or abusive authority 'must be framed in terms of rules of law, rational techniques of government and ethos, practices of the self and of freedom' (Foucault 1997a, p 299).

Foucault (1997a) contrasted two different models of self-interpretation: liberation and freedom, suggesting that the latter is broader than the former and historically necessary once a country or people have attained a degree of independence and set up political society. There may well be some translation difficulties between French and English around notions of liberation and freedom. For example, a person in chains is not free and although they may have some choices, these are severely limited by their lack of freedom. They have to be liberated or freed from their total domination so they have the freedom to practice their own ethics. Ethics is a practice or style of life. Freedom that equates to liberation is therefore a pre-condition of ethics, since ethics are the practices of the 'free' person. Foucault suggested that the ethical problem of freedom in relation to sexuality is politically and philosophically more important than a simple insistence on liberating sexual desire. In other words, he wished to understand freedom as the ontological condition for ethics especially when freedom takes the form of a kind of informed reflection. He began to outline this general understanding in terms of the ancient Greek imperative of 'care for the self'.

Truth telling and technologies of the self

> Why truth? … and why must the care of the self occur only through the concern for truth? [This is] *the* question for the West. How did it come about that all of Western culture began to revolve around this obligation of truth…? (Foucault 1997a, p 281).

As Foucault indicates, the compulsion to tell the truth is highly valued in our society. It is enshrined in how our laws operate. For instance, in court witnesses are required to swear an oath to tell the truth and they may be charged with perjury if they lie. Similarly, insurance will be cancelled if we do not tell the truth or disclose relevant information. Societal values certainly operate in the disciplinary regimes of schools and how they pursue regimes of 'truth'. In doing so, schools shape the student's self and their identities. Yet schools seldom formally perform this task or even consciously attempt it, despite government educational goals often referring to the type of person they are trying to form, citing variations on the theme of a 'good' citizen.

In 'Technologies of the self' (1988b), a seminar series held at the University of Vermont in 1982, Foucault's emphasis shifted to the hermeneutics of the self in his study of the first two centuries AD of Greco-Roman philosophy and the fourth and fifth centuries of the Roman Empire when Christian spirituality and monastic principles were prevalent. Foucault argued that the Delphic moral principle 'know yourself' (*gnothi sauton*) became dominant, and took precedence over another ancient principle and set of practices that were to take care of yourself, or to be concerned with oneself (*epimel_sthai sautou*) (Foucault 1988b). According to Foucault, care of the self formed one of the main rules for personal and social conduct and for the art of life in ancient Greek cities. The two principles were interconnected and it was from this principle that the Delphic principle was brought

into operation as a form of technical advice or rules to be followed when the oracle was consulted. In modern day western culture the moral principles have been transformed, maybe partly because Plato privileged the principle 'know yourself' and this subsequently became hugely influential in philosophy. Foucault argued that 'know yourself' is the fundamental austere principle nowadays because we tend to view care of the self as immoral, as something narcissistic, selfish and an escape from rules. Although there is no direct continuity from ancient to present times, Foucault's genealogy of sexuality does indicate some continuities and some of the Ancient Greek roots of our sexual ethics. First, Christianity adopted and modified themes from ancient philosophy and made renouncing the self the condition for salvation but, paradoxically, to know oneself required self-renunciation. Second, the basis of morality in our secular tradition involves concern for the self. Echoing Nietzsche in *The genealogy of morals* (1956), Foucault argued that a respect for external law, in contradiction to a more internalised notion of morality, is associated with an ascetic morality in which the self can be rejected, so the principle 'know yourself' has obscured 'take care of yourself'. Furthermore, theoretical philosophy since Descartes has positioned the *cogito* or thinking subject and knowledge of the self as the starting point for western epistemology. Foucault argued for the return of the ancient maxim of care of the self because since the Enlightenment the Delphic maxim has become over-riding and inextricably linked with constituting subjects who can be governed.

Foucault elaborated on both the Greek (Platonic and Stoic) and Christian techniques of self. The Stoic techniques include first, 'letters to friends and disclosure of self', second the 'examination of self and conscience, including a review of what was to be done, of what should have been done and a comparison of the two', third, '*ask_sis*, not a disclosure of the secret self but a remembering' and fourth, 'the interpretation of dreams' (Foucault 1988b, pp 34–38). He pointed out that, rather than renunciation, this is 'the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth … that is characterised by *paraskeuaz_* ("to get prepared")' (Foucault 1988b, p 35).

In fact the Stoic techniques of self transformed truth into a principle of action or *ethos*, or ethics of subjectivity, that involved two sets of exercise: the *melet_* (or *epimel_sthai*) or meditation and the *gymnasia* or training of oneself. The *melet_* was a philosophical meditation that trained one's *thoughts* about how one would respond to hypothetical situations. The *gymnasia* is a *physical* training experience that may involve physical privation, hardship, purification rituals and sexual abstinence. Foucault (1988b) remarked that, despite it being a popular practice, the Stoics were mostly critical and sceptical about the interpretation of dreams. It is interesting to note the re-emergence of many of these practices of the self in the different psy therapies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and Foucault does a real service in pointing us to the philosophical and historical roots of some of these. Perhaps Foucault's emphasis on the centrality of truth in relation to the self is to be developed only through the notion of 'others' as an audience, intimate or public. This form of performance allows for the politics of confession and (auto)biography.

In his discussion of ancient Greek (Plato, Socrates, Xenophon) philosophical notions of care of the self, Foucault (1997a) did not discuss the idea that care of the self involves 'care for others', or that care for others is an explicit ethic in itself. He accepted that the ancient Greek notion embodied in care of the self is an inclusive one that precludes the possibility of tyranny because a tyrant does not, by definition, take care of the self since he[2] does not take care of others. Foucault seemed to display a remarkable naivety about the goodness of human beings in accepting this inclusive definition in which care of the self involves a considerable generosity of spirit and benevolent relations for a ruler of others, be they one's slave, wife or children. He stated that care for others became an explicit ethic later on and should not be put before care of the self (see Foucault 1984).

Peters (2003) discusses truth games, which Foucault elaborated in a series of six lectures given at Berkeley in 1983, entitled 'Discourse and truth: the problematization of parrhesia' (Foucault 2001).[3] Foucault's genealogy problematises the practices of *parrhesia* in classical Greek culture. These are a set of practices that are deep-seated culturally for the West and take various forms. He demonstrates that these practices link truth telling and education in ways that still shape our contemporary subjectivities; thus they are relevant in understanding the exercise of power and control in contemporary life.

In the classical Greek, the use of *parrhesia* and its cognates exemplifies the changing practices of truth telling. Foucault investigated the use of *parrhesia* in education to show that education is central to the 'care of the self', public life and the crisis of democratic institutions, intending 'not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity' (Foucault 2001, p 169). He claimed that truth telling as a speech activity emerged with Socrates as a distinct set of philosophical problems that revolved around four questions: 'who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power' (Foucault 2001, p 170). Socrates pursued these in his 'confrontations with the Sophists in dialogues concerning politics, rhetoric and ethics' (Foucault 2001, p 170). These lectures reveal how Foucault thought that the end of pre-Socratic philosophy allowed two traditions of western philosophy that problematise 'truth' to begin. The 'critical' tradition in western culture that is concerned 'with the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth' begins at precisely at the same time as an 'analytics of truth' that characterises contemporary analytic philosophy (Foucault 2001, p 170). Foucault said that he aligned himself with the former 'critical' philosophical tradition, rather than the latter (Foucault 2001).

[2] The pronoun 'he' is used because these discussions about ancient Greek society only referred to free males as citizens, not to women.

[3] These lectures were edited by Joseph Pearson and first appeared on the Internet. They were published in 2001. Foucault did not write, correct or edit any part of the text, which is primarily a verbatim transcription of the lectures from the notes of one of the attendees.

A shift occurred in the classical Greek conception of *parrhesia* from a demonstration of the courage to tell other people the truth, to a different truth game that focused on the self and the courage that people displayed in disclosing the truth about themselves. This new kind of truth game of the self requires *ask_sis* which is a form of practical training or exercise directed at the art of living (*techne tou biou*). The Greek practice of moral *ask_sis* was concerned with 'endowing the individual with the preparation and the moral equipment that will permit him to fully confront the world in an ethical and rational manner' (Foucault 2001, p 144), aiming to establish a specific relationship to oneself, including self-possession, self-sovereignty and self-mastery. In marked contrast, Christian ascetic practices hold a different relationship to the self, since the theme of detachment from the world has its ultimate 'aim or target the renunciation of the self' (Foucault 2001, p 143). Thus Foucault elaborated on his earlier argument in 'Technologies of the self' (1988b) whereby the crucial difference in the ethical principle of self consists of ancient Greek *self-mastery* versus Christian *self-renunciation*.

Foucault's genealogy of confession as practices of the self

Contemporary notions of confession are derived not simply from the influence of the Catholic Church and its strategies for confessing one's sins (where sin is mostly equated with sexual morality so that confession became the principal technology for managing the sexual lives of believers), but from ancient, pre-Christian philosophical notions (Foucault 1980a, 1988b). They have also been profoundly influenced by confessional techniques embodied in Puritan notions of the self and its relation to God and by Romantic, Rousseauian notions of the self (Gutman 1988; Paden 1988).

Foucault pointed out the shift of confessional practices from the religious world to medical then to therapeutic and pedagogical models in secular contemporary societies. Foucault defined his sense of confession (*aveu*) as 'all those procedures by which the subject is incited to produce a discourse of truth about his sexuality which is capable of having effects on the subject himself' (Foucault 1980b, pp 215–216). Foucault argued that western society, unlike other societies that have an *ars erotica* (erotic art) whereby truth is drawn from pleasure itself, has *scientia sexualis* procedures for telling the truth of sex which are a form of knowledge-power found in confession. In confession, the agency of domination does not reside in the person that speaks, but in the one who questions and listens. Sexual confession became constituted in scientific terms through 'a clinical codification of the inducement to speak; the postulate of a general and diffuse causality; the principle of a latency intrinsic to sexuality; the method of interpretation; and the medicalization of the effects of confession' (see Foucault 1980a, pp 59–70). However, he moved beyond simply focusing on confession of sexuality, to the more general importance of confession in the contemporary world. He concluded 'Technologies of the self' with the highly significant point that the verbalisation techniques of confession have been important in the development of the human sciences into which they have been transposed and inserted and where they are used 'without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self. To use these techniques without renouncing oneself constitutes a decisive break' (Foucault 1988b, p 49).

In early Christianity two main forms of disclosing the self emerged: first, *exomolog_sis,* then *exagoreusis*. Despite being very different, with the former a dramatic form, the latter a verbalised one, what they have in common is that disclosing the self involves renouncing one's self or will. Early on disclosure of self involved *exomolog_sis* or 'recognition of fact' with public avowal of the truth of one's faith as Christians and 'a ritual of recognizing oneself as a sinner and penitent' (Foucault 1988b, p 41). Foucault pointed out the paradox that 'exposé is the heart of *exomolog_sis* … it rubs out the sin and yet reveals the sinner' (Foucault 1988b, p 42). Penance became elaborated around notions of torture, martyrdom and death, of renouncing self, identity and life, in preferring to die rather than compromising or abandoning one's faith. Foucault pointed out that Christian penance involves the refusal or renunciation of self, so that 'self-revelation is at the same time self-destruction' (Foucault 1988b, p 43). Whereas for the Stoics the 'examination of self, judgement, and discipline' lead to 'self-knowledge by superimposing truth about self through memory, that is memorizing rules', for Christians, 'the penitent superimposes truth about self by violent rupture and dissociation'. Furthermore, '*exomolog_sis* is not verbal. It is symbolic, ritual and theatrical' (Foucault 1988b, p 43).

Foucault asserted that later, in the fourth century, a different set of technologies for disclosing the self – *exagoreusis* – emerged in the form of verbalising exercises or prayers that involve taking account of one's daily actions in relation to rules (as in Senecan self-examination). With monastic life, different confessional practices developed based on the principles of obedience and contemplation, and confession developed a hermeneutic role in examining the self in relation to one's hidden inner thoughts and purity. The procedures of confession have altered considerably over time. But until the Council of Trent in the mid sixteenth century, when a new series of procedures for the training and purifying of church personnel emerged, confession in the church was an annual event, so the confession of and surveillance of sexuality was quite limited (Foucault 1980b). After the Reformation, confession changed profoundly to involve not just one's acts but also one's thoughts. Then in the eighteenth century Foucault suggested that there was 'a very sharp falling away, not in pressure and injunctions to confess, but in the refinement of techniques of confession' (Foucault 1980b, p 215). This point in time saw 'brutal medical techniques emerging, which consist in simply demanding that the subject tells his or her story, or narrate it in writing' (Foucault 1980b, p 215).

The history of sexuality (Foucault 1980a) examines the techniques of the examination and the confessional or therapeutic situation, where the person is required to speak about their psyche or emotions to a priest or therapist who, as an expert in both observation and interpretation, determines whether or not the truth, or an underlying truth that the person was unaware of, has been spoken. Accessing this inner self or 'truth' is facilitated by professionals in the psy sciences or helping professions (eg priests, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, counsellors) who may administer certain 'technologies' for speaking, listening, recording, transcribing and redistributing what is said, such as examining the conscious and the unconscious, and confessing one's innermost thoughts, feelings, attitudes, desires and motives about the self and one's relationships with others.

They may exert their expert knowledge to re-interpret and re-construct what a person says. However in gaining this form of self-knowledge, one also becomes known to others involved in the therapeutic process. This can, in turn, constitute the self.

A further shift occurs from the medical model of healing where a patient 'confesses' the problem and inadvertently reveals the 'truth' as part of the diagnostic clinical examination to a therapeutic model where both the confession and examination are deliberately used for uncovering the truth about one's sexuality and one's self (Foucault 1980a). In the process the therapy can create a new kind of pleasure: pleasure in telling the truth of pleasure. But speaking the truth is not only descriptive. In confession one is expected to tell the truth about oneself – a basic assumption that most counsellors continue to make about their clients. Because language has a performative function, speaking the truth about oneself also makes, constitutes or constructs forms of one's self. By these discursive means and through these technologies a human being turns him or herself into a subject.

As confession became secularised, a range of techniques emerged in pedagogy, medicine, psychiatry and literature, with a highpoint being psychoanalysis or Freud's 'talking cure'. Since Freud, it could be argued that the secular form of confession has been 'scientised' through new techniques of normalisation and individualisation that include clinical codifications, personal examinations, case-study techniques, the general documentation and collection of personal data, the proliferation of interpretive schemas and the development of a whole host of therapeutic techniques for 'normalisation'. In turn, these 'oblige' us to be free, as self-inspection and new forms of self-regulation replace the confessional. This new form of confession is an affirmation of our self and our identity that involves 'contemporary procedures of individualization' that 'binds us to others at the very moment we affirm our identity' (Rose 1989, p 240). In truthfully confessing who one is to others (eg to parents, teachers, friends, lovers and oneself) 'one is subjectified by another … who prescribes the form of the confession, the words and rituals through which it should be made, who appreciates, judges, consoles, or understands' (Rose 1989, p 240). Through speech acts of confession a person constitutes their self.

While confession means acknowledging, it also involves a declaration and disclosure, acknowledgement or admission of a crime, fault or weakness. The acknowledgement is partly about making oneself known by disclosing one's private feelings or opinions that form part of one's identity. In its religious form, confession involves the verbal acknowledgement of one's sins to another. One is duty-bound to perform this confession as repentance in the hope of absolution.

Foucault (1985, p 29) in *The use of pleasure* described technologies of the self as 'models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for deciphering the self by oneself, for the transformation one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object'. Foucault also examined the 'arts of the self', which are designed to explore the 'aesthetics of existence' and to inquire into the government of self and others. He

discussed 'self-writing' as a means of counteracting the dangers of solitude and of exposing our deeds to the gaze and at the same time, because it works on thoughts as well as actions, it becomes a form of confession (Foucault 1985, 1997b). It permits a retrospective analysis of 'the role of writing in the philosophical culture of the self just prior to Christianity: its close tie with apprenticeship; its applicability to movements of thought; its role as a test of truth' (Foucault 1997b, p 235). In the literary sense, then, confession contains elements of identifying the self in a deliberate, self-conscious attempt to explain and express oneself to an audience within which the individual exists and seeks confirmation – that is, writing the self (see Peters 2000).

Confession then is both a communicative and an expressive act, a narrative in which we (re)create ourselves by creating our own narrative, reworking the past, in public, or at least in dialogue with another. When the subject is confessing and creating its 'self', it seems to feel compelled to tell the truth about itself. Therefore, confession involves a type of 'discipline' that 'entails training in the minute arts of self-scrutiny, self-evaluation, and self-regulation, ranging from the control of the body, speech, and movement in school, through the mental drill inculcated in school and university, to the Puritan practices of self-inspection and obedience to divine reason' (Rose 1989, p 222). Whilst confession is autobiographical, compelling us to narratively recreate ourselves, it is also about assigning truth-seeking meaning to our lives. One can be assisted in this through therapies such as counselling or psychotherapy – the 'priesthood' of our secular society – who have replaced the theological form of confession. Although the use of listening techniques and the uncovering of self are similar, the elements of advice, admonition and punishment that are involved in the religious forms of confession are certainly no part of contemporary counselling either within or outside schools.

Conclusion

Foucault's discussion has strong and obvious relevance for schools in general and for school counselling as well as general counselling theories. Furthermore, his model of the care of the self in relation to practices of freedom provides a philosophical approach that offers schools and counsellors an ethically suitable way of dealing with the moral education of students. Foucault's account offers a very useful theory of power and also a Kantian-like basis for ethics based upon the way in which choices we make under certain conditions create who we become. Foucault's main aspects of the self's relationship to itself or 'ethical self-constitution' point to various ways that education of young people can help them to ethically constitute themselves: by ethical work that a person performs on their self with the aim of becoming an ethical subject; the way in which individuals relate to moral obligations and rules; and the type of person one aims to become in behaving ethically. One element that might be derived from Foucault is the importance of 'writing' and 'reading' the self alongside conversational or dialogical forms of 'talking' or confessing the self. Whilst acknowledging their current existence as counselling techniques, the emphasis in school counselling might be widened to re-emphasise the forms of bibliotherapy, diaries, journal writing, personal narratives, autobiographies and biographies, together with the educative impulse of all forms of

fiction, poetry and drama or role-play – both in film and television – that focus on the self.

In ancient schools of thought philosophy was considered to be a way of life, a quest for wisdom, a way of being and ultimately a way of transforming the self. Spiritual exercises were a form of pedagogy designed to teach their practitioners the philosophical life that had both a moral and existential value. These exercises were aimed at nothing less than a transformation of one's world view and personality by involving all aspects of one's being, including intellect, imagination, sensibility and will. In the contemporary world, schools have frequently being seen as an appropriate location for the moral education of young people. Socrates provided a set of dialogical spiritual exercises that epitomised the injunction 'know yourself!' and provided a model for a relationship of the self to itself that constituted the basis of all spiritual exercise that is at the very centre of a total transformation of one's being (see Davidson 1997). In this model, the process of dealing with a problem takes primacy over the solution (Hadot 1987). Foucault suggested re-instating care of the self, the maxim that 'know yourself' supplanted. This provides schools with an ancient philosophical basis or model, at once transformative, ethical, dialogic and pedagogical, which could both complement and correct certain emphases in Foucault's later thinking about truth, subjectivity and care of the self.

Current projects and even formal curricula with names such as values education, moral education, philosophy, civics, citizenship, personal and social education, and so on, have emerged alongside increasing concern about the moral state of young people. They aim to deal with current social issues and with 'social exclusion' in the UK. Regardless of whether or not learning about the self could or should be a formal curriculum item, schools do need to have some awareness of the part they play in constituting the self of their students. Schools need to be aware of the technologies of power (domination) and of the self that they bring to bear on their students and the effect these have in constituting the self. Furthermore, they need to provide the means to address care of the self more consciously, and truth telling and confession form only a part of this.

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